

POCKET DEVOTIONS SERIES

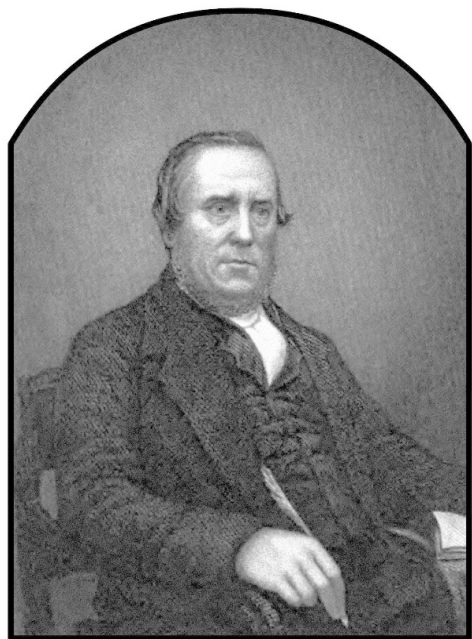
THE BETTER LAND



2 POCKET
DEVOTIONS
SERIES

James Smith

THE BETTER LAND



James Smith,

THE BETTER LAND

or

A BOOK FOR THE AGED

by
James Smith

NEW EDITION



2024
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The Better Land, or A Book for the Aged.
Smith, James (1802-1862)

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

In Ecclesiastes 12, Solomon warned his younger hearers that they would inevitably experience difficult times as they grew older. Advancing years bring a whole host of changes and challenges that are almost inconceivable while we are young. Older men no longer possess the same strength of mind and body as they did in former days. Anxieties and fears can increase as death approaches. And some elderly people find it increasingly difficult just to cope with the normal pressures of everyday life. In this book, Pastor James Smith addresses many of these issues as he provides Biblical help and comfort through these short devotions.

He invites his readers to look back at the Lord's unchanging faithfulness to them throughout their lives. He assures them that the One who has answered their prayers and supplied their needs in times past, will continue to do so as they near the Heavenly City. Yes, the time and manner of their death may be uncertain. They may be filled with many fears and doubts. Their bodies may be wracked with pain. But their God will never forsake them, even in the hour of death. Indeed, He will bring them safely across the Jordan into an eternity that will be far more glorious than they can possibly imagine.

THE BETTER LAND

That time however, has not yet arrived. There is still much that older saints can do in service for their Lord. Therefore, Pastor Smith urges his readers to keep persevering and trusting God, even as their days on earth draw to a close. His devotions will greatly encourage everyone who is nearing the end of their pilgrim journey.

But this book is not just for the elderly. In fact, it contains truths which we all need to hear, regardless of our age. For it reminds us that this world is not our final home. The day will eventually come when each of us must leave behind our family, our friends, and all our possessions, and stand before our Creator. Therefore, it is vital that we all have a proper, eternal perspective now, regardless of our stage in life. We must fix our hope on Heaven and on our Beloved Saviour now, for we do not know the day when we will finally see Him face to face.

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.

Some extra material has also been included in this new edition which may be of interest to the reader.

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

This includes a short biography of Pastor Smith (“About the Author”), 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.

Dear reader, are you ready to enter *The Better Land*? May this new reprint of Pastor Smith’s work help prepare you for that heavenly country, and increase your faith in the One who reigns there - the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE PUBLISHER
December 2024

THE BORDER LAND

The time of my departure is at hand.

2 Timothy 4:6

AGED CHRISTIAN, THY day is far spent, thy journey is nearly ended. The greatest part of the wilderness is behind thee. Thou hast travelled many a weary mile, and hast spent many a sorrowful day. But thou hast not much farther to go. Thou hast not many more days to spend here. Thou art just on the edge of the wilderness, on the borders of the Promised Land. Soon, very soon, thy Lord will send His messenger to call thee home. The year of release is just at hand. Do not, therefore, give way to fear. Do not hang down thy head like a bulrush, but look up, for thy redemption draweth nigh.

Let us talk together a little of the past, the present, and the future, and let us try and comfort one another with God's own precious words.

We have not much time left — let us not waste it. We have not far to go — let us not loiter. We are in the border country — let us expect visits from “THE BETTER LAND.” We are hasting from danger and a country that is doomed. Let us not look back. Every step now brings us sensibly nearer home. Every hour tells, and the last hour will soon be here.

Let us attend to the apostle's admonition, “This I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had

none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness," (1 Cor. 7:29-32).

Anxiety about temporal things does not become us now. The world is to us like an inn, where we lodge tonight, but shall leave it tomorrow.

*The world passeth away; but he that doeth the
will of God abideth forever.*

1 John 2:17



THE REVIEW

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth.

Psalms 71:17

IN EARLY LIFE, God began to instruct us. He taught us the rigid requirements of His holy law, our need of a better righteousness than our own, the importance of an interest in Christ, and the necessity of personal holiness. Under His teaching we left the world, came to Jesus, embraced the atonement, found peace, and commenced walking with God. Many years have passed since that period, many times have we manifested the depravity of our hearts, through many trials and troubles we have been brought, but amidst all, our God has taught us.

Yes, He has taught us our own weakness, the vanity of the world, the insufficiency of earthly things, and the necessity of something superior to what we find here, to satisfy the cravings of our immortal minds. Daily has He taught us our need of Christ, and how to make use of Him. He has taught us by His Word, by His servants, by His providence, and by His Spirit. And it is in consequence of His teaching that we now cleave to Jesus, prefer holiness to sin, heaven to earth, and the presence of God to everything beside.

Blessed, forever blessed be God, for teaching us. For if He had not taught us, we had still been ignorant of ourselves, strangers to Jesus, and alienated from

the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the natural blindness of our minds (Eph. 4:18).

My soul, look back at the many Ebenezers thou hast set up, when helped in difficulty, when supplied in necessity, and when delivered out of trouble. Especially notice this, how thy God has taught thee thy need of His grace, the preciousness of Christ, and the value and veracity of His precious promises. O Thou blessed God and Saviour, I praise, I bless Thee, that Thou hast taught me from my youth!

*Remember all the way which the LORD
thy God hath led thee.
Deuteronomy 8:2*



THE PETITION

*Cast me not off in the time of old age.
Forsake me not when my strength faileth.
Psalm 71:9*

READER, DO YOU not often put up the same petition to your good and gracious God? What could be so dreadful, as to be cast off of God? What should we deprecate so much, as to be forsaken when our strength faileth? But the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make them His people (1 Sam. 12:22).

No, my aged brother, my aged sister, the Lord will never cast thee off. He will never forsake thee. Yet, you may relieve your mind by thus praying, and please your God by thus pleading with Him provided you do not suspect His veracity or doubt His faithfulness. Again the psalmist breathes out his soul, "Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God forsake me not; until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to everyone that is to come," (Ps. 71:18). You see he is panting to be useful. He wanted to bear witness for God, to testify to His power, faithfulness and love.

Blessed be God, He never did forsake an old pilgrim yet! Blessed be God, He never did neglect an old servant yet! Many have deserved it, but He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us

according to our iniquities (Ps. 103:10). He is faithful to His word and cannot lie. He is in one mind and who can turn Him? Let us abide at His throne, hang on His word, plead for His presence, and aim in some feeble way to glorify Him. And then we may dismiss all our fears about His casting us off, or forsaking us. Then we may sing, if we have breath enough left, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge," (Ps. 46:1-7).

This God is our God for ever and ever.

He will be our guide, even unto death.

Psalm 48:14



THE PROSPECT

*As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness:
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*

Psalm 17:15

THE LORD MAY hide His face, or withhold sensible comforts. Providence may appear to frown, and temporal things may run counter to our wishes. Corruption may work powerfully within, and innumerable sins may stare us in the face. Comparing ourselves with what God requires, we may be depressed. And comparing ourselves with what Jesus was, we may not be able to discover more than a very faint resemblance.

But let us look forward. It will not be always as it is now. There will be a change, and a glorious change, soon. Others may have easier circumstances. They may be strangers to the conflicts we endure, and we may wonder at their prosperity. But what pleases them would not satisfy us. Nor must we expect full satisfaction at present. If we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, if we are longing to be like Jesus, if we are pining and praying for the presence of God, there is a glorious prospect before us.

We shall see our God soon. We shall fall asleep for a time. It may be vexed, wearied, and disappointed, but we shall awake in the likeness of Jesus. Our present privileges are great, but our future prospects are unspeakably glorious. “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).

Like Him! O glorious privilege! Awake up in His likeness! O delightful prospect! My poor, afflicted, tried, tempted, and aged friend, lift up thy downcast head. Look from thy present circumstances, for thy redemption draweth nigh. You will soon put off this tabernacle, and be clothed upon with a house which is from heaven.

*Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is
fulness of joy; at thy right hand there
are pleasures for evermore.*

Psalms 16:11



THE PROMISE

*Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs I
will carry you: I have made, and I will bear;
even I will carry, and will deliver you.*

Isaiah 46:4

THE FRIENDS OF your youth are gone, death or distance has stripped you of them. But your God says, “I am He.” I am He that formed you at first, as a creature. I am He that called you by My grace, into fellowship with My Son. I am He that gave you My word, that I would never leave you nor forsake you. And I am in the same mind still. *I am He*, there is no change in Me. You have changed, I have not. You will change, but I shall not. “Even to your old age,” I am the same. “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you.”

Your God will not only carry your burdens, but He will carry you. He laid you like a lamb in His bosom, when He called you by His grace, and He will carry you now you are old. He will never turn away from you from doing of you good, but will rejoice over you to do you good, with His whole heart and with His whole soul. He will bear with you, though you may sometimes feel fretful, peevish, and ungrateful. He will be with you amidst all your infirmities. He will carry you, not only to the Jordan, but over it. He has delivered you in six troubles, and in seven He will not forsake you (Job 5:19).

You should look back to past deliverances, and then face your present difficulty, saying with David, “The Lord, who delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, and out of the mouth of the bear, will deliver me also from this uncircumcised Philistine,” (1 Sam. 17:37). Or with Paul, “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us,” (2 Cor. 1:10). God’s promise is your property. Take it, trust it, plead it, and expect it to be made good. Faithful is He that promised, who also will do it. Even though you believe not, yet He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13).

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. But he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?
Numbers 23:19



THE STRONG STAFF

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Hebrews 13:8

THE AGED PILGRIM, in going down the steep of time, often feels that he needs a strong staff on which to lean. Something that will support his weight, rest his weary limbs, help him along the road, and never give way under him. And what he needs is provided for him.

The immutability of Jesus is a strong staff indeed. Take it, my aged friend, look at it, lean on it, try it. Jesus, thy Saviour, the Christ anointed to save thee, is ever the same.

Jesus Christ is the same now as He was when you first went to Him, full of guilt, full of fears, and expecting He would reject your prayer. You remember how He pitied you, how graciously He smiled upon you, how freely He pardoned you, and how He pledged Himself to you by His Word. He is the same today. His pity is as tender. His heart is as full of love. His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. He has watched over you during the whole journey of life. He has borne with you all through the wilderness. He loves you at this moment, as much as He did when He died for you, or when He first called you by His grace.

There have been many changes in you, but there has been no change in Him. Jesus, thy Jesus, resteth

in His love. Having loved His own, that are in the world, He loveth them unto the end (John 13:1). His eye is upon thee at this moment, and His heart glows with infinite love to thee. He has some gracious purpose to answer by keeping thee here a little longer. It may be in weakness, in pain, or even in privation. But as soon as that purpose is accomplished, He will send for thee, and receive thee unto Himself, that where He is, there you may be also (John 14:3). Rejoice then in this, that amidst all the changes experienced within, or witnessed without thee, “JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER.”

*I am the LORD, I change not.
Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.
Malachi 3:6*



THE EXPOSTULATION

O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Matthew 14:31

MANY AGED CHRISTIANS give way to doubt. They yield to fear. They are more affected by their own feelings than they are by God's Word. They judge more by what passes within them, than they do by what God has said to them. This casts them down, this disquiets them. Peter doubted, because he was on an unnatural element, and in new and trying circumstances. But Jesus reproves him for doubting, and He will reprove thee. "Wherefore dost thou doubt?"

Ah, you say, "My sins are so many and so aggravated." But Jesus promises to pardon them. "My imperfections and infirmities are so great." But Jesus will clothe thee in His righteousness. "My prayers are so broken and so lifeless." But Jesus pleads for thee. "But I seem to be everything I ought not, and nothing at all that I ought." Jesus will completely save thee.

You see your sins, because He has given you light. You feel your imperfections, because He has given you life. You are dissatisfied with yourself, because He has shown you His beauty. You complain of your prayers, because His grace prompts you to desire perfection. You loathe yourself, because He has partly sanctified you, and implanted within you the desire to be exactly like Himself.

Why do you doubt? Has he not promised that He will in no wise cast you out; that where sin abounds, His grace shall much more abound; that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved? (John 6:37; Rom. 5:20; Acts 2:21).

Now, you know you come to Him daily in desire and simple prayer. You know you pant and plead that grace may reign in your heart. You know that you call upon His dear name. Doubt not, then.

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou
disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet
praise him, who is the health of my
countenance, and my God.
Psalm 43:5*



THE LESSON

*I have learned by experience.
Genesis 30:27*

WE EXPECT THAT our aged friends have learned some important lessons. Paul had learned in every state therewith to be content (Php. 4:11), and therefore he exhorted the Lord's people, "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content," (1 Tim. 6:8).

It is a sad sight to see an aged Christian discontented. If God has arranged our lot — if He has promised us all that is necessary for life and godliness — if He has loved us with an everlasting love — if He has united us to Jesus — if He has redeemed us by the blood of His Son — if He has given us His Holy Spirit — if He has pledged His Word, never to leave us or forsake us — if He has assured us, that all things shall work together for our good — that as our day, so shall our strength be — if we have proved Him faithful so many years — if He has borne with our unlovely tempers, untoward manners, and many provocations — and if He is about shortly to introduce us to His kingdom and glory — surely, surely we ought to be contented.

"But our pains!" What are they to the pains of Jesus? What are they to what you deserve? "But our increasing infirmities!" The grace of Jesus will still be sufficient for thee. "But the road is so rough!" Never

mind, the journey now is but short.” Yes, but you do not know what the trials of old age are!” Jesus knows, and He has made full provision for all the trials of old age, as well as for the trials of youth. “But...” Yes, yes, you have not learned to submit to God’s wisdom, and to acquiesce in His will. You have not been thoroughly stripped and humbled. You do not realize that your desert is hell, and that everything short of everlasting burnings is a mercy. You have not learnt to count up your mercies, and to place them against your troubles and trials.

Be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Hebrews 13:5



THE TESTIMONY

*I have been young, and now am old.
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.
Psalm 37:25*

THEY ARE OFTEN tempted to believe that God will forsake them. Their sins of omission stare them in the face. Their want of conformity to God's preceptive will, rises up before them. And their many sins of commission appear set in array against them. In consequence of this, they have feared that God would withdraw, and leave them entirely to themselves. And at times they have been ready to conclude that He has, so that they have cried, "Will the Lord cast off forever, and will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercy?" (Ps. 77:7-9).

Did you never, my aged friend, feel inclined to make use of such language as this? Did your unbelief never lead you to fear? If a Christian, I know it has. But you have lived long enough to see the fallacy of all this. You have never been forsaken yet. No, nor you never will. You have known many believers, you have seen them in deep trials, in strange conflicts, in peculiar difficulties. But did you ever see them forsaken? You have perhaps thought at times, on account of the inconsistencies you have witnessed in

them, that you should not wonder if they were. But what Jeremiah testified of Israel has been true of them. It is a most blessed, a most encouraging passage: "Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God the Lord of hosts, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel," (Jer. 51:5).

As you have never been forsaken yourself, and as you have never seen any of the Lord's people forsaken, however tried and tempted, it is for you to bear your testimony, in order that God may be glorified, and poor tried believers comforted.

*The LORD will not forsake his people for his great
name's sake: because it hath pleased the
LORD to make you his people.
1 Samuel 12:22*



THE PERSUASION

*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that
he is able to keep that which I have committed
unto him against that day.
2 Timothy 1:12*

PAUL KNEW JESUS, and so knew Him, that he had no doubt of His willingness to take care of him, seeing He was able. It is a great thing to know Christ. To know who He is — the Son of God. What He is — the only Saviour. Where He is at the right hand of God. What He has done — provided a full salvation. What He is doing — making intercession for us.

If we know Jesus, we shall commit our souls to Him. We shall put ourselves into His hands, to be washed in His blood, clothed in His righteousness, sanctified by His Spirit, and to be kept by His power, through faith, unto perfect salvation.

My friend, you know Jesus, do you not? His name has been music in your ears, and His glorious work the only foundation of your hope. You have committed your soul into the hands of Jesus, have you not? Then you are safe, and you should be at peace. Jesus never refuses to receive a soul that hastens to Him, and He never fails to keep one that He receives. He has kept you in time past, you are a proof of His faithfulness at present, and He will keep you to the end. He is able to keep you, however weak, whatever

you suffer, though Satan may thrust sore at you, that you may fall. He will keep you, if your eye is fixed on Him, if your heart rests on His word, and you plead with Him in simple prayer to do so.

Though you are weak, Jesus is strong. Though you are shaken with the wind, Jesus is stable as the solid rock. Though you have fears, Jesus is faithful. He will perfect that which concerneth you. His mercy endureth for ever, nor will He forsake the work of His own hands (Ps. 138:8). Place your confidence in Him, though you are a poor, sinful, unworthy creature, and He will keep you in perfect peace (Isa. 26:3).

*Trust ye in the LORD for ever.
For in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.
Isaiah 26:4*



THE AUTUMN

*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall
be fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord
is upright. He is my rock, and there is
no unrighteousness in Him.*

Psalm 92:14-15

LOOK AT THE aged disciple, the devout, the sincere, the humble follower of Jesus. He has entered life's autumn and, like the aged palm in the east with its coronet of rich ripe fruit, stands a witness of God's faithfulness, a proof of the power of grace, and an evidence of the excellency of real religion. The Spirit of God has long dwelt in his heart. The word has wrought effectually in him. And now the ripe fruits of the Spirit appear. There is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law," (Gal. 5:22-23).

But the Christian, when in an advanced state of grace, never admires his own fruit. He sees his defects and mourns over them, and like the full ears of ripe corn, his head is bowed down in humility and self-renunciation before God.

The young professor may rejoice in what he is, in what he has, or in what he has done. Not so the aged saint. Though laden with fruit, he rejoices only in Christ Jesus. If he glories, it is only in the Lord. In his life he has been useful to others. He has fruit in souls

converted to God through his instrumentality — perhaps in children educated in the truth of God, in saints comforted, and backsliders restored. He has not lived in vain. He has left traces of usefulness behind him. But all is renounced when he looks into eternity. He says, “I am a sinner, saved by grace.” I owe everything to mercy. I ascribe everything to Jesus. This is my rejoicing, that my God is my Saviour, and my Saviour is my God. Christ in His Person, Christ in His work, Christ in His glory, is the object of my faith, the subject of my meditation and the theme of my song. In the mellow autumn of grace, CHRIST IS ALL, THE CREATURE IS NOTHING.

*Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are
by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*

Philippians 1:11



THE ORNAMENT

*The hoary head is a crown of glory,
If it be found in the way of righteousness.
Proverbs 16:31*

STRIVE NOT TO hide your grey hairs, my venerable friend. They are no shame to thee. They are rather thy glory, if found in the way of righteousness. If we are found in that way, in which God justifies poor sinners by His grace, it is a choice mercy. And if we are found in that way, in which God glorifies Himself by the service of poor sinners, it is not a less mercy. If we are in God's way, He brought us into it by His grace. And if we have been kept in that way, we have been kept in it by His grace. If we have grown grey in God's service, it is an honour to us. It reflects glory on Him. He acquires a credit by our conduct and constancy. An aged saint, who sought the Lord in youth, who began to serve God almost before he began to serve the world, and who has persevered for forty or fifty years, is an honourable character.

"The beauty of old men," said Solomon, "is the grey head," (Prov. 20:29). And it is a beautiful sight to see the grey-headed Christian happy in God, and walking closely with God — to see him leaning on the faithful promise that has supported him so many years. And while daily endeavouring to lead sinners to Jesus, encouraging those who are seeking, comfort-

ing those who are cast down, and bringing forth from the stores of his own experience matter to stimulate and strengthen those who are ready to halt.

Reader, is thy head hoary? Has it acquired that colour in the service of my Master, Jesus? By some the grey head may be called the flag of death. By others it may be said to be frosted by age. But God styles it “a crown of glory.” The grey head and the sanctified heart, the grey head and the useful life, are beautiful companions. But the grey head and the black heart, the grey head and a life spent in sin, are woeful associates.

*Bless the LORD, O my soul...Who crowneth thee with
loving-kindness and tender mercies.*

Psalms 103:1,4



THE ANTICIPATION

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the
days of my life. And I will dwell in the
house of the LORD forever.
Psalm 23:6*

IN LOOKING BACK, we see that God has been true to His word and faithful to His promise. Not one thing hath failed of all that the Lord our God hath promised. All is come to pass. His grace has been sufficient for us. His strength has been made perfect in our weakness. As our day — and we have had long days, dark days, sharp days, days that have made flesh and blood shake and tremble — but as our day, so has our strength been (1 Kgs 8:56; 2 Cor. 12:9; Deut. 33:25).

Goodness and mercy began with us, they have accompanied us, and now they will not forsake us. We can testify, with the psalmist, that “the Lord is good, ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy, unto all them that call upon Him,” (Ps. 86:5). Can God’s goodness fail? Impossible, for He is “abundant in goodness and truth,” (Ex. 34:6). Can God’s mercy fail? Impossible, for “the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children,” (Ps. 103:17).

God’s mercy found a channel in which to flow to poor sinners in the Person and work of Jesus. Mercy flowed to us when we never sought it nor thought of

it. And shall it fail us now? Oh no, from day to day, even until our dying day, we shall have to say, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning, and great is His faithfulness,” (Lam. 3:22). Sooner may the water fail in the ocean, or light fail in the sun, than that the mercy of God toward His poor people should fail.

His faithful word is, “I will not fail thee nor forsake thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of,” (1 Chr. 28:20). And what is that? “The Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly,” (Ps. 84:11).

*Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me to glory.
Psalm 76:24*



THE CONFIDENCE

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

THREE THINGS conspire to give the aged Christian confidence — the word of God, the Spirit of God, and his past experience of God's faithfulness and love. He has travelled with the Lord so long and so far. The word of God is so plain and so positive, and he has always proved it so true, that he feels there is no ground for fear. Death itself is but the shadow of what it was since Jesus died, for He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10).

The valley may be long, and dark, and damp, but Jesus has passed through it and driven everything injurious from it. Besides which, He will be with us in it. He said to His servant John, "Fear not, I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death," (Rev. 1:18).

No one can open the door of death to a believer but Jesus. And He always does it at the best moment, and in the best manner, for "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," (Ps. 116:15). Nature always shrinks from death, but faith will look to Jesus as the resurrection and the life, and welcome it.

But even when faith is not strong enough to welcome it, it will look to the great Shepherd and expect that His rod will drive away all evil beasts, and that His staff will be lent to the soul to lean upon.

My aged friend, be not frightened at a shadow. Be not afraid to go where Jesus has gone before thee. Look out for His footprints. Listen to hear His voice. Believe, and you shall find His grace made perfect in your weakness. Take the promise, look at it, place confidence in it, “I will never leave thee, I will never, no never, no never forsake thee,” (Heb. 13:5). And then stand at the entrance of the valley and sing, “I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.”

*We are more than conquerors through
him that loved us.
Romans 8:37*



THE JORDAN

*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.
Isaiah 41:10*

 ANAAN WAS A very faint and imperfect type of heaven. It was better than the wilderness, yea, better than Egypt. But imperfect as it was, it was the object of desire and anticipation. How passionately Moses longed to go over Jordan and see it, but was denied. Jordan rolled between the desert and the Promised Land. That must be crossed, before this could be enjoyed. And death, like the Jordan, lies between us and heaven.

We must die. To die is unnatural. It is unpleasant. Yet the Christian has no reason to fear death. No Israelite was ever drowned in this Jordan. Jesus crossed it, and, like Joshua (Josh. 4:1-9), placed twelve stones in the midst of it, on which the feet of His saints may rest. The precious promises are these stones.

Reader, are you afraid of death? As a believer in Jesus, it cannot hurt thee. He has taken away its sting. He has deprived it of all power to injure. The waters may be cold, and deep, and broad, but what then? He says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," (Isa. 43:2). On the other side, the sun always shines, the plants are always in bloom,

the atmosphere is always pure, the inhabitants are all happy.

Fear not death. It is a stingless serpent. The substance is gone. The shadow only is left. He that believeth in Jesus shall never die. Art thou afraid of dying? What! Afraid of falling asleep after the toils, troubles, and sorrows of life's long day? Afraid of dying! What, when Jesus will stand by thy dying pillow, and the angels of His presence wait around to conduct thee to glory!

Place the hand of thy faith on the shoulder of the faithful Jesus, and hang thy whole weight on Him. Go across the Jordan, as the spouse out of the wilderness, **LEANING ON THE BELOVED** (Song 8:5).

Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Romans 14:8



THE PREPARATION

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

Matthew 24:44

LET ALL YOUR worldly affairs be so settled, that you may comfortably leave them at any moment. And let your spiritual concerns be in such a state, that you may have nothing to do but bid friends farewell, and depart to be with Christ.

Daily confess sin over the blood of Christ, that it may be pardoned. Daily renounce thy own righteousness, and appropriate afresh the righteousness of Jesus. Daily seek the renewings of the Holy Spirit, that they may be shed on you abundantly. Daily commit body, soul, and spirit into the hands of Christ, to be saved by His grace, and to be used for His glory. Surrender everything to Jesus daily, without the least reserve. And endeavour to detach thyself as much as possible from everything here below.

Make the Bible thy companion, Jesus the constant object of thy faith, His perfect work the grand subject of thy meditation, and His presence and glory thy chief desire. View God as a Father. Worship God as a Father. Constantly think of God as a Father. Dwell upon His love to thee, His pity for thee, His promises to thee, and His conferring the kingdom upon thee.

Hold communion with the Holy Spirit. Pray for Him. Pray to Him. Think of Him. Expect from Him.

Look to heaven as God's home, as your home. And so live and walk with God, that you may feel that though by death you will change your place, you will not change your company.

You are leaving the world, therefore withdraw your thoughts, desires, and affections from it, as much as you can. You are going to heaven, therefore direct your thoughts, desires, and affections to it as much as possible. So will you be ready to depart whenever God calls you.

*Watch therefore: for ye know not what
hour your Lord doth come.*

Matthew 24:42



THE DESIRE

*Having a desire to depart, and to be with
Christ, which is far better.*

Philippians 1:23

READER, DO YOU at all sympathize with Paul? Do you desire to leave the present scene of conflict, sorrow, and sin? Do you desire to depart from all that gratifies, and all that perplexes, that you may be with Christ? What a delightful assurance it is to the believer, that, "absent from the body, he will be present with the Lord," (2 Cor. 5:8).

To be with Christ, what does not this comprise? Surely one may say, "It is all my salvation and all my desire," (2 Sam. 23:5). To be with Christ, what does not this exclude? All sin, all sadness, all foes, all fears, all claims. Well may Paul say it is "far better." Ah, how much better to be with Christ, than to be with the kindest relatives, the wisest friends, or in the most comfortable circumstances this world can furnish! To be with Christ, how far preferable to our present lot, where we are surrounded by foes, annoyed by temptations, perplexed with disappointments, and made wretched by sins! To be with Christ, that is to be perfectly holy, perfectly happy, and forever satisfied!

Now, we mourn His absence, sigh for His presence, and would give all we possess at times for one hour's heart-melting communion with Him.

Then, we shall be always with Him, exactly like Him, and forever praising Him. Better, surely it is infinitely better, to be where Jesus is, to be with Jesus, than to be here where there is so much sin, so many dangers, such briers and thorns, such disease and death.

My soul, seek such large communications of grace from God, such fellowship with the Holy Spirit, that thou mayest rise above all thy doubts, fears, carnality, and fleshly attachments. And say right heartily with the apostle, “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better,” — yea, which is best of all.

*We are willing rather to be absent from the body,
and to be present with the Lord.
2 Corinthians 5:8*



THE BETTER COUNTRY

They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

Hebrews 11:13-14

 ANAAN WAS THE BETTER country to the Jew, but heaven is the better country to the Christian. And truly it must be better than this. There are no thorns and briers there. There is neither death nor barren land there. There are no plagues or famines there. There are no wants or woes there. There is neither sin, disease or death there.

In that country the atmosphere is serene and healthy. The views are clear and enchanting. The sun never goes down, for there is no night there. Ah, it is a better country, if we think of the holiness of its inhabitants, the plenitude of its stores, and the immutable security thrown around it. There is permanent joy, untiring activity, and the perpetual presence of God. There are no winds of error there. There are no storms of persecution there. There are no sighs, groans, or sorrows there.

Aged Christian, this is the country thou hast been seeking, and thou art now come to the margin of it. Soon, very soon, thou wilt be called to take possession of it, and then thou wilt leave all that is painful behind thee. There are no weary limbs, no aching bones, no unstrung nerves, no long tedious nights

there. No, no, all is health, ease, light, peace, and pleasure there.

It is, indeed, THE BETTER LAND, the land which the Lord our God hath espied for us, and which we shall soon pass over Jordan to possess it. Millions of our brethren, and some of our dear natural relatives, are there before us. Others are on the road, and will follow if they do not overtake us. Best of all, Jesus is there. It is His country. It is called EMMANUEL'S LAND. Home of Jesus! My heart sighs for thee. O, to enter into that better country!

*If they had been mindful of that country from whence
they came out, they might have had opportunity to
have returned: but now they desire a better
country, that is, an heavenly.
Hebrews 11:15-16*



THE DEPARTURE

The time of my departure is at hand.

2 Timothy 4:6

AGED BELIEVER, THE time of thy departure will soon come. Let not thy mind be exercised as to *where* thou shalt die, *when* thou shalt die, or *how* thou shalt die. These are all minor matters, and ought not to affect thee. Simply look at death as Jesus did, as we read, “Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father,” (John 13:1).

Why shouldst thou regret to leave a world like this, where sin, sorrow, pain, grief, disappointment and anxiety meet thee at every turn? Or why be reluctant to go home, to go to thy Father? Dost thou not want to see His face, to enjoy His society, to be perfectly happy in His presence?

What did I hear thee say, “If I should be mistaken! If I should presume!” Mistaken! How can you be mistaken? Do you not renounce all hope in yourself, all dependence on your duties, and do you not trust on Christ alone? Have you not sought His face, relied on His word, trusted in His blood? Mistaken! Why, if you are not right, what will make you so? Do you say, “My sins, my imperfections, my infirmities.” Knowest thou not, that sins confessed, imperfections deplored, infirmities mourned over, if accompanied

with faith in Jesus, never kept a soul out of heaven yet, and never will.

“Presume,” didst thou say! What? Is it presumption to believe thy Saviour? Is it presumption to take God at His word, and give Him credit for speaking truth? “Presumption!” It is presumption to doubt, when God has spoken so plainly. It is presumption to fear, when God has spoken so positively. It is presumption to want something else to assure thee, when God has said, “He that believeth hath everlasting life,” (John 6:47). And to you, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and THOU SHALT BE SAVED,” (Acts 16:31).

*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in
peace, according to thy Word.*

Luke 2:29



THE REST

Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.

Revelation 14:13

THE BETTER LAND is the land of rest for the weary, and of sweet repose to the troubled. Here, we are often tossed with tempests and not comforted, or toil on in weariness, discouragement, and sadness. But “there remaineth a rest for the people of God,” (Heb. 4:9) and a glorious rest it is. For a time, the poor body will rest in the grave, and the disembodied spirit will rest in the presence of Jesus.

My aged friend, thy labour in carrying thy cross has been wearying, thy labour for the cause of Jesus has been exhausting, and the inward conflict has added greatly to the trouble of thy spirit. But now thou shalt rest. Rest from all temptation. No more trials of faith, patience and perseverance. No more solicitations to sin against God, grieve the Holy Spirit, and dishonour the cause dear to thy heart. No more painful afflictions, either personal or relative, of mind or body. No more self-denying duties, nor crucifying of the old man, or mortifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts. All field labour, all outdoor work, is done. No more exposure to storms and tempests, to burning suns or pinching frosts, nor

more bleak winds nor pelting showers. “The winter is past,” (Song. 2:11). These things are over and gone.

Rest — O how sweet is rest to the weary! Rest — O how delightful the sound to the exhausted traveller! Rest — O how pleasant to the poor, tired, and afflicted believer.

No more wearisome nights are appointed for thee now. No long, almost endless, days of strong pain remain for thee now. No need now to wish for the wings of a dove, that thou mayest flee away and be at rest. Thou shalt rest, and rest forever. Thy rest will be sweeter than an angel’s. It will be sweet as the rest of Jesus, when He ascended from the tree of agony, from the field of blood.

*Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest,
because it is polluted.*

Micah 2:10



THE INHERITANCE

*An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that
fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are
kept by the power of God through faith unto
salvation, ready to be revealed.*

1 Peter 1:4

HEAVEN IS CALLED an inheritance, because it comes to us by heirship. Being born of the Spirit, we are all the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17).

What a glorious inheritance must this be. Meditate upon it, O my soul! It is incorruptible. It will endure forever. No part of it is subject to decay. It is undefiled. No one can acquire it dishonestly. No one can soil it by sin. It fadeth not away. Its glory is ever new.

The plants on that inheritance know no winter. The sun never goes down. It is always in full perfection. The noblest production of God's power, it will stand out in bold relief from His other works, as the paragon of excellence. It is the portion of His children, the dwelling-place of the Lamb and His glorified bride, the reward given to Jesus, for His agonies and death. There the Lord God will dwell among His people. The tabernacle of God will be with men. But description is impossible, for the powers of conception fail. "Eye hath not seen, ear

hath not heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love Him,” (1 Cor. 2:9).

However great our sufferings here, and they may be exceedingly great, yet when the apostle compares them with this inheritance, he says, “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). What, O what, will that glory be! We must possess it to know it. We must be in it, adequately to speak or write of it.

Tried Christian, however poor now, however tried now, thou art heir to an eternal inheritance, which comprises the unsearchable riches of Christ. Therefore, suffer patiently, and hope to the end!

*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us
meet to be partakers of the inheritance
of the saints in light.
Colossians 1:12*



THE CITY

*God is not ashamed to be called their God,
for he hath prepared for them a city.*

Hebrews 11:16

WONDROUS FACT, THAT poor, depraved, and sinful as we are, God is not ashamed of us! By the faith which He has given us, we “come to the mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem,” (Heb. 12:22) and consider this our home. As Paul says, “Jerusalem which is above is free, and she is the mother of us all,” (Gal. 4:26). Jesus calls it, “the city of My God,” (Rev. 3:12). John in vision saw “the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,” to be the abode of the saints, and the dwelling-place of God (Rev. 21:12).

Such a city, for costly materials, excellent workmanship, vast extent, perfect purity, and for the health and happiness of the inhabitants, was never known. No sin, no sorrow, no tears, no disease there. For “He that sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new,’” (Rev. 21:5). On that city the glory of God rests forever, and there the Lamb for ever dwells. Here we shall find every accommodation. The saints will be connected in bonds of holy citizenship. They will enjoy perfect satisfaction, and be elevated to the highest honour. This city was founded before time. It is even now preparing for our reception. It will be

stored with all that can gratify and delight us, and we shall possess and enjoy it forever.

How wonderful, that poor, mean, and vile as we are, the infinitely great and glorious Jehovah should not be ashamed to be called our God, but that He should prepare for us a city, and such a city! How good, how gracious, how deep God's thoughts of us must have been! Well may David say, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them," (Ps. 139:17). Blessed be God for thinking of us, providing for us, and revealing to us such things. May we be daily preparing to pass over Jordan and possess them.

*Our conversation, or citizenship, is in heaven, from
whence also we look for the Saviour,
the Lord Jesus Christ.
Philippians 3:20*



THE HOME

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God,
believe also in me. In my Father's house are many
mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.*

I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:1-2

HOW FAMILIAR with heaven! How well acquainted with that "BETTER LAND" must Jesus be! He calls it "MY FATHER'S HOUSE." Sweet view of our eternal residence this!

Dying is but going home, going home to our Father, going to our Father's house. And shall we fear this? Fear it! Can we do other than desire it? Do we not wish to go home and see our Father? We shall not be strangers there. So many of our brethren are gone home before us. And if they were not, how can we feel strange where Jesus is!

"I leave the world," said Jesus, "and go unto the Father," (John 16:28). Such should be our language, in the prospect of death. O, that with child-like simplicity, we could receive into our minds the testimony of God's word! O that we could view death and heaven just as the Scriptures represent them! Where would our doubts and fears be then? What would become of our reluctance to leave the world then? Then, if we spake of departed relatives, who died in the faith of Jesus, we should use similar language to that of Judah before Joseph in reference to Benjamin, "The young-

est is this day with our Father,” (Gen. 42:23). We should no longer talk of losing friends or relatives. Oh no! We should speak of them as being in our Father’s house, or of being with our Father.

Is God my Father? Yes, assuredly, if I believe in Jesus, for “ye are all the sons of God, by faith in Christ Jesus,” (Gal. 3:26). Is God my Father? Unquestionably He is, if I love the Lord’s people, for “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,” (1 John 3:14). My soul, I charge thee, in future to look to heaven, simply as thy Father’s house!

For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5:1



THE HABITATION

My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.

Isaiah 32:18

HERE MANY OF the Lord's people have but a cottage, some a mere hovel, and some have been obliged to hide themselves from persecution in dens and caves of the earth. How many wants are felt, wishes indulged, and desires remain ungratified below. But in heaven, the poorest saint will have a mansion, a magnificent dwelling-place, in comparison with which the imperial palaces of earth will look poor and mean. The dignity of our nature, when raised to the exact resemblance of Jesus, will be consulted, and no wish for an alteration will ever arise. No desire for a change will ever be felt.

Look around thee, aged Christian, at thy inconveniences, at the many causes of discomfort. They will soon be left behind thee, and thou wilt inhabit a mansion prepared by Jesus. Look at all thy comforts, at the provision made to satisfy thee. And then look up, and remember you will soon be in a mansion — a mansion to which the most splendid of earthly palaces will bear no more resemblance than the light of the glow-worm at evening does to the light of the sun at noon.

Blessed, thrice blessed Jesus, what love is Thine! Not only to die for our sins, quicken our souls, and

make us happy in time, but to go and prepare a mansion for us — a mansion in Thy Father's house!

Believer, no more complain of thy lot. No more think thy trials heavy, or thy privations great. It is but a little while, and thy beloved Lord will call to thee, saying, "Come up hither, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," (Matt. 25:21). What joy is that! What tongue can tell, what heart can conceive, what the joy of the Lord is! But, however pure its nature, however exquisite its sweetness, however vast its degree, it will be ours, and ours very soon. Joy of Jesus! Thou art my portion after death, and then forever!

*He led them forth by the right way,
that they might go to a city of habitation.*

Psalm 107:7



THE WHITE ROBES

I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

Revelation 7:9

HERE WE ARE often clad in sable, and called to mourn and weep. But “in the better land” we shall be clothed in white robes, and carry branches of palm in our hands. The white robe indicates *acquittal* from all charges. Here we have many things laid to our charge. Satan and our consciences often accuse us, but there we shall not only be justified from all things, but our very garments will witness that we are faultless before the throne of God.

The white robe indicates *victory*, and then we shall have gained the final victory over the great red dragon, that old serpent, the devil, who deceiveth the whole world. We shall have conquered every inbred lust and every fleshly principle. The victory will be complete and final. The shield will be hung up in the hall of glory, and the arms forever grounded at the feet of our all-conquering King. The last enemy, Death, will be destroyed then. The white robes indicate *purity* too, and those who wear them are purified from every stain. They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb

(Rev. 7:14). Jesus has purified and cleansed them with the washing of water by the word, and they are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. 5:26-27).

The white robes are the *wedding robes*, and being clothed in them shows that the bride has made herself ready, and is waiting for the nuptial ceremony. In robes of snowy white, will Jesus wed His Church. The white robes also are the emblem of praise, and *praise* will be the constant and pleasing employment of our souls forever. The heart, like a crystal fountain, will send forth streams of gratitude, love, adoration, and praise before the throne of God and the Lamb forever.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

Revelation 3:4



THE CROWN

*In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown
of glory, and for a diadem of beauty,
unto the residue of His people.
Isaiah 28:5*

EVERYTHING “in the better land” is in harmony. If we have an inheritance, it contains a city; if a city, a mansion; if a mansion, white robes; and if white robes, a crown. Not a crown of myrtle, or laurel, or bay, like those awarded in the Grecian games, but a diadem, a gemmed crown. Their crown is called “a crown of *righteousness*,” (2 Tim. 4:8) because the righteousness of Jesus purchased it, and being graciously promised to the overcomer, God in righteousness confers it. It is called “a crown of *life*,” (James 1:12). It will be the crown of an endless existence — that which sheds lustre and glory upon it. It is promised to all who patiently endure, and perseveringly overcome the temptations of the present state. It is called also “a crown of *glory*,” — “when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away,” (1 Pet. 5:4). Men strive for a corruptible crown, but we an “*incorruptible*,” (1 Cor. 9:25).

Never were such crowns seen, as those which Jesus will place on the heads of His people. And they, as if they felt unworthy to wear them, will, in the ardour of their devotion, cast them at His feet, as if

crowns of glory were alone fit to form a pavement for the feet of the Lamb to walk on (Rev. 4:10). What will it be to wear a crown of righteousness, a crown of life, a crown of glory, an incorruptible crown? We must enjoy it, to know it. And blessed be God, through free and sovereign grace, we hope to finish the good fight, to endure temptations and to fill up the character assigned us, and then receive from the hands — the once nail-pierced hands of Jesus — our crown, and wear it to His praise forever. The circlets of righteousness, life, and glory, will forever adorn those brows, which were not ashamed to confess Christ, and help forward His cause on earth.

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



THE SONG

*And they sung a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy,
for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God
By thy blood, out of every kindred, and
tongue, and people, and nation.*

Revelation 5:9

THEY SANG A new song before the throne. It is always new, because accompanied with new joys, arising from new thoughts and new views of Jesus. It is pleasant to sing of Jesus, and to sing to Jesus now. But what will it be above? Here, want of knowledge, or want of voice, or want of suitable feelings, often prevent our singing, or enjoying what we sing. But there the knowledge will be perfect, the voice will be sweet, and the heart will be always in tune.

Our recollections of the past, what we were, where we were, what we deserved, and what we were doomed to suffer, and what Jesus did for us, suffered for us, and conferred on us, will fill us with lively and everlasting gratitude. And then the presence of Jesus, the glories of Jesus, and the communications made by Jesus, will keep that gratitude alive and vigorous forever.

Aged Christian, Jesus loves to hear thy tremulous voice sing His praises now. Do not give over singing if thou canst raise a note, but continue to praise His dear and ever-blessed Name. O that we praised Him

more! O that our hearts were always in tune to praise Him! It is not so much the voice, as the heart that is inharmonious. But let us rejoice in this, that we have an eternity before us, in which we shall forever praise and bless our Saviour's dear and adorable name. There, in the city of saints, in the mansion of glory, in our Father's house, in that "BETTER LAND," we shall all unite to praise the Father, for His free, sovereign, and glorious grace — the Son, for His precious blood, perfect righteousness, and prevalent intercession — and the Holy Spirit, for His quickening, comforting, and sanctifying operations.

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 1:5-6



THE SERVICE

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

Revelation 7:15

IT WILL BE temple-service in “THE BETTER LAND,” becoming the dignity and purity of our priestly character. Here we serve God, but how imperfectly, how fitfully, how unbecoming His dignity and glory! Our weakness is so great, our interruptions are so many, and the sin that easily besets us is so powerful, that we feel ashamed of our best services. In looking back upon life, now we are arrived at its evening, how little we have done for God, and how imperfect is all we have done. We feel ashamed of it. We are sorry we have done so little, and done that little so badly.

And now, compassed with infirmities, waiting for our dismissal, what can we do? Satan whispers, “*You are too old to be useful.*” But not so, we may do something still. We may speak for Jesus to those who visit us. We may write a line occasionally to those who do not, with a view to honour His dear name. We can suffer patiently, in order to glorify Jesus. We may seek grace, that by our pains and weakness, by our prayers and praises, by our patience and perseverance, by our watching and waiting, we may glorify Him. And soon, very soon, we shall be raised, where

we shall serve Him with gladness and great joy, without weariness or interruption, without infirmity or defect.

How delightful is the thought, that we shall still serve our God, that we shall still be employed by and for Jesus! Much of our happiness here has arisen from our service, for we have found that “in keeping His commandments there is a great reward” (Ps. 19:11), and much of our happiness above will doubtless arise from our service. As to the nature of that service we are not informed, nor is it necessary for us to know, for we shall be willing to do anything, or be anything, for Jesus.

*And there shall be no more curse, but the throne
of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and
his servants shall serve him.*

Revelation 22:3



THE OBJECT

*Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.
They shall behold the land that is very far off.
Isaiah 33:17*

FEW THINGS TRY the true Christian more than his want of the presence of Christ. If we can but realize that Jesus is with us, if His love is shed abroad in our hearts, and the light of His countenance shines upon us, we are happy and all is well. But often, very often, and for long seasons together, we have to walk by faith and not by sight — believing when we do not see, when we do not feel, when we do not enjoy.

Jesus has won our love. He has taken away our hearts so that, if we do not enjoy Him, we are not satisfied with anything. Consequently, one of the great attractions of the better land is, that there we “shall see the King in His beauty.” “We shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2), “and so shall we ever be with the Lord,” (1 Thess. 4:17).

What will the first sight of Jesus be! What joy, what unutterable pleasure will it impart! Blessed be God, there will never be a last sight of Him! Suppose such a thing! Why it would silence the harps of angels, and stop the songs of saints. Heaven would be clothed with sackcloth, and the only sound heard within its crystal walls would be weeping, wailing, and indescribable sounds of woe.

To see Jesus for the last time! O terrible thought! But it cannot be. Through millions of ages we shall gaze on His beauties, and eternity will be occupied in admiring, adoring, and enjoying His infinite glories. Yes, Jesus will be the object that will fix the eye, nourish the heart, and tune the tongue forever. I shall see Him, whose head was crowned with thorns, whose face was so marred more than any man's, whose heart was broken by extreme agony and pain. But how different then — crowned with glory, robed in light, and infinitely happy.

*They shall see his face, and his name shall
be in their foreheads.
Revelation 22:4*



THE CONTRAST

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

Romans 8:18

LOOK AT MANY of the Lord's people now. With sickly bodies, they groan, being burdened. With pressing wants, they sigh for relief. Tormented by inbred sin, they weep and long to be free. Harassed by Satan, they pant for deliverance. They hunger, they thirst, they suffer, they mourn, they pray, they doubt, they fear, they hope, they strive, they struggle, they pass through great tribulation. Every day is more or less a day of trial. And what with family troubles, business troubles, church troubles, and soul troubles, they are ready to exclaim, "I loathe it, I loathe it, I would not live always," (Job 7:16).

When you have taken a full view of them as sufferers, as sojourners, as cross-bearers, passing over the desert, then look up and see what and where they are now. They "are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of

waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,” (Rev. 7:15-17).

How is it possible for the contrast to be more complete, between the present and future state, of many of the Lord’s poor tried people? Now, the eye of carnal reason would say, “They are of all men most miserable,” (1 Cor. 15:9). Then, everyone will acknowledge they are of all men most happy, most blessed! Look away then, my brother, from all that tries thee, and pains thee, and grieves thy heart. And look forward to the period when thou shalt be before God’s throne, the companion of the Lamb and His glorified and happy company.

*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,
worketh for us a far more exceeding
and eternal weight of glory.
2 Corinthians 4:17*



THE INVITATION

*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand,
Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom
prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

Matthew 25:34

WHAT A GLORIOUS privilege will this be! Blessed of His Father! Yes, all whom the Father has blessed with divine instruction, with an interest in His own glorious Person, and with His Holy Spirit to prepare them for glory. Blessed? Yes, the Father blessed them with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. To them the Father, in His good pleasure, gave the kingdom. And they by His word and ordinances, by His Spirit and His providences, had been preparing for the kingdom. And now Jesus, as the King of kings and Lord of lords, invites them to come and take possession of the kingdom.

It is a state, in which Jesus will reign, from which Satan will be expelled, into which sin, or sorrow, or suffering, can never enter. It is a state, in which holiness is perfect, happiness is complete, and everlasting honours are conferred. It is a state in which we shall always see the King's face, enjoy the King's presence, and rejoice in the King's favour. O how different to the present!

Wearied fellow-traveller, look forward and anticipate this glorious event. How glorious the

Person, how great the dignity, how sweet the voice, of Him that gives the invitation! How rich the grace, how free the love, how sovereign the mercy, that confers such honour, such happiness on us! Well may we exclaim, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and listeth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory," (1 Sam. 2:8).

Are you fearful, feeble, timid, and prone to wander from the Lord? Fear not. Feed His hungry, clothe His naked, visit His sick. In a word, show kindness to His tried ones for His sake, and soon, perhaps very soon, you will hear Him say, "Come, inherit the kingdom."

*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good
pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

Luke 12:32



THE CONCLUSION

*The harvest is past, the summer is ended,
and we are not saved.*

Jeremiah 8:20

HITHERTO WE have had the aged Christian for our companion. But this book may be read by an aged sinner, an old unbeliever. Ah, there are many such, some of whom are uttering these words.

“Harvest past!” What, did you sleep in harvest? “Summer ended!” What, have you squandered life away? “We are not saved!” What, have you neglected the one thing needful? Poor old man! Poor old woman! What folly you have been guilty of. What a sin you have perpetrated. You have lived, only to insult God. You have lived, so as to deplore the course you have pursued to all eternity.

But, yet there is hope. If harvest is past, if summer is ended, life is not extinct, and while there is life there is hope. You may yet be saved. But there is not a moment to be lost. The blood of Jesus will wash out the sins of threescore years and ten. The righteousness of Jesus will justify a sinner trembling on the borders of the grave. The Spirit of God can take away the stony heart, and give the heart of flesh, even at the eleventh hour.

But immediate application is necessary. Cry mightily to God, that He would give you His Holy

Spirit. Receive into thy heart God's message of mercy. Withdraw thy dependence from all, and everything, within thee and without thee, and depend on Christ alone.

Jesus still invites thee to come to Him. O linger not! Jesus is yet willing to receive you. O delay not one moment! Yield not to discouragement. Say not, "There is no hope." There is! There is! There is hope, there is mercy for thee, if thou seekest it. Seek it at once. Seek and thou shalt find. Flee, flee, flee to Jesus! This moment flee! For heaven's sake, for thy soul's sake, flee!

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one
that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth;
and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened*

Luke 11:9-10



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.

THE BETTER LAND

- 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

THE BETTER LAND

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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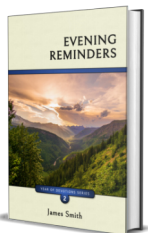


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