

POCKET DEVOTIONS SERIES

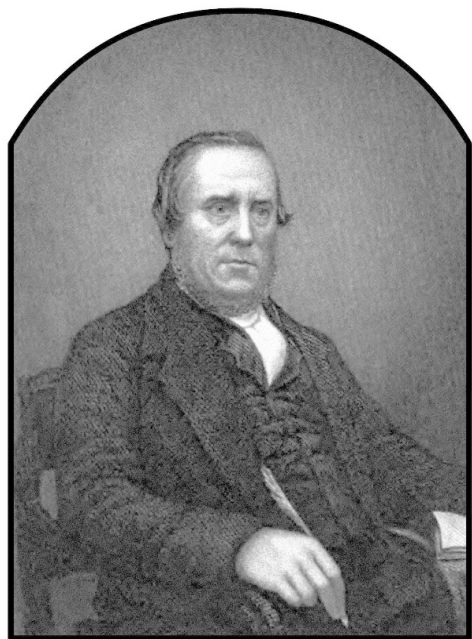
OUR HEAVENLY FATHER



3 POCKET
DEVOTIONS
SERIES

James Smith

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER



James Smith,

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

or

GOD OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

by
James Smith

NEW EDITION



2024

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Our Heavenly Father, or God Our Refuge and Strength
Smith, James (1802-1862)

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

The Fatherhood of God is a truth which is declared over and over again in the Scriptures. Indeed, our God loves us more than the best human father loves his own children. But how often we fail to grasp the significance of this truth! Though we address Him as such we sometimes struggle to believe that He really is our loving, heavenly Father. In the midst of poverty or financial stress, we are tempted to think that our God won't provide all that we need. In times of trouble, we fear that He has forgotten or abandoned us. When we are disciplined by Him, we secretly complain that He is dealing too harshly with us. We imagine Him to be a less than perfect Father.

But as Pastor Smith emphasizes in these devotions, God's love for His children is infinite and everlasting. Not only does He desire the best for His children, as all good fathers do. He always faithfully accomplishes it for them as well. In fact, no power in heaven or upon earth will ever prevent God from exercising His love for His children and supplying them with everything that they need.

In this new edition, only a few minor alterations were made to Pastor Smith's original work. Bible references have been added to the text in those places where quotes and allusions to the Scriptures occur. Some punctuation has also been updated and a small

number of very long sentences have been broken up into smaller ones. On rare occasions, words with archaic meanings have been replaced with a modern equivalent, and British spelling has been preferred throughout.

Extra material has also been included in this new edition which may be of interest to the reader. This includes a short biography of Pastor Smith, a timeline of his life and a list of his major works. Most of this information has been gleaned from his autobiography *Marvellous Mercy*. Above the title of each devotion is also an additional Bible passage. This serves as a suggested Scripture reading which may be read prior to the devotion itself.

Of course, the greatest proof of God's love for us is shown in the punishing of His only begotten Son for our sins. He willingly poured out His righteous wrath on the Lord Jesus Christ that He might forgive us and grant us eternal life. The full cost of that sacrifice which our Father made for us is far beyond our ability to comprehend. But we do know this: That He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will certainly give us all things along with Him (Rom. 8:32).

Dear reader, as you ponder and meditate upon these truths, may they lead you to a greater love, a higher reverence, and a deeper respect for your loving Heavenly Father.

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OUR FATHER

*I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons
and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

2 Corinthians 6:18

TRIED CHRISTIAN, THOU art not an orphan! Thou hast a Father. God, in all the glory of His nature and perfections, is thy Father. He has adopted thee for His own. He has regenerated thee by His Spirit. He has called thee out of the world, and has promised to do a father's part by thee.

"I will be a Father unto you." Do you want advice? Consult your Father. Do you need supplies? Ask them of your Father. Are you tormented with cares? Cast them on your Father. Are you alarmed at foes? Cry unto your Father. Do your difficulties appear insurmountable? Appeal to your Father. God is not merely a Father in name. He has a Father's nature. He not only calls us His sons and daughters, but wishes us to act towards Him as such. We should exercise confidence in His love. We should trust in His word. We should appeal to His paternal heart. We should look for our supplies from His hand. In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving we should let our requests be made known unto God (Php. 4:6). He loves to see us confide in His care, rely on His word, expect His communications, and acquiesce in His will.

Believer, whatever trials may befall thee, whatever troubles may come upon thee, whatever enemies may rise up against thee, whatever changes may take place in thy circumstances, one thing can never befall thee — thou canst never be fatherless. Therefore thou canst never be friendless. Thou art God's child, however poor thy circumstances or trying thy path. What an unspeakable mercy!

We are the children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:16-17



OUR ELDER BROTHER

Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother.

Matthew 12:50

EVERY RELATION IN which Jesus stands to His people is precious. But there are some peculiarly so, especially under certain peculiar circumstances. He is not only our Saviour, but our brother. He is bone of our bones, and flesh of our flesh. Possessing our nature, being part of the same family, He watches over us with a brother's eye, and loves us with a brother's love. He is the "brother born for adversity," (Prov. 17:17). He takes the deepest interest in all our affairs, and watches over us to do us good. We may go to Him in all our troubles, and open our hearts to Him without the least reserve. We cannot go to one who loves us more, or one who is more able or willing to help us. He laid down His life for us, thereby proving the intensity of His love to us. He is gone into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God *for us* (Heb. 9:24).

My tried Christian friend, the eye of Jesus is upon thee in thy trial. The ear of Jesus is open, to listen to thy cries. The heart of Jesus is affected with thy griefs and woes, and the tongue of Jesus is employed to intercede with His Father for thee. Sweet thought! We have a brother in heaven, a brother who knows all we suffer, and who will frustrate the designs of our

foes, sanctify to us our troubles and trials, and eventually make all things work together for our good! His strong arm will defend us, His merciful hand will supply us, and His tender heart will ever sympathize with us. He will guide us through life and death by His counsel, and afterwards receive us to glory (Ps. 73:24). Let us, therefore, go to Him in every trouble, plead with Him to supply our wants, trust Him in every dark and dreary hour, and expect Him to show a brother's love.

*Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified
are all of one [family], for which cause he
is not ashamed to call them brethren.*

Hebrews 2:11



THE COMFORTER

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.

John 14:16

THE SORROWS OF the Lord's people are sometimes so deep, that human comforters are vain. They do but aggravate our woe and increase our distress. Jesus knew this, and therefore, having comforted His disciples Himself by the space of three years, and being now about to leave them, He promises to send the Holy Spirit to be the abiding Comforter of His people.

The Holy Spirit is a divine Person. He can search the heart, pierce the clouds, penetrate all recesses, and ascertain the true cause of all our sorrows. His tenderness and love are infinite, therefore He can administer consolation in the most suitable and efficient manner. The whole fullness of Jesus is open to Him, and He will select and apply the most appropriate remedy in every case of sorrow. He applies the promises. He unveils our Father's loving countenance. He reveals the suitability and sufficiency of Jesus. He witnesses to our adoption, and cries "Abba, Father," in our hearts. To Him we are indebted for every bright ray, every cheering hope, every pleasant prospect, and every refreshing consolation. It is His *work* to comfort. It is His *delight* to comfort. Let us therefore look to Him for comfort under all our trials,

troubles, temptations, and distresses. Our earthly friends may fail us, or prove miserable comforters to us, but the Holy and ever blessed Spirit can and will comfort us to the end.

Blessed Jesus, send the Comforter into my heart, to comfort me with the assurances of Thy love and the joys of Thy salvation! O to realize the presence and power of the Comforter in my soul, unfolding truth, revealing Jesus, and sealing me unto the day of redemption.

*He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine,
and shall shew it unto you.*

John 16:14



THE APPOINTMENT

No man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

1 Thessalonians 3:3

ALTHOUGH AFFLICTION cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7). Trouble is the natural consequence of sin, and all trouble springs from this bitter root. But God makes our trouble our medicine, and uses it for our present and everlasting welfare. Our troubles are not the inflictions of an angry God, but the chastisements of a loving Father. He foresaw what we should be, and what would be necessary for us, and consequently appointed, the number, nature, and length of our troubles. He sometimes sends trials directly from Himself — then we see His hand, and find it comparatively easy to submit to His will.

But at other times He allows us to involve ourselves in trouble. Then we cannot trace His hand, and therefore yield to temptation, depression, and grief. But every Christian has His cup. It is mixed by His Father's wisdom, and put into his hand by His Father's providence. He should therefore take it, endeavour to acquiesce in it, and say with Jesus, "The cup that my heavenly Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). Every trouble comes from God's appointment, is intended to do us good, and

will be overruled for our real welfare. Every trial is labelled “LOVE,” if we could but read the writing, and in every affliction God calls to us, saying, “Come near unto Me, My son, that I may bless thee.”

Let us, then, draw near unto God, and show before Him our trouble. Let us entreat Him to sanctify it to us, that it may wean us from earth, consecrate us to Jesus, and fit us for heaven. All is love that comes from the God of love.

He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him.

Job 23:13-14



THE LIMIT

*Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness
through manifold temptations.*

1 Peter 1:6

TEMPTATIONS ARE trials, and are intended to test our principles, try our profession, and prove the strength of our graces. The temptations or trials of the believer are manifold. They come from various quarters, they affect us in various ways, but they are all limited. They are but for a season: “In the *day* of adversity consider,” (Eccl. 7:14); “The *hour* of temptation,” (Rev. 3:10); “Our light affliction, which is but for a *moment*,” (2 Cor. 4:17); “For a *small moment* have I forsaken thee,” (Isa. 54:7). Thus they are limited sometimes to “a day,” “an hour,” “a moment,” “a small moment.” God fixes the limit of every trial, and however long that limit may be, it is confined to the present time. “I reckon that the sufferings of this *present time* are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us,” (Rom. 8:18).

Beloved, however severe the trial, it cannot be long. However heavy the burden, you have not far to carry it. We shall soon lay down our cross, and ascend to receive our crown. If our Father frowns upon us now, He will smile again soon. “His anger endureth *but for a moment*; in His favour is life. Weeping may endure *for a night*, but joy cometh in

the morning,” (Ps. 30:5). Thy present trouble is but *for a season*, and that season will soon close, therefore bear it patiently, prayerfully, and hopefully. Yield not to despondency, listen not to Satan, but hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him, for the help of His countenance (Ps. 42:11). The darkness of night will soon be chased away by the rosy light of morning. The limit of thy trouble will soon be reached, and then joy, everlasting joy, will be upon thy head, and all sorrow and sighing will flee away forever (Isa. 35:10).

Now the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

1 Peter 5:10



THE LEGACY

*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you —
not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*

John 14:27

JESUS KNOWS FROM experience what His people need. His life on earth was a life of trial, trouble, and grief. He was the “Man of Sorrows,” (Isa. 53:3). Yet, in the midst of all, He enjoyed peace. His spirit was generally at rest. His faith was in lively exercise, and His repose on His Father’s love was perfect. When all was confusion and strife without, He had peace within. And when He departed out of this world to go unto his Father, He left us this as a legacy — “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you,” (John 14:27).

Our souls may be peaceful, let our outward circumstances be what they may. By the exercise of faith in Jesus, by staying the mind on Jesus, and by acquiescing in the will of Jesus, we shall have peace. So it is written: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee,” (Isa. 26:3).

My soul, I charge thee to cast every care on Jesus. Submit to His will, nay, prefer His will to thine own. Let the word of Jesus be thy rule and comfort, let the glory of Jesus be thy aim and object, and let the legacy of Jesus be taken to the throne of grace, that it may be paid thee by His heavenly Father. Pray, pray

for holy tranquillity of mind, amidst all the storms of time, and expect an inward calm of spirit both in life and death. Believe, and the legacy is thine. Pray in faith, and the legacy will be paid thee. Thy Saviour, who left thee this legacy on earth, lives in heaven to see it paid to all applicants. Therefore, present it in confidence, expect to receive it, and you shall soon enjoy it. We that believe do enter into rest (Heb. 4:3).

Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7



THE SOLACE

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.*

Psalm 46:1

GOD IS WHATEVER His people need, and whatever He is, He is to them. Are they in danger? He is their refuge. Here they are safe from the avenger of blood, the justice of God, and the threatenings of a violated law. Are they weak? He is their strength. He will strengthen them for conflict with the foe, strengthen them while in the engagement, and bring them off more than conquerors. Are they in trouble? He is a help, a very present help in trouble. He will help them to bear trouble. He will help them to improve trouble. He will help them out of trouble. He will deliver them in six troubles, and in seven shall no evil touch them (Job 5:19).

Christian, in every danger run to thy God. His arms are open to receive thee. His heart is a refuge for thee. He will screen thee. He will shelter thee. He will defend thee. He will be thy protection in adversity and prosperity, in life and death. In all thy weakness, go to Him for strength. In all thy infirmities, repair to Him for grace. He is the strength of the poor, and the strength of the needy in His distress. He has strengthened thousands of poor feeble ones, and He will strengthen thee. In all thy troubles go to Him for solace and succour. He will help thee.

Hear His own precious words, addressed to His people when in deep trouble and distress: “Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness,” (Isa. 41:10). He is thy shield in danger, and thy very present help in trouble. He is always at hand, always ready to help, always willing to bless thee.

*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of
grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find
grace to help in time of need.
Hebrews 4:16*



THE COMMON LOT

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

Psalm 34:19

THE LORD'S PEOPLE are all righteous. To them the glorious righteousness of Jesus is imputed. In them the righteous work of the Holy Spirit is wrought. By them the righteous precepts of God's word are observed. The obedience of Jesus is their title to heaven. The work of the Holy Spirit prepares them for glory. Their practical conformity to the moral requirements of the gospel, proves them to be justified before God, and sanctified by His grace.

All the righteous are afflicted — some more, some less — but none are exempt. Nor have they merely one source of affliction, for “*many* are the afflictions of the righteous.” There has been more than one Job, or one Lazarus, in God's family, though all suffer not so severely as they did. Every son is scourged.

But however numerous, however great their afflictions may be, they are more than a match for them. As their day, so is their strength (Deut. 33:25), and they ever find that the grace of Jesus is sufficient for them (2 Cor. 12:9). “The Lord delivereth him out of them all.” God has undertaken to sustain us in, to bring us through, and deliver us out of, all our troubles. God's deliverances are always perfect. He

delivers every one of His children, and He delivers every one completely and forever.

“Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. They shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end,” (Isa. 45:17). No believer ever perished in his affliction. No Christian ever found his burden greater than his strength. We have often doubted, often feared, often questioned our safety, but we, even we, can testify that God is faithful, that His promise is true, and therefore we have persevered until now.

*Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles,
shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up
again from the depths of the earth.*

Psalm 71:20



THE FOOTPRINTS

*These are they which came out of great tribulation,
and have washed their robes, and made them
white in the blood of the Lamb.*

Revelation 7:14

NOTHING IS MORE common than for the Lord's people to be tempted to think that their troubles and trials are peculiar. But a careful perusal of God's word, and communion with the Lord's people, will soon convince them that this is a mistake. All the Lord's family have gone home to heaven by the same road, and have all experienced more or less the same trials. All have to experience a conflict within, and a rough road without.

Look at the prophets. Theirs was a most trying path. Hence says the apostle, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience," (James 5:10). Just so the Corinthians. They fancied that their trials were singular, therefore Paul wrote them: "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," (1 Cor. 10:13). Just so the Master also: "He was in all points tempted like as we are," (Heb. 4:15) and "in that He

Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able also to succour them that are tempted," (Heb. 2:18).

Tried Christian, thou art in the footsteps of the flock. Look attentively at thy road, and thou wilt discern the footprints of the great Shepherd, and also of His little flock. It is of the path of trial that Jesus says, "This is the way, walk ye in it," (Isa. 30:21). Cheer up, then, for present troubles lead to future glory. The weary way will sweeten the rest at the end. The horrors of the wilderness will make Canaan appear more lovely and pleasant. Press on, for home is just before you.

*Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished
in your brethren that are in the world.*

1 Peter 5:9



RELATIONSHIP PROVED

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Hebrews 12:7-8

AFFLICTIONS ARE often chastisements. They flow from a Father's love, and are intended to correct us for our faults. Consequently when brought into trouble, we should ask, "Is there not a cause?" and say with the prophet, "Let us search, and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord," (Lam. 3:40).

All the Lord's children need correction, and all are corrected. If allowed to sin without stripes, or to become conformed to the world without chastisement, our sonship is at best very questionable. But when our consciences are made and kept tender, when our follies are followed with trials, troubles, or painful convictions, our sonship is proved. God will not allow His children to wander from Him far, or to wander from Him long. "The rod and reproof give wisdom," (Prov. 29:15) and we shall be smitten and reproofed often if we go astray from the right ways of the Lord. If I cannot sin without remorse, if I cannot rest until I confess it to the Lord, if I cannot be happy until I receive a renewed sense of His pardoning love, there can be no reasonable doubt of my relationship. God is my Father, and however fickle, feeble,

wayward, and unworthy, I am His child. He uses the rod of a father, that He may not use the sword of a judge. I will therefore arise, and go to my Father. I will plead with Him for grace, that I may approve the discipline, kiss the rod, and bless the hand that strikes me.

O my Father, let Thy child lay his aching head on Thy bosom. Soothe me with one of Thy sweet words, assure me of Thy love, and enable me lovingly to accept of Thy correction! O Lord, correct me, but in mercy, not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing (Jer. 10:24).

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Be zealous therefore, and repent.

Revelation 3:19



THE GRACIOUS DIRECTION

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

Psalm 55:22

TROUBLES IN THE flesh are often heavy burdens to the spirit. Nor have we a friend, a relative, or foe, but sometime or other lays a burden upon us. We cannot always prevent burdens being laid upon us, but we may refuse to carry them. Indeed, we ought not to carry any burdens, for it is not becoming in the King's children to act like porters.

We have a great Burden-bearer — One who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isa. 53:4) — One who bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). Now He bore our sins — the guilt and the punishment of them — that we may never bear them. He sighed, that we may sing. He sunk under the weight of our sorrows, that we may rise and taste His sweetest joys. And now, when He sees us burdened with care, grief, anxiety, or worldly trouble, He sweetly says, “Let Me take thy burden and carry it for thee. My strength is greater than thine. Bring it to Me. Cast it on Me. Leave it with Me.”

O Christian, what a Saviour thou hast! He so cares for thee, that He desires thee not to care, and He so loves to see thee happy, that He proposes, yea, asks, to be allowed to carry thy burden for thee. More than this, He will not only carry thy burden, but He

will carry thee. He will place His everlasting arms beneath thee (Deut. 33:27), lift thee up out of every difficulty, and set thee before His face forever. Take thy present burden to Jesus, and let Him bear it for thee. If you do not, you will find it too much for your patience, and you will soon begin to think that the Lord deals hardly with you. But if you take it to Jesus, He will not only bear it for you, but endear Himself to you by doing so.

*Call upon me in the day of trouble.
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.
Psalm 50:15*



THE GROANING

*We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.
2 Corinthians 5:4*

THE BODY IS a poor residence for the soul. It was at first a noble structure, but it is now like a poor canvas tent, affording few accommodations, and letting in all kinds of annoyances. It is the seat of pain, the medium of temptation, and often a great hindrance to us in our spiritual course. We groan in this tent, because of what we feel we want, as well as from what we positively suffer. Nor will our groaning cease but with our breathing. We shall have to groan over our carnality, worldliness, concupiscence, dullness, deadness, darkness, and unbelief. We shall groan for liberty, holiness, and perfect, uninterrupted peace.

We *do* groan now, as some of us have for years, and we *shall* groan until mortality is swallowed up of life. We shall go down to the grave groaning, but from thence the ransomed of the Lord shall return with singing, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 35:10).

My brother, is thy poor body the seat of disease, of strong pain? Dost thou feel fettered by it, and pent up in it? Art thou groaning as a poor prisoner for freedom? Lift up thy head, for thy redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:28). The resurrection morning will

soon break on this groaning world, and then the last groan of God's church will be lost in everlasting songs. Jesus is coming, and when He comes, then will come the world's jubilee. Every fetter will then be knocked off, every prison-door will be opened, every sufferer will enjoy freedom from pain, and every form of disease will flee away. The poor tent will become a building of God, a glorious residence, a magnificent mansion for the soul.

*We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption,
to wit, the redemption of our body.*

Romans 8:23



THE COMPLAINT

*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver
me from the body of this death?*

Romans 7:24

AS CHRISTIANS, we have not only troubles without, but we have trials within, and soul troubles are the greatest troubles. Every believer feels, that when he would do good, evil is present with him — that he has a law in his members warring against the law of his mind — that, like the Roman criminal, he has a dead body fastened to him.

The old man of sin and the new man of grace inhabit the same soul, and between them there is a perpetual warfare. From the one proceed evil thoughts, vile lusts, carnal desires, corrupt inclinations, and a number of evils too vile to enumerate (Mark 7:21-13). From the other flow holy aspirations, spiritual desires, heavenly affections, and earnest pantings for perfect holiness.

The flesh works, and mars our very best performances. The Spirit works, and prevents our yielding to its base inclinations. We would do good, only good. But evil, powerful evil, is present with us (Rom. 7:21). The body of death hinders us in duty, and often spoils our enjoyment and our privileges. Thus, like the Shulamite, we have in us two armies (Song 6:13), and these armies are perpetually at war, and if at any time there seems to be an armistice, then is the time

of our greatest danger. Oh, for grace to crucify the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness! (Eph. 4:22-24).

But, blessed be God, the warfare will soon be over, the conflict will soon cease. We shall soon be perfectly holy, and then we shall be perfectly happy. The old man must die. He is under the sentence of death now, and the new man must reign, and rule one whole person without a rival. Oh, glorious prospect of eternal freedom from all sin!

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Galatians 5:17



THE PRAYER

Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble.

Psalms 31:9

PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS a privilege, but it is a special privilege in the times of trouble. What should we have done sometimes but for prayer! When the heart was overcharged with grief, when the body was reduced by disease, when property melted like snow, and the grave closed over our loved ones, what should we have done but for prayer! Then we poured out our hearts before the Lord, then we appealed to the almighty Ruler, then we cried to the Disposer of all events, then we sought fellowship with the Resurrection and the Life, and in prayer we were comforted, and in answer to prayer made a match for our troubles.

Christian, in thy trouble appeal to thy God — appeal to His mercy. Mercy always sympathizes with misery, and feels for the distressed. The mercy of thy God is vast as infinity, and tenderer than the tenderest mother's heart. He will listen to thee, sympathize with thee, appear for thee, and bring thee to bless Him for the very trouble that now makes thee groan. How often is it repeated in His word, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses," (Ps. 107:6).

Pray on therefore, though the more you pray, the more your troubles may seem to increase, for this is

sometimes the case. Yet prayer, if it be the prayer of the heart, will certainly prevail. God cannot refuse to hear the cries of His afflicted ones, or to answer the prayers of His children in trouble. His word is passed, and cannot be recalled. His heart is love, and cannot be unaffected. His resources are infinite, and cannot be exhausted. He will therefore be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry. When He shall hear, He will answer thee (Isa. 30:19).

Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake. For thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

Psalms 143:11



AN ANTIDOTE

*None of us liveth to himself.**Romans 14:7*

THE TRIED CHRISTIAN should never dwell on his troubles. Trouble comes to furnish him with a message to the Lord, and to drive him out of his present state and condition. Therefore many of the Lord's people have found great relief in trouble by actively engaging in the Lord's service.

My tried friend, go, if thou canst, to the chamber of the sick, and speak of Jesus to them. Go to the desolate home of the widow, listen to her tale of sorrow, and endeavour to dry her tears. Take her fatherless children by the hand, and speak loving words to them of a father in heaven. Go to the poor labourer's cottage, where there are many wants and few comforts, and represent Jesus there, speaking of Him and acting for Him. Look at the sufferings of others, and try to relieve them. Look at the wants of others, and try to supply them. Look at the ignorance of others, and endeavour to instruct them. It is by doing good that we get good. Be active for thy Saviour, and thou shalt be comforted by thy Saviour.

The way to increase sorrow is to dwell upon it, and the way to obtain relief from sorrow is to act for Jesus notwithstanding it. The action of fresh air on the nerves, the action of God's truth on the mind, and the action of another's sorrow on thy heart, will re-

lieve, reanimate, and restore to comfort those who go forth as messengers of mercy, while those who confine themselves at home, dwelling on their griefs and woes, will continue depressed and sad. While, therefore, you rely on the Lord's promise, be active in the Lord's service, and energetic in the Lord's cause. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich, but the slothful soul shall suffer hunger," (Prov. 10:4). This is as true in spirituals as in temporals.

*We should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but
unto him that died for us, and rose again.*

2 Corinthians 5:15



DIVINE SYMPATHY

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

Isaiah 63:9

HOW SWEET IS sympathy! Yet human sympathy is very often feeble. It may soothe, but cannot help. The kind visit, the loving word, is at times precious, but they reach not our case, they bring us no permanent relief. Love is often without power to assist the beloved object. Not so when God loveth, for then the loving heart moves an omnipotent arm, and opens infinite resources.

But there is something astounding in the thought, that the afflictions of a worm — a sinful worm — should afflict the heart of the Infinite, the heart of God. Yet such is the testimony of His own word. What an expression of love is that! “They put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord, and *his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*,” (Judg. 10:16). What exquisite tenderness is manifested when the God of the universe declares, “*He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye*,” (Zech. 2:8).

Tried fellow-traveller, when thy road is rough, when thy strength is small, when thy heart is pained, when thy sighs are heavy, God sympathizes with

thee. His eye sees, His ear hears, and His heart feels, for “like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust,” (Ps. 103:13-14).

Believe this, and be sad if thou canst. Believe this, and complain if you dare. Believe this rather, and go on thy way rejoicing. What can you desire more? God your Father — God, as a Father, pitying you — pitying you as His beloved child! The sympathy of God should be thy solace, thy comfort, and thy joy.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 4:15



THE PERSUASION

*Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
Thou wilt revive me.
Psalm 138:7*

SOME OF THE Lord's family are peculiarly tried. Trouble seems to come upon them from every quarter. They appear to be surrounded by it. They have trouble in the world — business tries them. They have trouble in the family — children try them. They have trouble in the church — fellow-members try them. They have trouble in their own souls, for Satan, doubts, fears, and inward corruption try them. They must go forward, but they walk in the midst of trouble. Onlookers wonder how they bear up, how they persevere. But there is a secret, which observers cannot see. The Lord revives His tried ones.

Sometimes some precious portion of His word falls on the spirit like the dew upon the grass. At other times the Holy Spirit breathes on the soul, like the breezes from the everlasting hills. Now Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, breaks out and shines on them, like nature's sun on the stormy day. Then in prayer the soul is drawn out, and mounts upward, and holds such communion with God as resembles bathing in the river of pleasure. The ordinances of God's house are really means of grace, and reading God's word is like walking with unfallen Adam in his paradise.

These revivals are precious. They cause faith to fasten on the promise afresh, hope looks forward to the rest that remaineth anew, and love ascends and finds its centre and its solace in the perfections of the Most High. O for more of these reviving seasons! My God, Thou hast said, "I will be as the dew unto Israel, and he shall revive as the corn," (Hos. 14:5). Fulfil this precious promise daily in my soul.

*Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD.
His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He
shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter
and former rain unto the earth.
Hosea 6:3*



THE DESIGN

*We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us,
and we gave them reverence. They chastened us
after their own pleasure, but he for our profit,
that we might be partakers of His holiness.*

Hebrews 12:9-10

BELIEVER, ART thou afflicted? Art thou severely tried? Does trouble after trouble roll over thee? What is the cause? There must be one. What is the design? Hast thou inquired? If not, inquire now. Why does God try me so? Does He hate me? No. Is He wrathful? No. He hath sworn that He will not be wroth with thee (Isa. 54:9).

Why then is it? God intends to make thee holy — to make thee like Himself. He is weaning thee from the creature. He is wearying thee of earth. He intends to raise thy thoughts, desires, and hopes to heaven. He is detaching and separating thee from what pollutes and defiles, that He may polish and brighten thee, to catch and reflect the rays of His glory in His presence forever. You have prayed to be made holy. God has heard your prayer. He approved of it. He is answering it. By His present dealings, which He will sanctify by the power of His Holy Spirit, He will prepare thee to glorify Him on earth, and make thee meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12). His design is most gracious, every way worthy of Himself, and you will

see by-and-by that love and wisdom appointed and arranged every trial you are now passing through.

Submit yourself, therefore, unto God. Accept His corrections, nor ever complain of His dealings. He treats you as His child. He corrects thee for thy good. He prepares you for what He has prepared for you. He will make you a vessel of mercy, afore prepared unto glory (Rom. 9:23). In eternity you will bless Him for the discipline of time.

*He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.
By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged,
and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.*

Isaiah 27:8-9



THE CALCULATION

*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are
not worthy to be compared with the glory
that shall be revealed in us.*

Romans 8:18

THE SUFFERINGS OF the Lord's people are often severe and protracted. But, however severe, however protracted, the sufferings of the believer may at present be, there is no comparison between them and the glories that await him. He is now under training. He is a child preparing to take possession of a glorious inheritance. The discipline he is now under is painful, but the result will be seen in the future.

He is educating for eternity. There is a hope laid up for him in heaven (Col. 1:5). There is a weight of glory in reserve for him (2 Cor. 4:17). "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him," (1 Cor. 2:9). There is a glory for the body, like that which shone forth in the body of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. There is a glory for the soul, which will very much consist in perfect knowledge, perfect holiness, exact conformity to the soul of Jesus, and the beatific vision of God. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father," (Matt. 13:43).

But words are wanting, thoughts fail, when our attention is directed to the glory that shall be revealed in us. Even John knew not what was comprised in it. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," (1 John 3:21). Let this calm thy mind and quiet thy spirit, that glory is prepared for thee, and will be revealed in thee, and that there is no comparison between what thou art suffering now and what thou wilt enjoy then.

*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall
ye also appear with him in glory.
Colossians 3:14*



GOD'S DETERMINATION

My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

Isaiah 46:10

GOD NEVER ACTS at random. His plan is drawn. His purposes are fixed. He steadily pursues His end. Resistance is vain — it is sin. It brings punishment on the sinner, and correction on the saint. Submission is at all times a duty. Resignation ought ever to characterize us. “There are many devices in a man’s heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand,” (Prov. 19:21). His omnipotence is engaged to carry out His designs, and “He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan. 4:35).

Believer, the Lord taketh pleasure in thy person, and in thy spiritual prosperity. He is pleased with whatever advances thy spirituality, perfects thy character, increases thy real happiness, and adds splendour to thy crown. Hence said the apostle, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” (2 Cor. 4:17). You wondered at the afflictions of the saints. Do you wonder now? They are to add weight and brilliance to their crowns. Sanctified afflictions are among our choicest blessings.

Let us, therefore, pray that our afflictions may be sanctified, and to be kept from striving with our Maker, reflecting upon His wisdom, and grieving His love. In our best moments we can thank God for the immutability of His counsel, and the changeless nature of His decrees. A God of love can only pass loving decrees respecting His children, and such are all God's purposes respecting you. O Lord, fulfil in us all the good pleasure of Thy goodness, and the work of faith with power! (2 Thess. 1:11).

*The counsel of the LORD standeth forever,
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*

Psalm 33:11



THE DESIRE

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:10

GOD'S WILL MUST be wise and holy — therefore God's will should rule. God willeth nothing for us but what is consistent with His love to us and concern for us. Nor are we at a loss to know the turn that God's will takes towards us: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification," (1 Thess. 4:31). God wills, first His own glory, and in subordination to that, our present and everlasting welfare. It is therefore our wisdom to pray that God's will may always, everywhere and in everything, be done.

And it is our happiness to acquiesce always, and in everything, in God's will. Indeed we can never be happy if our wills run contrary to God's will, or if they run beside it. We must be *little children*. We must endeavour to ascertain what is our Father's will, and be pleased with that. If God wills me poverty or plenty, health or sickness, pleasure or pain, publicity or obscurity, life or death, I should be satisfied with it. I should approve of it, more, I should be pleased with it — so pleased with it, that if the turning of a straw would make the least difference in it, I should refuse to turn that straw. This would be to treat God as God, and to act just as a simple, ignorant, inexperienced child should act.

Lord Jesus, send the blessed Comforter, to direct my will into the channel of God's will, and to keep it there. I can never be happy while my will crosses Thy will. Teach me, therefore, to give up my will, and bring me into that state, that I may not have a wish, but just to be, to do, to enjoy, or to suffer as God willeth. O for that depth of holiness, that I may ever cry with thee, "Not my will, but Thine be done!" (Luke 22:42).

*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,
nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Matthew 26:39



AN EXAMPLE

He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Hebrews 11:27

MOSES HAD MUCH to suffer, and who has not, if loved and honoured of God? Satan and the world are leagued against God's children. In Egypt, they are persecuted and ruled by their carnal neighbours. In the desert, they are tried by a variety of vexing dispensations, and in Canaan, or the church of God, they often meet with enough to make them weary of life.

But Moses *endured*. He bore his trials patiently. He pressed on, notwithstanding difficulties. He courageously faced a proud and angry monarch at God's bidding. How was this? He realized the presence of an invisible God. He kept his eye fixed on the Most High. He feared His frown. He dreaded His displeasure. He sought His favour. He prized His blessing. If God is with us, all will be well. But God is with us, though unseen. Let us, therefore, endeavour to suffer, with the eye of faith fixed on God as our heavenly Father, who will support us — on Jesus, as our great pattern, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame (Heb. 12:2) — and on the Holy Spirit, as our present, perpetual, and powerful Comforter.

Troubled Christian, God is with thee, only thy natural eye cannot see Him. He is supporting thee at

this moment. He has promised never, never to leave thee, nor forsake thee (Heb. 13:5). He is faithful to His word, therefore patiently endure until He set thee free. It will not be long ere He will appear for thee, set thee on high from affliction, and make thee full of joy with His countenance. The present is thy worst condition. Once over the Jordan of death, and all will be peace, prosperity, and pleasure.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

James 1:12



A PRESCRIPTION

Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1-2

THE WORLD IS a race-course, life is a race, and every one of us are racers. A mark is set up, at which we are to aim, and a prize is promised to every overcomer. But there are many difficulties in the way, and we have many weights about us. Those difficulties must be mastered, and those weights must be laid aside. Our easily besetting sin is distrust of God. This must be opposed and laid aside, and we must run with patience the race set before us, keeping the eye on Jesus.

Jesus is our example. We must copy Him. Jesus is our leader. We must follow Him. Jesus is our sovereign. We must submit to Him. Jesus is our Saviour, and we must confide alone in Him. We must look to His blood for pardon, to His righteousness for justification, to His Spirit for strength, and to His fullness for all our supplies. We must make use of Jesus every day, every hour, every minute.

Christian, look to Jesus when discouraged. It will animate you. When timid, it will embolden you. When feeble, it will strengthen you. When weary, it will stimulate you. And when dying, for it will give you the victory. Let thy last look be a look at Jesus.

“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is none else,” (Isa. 45:22). No one ever looked to Him in vain, but as every one was healed who looked to the brazen serpent (Num. 21:9), so is every one saved, sanctified, and sustained, who looks to Jesus. Look to Him for all you need, and from all you fear. Keep the eye fixed on Jesus — so wilt thou conquer the world, overcome Satan, reach the mark, and obtain the prize.

*They looked unto him, and were lightened,
and their faces were not ashamed.*

Psalm 34:15



THE SANCTUARY

In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion.

In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.

He shall set me up upon a rock.

Psalm 27:5

TIMES OF TROUBLE are times of danger. But when the child is in danger, the parent is most watchful and concerned. So, believer, thy heavenly Father pays special attention to thee in the time of thy trouble. He will not only keep His eye on thee, but He will hide thee. Where will He hide thee? In some house, or fortress, or granite rock? No, but in His pavilion. The pavilion is the royal tent, and is placed in the centre of the army, surrounded by the strongest and most courageous soldiers. Here the king dwells, and here, if anywhere, safety is to be found.

Sweet thought this for thee, poor tried one — God will take thee to His own tent! He will make thee safe as Himself! In the pavilion of thy God thou wilt find supplies for thy wants, balm for thy wounds, and solace for thy sorrows. Many a Christian has seen more of God, and enjoyed more of the presence of God, in one week's affliction, than in years beside. In His pavilion God communes with His troubled ones. He opens His heart to them, He lifts up the light of His countenance upon them, and He gives them peace.

Blessed Lord, in all times of my trouble bring me into Thy pavilion. Hide Me in the secret of Thy tabernacle, that I may know the blessedness of having my life hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). My soul, in every time of trouble or of trial repair to Thy God, plead with Him, and let this be Thy prayer: "Keep me as the apple of the eye. Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings," (Ps. 17:8). Then thou wilt have to exclaim with joy, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O Lord! Therefore the sons of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings," (Ps. 36:7).

*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place
in all generations.
Psalm 90:1*



THE BEST COMPANION

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.

I will be with him in trouble.

I will deliver him, and honour him.

Psalm 91:15

BELIEVERS SOMETIMES fancy themselves alone in their troubles, and they feel sad and solitary. Christian friends forget or neglect to call on them, and this grieves them. But if this page meet the eye of such an one, I would say: My friend, grieve not. Refreshing as the presence and spiritual communications of a fellow Christian may be, you can do without them. For surely the presence of the Master is far better than the visits of the servant, and He has said of every tried believer, "*I will be with him in trouble.*" Precious words these!

But mistake not — the Lord's presence can only be realized by faith. The benefit of His presence is received, when the pleasure of His presence is not enjoyed for the want of faith. He never fails to fulfil His promise, though for want of faith we may fail to enjoy it. His presence supports when it does not comfort, and keeps us back from evil when it does not fill us with joy.

Blessed Lord, thou hast ever been with Thy people in all their trials and troubles, and Thou art with every tried believer now. And not only so, but Thou wilt deliver them in six troubles, and in seven Thou

wilt not forsake them! (Job 5:19). We find that Thy grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:9), and as our day, so is our strength (Deut. 33:25). Be especially with us in our present troubles, and not only so, but let us realize and enjoy Thy presence. We want to feel Thy love, to enjoy the light of Thy countenance, and as the result, to glorify Thee in the fires. O Jesus, as Thou wast with the Hebrews in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace (Dan. 3:25), be with us in every fiery trial!

Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Isaiah 43:1-2



PRESENT REPOSE

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.

Isaiah 26:3

ONFIDENCE IN God will keep the mind steady in the wildest storm, and under the heaviest trials. God's covenant character is the repose of the soul — in that we are to trust, on that we are to stay ourselves. And he that believeth that God is gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and in truth, and that He intends to display and illustrate these glorious perfections in his experience, will find his mind calm, and his soul enjoying repose, under all the changing circumstances of time. Taking the eye off creatures, circumstances, and self, and fixing it intently upon God as revealed in Jesus, and as working all things after the counsel of His own will, will bring rest to the soul, and preserve the mind in peace. Let the spirit be but stayed on God as love, and let the heart trust in God's truth, faithfulness, and immutability, and there will be "peace, peace."

But the moment it is taken off the Lord, there will be agitation, fear, and painful perplexity. Like Peter on the water, so long as he kept his eye on Jesus, he was safe. He could tread the waves under his feet. But the moment he began to listen to the winds, and look at the billows, that moment he began to sink (Matt. 14:29-30). Just so it is with us. Let us therefore

seek grace, to trust in the Lord at all times, and stay ourselves upon our God.

Gracious Saviour, Thou didst stretch forth Thine hand to catch sinking Peter. Let Thy hand hold us, and let Thy loving voice cheer and refresh us under all our changing frames and sinking feelings! Underneath us place Thine everlasting arms (Deut. 33:27).

*My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in
sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places; When it
shall hail, coming down on the forest; and
the city shall be low in a low place.*

Isaiah 32:18-19



THE LOVING LOOK

*Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction.
Genesis 29:32*

SO SAID LEAH, when the Lord granted her a son. Barrenness had been her trial, but now the Lord looked upon her, and blessed her. The Lord's look performs wonders. It filled the Egyptians with perplexity and distress, but it brought Israel relief and comfort. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry," (Ps. 34:15).

Sufferer, the eye of God is upon thee. He knows where thou art, what thou art suffering from, and the degree of thy pain and sorrow. "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous," (Job 36:7). Thou canst not be concealed from Him. The eye of His mercy lingers over thee, until the hand of His power is stretched out to deliver thee. His eye affecteth His heart, therefore He sympathizes with thee. He is looking upon thy affliction now, and only waits the fittest time to appear for thy rescue.

Look up to Him, as He is looking down upon thee, and let the eye of thy faith meet the eye of His mercy. Look up through thy tears, for there is eloquence in the tears of His children, and as thou lookest, cry, with David, "Look Thou upon me, and be gracious unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name," (Ps. 119:132). Think how Jesus looked on

backsliding Peter, till He looked Him into penitence and prayer (Luke 22:61-62), and how He looked on dying Stephen, until He looked him into meekness and courage (Acts 7:55-56). The look of Jesus will strengthen thy faith, animate thy hope, inflame thy love, brighten thy evidences, and increase thy courage.

O Jesus, let me daily realize that Thine eye is upon me, that Thou art watching over me to do me good, and that Thy loving eye will preserve me from hidden evils and crafty foes!

*And God looked upon the children of Israel,
and God had respect unto them.*

Exodus 2:25



CHANGELESS FRIENDSHIP

*He shall deliver thee in six troubles,
yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.*

Job 5:19

FRIEND, HAS NOT the Lord often delivered thee? Aged believer, thou canst bear thy testimony to the fact that “the righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles,” (Ps. 34:17). Past deliverances ensure future interpositions. Thy troubles will be successive, but God’s deliverances will be successive too. Seven is the number of perfection, and is designed to teach us that the Lord will deliver us, until deliverance is no longer needed.

Having delivered us when dead in trespasses and sins, having brought us into an experimental acquaintance with Himself, and having set us apart for His glory and praise, is it not ungrateful, is it not very sinful, especially as we have His positive promise to the opposite, if we doubt that He will yet deliver us? With our God there can be no difficulty, for infinite wisdom and omnipotent power prevent it. With our God there can be no lack of love, for His love is from everlasting to everlasting (Ps. 103:17), without variation or the shadow of a turn (James 1:17).

With our God there can be no lack of a reason why He should deliver us, for He has made us His children, and bound up His own glory with our

present and everlasting welfare. The Psalmist points us to one case, as a sample of the whole: “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles,” (Ps. 34:6). So will it be with every praying soul. There will be a last trouble and a final deliverance. At death, the soul will be delivered from sin, Satan, and the world, and at the first resurrection, the body will be delivered from corruption, and so shall we be ever with the Lord.

Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.

2 Corinthians 1:10



THE CERTAIN RESULT

*We know that all things work together for good
to them that love God, to them who are the
called according to his purpose.*

Romans 8:28

WHAT A BLESSED assurance is this! *All things*, whether painful or pleasant, spiritual or temporal, all things are overruled and directed to do us good. They *work together*. They are connected as the links in a chain. As different drugs in one medicine, they mutually act upon and assist each other for *our good*, our present and everlasting welfare — to prevent sin, and deepen our sanctification — to wean from earth, and qualify us for heaven — to exercise our graces, and mortify our lusts — to employ our gifts, and extend our usefulness. Trials lead to triumphs, and conflicts to conquests.

The good Lord purposed to call us by His grace, and according to His purpose He did so. He has shed abroad His love in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, and we love Him in return (Rom. 5:5). Now, as His beloved and loving children, His heart is set upon our best interests, and He so works, by His providence, His word, and His Spirit, as not only to prevent our being injured, but that we shall be really benefitted, by all that happens to us. So that, in reference to every trial, exercise, pain, pleasure, loss, or acquire-

ment, we may say, “This shall work for my good. This will fit me for heaven, and fit me to glorify God more and more.

My soul, never forget, in the dark night of sorrow, desertion, sickness, and pain, that all things are working together for thy good, even when thou art suffering most. The present is connected with the future. Time runs into eternity, and thy present sufferings in Christ’s cause work out for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17). “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with them,” (Isa. 3:10).

*Surely I know that it shall be well with them that
fear God, which fear before him.*

Ecclesiastes 8:12



ENDLESS REST

*There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.
Hebrews 4:9*

HOW SWEET IS rest to the weary! Yet how little rest do some of the Lord's people enjoy here! But the troubled spirit shall rest in the presence and enjoyment of its God, and the poor, wearied, and diseased body shall find rest in the grave. Weariness is limited to time, but our rest will be lasting as eternity. There are no weary heads, or weary limbs, or weary hearts, on the other side of Jordan. The rest of heaven will be the sweeter for the toils of earth. The value of eternal rest will be enhanced by the troubles of time.

Jesus now allows us to rest on His bosom. He will soon bring us to rest in His Father's house. His rest will be glorious — a rest from sin, a rest from suffering, a rest from conflict, a rest from toil, a rest from sorrow — the very rest that Jesus Himself enjoys. We shall not only rest *with* Him, we shall rest *like* Him. How many of earth's wearied ones are resting in His glorious presence now! It will be undisturbed rest. Here the rest of the body is disturbed by dreams, and sometimes by alarms, but there are no troublesome dreams or alarming occurrences there. Thanks be unto God for the rest we now enjoy *in* Christ! Ten thousand thanks to God for the rest we shall soon enjoy *with* Christ!

Wearied one, look away from the cause of thy present suffering, and remember there is a rest remaining for thee. A little while, and thou shalt enter into rest. A little while, and thou shalt see Jesus as He is, be filled with His love, and enjoy uninterrupted rest in His presence. Weariness, languor, and pain are for time. Rest, peace, and pleasure are thy eternal portion.

Ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.
Deuteronomy 12:9



PREPARATION

*Be ye all ready.
Joshua 8:4*

THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD be ready for every event. Provision is made for him, promises are given to him, examples are set before him, and exhortations are delivered to him. The Master's word is, "*Be ready*" — ready to meet, endure, and derive benefit from your troubles; ready to meet thy foes, especially the last enemy. Death will come, but we know not when, where, nor how. Therefore we should be always prepared, having our accounts settled, our work forward, and our affections set on heavenly things — ready for the coming of Jesus.

He will come in like manner as He went into heaven (Acts 1:11). We must *meet* Him, *face* Him, and be *presented* to Him. The appearing of Jesus should be the object of our liveliest hopes, warmest desires, and sweetest anticipations. We should look for the coming of Jesus as the wandering traveller for his *path*, as the Eastern watchman for the morning (Ps. 130:6), as the bride for the expected *bridegroom* (Matt. 25:13), and as the bondman for the morning of *emancipation*.

My brother, let me at parting say to thee, "Be ready, Jesus is coming." Soon, very soon, the cry may be heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him," (Matt. 25:6). Oh, to have our loins girt,

our lamps burning, and our hearts crying out, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!” (Rev. 22:20). In this state we are prepared for labour or for rest, for life or for death, to remain here or depart to be forever with the Lord.

Holy Spirit, daily anoint Thy people, that they, experiencing Thy renewings, may look, long, watch, and pray for the coming of their Lord! Thrice blessed event! May the Lord hasten it, for my soul longs to share in it!

Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.

Matthew 24:44



THE EXCEPTION

*They are not in trouble as other men,
neither are they plagued as other men.*

Psalms 73:5

THE TRIED CHRISTIAN sometimes looks around upon the ungodly, and wonders at God's dealings with them. Judging by sense, he is stumbled, until like Asaph, he repairs to the sanctuary or the word. Yes, how often is it the case that the saint is poor, and the sinner rich — the saint is sickly, and the sinner healthy — the saint is deformed, and the sinner is well shaped — the saint struggles but cannot succeed in temporal things, while the sinner seems to get wealth without difficulty!

How is this? Is there not a providence? Does not God love His people? Yes, but God deals with saints in time in reference to eternity. The present is preparatory to the future. Envy not the sinner, and choose none of his ways. The present is all the pleasant he will have. He has his good things now, and the believer has his evil things. He may write after every day's sinful pleasure, after carnal amusement, and after acquisition of property, "*After this the judgment,*" (Heb. 9:27). The rich man died, and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments. The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22-23). Contrast their end, their eternal portion, and then thou

wilt bless God if He has put thee among His poor, tried, and afflicted people. Dwell not on present appearances, but remember they stand on slippery places, and will soon be cast down into destruction (Ps. 73:18).

Sinner, thy prosperity is thy snare! Thou hast thy best now, and dying out of Christ, all that remains for thee is an eternity of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:42). Flee, oh, flee to Jesus for life and peace!

We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:18



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Smith (1802-1862) was a 19th century English Baptist pastor who became a prolific and much-loved devotional author. Called to the ministry in his mid-20s, he served as pastor of two churches in Cheltenham over a period of 12 years. In 1841 he accepted a call to the New Park Street chapel in London - the church which Charles Spurgeon would later pastor for almost 40 years. Health issues eventually forced him to leave London in 1850, and he eventually returned to Cheltenham to pastor a third church in the area from 1852 until his death. In total, he authored more than 50 books, along with numerous tracts and articles for various Christian periodicals and magazines.

Smith's writings were full of Christ, and he sought to magnify and exalt His precious Saviour in every book. He aimed to not only cultivate a genuine love for the Lord Jesus in the hearts of his readers, but to see such love for Christ manifested in their everyday lives. In the preface to his popular *The Believer's Daily Remembrancer*, he wrote:

"In this little work, I aim to speak in the closet, in the cottage, in the kitchen, and even in the field, to the different classes of the Lord's family; endeavouring to draw them nearer to their God and gracious Father. My desire is to

promote the power of godliness; and these little pieces are written to convince, comfort, and correct; to fan the flame of devotion, and to produce holiness of heart and life...Habitual dependence upon God for all we need, acknowledging the hand of God in all we receive, and walking with God, notwithstanding all that may happen to us below, enter into the very vitals of genuine Christianity; and it is only while we are thus acting that we enjoy peace with God, and walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.”

Most Christian authors would naturally have similar desires. But whereas many are able to speak about the Christian life in theory, Smith had first-hand experience of the truths that he wrote about. In God’s providence, he learnt them by passing through his own fiery trials. Smith’s father died while he was still an infant, and as a young child he was pressed into the workforce to help his mother support the family. As an apprentice and employee, he battled with the opposition that he received from ungodly co-workers. As a father of at least seven children, he saw three of them die at an early age. As a pastor, he experienced the hatred, slander and nastiness that sometimes comes from professing Christians, and he went through more than one bitter church split. Nor was he exempt from health and financial worries either. In addition to all this, Smith endured the normal internal battles against sin that plague every

believer, while also bearing the heavy burden for the souls of others that accompanies a faithful ministry.

Not surprisingly, Smith's writings began to resonate with other readers who were enduring similar trials. Through his pen, they were being comforted with the same comfort that he himself had received from God (2 Cor. 1:4). Before long, Smith's books began to spread throughout England and eventually around the world. Many wrote to him, expressing gratitude for the tremendous help they had received, or explaining how God had used his writings to awaken unbelieving friends and relatives. Hungry souls were being fed, and for a while, his writings were even more popular than those of Charles Spurgeon. Sadly, his works are now largely unknown by most 21st century Christians, but it is hoped that as more of them are reprinted, the Lord will again use them to exalt Christ and bless the souls of His beloved saints.

Further information about Pastor James Smith can be found in his autobiography, *Marvellous Mercy, as Displayed in the Life and Experience of the Author, James Smith of Cheltenham*. The first edition contains a record of his life up until August 1861, and was published prior to his death in December of the following year. In a subsequent printing in 1864, his son Joseph Smith, provided some additional details about Pastor Smith's final months.

Brief Timeline

- 1802 Born in Old Brentford, Middlesex (19th November).
- c.1812 Taken from school to work in a soap factory to help his widowed mother earn an income for the family.
- c.1816 Commenced work as an apprentice fell-monger (tanner and dealer of sheepskins).
- 1819 Conversion (28th February).
- 1820 Publicly baptized (31st March) and received into church membership (2nd April).
- 1824 Marriage to Ann Cook (29th August).
- 1825 Moves to Chertsey for work purposes as his employer's fell-monger business begins to expand (April).
- 1826 Preaches publicly for the first time at Alton from Ps. 9:18 (19th November). It was his 24th birthday. Preaches twice more that same day from Zech. 9:10 and Zech. 13:1.
- 1827 Brentford church sets him apart for the ministry of the word (March), and he begins preaching in various places as needed.
- 1828 Accepts an invitation to preach for a 12 month trial period at Cheltenham, with the possibility of becoming the church's pastor. During this time he faced severe opposition from some in the church, and a number of members decided to leave.

- 1829 Ordained as pastor of Bethel Chapel in Cheltenham (26th May) and the church continues to grow, despite ongoing controversies. Members with hyper-calvinistic and antinomian views become increasingly critical of his ministry and message. In order to divert his mind from these trials, Smith begins to write, print and circulate gospel tracts.
- c.1830 Death of daughter Mercy.
- 1831 Death of 19-month-old daughter Anne after a three day illness (13th Jan.)
- 1833 Death of son Charles.

Comes to believe in the universal offer of the gospel to all lost sinners, and determines to start calling them to repent and believe in the gospel, and offer them the Lord Jesus as Saviour. Previously, he held the view that gospel invitations should only be made to sinners who had been made to feel their need of Christ. He anticipates further opposition from the church as a result.
- 1835 The church situation deteriorates further and he resigns as pastor of Bethel Chapel. A number of members also leave, and he begins preaching among them at a local gallery for the next three months.
- 1836 Becomes pastor of the newly-formed Salem Baptist Chapel in Cheltenham (1st January). Though the original premises could seat 600 people, the congregation numbered more than 1200 within just 2 years and the building had to be enlarged.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

- 1841 Resigns as pastor of Salem Chapel (9th November) and accepts a call to New Park Street Chapel, London. He describes the London church as 'in a very low state, and the congregation very small,' but between 400 and 500 new members would be added to the church during his pastorate.
- 1850 Resigns as pastor of New Park Street Chapel (February) due to ongoing lung and asthma problems. Commences a two year trial at Byrom Street Chapel in Liverpool (August) which only lasts until the end of the year.
- 1851 Invited to oversee the church at Shrewsbury for 12 months (February).
- 1852 Returns to Cheltenham to pastor a church which was meeting in Ebenezer Chapel (February). This church, which had formed in 1843 from previous members of Salem Chapel, was now itself in danger of disbanding. It recovered under Smith's ministry and would soon become Cambray Baptist Church.
- 1861 Suffers a sudden stroke and paralysis (September), which prevents any further work as a preacher or writer.
- 1862 Death at the age of 60 years (15th December)

List of Published Works

- 1836 Parental Solitude
- 1838 Jehovah Revealed as the Object of Faith and Hope
- 1839 Messenger of Mercy, A
- 1840 Minister's Pocket Companion, The
- 1842 Believer's Daily Remembrancer, The (Pastor's Morning Visit)*
- 1845 Book That Will Suit You, The*
Church As It Ought to Be, The
Love of Christ [Set Forth], The*
- 1846 Believer's Daily Remembrancer, The (Pastor's Evening Visit)
Christian's Railway and Steamboat Companion
Way of Salvation Set Forth, The
- 1847 Voice of Mercy in the House of Affliction, The
- 1848 Green Pastures for the Lord's Household
- 1849 Manna in the Wilderness
Sinner's Guide to God and Glory, The
Streams in the Desert
- 1850 Daily Bible Readings for the Lord's Household
Rainbow of the Covenant, The*
Refreshing Dew-Drops
Selection of Spiritual Poetry, A
- 1852 Book That You Want, The
Still Waters*
- 1854 Precious Things From the Everlasting Hills
- 1855 Better Land, The

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Sabbath Readings
Welcome to Jesus

1856 Early and Latter Rain, The
Good Seed for the Lord's Field
Our Heavenly Father
Sacramental Meditations

1857 Bread From Heaven
Christ Alone

1858 Great Comforter, The
Light for Dark Days
Sunny Subjects for All Seasons

1859 Book You Will Like, A
Evening Sacrifice, The
Important Questions
Morning Sacrifice, The
Pearls from the Ocean
Words of Comfort

1860 Fruit From the Tree of Life
Gleams of Grace
Good News for All
Rills from the Rock of Ages

1861 Glad Tidings of Good Things
Pleading Saviour, The

1862 Marvellous Mercy

1863 Believer's Triumph, The

1865 Bright Rays and Reviving Showers

1867 Food for the Soul

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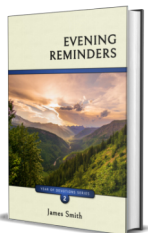


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