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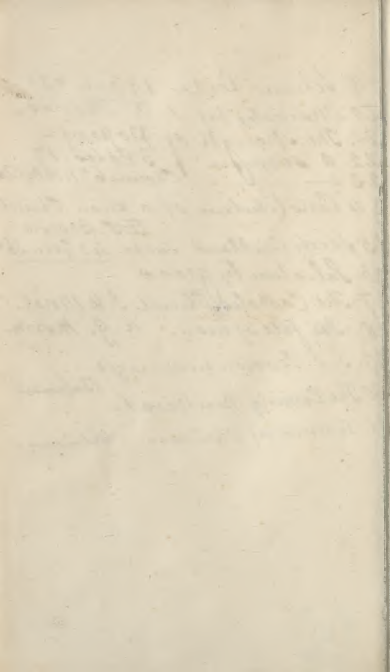
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# Jacob's Complaint ;

Or

## The Tried Christian's Mistake.

BY THE

REV. A. W. SNAPE. M.A.

CURATE OF ST. LUKE'S, CHELSEA.

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For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ,  
and Him crucified."—1 Cor. ii. 2.

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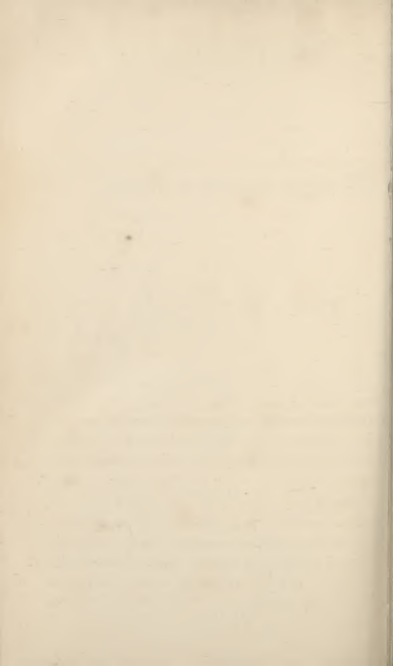
LONDON:

G. F. FUGE, SLOANE SQUARE, CHELSEA ;

WORTHEIM & CO. PATERNOSTER ROW ;

G. W. FULCHER, SUDBURY.

1851.





JACOB'S COMPLAINT; OR THE TRIED  
CHRISTIAN'S MISTAKE.

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GENESIS, xlii. 36.

*"All these things are against me."*

SAD words these, sad occasion on which they were spoken, sad feelings which dictated them. Sad words, because they manifest murmuring complaint and desponding fear. Sad occasion, because they were spoken during a season of severe and multiplied trial; it was a dark time with the aged servant of God, all around him looked sad and dreary; his family in a bad state, old age pressing upon him, a long journey before him to escape the pangs of hunger and famine, and he exclaims, no doubt with much bitterness of feeling, "All these things are against me." Sad feelings, because expressing doubt in the mercy and goodness of God.

The words of the text are not words to be slightly regarded ; though few, they are solemn ; solemn, because proceeding from the mouth of an aged saint, one who had experienced the goodness and graciousness of God, one who had prevailed with God, and by whose name Jehovah called Himself, "I am the God of Jacob:" and yet, Jacob, when trials pressed upon him, lost for the time the bright vision beyond the world, and cries, "All these things are against me."

At first sight we may be inclined to say, Jacob's words were wrong, which undoubtedly they were : but let us look home, home to our own experience as Christians, and how many are there of us, who in the first realization of heavy sorrow, have not exclaimed, "All these things are against me!" True, when the soul is brought calmly to look upon trial, and to "cast its care upon Him who careth for us," one's feelings and thoughts receive a change, and we are able with the Psalmist, not merely to cry, but to realise the truth, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." (Ps. cxix. 71.) ; but still, the impulse of our undisciplined and untutored hearts is to cry with Jacob, "All these things are against me."

It is not my intention to consider the words of my text in reference to Jacob exclusively, but rather to make it a practical lesson for us all ; and may the Holy Spirit graciously manifest His presence, by bringing the word home to our hearts !

## I. THE CHRISTIAN'S MISTAKE.

## II. HOW THIS MISTAKE ORIGINATES.

## III. A SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

I. The text says, "All these things are against me." Keep in view what has been before said, these are not the words of an unconverted sinner, but a believer, an aged servant of God. Now, I urge these words are a mistake, because nothing can be *against* the child of God, whatever happens; whether it be mental or bodily suffering, bereavement, or any other thing, yet they are not *against*, but *for*; "All things," says the Apostle, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom. viii. 28.) A passage like this one now quoted would alone be sufficient to prove that the words of the text, in a Christian's mouth, are a mistake; but I would look a little closer.

They are so,

1. *Because God loves His children.*

I cannot now enter into the *nature* of that love which exists between God and His people; it has breadths and lengths which would take me far beyond the compass of a Sermon; but I would rather assume it as an undoubted fact, that God loves His children; "God is love." What a character; how it makes the heart leap, and the spirit to be joyful! "God is love."

A Christian father who loves his children, seeks their comfort and welfare; if they are wrong, he chastens them with one object in view, love for their souls. Now this is the very simile used in Scripture in reference to Jehovah; a Father, loving, tender, and compassionate: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. ciii. 13, 14.) Look again, how startling and forcible is that passage in Isaiah, (xlix. 15.) The Lord assumes that a woman may forget the son of her womb, but that He can never forget His own children. Mark the strong expressions in that passage, "Can a woman forget?" Is it possible that the tender mother can forget her new born child? *Is it possible, can a woman forget?* Then note the answer, "Yes, she may forget!" However unnatural, *she may*; "yet will I *not* forget thee." There is the *unchangeableness* of His love. One other passage I call your attention to, (Jer. xxxi. 3.) shewing the *eternity* of the Lord's love, not a sudden impulse, but an everlasting love: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." O what a great and glorious truth it is, that we poor dying sinners were the subjects of a love reaching from eternity into eternity; a love which glowed in the bosom of the Father before the creation of the world; a love which He had "in Christ Jesus before

the world began;" a love which seemed panting for egress, and at last burst forth in that wondrous display of mercy towards a fallen world: the gift of His Son. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John, iv. 9, 10.) "God *so loved* the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John, iii. 16.)

When, therefore, we look at passages like these, manifesting so plainly the love of God towards His children, we cannot but see that this love guides every trial; and that therefore every trial would be *for not against* us; because the Lord is too wise to be unjust, too loving to be cruel, too good to be unkind.

But a second reason why the words of the text are a mistake is,

2. *Because of God's dealings towards His children.*

*He tries them.* "The Lord trieth the righteous." (Ps. xi, 5.) Indeed, trial is one great proof of God's love, it is the mark which He puts upon all His family. "The wicked and him that loveth violence, His soul hateth;" (Ps. xi. 5.) but "whom the

Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." *Every son*, not one here and there, but "every son whom He receiveth." "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." (Heb. xii. 6—8.) Again, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." (Rev. iii. 19.)

This sounds strange to the natural man, *chastisement* the proof of *love*; very strange! Yet it is no less true than strange. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." From Abel, the first martyr, who passed away to enjoy a foretaste of that glory yet to be revealed, down to the last Christian spirit that has winged its flight to the God that gave it, we have lasting proof of this text; nay, if you read the whole of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and the miseries recorded there, you will learn this *one striking* lesson, "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Abraham must sacrifice his son, his well-beloved, the child of promise, the stay of his declining years; yet Abraham was "*the friend of God*." Joseph must be the victim of envy and false accusers, and be sold as a slave, and cast into prison; yet "*the Lord was with Joseph*." David must flee from his throne an outcast, driven forth by his own son; yet "*David was a man after God's own heart*." Lazarus must be sick, yea! sick unto death, because the Lord loved him; "Lord, behold

he whom *Thou lovest* is sick." Another Lazarus must be laid at the gate of a rich man, dying with hunger, while the rich man is "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:" yet Lazarus dies and *is borne to heaven*; the rich man dies and goes to hell. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," (Mal. i. 2, 3.); (Rom. ix. 13.) Yet Esau was the prosperous man, Jacob *the afflicted*. All these are but comments and proofs of the point at which I started, "The Lord trieth the righteous;" "As many as He loves, He rebukes and chastens;" "We must suffer, if we would reign." And, O dear friends, when the dark and troubled waves of this world's troubles shall be settled down into the smooth, calm sunshine of Christ's glorious reign, how sweet it will be to talk with saints of bygone ages, to follow them through past trials and sorrows, and to hear how they obtained their great and glorious prize! To hear an Abraham tell of the agony that smote his breast when called to offer up Isaac. A Jacob telling the bitterness of his past experience, the glory of its ending. A Paul, of those deep tribulations which, like a troubled stream, seemed to overwhelm him. How sweet will it be to look back upon the past, and to see how the hand of God wrought in each trial that afflicted us! And so learn in the midst of unending joy, the true realization of the Christian's motto,—Tribulation. It is through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts, xiv. 22.)

“ Trials make the promise sweet,  
 Trials give new life to prayer,  
 Trials bring us to Christ's feet,  
 Lay us low, and keep us there.”

Again, the words of my text are a mistake,

3. *Because of the end which God has in view with respect to His children.*

A merciful end ; it matters little how that end is brought about ; but one thing is certain, God has only one end, viz. *mercy*. You must bear in mind that we are not to regard the ways of God as we do the ways of man ; “ His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways ;” there is as great a difference between God's thoughts and ours, “ as the heavens are higher than the earth.” But what I want to impress on you now is this, that God in all His ways and dealings with His people, has an *end* in view ; there may be different ways, and different points in that end, but they all ultimately terminate in one end, “ *our sanctification.*” (1 Thess. iv. 3.) “ For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

I may be speaking to some now who do not like the way which God is taking in respect to themselves : trials may be falling fast and thick upon you, and even perhaps now you are saying, “ All these things are against me.” True, dear friends, “ now no chastening for the present appeareth joyous, but grievous ;” but what you want is to get a clear view of that which is beyond all



trial and sorrow; a clear view of Canaan's everlasting rest; and then you would understand the full meaning of St. Paul's words, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.) I do not believe that there is one living or departed saved Christian, however tried he may have been, however his bright hopes may have been withered, however his unripened joys may have been blasted, who regrets for a single moment having passed through the furnace of affliction. At one time, perhaps, he thought it hard, and murmured against it, but now he will glorify his Saviour, as one that "doeth all things well." Believe me, there is great necessity for watching the end and design which God has in view with respect to us. The child you have loved with all a mother's fondness, may be torn from you, and nothing left you but the remembrance. A husband may lose the desire of his eyes at a stroke. A wife the partner of her life, the stay and hope of her heart. A father may hear of the death of some profligate, but much loved son, and in the agony of grief may cry out in wailing accents, "O my son, my son, would God I had died for thee, my son." Again and again, in accents of despair, you may say, "All these things are against me." But there

is the very point of error, they are not *against* you, but *for* you; these were idols which kept your heart too much from God; the Lord wants your best affections, his design is to bring you to glory, to make you partakers of the first resurrection; therefore He must bring you through the waste howling wilderness.

Israel was to come to Canaan, they were to subdue enemies, and inherit kingdoms; but lest they should be exalted above measure at God's choice of them, they must wander in the wilderness for forty years; they thought it hard, and continually murmured, but yet it was the *right* way: "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." (Ps. cvii. 7.) So *you* will find in the end, that you were led by the *right* way; that the Lord loved you, and therefore He brought you daily more closely to Himself, by making you to wander in the wilderness of trouble.

See, again, the very instance before us, Jacob; he says, "All these things are against me." They were not so, and in the end he acknowledged the reverse; they were means which God employed to bring about His own merciful ends. Jacob had experienced trouble; the Lord willed that he should die in peace, and that his seed should be preserved; but mark the manner in which it was brought about. He loses his beloved son; a mighty famine spreads through the land; another son is taken from him; a third he must part with, and in

bitterness he cries out, "Ye have bereaved of my children : Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away : all these things are against me." Yet how glorious the end ! The dark cloud passes away : Joseph alive ; Simeon restored ; Benjamin uninjured ; the aged Patriarch in astonishment and joy exclaims, " Joseph my son is yet alive : I will go and see him before I die."

Job, again, none more afflicted, none more patient. God willed to prove to Satan the integrity of Job ; He permits him to be tried ; seven years uninterrupted sorrow and unmitigated pain passed over, yet no falling away. Job thought at times that the Lord was treating him as His enemy, " He hath also kindled His wrath against me, and He counteth me unto Him as one of His enemies." (Job, xix. 11.) But in the issue He saw His mercy, for " The Lord turned the captivity of Job." (Job, xlii. 10.)

Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, study God's ways, the more you study, the more you will wonder, the more you will praise and adore ; through the greatest suffering, the brighter glory ; no crown without the cross. The very description given of the redeemed in glory is, that they " came out of *great tribulation*, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.) No crown will shine so brilliantly as that which will adorn the head of the glorified Martyr ; no eye sparkle so brightly as that of the afflicted but rau-

somed Christian ; no voice sing so loudly the long and thrilling Allelujah as the Saint, redeemed out of all sorrow, and now for ever without fault before the throne of God.

“ All these things against you :” No, dear Brethren, if you belong to Christ, let affliction or persecution come ; let the powers of darkness arise to trouble and harass you, yet all will tend only to work out your brighter glory. Just as that hour is the darkest which immediately precedes the dawn of morn, so, often, your soul is darkest before the full burst of glory shall overwhelm it ; never say, “ All these things are against me ;” but rather hang upon Christ, and let the thoughts of your heart find utterance in that sublime hymn,

Jesus, refuge of my soul,  
 Let me to Thy bosom fly ;  
 While the raging waters roll,  
 While the tempest still is high.  
 Other refuge have I none ;  
 Hangs my helpless soul on Thee ;  
 Leave, ah, leave me not alone,  
 Still support and comfort me.  
 Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
 Till this storm of life is past ;  
 Safe into the haven guide,  
 O receive my soul at last.

We see then, that Jacob, and that every Christian, is wrong, when he says the dealings of God are against him ; for “ all things work together for good to them that love God.” An individual question here arises, how are we enduring the chastening of the Lord ? Are we like Eli, bowing in patient resignation ? “ It is the Lord, let Him do what

seemeth Him good." Are we thankful for the past? "O Lord, I will praise Thee, for though Thou wast angry with me, yet Thine anger is turned away." Or are we crying out, "Alas! my trouble is more than I can bear?" "All these things are against me." Let us see,

## II. HOW THIS MISTAKE ORIGINATES.

Reason after reason might be given, but I would rather confine myself to three points.

### 1. *Want of Faith.*

Here is the real cause of not understanding the ways and dispensations of Providence, *want of faith*; no prayer is so necessary for the Christian as that of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith." One sees a Christian brother or sister under the Lord's chastising hand, we sympathise with them, try to convince them to see it as a proof of love, and to seek the spirit of the Apostle; "Most gladly will I glory in tribulation also, that the power of Christ may be made manifest in me." But then comes the 'Alas, not for me!' Why not for every Christian? Why not for you? Has God put any difference between His own children? He does not say, I chastise *this man*, because I love Him; but "*as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,*" "*Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.*" It is a subject for rejoicing, rather than mourning. Every

tried Christian bears about him the mark of God's family; "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." (Job v. 17.)

What! still doubting? still saying, 'not for me?' Why is it, but because you have not faith in your heavenly Father? Why is it, but because you are judging from outward appearances, from man's ways, instead of taking the *Word of God* for your rule and guide?

In the midst of trouble your heart is sinking, but do not look at the trouble itself, look away from it to the hand that smites. "Hear ye the rod, and *who* hath appointed it." Look at God's word; at the Christian's path as described in that word; the narrow way; at the characters which walk that narrow way; at the promises of the Lord; look there, rest there, and you will soon learn that all these things which happen, are sent to remind you that "Here you have no continuing city," that you are but strangers and pilgrims in this world, looking for a brighter and more blessed hope at the appearing of Christ; even an inheritance in the new Jerusalem, where sorrow and sighing never enter, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

A second reason:

2. *We want to have things our own way.*

There is nothing easier when trial is far away, than

to talk of resignation; but it becomes quite a different matter, when we have to drink the dregs of the cup; then it is that our perverse *wills* start up, we want to have things our own way, and because they are not so, we murmur and rebel. "All these things are against me." Alas, alas! how difficult to feel and realise that all God does is right, that He cannot err! How difficult to say with the Shunamite woman, while one's heart is breaking, "*It is well!*" How difficult to sit with one's lips in the dust, beneath the stroke! "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because *Thou* didst it." (Ps. xxxix. 9.) And yet this is the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit which we should seek; the very spirit which characterized our blessed Saviour in His agony, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done." Our stubborn hearts; our perverse wills; these are what keep us from being submissive; these are what keep us from drinking in the sanctifying influences which flow through the waters of affliction. Ah! who is there that does not pray for new wills, for new affections? who does not long for that glorious time when he shall really have the mind of Christ, and be conformed to His image, "be like Him," because he will "see Him as He is?"

A third reason:

3. *We still have some clinging to earthly things.*

David could cry, "My soul is even as a weaned child." My dear friends, is this our heart language?

if we belong to Christ, this is what He will bring us to say. He wants our hearts, our whole hearts, our sole undivided affections, and He will be contented with nothing less. Do not misunderstand me; we may have earthly affections, the Lord wills that we should have; He had them himself, He loved the family of Bethany. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus," (John xi. 5.) He could sympathise with their sorrows, and weep at their bereavement; for as He stood at the tomb of Lazarus, "Jesus wept." (35.) But still, though the Lord wills that we should have earthly affections, He wills that He himself shall have the first place in our hearts. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. x. 37.) Believe me, this is what He will bring us to: "None but Christ." While there is any clinging to the world; while we are fancying that we are hardly dealt by, God's hand will be heavy. Trial after trial will come upon us, He will make us feel none can help us but Himself; and in the midst of sorrow and anguish, He will teach us to experience the preciousness of the promise, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Ps. lv. 22.)

These are three of the reasons why a Christian is apt in trial to say, "All these things are against me." *Want of faith; wanting to have things*



*our own way; a clinging still to earthly things.*

I pass on now to notice,

### III. THE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

It is this. *The duty of a Christian under trial.*

#### 1. *To cast his care on the Lord.*

You may bear in mind that this is the very charge which St. Peter gives; "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." (1 Peter v. 6,7.)

True, God knows every trouble and trial that afflicts us; not a sigh that bursts from the bosom which He does not hear; not a tear which courses down the cheek which He does not see; not a cry of agony that is poured forth from the heart which He does not listen to: "He knoweth our frame." He knoweth our need before we ask Him; yet it is His will that we should go and tell Him our sorrows, "Casting all our care upon Him." How sweet is this thought, we can go to the footstool of our Father in heaven, a reconciled Father in Christ, and pour forth all that weighs down the soul into an ear ever wakeful, ever sympathising, "He careth for us." Oh then, dear friends, do not let sorrow weigh you down, you cannot alleviate it, you cannot remove it, but go and cast it all at the foot of the cross, remembering that "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of

our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv. 15.) And it is His voice which, in beseeching tones, calls the weary and heavy laden to come to Him, and He will give them rest. (Matt. xi. 28.)

### 2. *To wait the Lord's own time.*

Relief will come sooner or later, it may be a very long, or it may be a very short time; but still in the Lord's own good time, it *will* come. If we could only keep this in view, how peacefully should we rest under the Lord's hand, assured that in His time, all will be well. If we were very ill, and a physician prescribed for us, we should not expect to be cured by the *first dose* of medicine; *we should wait*; just so the *first stroke* does not cure the rebelliousness of our hearts. The Physician who smites, knows best how much we have need of; He will inflict no more and no less; "*wait* therefore on the Lord." "He that believeth, shall not make haste." How beautifully is this frame of mind spoken of by the Prophet Micah, (vii. 9.) "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness."

### 3. *To pray without ceasing.*

Compass the mercy seat with prayer, cry mightily to the Lord. No time when we need pray so much

as in trial, no time when our prayers are more quickened, more earnest, or more supplicating. Pray for a resigned spirit; pray for sanctification of soul; pray that you may see the design of your sorrow; pray for the Lord Jesus' support. The Christian will always pray, the living spirit that actuates his soul is prayer, it is the health of spiritual life; but in the hour of affliction, the nature of all earthly things is seen, there is a clinging of the soul to Jesus, a looking to Him as the only refuge; the earnest cry of a burdened heart, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." "Pray without ceasing;" it is the support in life, the passport to the first resurrection.

#### 4. *To hope against hope.*

This was Abraham's case. God called him to give up all, to leave houses, lands, father, kindred, all, and to go into a land where he had not a portion so much as to put his foot upon. The promise had been given him, that "his seed should possess the land." He believed, "he hoped against hope." Knowing that "faithful was He that had promised". You may cry out, "All these things are against me;" that the waves of the Lord have gone over you, that you are sinking in the deep mire; you may say, 'How can the Lord deliver me?' With Him all things are possible, no want of power or unwillingness in Him, He is able; hope, therefore, against hope; however dark the present state,

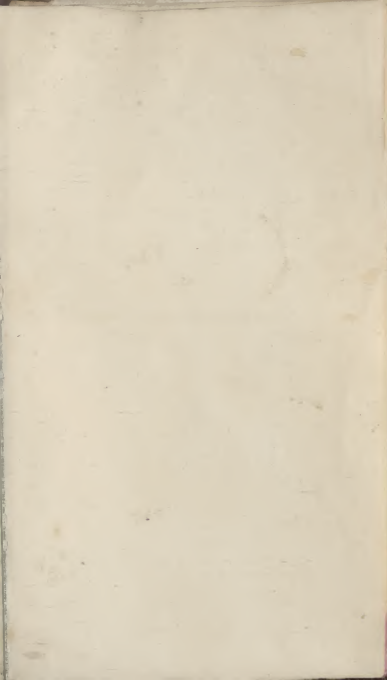
hope ; however despairing all looks around, hope ; however bitter the affliction, hope ; "Hope in God, for He will yet give you rest, who is the help of your countenance and your God." "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Seek this feeling, *hope* ; for the time is at hand, when *faith* will have become *sight*, and *hope* will have been turned into *reality* ; then will you see that "they that trusted in the Lord were even as Mount Zion, which shall never be moved."

In conclusion. I am speaking to some now who are not the Lord's people. Fellow sinners, when things do not go right, you say, quickly enough, "All these things are against me." You are right, "*All are* against you," while out of covenant with Christ, while you have no desire after God as a Refuge, for Christ as a Saviour. But, O ! how fatally true will these words be in the day of the Lord ; all then will be against you : God the Father "who would not the death of a sinner," will be against you ; God the Son the only hope for the lost, will be against you ; God the Holy Ghost who strives and wrestles with you, will be against you ; Angels who swell the choir above, will be against you ; Saints who mourn and pray for the perishing, will be against you ; Devils who have tempted you, will be against you ; your own evil companions who have helped you to sin, will be against you ; and worst of all, your own conscience will condemn you. Do you ask, why ?

Because you are *without all excuse*: Christian Sabbaths broken; a preached Gospel neglected; means of grace slighted; a Bible unread; a prayer hearing God unthought of; an immortal soul uncleansed, unsaved, uncared for. What can you expect in that day, if you are unaltered? And yet now there is time; time to flee to Christ, to have His blood sprinkled upon your soul, to have your sins forgiven, and your iniquities pardoned; now there is time, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi. 2.)

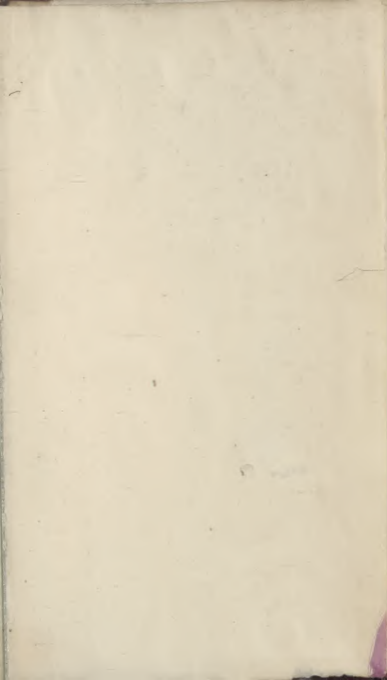
O that I had the power, as I have the will, to shew you, not merely the necessity, but the joy of fleeing to Christ; to feel that your sins are cleansed away, that God is your Father, Jesus your Saviour, the Spirit your Comforter, heaven your home. Why, the cry which the Lord Jesus is uttering now is, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." (John, v. 40.) The cry that will be borne with unceasing power, and with terrible distinctness, to your heart, throughout eternity, will be, "*I would not come to Christ that I might have life.*"

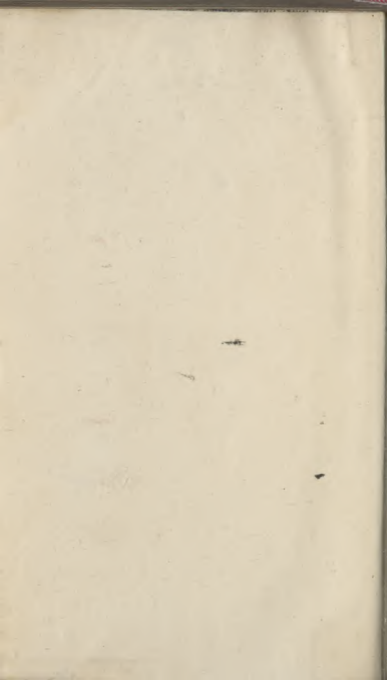












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