

TESTIMONY

FOR

THE CHURCH.

NO. 17.

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THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

In order to fully realize the value of salvation, it is necessary to understand what it cost. In consequence of our limited ideas of the sufferings of Christ, we place a low estimate upon the great work of the atonement. The glorious plan of man's salvation was brought about through the infinite love of God the Father. In this divine plan is seen the most marvelous manifestation of the love of God to the fallen race. Such love as is manifested in the gift of God's beloved Son amazed the holy angels. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This Saviour was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. He possessed divine majesty, perfection and excellence. He was equal with God. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Christ consented to die in man's stead that man, by a life of obedience, might escape the penalty of

the transgression of the law of God. The death of Christ did not make the law of God of none effect. His death did not slay the law, lessen its holy claims, nor detract from its sacred dignity. The death of Christ proclaimed the justice and perpetuity of his Father's law in punishing the transgressor, in that he consented to suffer the penalty of the law himself, in order to save fallen man from its curse. The death of God's beloved Son on the cross shows the immutability of the law of God. His death magnified the law and made it honorable, and gave evidence to man of its changeless character. From his own divine lips is heard, "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill." The death of Christ justified the claims of the law.

In Christ was united the human and the divine. His mission was to reconcile God to man, and man to God; to unite the finite with the infinite. This was the only way in which fallen men could be exalted through the merits of the blood of Christ, to be partakers of the divine nature. Taking human nature, fitted Christ to understand the nature of man's trials, and his sorrows, and all the temptations wherewith he is beset. Angels who were unacquainted with sin could not sympathize with man in his peculiar trials. Christ condescended to take man's nature. He was tempted in all points like as we, that he might know how to succor all who should be tempted.

As the human was upon him, he felt his need of strength from his Father. He had select places of prayer. He loved the solitude of the mountain where to hold communion with his Fa-

ther in Heaven. In this exercise, his holy, human soul was strengthened for the duties and trials of the day. Our Saviour identifies himself with our needs and weaknesses, in that he became a suppliant, a nightly petitioner, seeking from his Father fresh supplies of strength, to come forth invigorated and refreshed, braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. He is a brother in our infirmities, but not possessing like passions. As the sinless One his nature recoiled from evil. He endured struggles, and torture of soul, in a world of sin. His humanity made prayer a necessity, and privilege. He required all the stronger divine support and comfort which his Father was ready to impart to his Son, who had left the joys of Heaven, chose his home, for the benefit of man, in a cold and thankless world. Christ found comfort and joy in communion with his Father. Here he could unburden his sorrows that were crushing him. He was a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

Through the day he labored earnestly to do good to others, to save men from destruction. He healed the sick, he comforted the mournful, and brought cheerfulness and hope to the despairing. He brought the dead to life. After his work was finished for the day, he went forth, evening after evening, away from the confusion of the city, and his form was bowed in some retired grove, in supplication to his Father. At times the bright beams of the moon shone upon his bowed form. And then again the clouds and darkness shut away all light. The dew and frost of night rested upon his head and beard while in the attitude of a suppliant. He frequently con-

tinued his petitions through the entire night. He is our example. If we could remember this, and imitate the pattern, we should be much stronger in God.

If the Saviour of men, with his divine strength, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals, feel the necessity of prayer, — fervent, constant, prayer? When Christ was the most fiercely beset by temptation, he ate nothing. He committed himself to God, and through earnest prayer, and perfect submission to the will of his Father, came off conqueror.

Those who profess the truth for these last days, above every other class who take the name of Christian, should imitate the great Exemplar in prayer. “It is necessary for the disciple to follow his Master, and enough for the servant to be as his Lord.” Our tables are frequently spread with luxuries not healthful nor necessary, because we love these things more than we love self-denial, freedom from disease, and a sound mind. Jesus sought earnestly for strength from his Father. This he considered, even for himself, the divine Son of God, of more value than to sit at the most luxurious table. He has given us evidence that prayer was essential in order to receive strength to contend with the powers of darkness, and to do the work allotted us to perform. Our own strength is weakness, but the strength which God gives is mighty, and will bring off every one who obtains it, more than conqueror.

As the Son of God in the garden of Gethsemane bowed in the attitude of prayer, the agony of his spirit forced from his pores sweat like great drops of blood. It was here that the horror of

great darkness surrounded him. The sins of the world were upon him. He was suffering in man's stead as a transgressor of his Father's law. Here was the scene of temptation. The divine light of God was receding from his vision, and he was passing into the hands of the powers of darkness. In the agony of his soul-anguish, he lay prostrate on the cold earth. He was realizing his Father's frown. The cup of suffering, Christ had taken from the lips of guilty man and proposed to drink it himself, and in its place, give to man the cup of blessing. The wrath that would have fallen upon man, was now falling upon Christ. It was here the mysterious cup trembled in his hand.

Jesus had often resorted to Gethsemane with his disciples for meditation and prayer. They were all well acquainted with this sacred retreat. Even Judas knew where to lead the murderous throng, that he might betray Jesus into their hands. Never before had the Saviour visited the spot with a heart so full of sorrow. It was not bodily suffering from which the Son of God shrank, and which wrung from his lips, in the presence of his disciples, these mournful words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." "Tarry ye here," said he, "and watch with me."

He went a little distance from his disciples, leaving them within hearing of his voice, and fell on his face, and prayed. His soul was agonized, and he plead, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The sins of a lost world were upon him, and overwhelmed him. It was a sense of his Father's frown, in consequence of sin, which rent the heart of the Son of God with such pierc-

ing agony, and forced the great blood-drops from his brow down his pale cheeks, falling to the ground, and moistening the earth.

He rose from his prostrate position, and came to his disciples, and found them asleep. He said unto Peter, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." At the most important time, the disciples were found sleeping—at the time when Jesus had made a special request for them to watch with him. He knew that severe conflicts and terrible temptations were before his disciples. He took them with him, that they might be a strength to him, and that the events they should witness that night, and the lessons of instruction they should receive, might be indelibly printed upon their memories. This was necessary, that their faith might not fail, but be strengthened for the test just before them.

But instead of watching with Christ, they were burdened with sorrow, and fell asleep. Even the ardent Peter was asleep, who, only a few hours before, had declared that he would suffer, and, if need be, die for his Lord. At the most critical moment, when the Son of God was in need of their sympathy and heartfelt prayers, they were found asleep. They lost much by thus sleeping. Our Saviour designed to fortify them for the severe test of their faith to which they would soon be subjected. If they had spent the mournful period in watching with the dear Saviour, and in prayer to God, Peter would not have been left to his own feeble strength to have denied his Lord in the time of trial.

The Son of God went away the second time, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." And again he came to his disciples, and found them sleeping. Their eyes were heavy. By these sleeping disciples is represented a sleeping church when the day of God's visitation is nigh. It is a time of clouds and thick darkness, when to be found asleep is most perilous.

Jesus has warned: "Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." The church of God is required to fulfill her night watch, however perilous, whether long or short. Sorrow is no excuse for her to be less watchful. Tribulation should not lead to carelessness, but to double vigilance. Christ has directed the church by his own example to the Source of their strength in times of need, distress, and peril. The attitude of watching is to designate the church as God's people indeed. By this sign the waiting ones are distinguished from the world, and show that they are pilgrims and strangers upon the earth.

The Saviour turned sadly the second time from his sleeping disciples, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to them, and said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." How cruel for the disciples to permit sleep to close their eyes and slumber to chain their senses, while their divine Lord was enduring such inexpressible mental anguish. If they had remained watching, they

would not have lost their faith as they beheld the Son of God dying upon the cross. This important night-watch should have been signalized by noble mental struggles and prayers, which would have brought them strength to witness the unspeakable agony of the Son of God. It would have prepared them, as they should behold his sufferings upon the cross, to understand something of the nature of the overpowering anguish which he endured in the garden of Gethsemane. And they would have been better able to recall the words he had spoken to them in reference to his sufferings, death, and resurrection; and amid the gloom of that terrible, trying hour, some rays of hope would have lit up the darkness, and sustained their faith. He had told them before that these things would take place; but they did not understand him.

The scene of Christ's sufferings was to be a fiery ordeal to his disciples, and hence the necessity of watchfulness and prayer. Their faith needed to be sustained by an unseen strength, as they should experience the triumph of the powers of darkness.

We can have but faint conceptions of the inexpressible anguish of God's dear Son in Gethsemane, as he realized the separation from his Father in consequence of bearing man's sin. He became sin for the fallen race. The sense of the withdrawal of his Father's love pressed from his anguished soul these words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Then with entire submission to his Father's will, he adds, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

The divine Son of God was fainting, dying. The Father sent a messenger from his presence to strengthen the divine Sufferer, and brace him to tread his blood-stained path. Could mortals view the amazement and the sorrow of the angelic host as they watched in silent grief the Father separating his beams of light, love, and glory, from the beloved Son of his bosom, they would better understand how offensive is sin in his sight.

The sword of justice was now to awake against his dear Son. He was betrayed by a kiss into the hands of his enemies, and hurried to the judgment hall of an earthly court, there to be derided, and condemned to death, by sinful mortals. There the glorious Son of God was "wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." He bore insult, mockery, and shameful abuse, until his "visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."

Who can comprehend the love here displayed? The angelic host beheld with wonder and with grief Him who had been the majesty of Heaven, and who had worn the crown of glory, now wearing the crown of thorns, a bleeding victim to the rage of an infuriated mob, fired to insane madness by the wrath of Satan. Behold the patient sufferer! Upon his head is the thorny crown. His life-blood flows from every lacerated vein. All this in consequence of sin! Nothing could have induced Christ to leave his honor, his majesty, in Heaven, and come to a sinful world, to be neglected, despised, and rejected, by those he came to save, and finally to suffer upon the cross, but

eternal, redeeming love, which will ever remain a mystery.

Wonder, O Heavens! and be astonished, O earth! Behold the oppressor and the oppressed. A vast multitude enclose the Saviour of the world. Mocking and jeering are mingled with the coarse oaths of blasphemy. His lowly birth and his humble life are commented upon by unfeeling wretches. His claim to be the Son of God is ridiculed by the chief priests and elders, and the vulgar jest and insulting derision are passed from lip to lip. Satan was having full control of the minds of his servants. In order to do this effectually, he commences with the chief priests and the elders, and imbues them with a religious frenzy. They are actuated by the same Satanic spirit which moves the most vile and hardened wretches. There is a corrupt harmony in the feelings of all, from the hypocritical priests and elders down to the most debased. Christ, the precious Son of God, was led forth, and the cross was laid upon his shoulders. At every step was left blood which flowed from his wounds. Thronged by an immense crowd of bitter enemies and unfeeling spectators, he is led away to the crucifixion. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

His sorrowing disciples follow him at a distance, behind the murderous throng. He is nailed to the cross, and hangs suspended between the heavens and the earth. Their hearts are bursting with anguish as their beloved Teacher is suffering as a criminal. Close to the cross are the blind,

bigoted, faithless priests and elders, taunting, mocking, and jeering: "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God." Not one word did Jesus answer to all this. While the nails were being driven through his hands, and the sweat-drops of agony were forced from his pores, from the pale, quivering lips of the innocent sufferer a prayer of pardoning love was breathed for his murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." All Heaven was gazing with profound interest upon the scene. The glorious Redeemer of a lost world was suffering the penalty of man's transgressions of the Father's law. He was about to ransom his people with his own blood. He was paying the just claims of God's holy law. This was the means through which an end was to be finally made of sin and Satan, and his host to be vanquished.

Oh, was there ever suffering and sorrow like that endured by the dying Saviour! It was the sense of his Father's displeasure which made his cup so bitter. It was not bodily suffering which so quickly ended the life of Christ upon the cross; It was the crushing weight of the sins of the world, and a sense of his Father's wrath.

The Father's glory and sustaining presence had left him, and despair pressed its crushing weight

of darkness upon him, and forced from his pale and quivering lips the anguished cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Jesus had united with the Father in making the world. While amid the agonizing sufferings of the Son of God, blind and deluded men alone remained unfeeling. The chief priests and elders were reviling the expiring agonies of God's dear Son. Yet inanimate nature groans in sympathy with her bleeding, dying Author. The earth trembles. The sun refuses to behold the scene. The heavens gather blackness. Angels have witnessed the sufferings of God's dear Son, until they can look no longer, and hide their faces from the horrid sight. Christ is dying! He is in despair! His Father's approving smile is removed, and angels are not permitted to lighten the gloom of the terrible hour. They could only behold in amazement their loved Commander, the Majesty of Heaven, suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law.

Even doubts assailed the dying Son of God. He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Bright hope did not present to him his coming forth from the tomb a conqueror, and his Father's accepting his sacrifice. The sin of the world, with all its terribleness, was felt to the uttermost by the Son of God. The displeasure of the Father for sin, and its penalty which was death, was all that he could realize through this amazing darkness. His soul was tempted to fear that sin was so offensive in the sight of his Father, that he could not be reconciled to his Son. The fierce temptation that his own Father had left him, caused that piercing cry from the cross, "My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Christ felt much as sinners will feel when the vials of God's wrath shall be poured out upon them. Black despair, like the pall of death, will gather about their guilty souls, and then they will realize, to the fullest extent, the sinfulness of sin. Salvation has been purchased for them, by the suffering and death of the Son of God. It might be theirs, if they would accept of it willingly, gladly; but none are compelled to yield obedience to the law of God. If they refuse the heavenly benefit, if they choose the pleasures and deceitfulness of sin, they can have their choice, and at the end receive their wages, which is the wrath of God and eternal death. They will be forever separated from the presence of Jesus, whose sacrifice they had despised. They will have lost a life of happiness, and sacrificed eternal glory, for the pleasures of sin for a season.

Faith and hope trembled in the expiring agonies of Christ, because God had removed the assurance he had heretofore given his beloved Son of his approbation and acceptance. The Redeemer of the world then relied upon the evidences which had hitherto strengthened him, that his Father accepted his labors and was pleased with his work. In his dying agony, as he yields up his precious life, he has by faith alone to trust in Him whom it has ever been his joy to obey. He is not cheered with clear, bright rays of hope on the right hand nor on the left. All is enshrouded in oppressive gloom. Amid the awful darkness which is felt by sympathizing nature, the Redeemer drains the mysterious cup even to its dregs. Denied even bright hope and confidence in the triumph which will be his

in the future, he cries with a loud voice, "Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit." He is acquainted with the character of his Father, his justice, his mercy, and great love. In submission he drops into the hands of his Father. Amid the convulsions of nature are heard, by the amazed spectators, the dying words of the Man of Calvary. Nature sympathized with the suffering of its Author. The heaving earth, the rent rocks, proclaimed that it was the Son of God who died. There was a mighty earthquake. The veil of the temple was rent in twain. Terror seized the executioners and spectators as they beheld the sun veiled in darkness, and felt the earth shake beneath them, and saw and heard the rending of the rocks. The mocking and laughing of the chief priests and elders was hushed as Christ commended his spirit into the hands of his Father. The astonished throng began to withdraw, and grope their way, in the darkness, to the city. They smote upon their breasts as they went, and in terror, speaking scarcely above a whisper, said among themselves, "It is an innocent person that has been murdered. What if, indeed, he is, as he asserted, the Son of God."

Jesus did not yield up his life till he had accomplished the work which he came to do, and exclaimed with his departing breath, "It is finished." Satan then was defeated. He knew that his kingdom was lost. Angels rejoiced as the words were uttered, "It is finished." The great plan of redemption, which was dependent on the death of Christ, had been thus far carried out. And there was joy in Heaven that the sons of Adam could, through a life of obedience, be finally

exalted to the throne of God. Oh, what love! What amazing love! that brought the Son of God to earth to be made sin for us, that we might be reconciled to God, and elevated to a life with him in his mansions in glory. Oh! what is man, that such a price should be paid for his redemption!

When men and women can more fully comprehend the magnitude of this great sacrifice, which was made by the Majesty of Heaven in dying in man's stead, then will the plan of salvation be magnified, and reflections of Calvary will awaken tender, sacred, and lively emotions in the Christian's heart. Praises to God and the Lamb will be in their hearts, and upon their lips. Pride and self-esteem cannot flourish in the hearts that keep fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary. This world will appear of but little value to those who appreciate the costly price of man's redemption—the precious blood of God's dear Son. All the riches of the world are not of sufficient value to redeem one perishing soul. Who can measure the love Christ felt for a lost world, as he hung upon the cross, suffering for the sins of guilty men? This love was immeasurable. It was infinite.

His love, he has shown, was stronger than death. He was accomplishing man's salvation; and although he had the most fearful conflict with the powers of darkness, yet, amid it all, his love decreased not, but grew stronger and stronger. He endured the hidings of his Father's countenance, until he was led to exclaim, in the bitterness of his soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" His arm brought salvation. The price was paid to purchase the redemption of man, when, in the last soul-struggle, the blessed words

were uttered, which seemed to resound through creation, "It is finished."

Many who profess to be Christians, will become excited over some worldly enterprise. Their interest is awakened for new and exciting amusements, while they are cold-hearted, and appear as if frozen in the cause of God. Here is a theme, poor formalist, which is of sufficient importance to excite you. Eternal interests are here involved. Upon this theme it is sin to be calm, and unimpassioned. The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotion. Upon this subject you will be excusable if you manifest enthusiasm. That Christ, so excellent, so innocent, should suffer such a painful death, bearing the weight of the sins of the world, our most extended thoughts and imaginations can never be able to fully reach, and enable us to comprehend the length, the breadth, the height, the depth, of such amazing love. The contemplation of the matchless depths of a Saviour's love, viewed by faith, fills and absorbs the mind, touches and melts the soul, refines and elevates the affections, and completely transforms the whole character. The language of the apostle is, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." We may look toward Calvary, and also exclaim, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Considering at what an immense cost our salvation has been purchased, what will be the fate of those who neglect so great a salvation? What will be the punishment of those who profess to be followers of Christ, yet fail to bow in humble obe-

dience to the claims of their Redeemer, and who do not take the cross, as humble disciples of Christ, and follow him from the manger to Calvary? He that gathereth not with me, saith Christ, scattereth abroad.

Some have limited views of the atonement, and think that Christ suffered only a small portion of the penalty of the law of God, and that while the wrath of God was felt by his dear Son, they suppose that he had, through all his painful sufferings, an evidence of his Father's love and acceptance, and that the portals of the tomb before him were illuminated with bright hope that he had the abiding evidence of his future glory. Here is a great mistake. Christ's keenest anguish was a sense of his Father's displeasure. His mental agony, because of this, was of such intensity that man can have but faint conception of it.

The history of the condescension, humiliation and sacrifice of our divine Lord does not with many stir the soul, affect the character and life, any more, nor awaken deeper interest than to read of the death of the martyrs of Jesus. Many have suffered death by slow tortures; others have suffered death by crucifixion. In what does the death of God's dear Son differ from these? It is true he died upon the cross a most cruel death; yet others, for his dear sake, have suffered equally, as far as bodily torture is concerned. Why was the suffering of Christ more dreadful than that of other persons who have yielded their lives for his sake? If the sufferings of Christ consisted in physical pain alone, then his death was no more painful than that of some of the martyrs. Bodily

pain was but an item in the excruciating agony of God's dear Son. The sins of the world were upon him, also the sense of his Father's wrath as he suffers the penalty of the law transgressed. It was these that crushed his divine soul. It was the hiding of his Father's face, a sense that his own dear Father had forsaken him, which brought despair. The separation that sin makes between God and man was fully realized and keenly felt by the innocent, suffering Man of Calvary, without one ray of light to brighten the future, oppressed by the powers of darkness, struggling with the power of Satan,—he declaring that Christ was in his power, that he was superior in strength to the Son of God, that God had disowned his Son, and that he was no longer in the favor of God any more than himself. If he was indeed still in favor with God, why need he die? God could save him from death. Christ yielded not in the least degree to the tormenting foe, even in his bitterest anguish. Legions of evil angels were all about the Son of God, yet the holy angels were bidden not to break their ranks and engage in conflict with the taunting, reviling foe. Heavenly angels were not permitted to minister unto the anguished spirit of the Son of God. It was in this terrible hour of darkness, the face of his Father hidden, legions of evil angels enshrouding him, the sins of the world upon him, that the words were wrenched from his lips, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."

The death of the martyrs can bear no comparison with the agony endured by the Son of God. And we should take larger, broader, and deeper views of the life, sufferings, and death of God's

dear Son. When the atonement is viewed correctly, the salvation of souls will be felt to be of infinite value. In comparison with the enterprise of everlasting life, every other sinks into insignificance. But how have the counsels of this loving Saviour been despised. The heart's devotion has been to the world, and selfish interests have closed the door against the Son of God. Hollow hypocrisy and pride, selfishness and gain, envy, malice and passion, have so filled the hearts of many that Christ can have no room.

He was eternally rich, "yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." He was clothed with light and glory, surrounded with hosts of heavenly angels, waiting to execute his commands. Yet he put on our nature, and came to sojourn among sinful mortals. Here is love that no language can express. It passes knowledge. Great is the mystery of godliness. Our souls should be enlivened, elevated, enraptured with the theme of the love of the Father and the Son to man. The followers of Christ should learn here to reflect back in some degree that mysterious love preparatory to joining all the redeemed in ascribing "Blessing and honor and glory and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

To The Church at ———.

DEAR BRETHREN:—I have been shown that you are not in the light, as God would have you. In vision, I was pointed back to the ingathering of souls at ——— last spring,

and was shown that your minds were not prepared for that work. You were not expecting or believing for the work which was then accomplished among you. This work was carried on, notwithstanding your unbelief, aside from the participation of many among you.

When you had such evidences that God was waiting to be gracious to his people, that Mercy's voice was inviting sinners and backsliders to the cross of Christ, why did you not unite with us, who had the burden of the work upon us? Why did you not come up to the help of the Lord? Some of you seemed benumbed and stupefied, and seemed to be amazed, and were unprepared to participate fully in the work. You assented to it, but the hearts of many were not in it. It was a great evidence of the lukewarm condition of the church.

The worldliness you possess does not incline your hard hearts to throw wide open the door, at the knock you hear from Jesus who is seeking an entrance. The Lord of glory who has redeemed you by his own blood, waited at your doors for admittance, and you did not throw open the door wide and welcome him in. Some opened the door slightly and permitted a little light from his presence to enter, but did not welcome the heavenly Visitor. There was not room for Jesus. The place which should have been reserved for

him was occupied with other things. Jesus entreated you: "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." There was a work for you to do to open the door. For a time you felt inclined to hear, and open the door, but even this inclination departed, and you failed to secure the communion with the heavenly guest which it was your privilege to have. By some, the door was opened, and Jesus heartily welcomed.

Jesus will not force open the door. The act you have to perform to show your desire for the heavenly Visitor is to open the door wide and give him a sincere welcome. If all had made thorough work in clearing away the world's rubbish, and preparing a place for Jesus, he would have entered and abode with you, and would have done a great work through you for the salvation of others. You were unprepared for the work. It commenced, notwithstanding, in mighty power among you. Backsliders were reclaimed, sinners were converted, and the sound went out into the region round about. The community was stirred. Had the church come up to the help of the Lord, and had the way been fully opened for further labor, there would have been in _____ and _____ and the region round about, a work accomplished such as you have never witnessed. But the ideas of the brethren were not raised,

and they were indifferent, in a great degree, to the matter. Some who had ever been seeking their own interest, could not think of having their minds drawn away from themselves on this occasion, even though the salvation of souls might be at stake.

The Lord had laid upon us the burden. We were willing to give you all there was of us for a time, if you would come up with us to the help of the Lord. There was a decided failure. There was great ingratitude shown for the manifestations of the power of God among you. Had you received the tokens of God's mercy and loving kindness as you should, with thankful hearts, and united your interest to work with the Spirit of God, you would not now be in the condition that you are. But you have been going down, and withering spiritually since that precious work was done among you.

The parable of the lost sheep you do not yet understand. You have not learned the lesson the divine Teacher designed you should. You have been dull scholars. Read the parable in Luke xv. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the *wilderness*, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends, and neighbors, saying

unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.”

Here were the cases of several who had backslidden; who had been in darkness; who had strayed away from the fold. But especially, as a prominent one, was the case of Bro. ———. He strayed from the fold. All the efforts were not made in wisdom, which should have been made to have prevented his straying from the fold, and then after he had strayed, there were not diligent efforts put forth to bring him back. There was much more gossiping over his case than sincere sorrow for him. All these things kept him from the fold, and caused his heart to be separated farther and farther from his brethren, making his rescue more and still more difficult. How different was this course from that pursued by the shepherd in the parable, in pursuit of the lost sheep. The whole ninety and nine were left in the wilderness, to care for themselves, exposed to dangers; yet the lone sheep, separated from the flock, was in greater danger, and to secure the one, the ninety and nine were left.

Some of the church had no special anxiety to have Bro. ——— return. They cared not enough to unbend from their dignity and pride to make special efforts to help him to the light. They stood back on their dignity, and said, “We will not go after him; let

him come to us." It was impossible for him to do this, as he viewed the feelings of his brethren toward him. Had they regarded the lesson taught by Christ, they would have been willing to yield their dignity and pride, and go after the wandering ones. They would have wept over them, prayed for them, implored them to be faithful to God, and the truth, and abide with the church. But the feeling of many was: If he wants to go, let him go.

When the Lord sent his servants to do the work for these wanderers, which you ought to have done, you were even then unprepared to give up your ideas, when you had evidence that the Lord was giving a message of mercy to these poor stray sheep. You did not feel like leaving the ninety and nine, and searching after the lost sheep till you found it. You did not do this. And when the sheep was found, and brought back to the fold with rejoicing, did you rejoice? We tried to arouse you. We tried to call you together as the shepherd called his neighbors and friends, to have you rejoice with us. But you seemed unwilling. You felt that the sheep had done a great wrong in leaving the fold, and instead of rejoicing that he had returned, you were anxious to make him feel that he should be very sorry for leaving, and should come back just according to your ideas. And since the return of the lost sheep,

you have had a feeling of jealousy in regard to his return. You have kept your eye out, watching to see if all was right. Some have not felt just satisfied, but have felt an unwillingness in their hearts to have things just as they are.

You are unacquainted with yourselves. Some possess selfishness, which leads to the narrowing up of their influence and efforts. There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.

Had the church been prepared to appreciate the work the Lord was doing among them, they would since that ingathering have been growing stronger and stronger. But instead of all throwing their whole soul into the work, and feeling a special, sincere interest to do all in their power to bring up the work where we left it, they acted very much as if the work did not concern them especially, but as though they were only spectators—ready to distrust, and find fault if there was a chance.

I was shown the case of Bro. ——. He feels unhappy. He is dissatisfied with his brethren. His mind has been exercised for some time that it was his duty to carry the message. He is capable, as far as his knowledge of the truth is concerned. He has the ability, but he lacks culture. He has not controlled himself. It requires great wisdom

to deal with minds. Bro. — is not qualified for this work. He understands the theory, but has not educated himself in forbearance, patience, gentleness, kindness, and true courteousness. If things arise which do not meet his mind, he does not stop and consider whether it is not wisdom to take no notice of it, and let it pass for the present until it shall be fully considered. He braces himself at once for battle. He is harsh, severe, denunciatory. He raises disturbance at once, if things do not meet his mind.

He possesses in his organization the elements of war rather than of sweet peace and harmony. He has not wisdom to give to all their portion of meat in due season. "And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." This making a difference; Bro. — has but little knowledge of. He is rough in his manners, and indiscreet in his dealing with souls. This disqualifies him for making a good, wise, careful shepherd. A shepherd must have courage, fortitude, noble generosity, love, and tenderness, combined.

He will be in danger of tearing down more than he can build up. He has not had all his powers in subjection to the will of God. He has not been transformed by the renewing of his mind. He is self-sufficient,

and does not rely wholly upon the grace of God. His works are not wrought in God.

To be a shepherd is to occupy a very important, responsible position. It is a high and sacred work to feed the flock of God. Bro. —, the Lord does not regard you fit to be an overseer of his flock. Had you been learning the lesson of self-government in your religious experience, and had you felt the necessity of elevating your mind, and purifying your heart by sanctification of the Spirit, and bringing all your powers into subjection to the Spirit of God, seeking humility and meekness, you might now be in a position to do good, and to exert an influence which would be elevating and saving.

Bro. and Sr. —, you have a work to do for yourselves, which no one can do for you. You are inclined to murmur and complain. You have something to do to subdue your natural feelings. Live for God yourselves, knowing that you have not to answer for the wrongs of others. I saw, Bro. —, that you would certainly be overcome by Satan, and make utter shipwreck of faith unless you stop your fault-finding, and seek pure and undefiled religion before God. You need to be elevated in your thoughts and conversation. You need a thorough conversion.

Life or death is before you. You should solemnly consider that you are dealing with

the great God. Remember, God is not a child that can be trifled with. You cannot serve God at will, and let it alone at pleasure. Your inmost soul needs to be converted.

All who, like you, my brother, have failed to grow in the grace of God, and perfect holiness in his name, will, in these days of peril and trial, meet with great loss. Their foundation will be in danger of proving sliding sand instead of the Rock, Christ Jesus.

You move by impulse. You feel unreconciled with your brethren because you are not sent out to preach the truth. You are not fit for this trust. It would take the care of more than one efficient preacher to follow in your wake, to bind up the wounds and bruises your harsh dealing would make. God is not pleased with you, and I fear that you will fail of everlasting life.

You have no time to lose in making mighty efforts to rescue yourself from Satan's snare. You need to learn of Jesus, who is meek and lowly of heart, and then you will obtain rest. Oh! what a work you have to do to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and be prepared for the society of the pure and holy angels. You need to humble your heart before God, and seek meekness and righteousness, that you may be hid in the day of the Lord's fierce anger.

Bro. —, the Lord let his blessing rest

upon you last spring ; but you did not see the relation which watchfulness and prayer sustain to a progress in the divine life. You have neglected these duties, and the result has been that darkness has enshrouded you. You have been in a state of uncertainty and distrust. You have frequently chosen for your society those who are in darkness, those whom Satan uses to scatter from Christ. You could live among the most corrupt, and remain unstained, unsullied, if God in his providence thus directed you. But it is dangerous for those who wish to honor God to choose for their companions those who fear not God, and be pleased and entertained with their society. Satan is ever surrounding such, and great darkness is around about them ; and if those who profess Christ go unbidden into this darkness, they tempt the Devil to tempt them. If God requires us to go amid infernal spirits, where is the blackest darkness, in order to do good and glorify his name, he will encircle us with his angels and keep us unsullied. But if we seek the company of sinners, and are pleased with their coarse jests, and are entertained and amused with their stories, sports, and ribaldry, the pure and holy angels remove their protection, and leave us to the darkness we have chosen.

Bro. —, I wish to alarm you. I wish to arouse you to action. I wish to entreat of

you to seek God while he invites you to come to him that you may have life.

Watch, Pray, Work, are the Christian's watchwords. Satan is vigilant in his efforts. His perseverance is untiring, his zeal earnest and unabated. He does not wait for his prey to come to him, he seeks for it. To wrench souls from the hand of Christ, is his determined purpose; yet souls are asleep in their blindness—insane in their pursuits. God is not in their thoughts. A vigilant foe is upon the track of the Christian; yet he is in no danger while he makes God his trust. But unless he puts his trust in God, his strength will be weakness, and he will be overcome by Satan.

Bro. ———, it is dangerous for you to yield to doubts. You must not permit yourself to go any farther in the direction in which you have been going. You are in constant danger. Satan is on your track, suggesting doubts and causing unbelief. Had you stood clear in the counsel of God, you could have had an influence for good over those who love your society now.

Poor Bro. ———; he felt the influence of the Spirit of God, but was deficient in experience. He did not turn fully from his old habits and customs. There is no concord between Christ and Belial. Bro. ——— failed to make God his strength continually, and his feet have slipped. You might have

helped him if you had had hold from above, as you should have had. But your course of inactivity, your manner of conversation, your influence, have strengthened him in his backsliding, and quieted the voice of conscience within him. Your course has not been a reproof to him in his downward track. You could do good, were you living for God.

Your strength is utter weakness; your wisdom is foolishness; yet you do not realize this. You have been too well satisfied with a theory—a correct form of doctrine, but have not felt the necessity of the power of God. You have neglected the spiritual part of religion. Your whole being should cry out for the Spirit of God—the life and power of religion in the soul, which would lead to the crucifixion of self, and firm trust in your Redeemer.

You are in terrible darkness, and unless you arise in the name of God, and break the fetters of Satan asunder, and assert your freedom, you will make shipwreck of the faith.

Notwithstanding your life has not been in accordance with the will of God, your works and ways have been offensive to him, yet such is his great unwillingness to leave you—such is his love toward you, that the Majesty of Heaven condescends to beg the privilege of making you a visit, and leaving you his blessing. “Behold I stand at the door and

knock." The mansions in glory are his. His the joy of the heavenly abode; yet he humbles himself to seek an entrance at the door of your heart, that he may bless you with his light, and make you to rejoice in his glory. His work is to seek and save that which is lost, and ready to perish. He wishes to redeem from sin, and death, as many as he can, that he may elevate them to his throne and give them everlasting life.

Bro. —, be entreated to arise and cast aside your doubts. What makes you inclined to doubts? It is your life of departure from God. Your life of unconsecration. Your jesting and joking. Your lack of sobriety is endangering your eternal interests. Christ is inviting you to turn from these follies to him. You are not growing in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. You are not an honor to the cause. You are not becoming elevated, but are sinking lower and lower in the scale. You are not forming a character for Heaven, and everlasting life.

You are pleasing yourself, passing away time in frivolity which should be spent with your family, teaching your children the ways and works of God. The hours that you spend in company that is doing you only harm, should be devoted to prayer and the study of God's word. You should feel that a responsibility is upon you, as head of your family, to bring up your children in the

nurture and admonition of the Lord. What account will you render to God for misspent time? What influence are you having over those who have not the fear of God before them? "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." May God anoint your eyes that you may see your peril. I feel deeply for you. My heart yearns over you. I long to see you coming up to the high standard that it is your privilege to attain. You can do good. Your influence, if exerted on the right side, will tell. Bro. —, your footsteps are in the downward path. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die."

Pursue the course you are now traveling, much longer, and you will become infidel in regard to the truth—infidel in regard to the word of God. Watch, and pray always. Dedicate yourself unreservedly to God, and it will not be difficult then to serve God. You have a divided heart. This is the reason that darkness, instead of light, encircles you.

The last message of mercy is now going forth. It is a token of the longsuffering and compassion of God. Come, is the invitation now given. Come, for all things are now ready. This is mercy's last call. Next will come the vengeance of an offended God.

Bro. —, encourage simplicity, love, forbearance, and sweet union with your breth-

ren. But do not, oh! do not, sell everlasting life so cheaply. You will never know real happiness if you go from the truth. You will be miserable indeed. Heaven is worth making any and every sacrifice for. Break the bands of Satan. Jesus is now inviting you. Will you listen to his voice? You must take a higher stand than you have hitherto done. Make the kingdom of Heaven, and the righteousness of Christ, your first business. Live for God and Heaven, and the eternal reward will be yours at the end of the race.

I was shown Bro. ————. I was pointed back to last spring, in May, when the Lord visited ————. Bro. ———— was not prepared to take stock in that work. His mind and heart were elsewhere. He was contemplating marriage. He could not listen to the invitation of Jesus, "Come, for all things are now ready." His contemplated marriage engrossed his attention. He had no time or inclination to open the door of his heart to the gracious Visitor. Had he done this, Christ would have given him good counsel, which, if heeded, would have been of priceless value to him. He would have presented before him in its true light his danger of yielding to the dictates of a wayward inclination, and setting aside the decisions of sober reason, and the glory of God. He would have charged him to beware how

he tread in the footsteps of those who have fallen and been ruined. He did not consider that God had claims upon him; that he should make no move without consulting him who had bought him. We are instructed that whatever we do, we should do all to his glory.

Did you, Bro. ———, as a disciple, a learner of Christ, go to him in humble, sincere prayer, and commit your ways to him? You failed to do this. You did not investigate all your motives, and move with carefulness lest you should bring a reproach upon the cause of Christ, your Redeemer. You did not consider whether this move would have the best effect to increase your spiritual sensibility, quicken your zeal, and strengthen your efforts in self-denial and steadfastness in the truth. You were ignorant of your own heart. The work of God was seen in the church, but you had no longings for the divine Spirit. The things of Heaven were insipid to you. You were infatuated by your new hopes of uniting your interest with another. You did not consider that a marriage alliance was to affect vitally your interest for life, short though that life must be.

You should have felt that with your own evil heart to subdue, you could not be brought in connection with an influence which would make it more difficult for you to overcome self, and make your path upward to Heaven