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To

Miss M. Calderwood

From an affectionate  
Friend

From

September 30<sup>th</sup>

1857



No. .j

# “CLEAVE UNTO THE LORD.”

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BY THE REV. J. FLEMING.

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JOSHUA xxiii. 8.—*“But cleave unto the Lord your God.”*

WHATEVER be our circumstances in life, they are all ordered and directed by an Almighty and Beneficent Being, who entertains feelings of kindness towards us, and who displays these feelings in the bestowal of innumerable and precious blessings upon us. He breathes within us the breath of life, and sustains us in existence during the feeble and helpless years of infancy, amidst the multitudes that are cut down by death in this early stage of their being; and after we have begun to walk in the apartments which we occupy, and in the neighbourhood where we live, He guides our wandering footsteps, and protects us amidst many and imminent dangers into which we unconsciously rush; and after advancing us onward to maturity, He still upholds us in the full use of the various faculties with which He has endowed us, and the various members with which He has favoured us, so that we are enabled to engage in the different pursuits that are necessary to our support and comfort. And after we have arrived at old age, He sympathises with our many infirmities—He sustains our tottering limbs, and still remembers

us, old and grey-headed as we are. And although we are unworthy of the very smallest of these mercies, and deserve to be cut down as cumberers of the ground, and have our portion immediately assigned us in the place of perdition, yet He does inconceivably more for us than merely preserve our temporal lives amidst the difficulties and dangers to which we are exposed in the various stages of our progress in the journey of life—He has made provision for our happiness hereafter, and forever. He knew the lost and sinful state in which we would be involved by nature and practice, and in the exercise of His kindness towards us, He made an agreement with His only begotten and well beloved Son to redeem and purify us, and so bring us into a state of communion with Him here and enjoyment with Him hereafter. Now, as there are individuals who advance to the various stages of the temporal life, so also there are individuals who advance to the various stages of the spiritual life—they are born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. They are first of all babes in Christ, and they are supported (amidst the many efforts that are made by their spiritual enemies to destroy them) with the sincere milk of the word, and consequently grow thereby; and there are others who are advanced in the spiritual life to the age of young men, and who, in this stage of their progress towards heaven, obtain brighter views of God's real character, and increased degrees of His grace, and are thus strengthened against the temptations to which they are exposed, and encouraged to the discharge of the duties which are required. And there are others who are advanced to the age of fathers in the spiritual life, who have become rooted and grounded in the faith and hope of the gospel, and so are enabled to repel the attacks that are made upon them by enemies both within and without, and to go onward from strength to strength unwearied, until they appear before God in Sion. And so it is, that while all our species in general, in all stages of their existence, are obligated to cleave unto the Lord, from the many temporal benefits He bestows upon them, yet those who are brought into the spiritual life are under unspeakably greater obligations to do so.

But it is a mournful fact, that obligated as all our species are to cleave unto the Lord, that there is a sad aversion in the human mind to do so, and an awful proneness to wander away from Him. The unregenerate are quite insensible of the obligations they are under to cleave unto the Lord; and not only so, but they are ignorant of His character, and consequently of His worthiness to be adhered to at all times and in all circumstances; and hence it is that the unregenerate among the young know well how to depart away from Him, but to cleave to Him they have no understanding; so that instead of seeking Him early, although assured if they do so they will find Him, they seek after amusement, and vanity, and vice; and hence it is said, that they go astray, speaking lies, almost as soon as they are born; and when they have arrived at manhood, and when it might be expected that then they would bethink themselves, and guard against the follies of childhood and the vanities of youth, yet they often become more foolish than they were before, and more addicted to vanity than ever, and frequently indulge in vices to which they were formerly strangers; so that instead of cleaving to the Lord in proportion as they approach His judgment-seat, they become more and more alienated from Him. And when they arrive at old age, they become worse than children with regard to real religion; and so it is that, instead of giving good advice and exhibiting a good example, they give bad advice and set before others a very bad example; and thus they go down to the grave unchanged and unprepared for eternity. And with regard to the regenerate, there are so many snares laid to entangle them, both on the right hand and on the left, both by friends and foes, that they are in danger of forgetting God, and deviating from the path of rectitude into which they have been directed; and hence it is that many a pious child has been advised and tempted to engage in some forbidden scenes, which has cost him many a day and many a year's bitter regret; and many a pious young man has been allured by the profits and fascinations of the world, to set his affections on things below when he ought to have set them on things above, so that God has not been in his thoughts; and many a pious father has been

so perplexed with difficulty and disappointment, that he has been apt to murmur against God, and to allow that place in his heart to the difficulties and perplexities of his situation which ought to be given to God and to those devotional exercises through which he communicates Himself to the soul. Now, to these difficulties, and temptations, and allurements the Jewish tribes were much exposed; and Joshua, knowing the danger in which they would involve themselves if they wandered from the God to whom they had been brought near, and extremely solicitous for their temporal and spiritual prosperity, with his dying breath beseeched them to cleave unto the Lord.

To cleave unto the Lord is to know Him savingly. We would never think of attaching ourselves to a person with whom we were unacquainted, or of whose character we heard very unfavourable accounts. Neither will we cleave unto the Lord if we continue ignorant of His character, or give credit to the unscriptural statements which are made by sceptical men concerning Him; and so it is that those who know not God, or who rest satisfied with speculative notions about Him, instead of cleaving to Him, usually wander farther from Him, and engage in those pursuits which He has expressly forbidden, and for the prosecution of which He has denounced the severest punishment. But when persons, either in youth, or manhood, or old age, are internally illumined by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit of God, to contemplate the character of the Lord as he Himself hath made it known in His pure and blessed word, then they are brought to know Him savingly—to know that He is God over all and blessed for ever—that He is the Great Creator and Supreme Governor of the universe—that He is possessed of every perfection and every attraction that is calculated to excite the esteem and admiration of all mankind, and which actually makes Him admired and beloved by all who believe on Him—that He is the Great Lawgiver who appeared to Moses on Sinai's smoking summits, and, in the midst of thunders and lightnings and other fearful sights, proclaimed the ten commandments, and gave them to Moses to be communicated to the Israelites as the rule of their obe-



dience, and the obedience of all mankind—that He is the great Redeemer, who has shed His precious blood as the price of man's redemption, and so rescues them from the tyranny of Satan and the chains of sin, makes them free, and restores them to the glorious liberty of the sons of God—that He is the great Advocate of His people, who pleads their cause at the throne above, and secures for and bestows upon them all those blessings which spiritualise, enrich, ennoble, and exalt the soul—that He is the great Entreator, who beseeches the young, the middle-aged, and the old, in the most tender and pressing accents, to come unto Him that they may have life, and have it more abundantly; who has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but rather that they would come unto Him and live. And whoever is thus led by the Spirit to contemplate and know the Lord, whether they are old or young, or rich or poor, become quite attached to Him. He now occupies the supreme place in their hearts, and whatever may be their attachment to neighbours, friends and relatives, however near and dear those relatives may be to them, yet their attachment to the Lord is inconceivably greater; and whatever they may know about other subjects, and other objects, and other pursuits, however useful and however profitable, this knowledge of their Lord infinitely surpasses it all. They seek no other treasure to enrich them, no other portion to satisfy them, no other object to delight them, and say like David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides thee. My heart and my flesh may faint and fail me; but thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

To cleave unto the Lord is to depend upon Him firmly. Pride is an evil passion that is quite natural to our species, and under its pernicious influence they imagine that they either need nothing, or if they do, they are perfectly able to supply their own wants; and did this principle operate merely in reference to their fellow-men and their temporal circumstances, then it would be of less consequence; but we find that the same principle influences our race in reference to God and our spiritual interests; and hence it is that, poor and needy, weak and helpless, as we actually are, yet

we think that we are rich and stand in need of nothing for the benefit of the soul, or if we do, we conceive ourselves quite able to secure what we need for its welfare; and so it is that multitudes of our species are either quite indifferent about this momentous subject, or they depend upon their own righteousness to secure for them whatever is necessary. But when individuals, in whatever stage of their existence they move, are convinced by the Holy Spirit of God of their sinful and miserable, their weak and helpless, state—that they stand in need of everything, and are altogether unable to secure for themselves any thing—they are not only humbled and led to say, in the language of Job, “Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee,”—they not only renounce all dependence upon themselves or any works of righteousness which they may have done or can do,—but they are led to contemplate the suitableness and sufficiency of Christ’s righteousness, and to depend entirely upon it as the only ground of their acceptance with God—they not only become quite willing to be indebted to Christ for the whole of their salvation—but they also depend completely upon him for all they need in order to their present peace and future happiness, and rejoice to think that such a great and glorious Saviour has been provided for them, who is able to save unto the very uttermost all who draw near unto Him, however deep their guilt, and however complicated their criminality, and that such a perfect, full and finished righteousness has been wrought out by Him, and that this righteousness is unto all and upon all who believe in Him, and by the imputation of it they are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. And there is nothing they so highly value—nothing they so ardently desire—none on whom they so thoroughly depend, as on the Lord Jesus Christ and his righteousness; accordingly they adopt the language of the Apostle when he said, *Philippians* iii. 8, 9, 10, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteous-

ness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

To cleave unto the Lord is to abide by Him constantly. We are naturally alienated from the Lord, and sin has produced this alienation. Two intelligent beings cannot maintain harmony with each other, so long as they are opposed to each other in disposition, in sentiment, and in action. Now, sin has caused this opposition between the Lord and our race. He is life, and the giver of all the natural, spiritual and eternal life that is enjoyed by His creatures; but our species are spiritually dead, and exposed to, and multitudes of them involved in, eternal death. The Lord is light, and the Author of all the natural and spiritual light that is experienced by our race; but our species are spiritually blind, and cannot see the beauty and glory of the Lord. He is immaculately pure in all his thoughts, entertaining feelings of love and affection towards Adam's guilty offspring; but we are full of impurity, our carnal hearts are enmity against God, and we entertain feelings of hatred and envy towards our fellow-men. He is righteous in all his ways, maintaining the strictest justice in all his transactions with our species; but we are quite unrighteous, acting treacherously towards God, robbing Him of His glory, and trifling with the duties which He requires; acting, in many cases, dishonestly with our fellow-men, not only depriving them of their due, but often doing injury to their property. Now, so long as we are in these circumstances, we cannot abide by the Lord, nor even cleave unto Him; there must be a similarity of disposition and sentiment ere we can do so. Indeed, men must be united to the Lord by a principle of faith ere they can abide by Him; by this principle they must be ingrafted into Him, and so participate of that spiritual life which He communicates to His people, by which they are quickened and made alive to Him; so that as the branch lives by its being united to and receiving nourishment from the parent stock, they may live by their being ingrafted into Christ, and receiving spiritual life and quickening from Him; and by this prin-

ciple of faith, they are enabled to contemplate the beauty, the excellency and glory of His character as God over all, and consequently quite able to do for them above and beyond what they are able either to ask or think; as man, and so quite qualified to sympathise with their infirmities and feel for their distresses; as Mediator, and consequently opening up the way to and bringing them into a state of favour with God. By this principle they are led to contemplate the beauty of holiness, the holiness of Jehovah's nature, and the holiness which adorns all His redeemed people; and they are made partakers of that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. They become interested in His righteousness, and are now possessed of a righteous nature, and are anxious and careful to live a righteous life, and as Christ their Lord liveth, they live also, and out of His fulness do they receive, and grace for grace; and being united to Him by this principle of faith, which is wrought in the soul by the effectual agency of His Holy Spirit, there is not only a similarity of disposition, but also a similarity of sentiment produced. Now it is that they become agreed,—Christ draws near to them, and they are led close to Him; and this union is continually maintained, for nothing can separate them from the love of Christ; and they are commanded at all times to maintain it, "Abide in me," says Christ, "and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit unless it abide in the vine, no more can ye unless ye abide in me; for without me ye can do nothing." And as the branch must abide constantly by the vine, otherwise instead of bringing forth fruit it would wither and die, so must we abide constantly by the Lord, otherwise instead of living to His praise we would grow weak and languid in spiritual exercises, saying, in the language of the Psalmist, "My waiting eyes are constantly set towards the Lord; for he it is that can bring forth my feet out of the net, and keep me as the apple of his eye."

To cleave unto the Lord is to obey Him carefully. The Lord is not only our great Creator and Bountiful Benefactor—He is not only our great Mediator and the Lord our Righteousness—but He is also our great Lawgiver and Judge. He hath given us a rule to direct us

in all the situations in which we may be placed, in which He requires us to know and acknowledge Him as the only living and true God, and to worship and glorify Him accordingly,—in which He requires us to observe and keep pure all such religious worship and ordinances as He hath appointed in His word,—in which He requires us to maintain a holy and reverend use of His various names, titles, attributes, word and works,—in which he requires us to rest the whole of the Sabbath from all worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending the whole of it in the public and private exercises of religion, except so much as is to be taken up in acts of necessity and mercy,—in which He requires us to maintain the honour, and perform the duty belonging to every one in their several places and relations,—in which He requires us to use all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life and the life of others, and to maintain chastity in heart, speech, and behaviour; and to preserve our own, and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate; and to speak the truth in all our transactions; and to be content with our situation, and maintain a right and charitable frame of spirit towards our neighbour and all that is his. And He who requires all this, is also our Judge; and the period is fast approaching when we must appear before his great white throne in heaven, and answer for the right discharge of all the duties which He enjoins, and will render unto all according to their works. Now, there can be no cleaving unto such an illustrious personage as this, unless we be obedient to his injunctions. If we deny or do not worship Him as God and our God,—if we profane and abuse the various ways by which he makes himself known,—if we devote the Sabbath to any other exercises than those which he hath commanded,—if we neglect the honour, and refuse to perform the duties we owe to every one in their several places and relations,—if we do what has a tendency to injure our neighbours, either by our words or our conduct,—if we feel discontented with the situation in which Providence has been pleased to place us, and envy and grieve at the good of our neighbours,—there can be no cleaving unto the Lord where this is the case. As no man can

be said to be the follower of another who acts a part quite the reverse of that which he requires, so none can be said to be a follower of, or cleave unto the Lord, unless he is careful to do all that the Lord requires—unless his mind is fixed and stayed upon Him, and attuned with his lips to praise Him, saying, in the language of the Psalmist, "My heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, I will sing and praise thee,"—unless he is earnest in prayer to God, saying, "Pardon mine iniquity,"—unless his conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ, saying, like the Psalmist, "Come near all ye that fear God, and I will tell what he hath done for my soul,"—unless he is diligent in keeping the Sabbath, saying, like David, "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than dwell in tents of wickedness,"—unless he is attentive to the relative duties which are enjoined upon him, whether as a parent, a partner, or a child,—unless he is possessed of the feeling of benevolence towards his fellows, and under the influence of this feeling, exerting himself to advance their real interests, not only doing to others what he would that others would do to him, but also doing more for others than they do for him.

From what has been said, my friends, let us be entreated to cleave unto the Lord. Besides our being naturally involved in distress, there are the troubles which constantly arise from the calamitous events that are frequently taking place, and the errors into which we frequently run, and the treachery to which we are at all times exposed, and the disappointments which we constantly experience. And there are none who can relieve, protect and cheer us in our distress but God the Lord. Do we place any dependance upon our fellow-men and cultivate their friendship, we find the declarations of scripture verified from our own experience, namely, "that cursed is the man that trusteth in man;" and again, "the help of man is vain." Do we place our dependance upon our own ingenuity and acquirements, we find, from the same source, "that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;" "that vain man goes astray speaking lies." Do we place our dependance upon our possessions, and feel great anxiety

and make many efforts to secure and increase them, we find, from the same inestimable book, that these "take wings to themselves and flee away;" and "none of them can redeem from death, and be a sufficient ransom for the soul." It is the Lord alone that can be a refuge in times of trouble to the distressed,—He never disappoints those that cleave unto Him, but does for them far above what they are able either to ask or think. Blessed, then, must be the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose God Jehovah is. He never forsakes those that betake themselves to Him: "I have loved thee," says He "with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb? yea, she may forget, but I will not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." He never fails to support all who draw near to Him with their whole heart; "I will strengthen, and support, and uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." He never ceases to guide and to direct them to the land of everlasting rest, where the wicked cease to trouble, and where the weary are at rest: "I will make darkness light before thee, I will guide thee with my counsel, and afterwards conduct you to glory." He never fails to enrich their souls with spiritual and heavenly treasures: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see." "I will give you my flesh, which is meat indeed, and my blood, which is drink indeed." He never fails to animate and gladden their hearts, in whatever circumstances they may be placed: "In the world," says He, "ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. I will make your hearts to rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." What powerful motives are these, my friends, to urge us to cleave unto the Lord—to become more and more acquainted

with his real character, and excellency, and love; so that we may see how worthy He is of being sought after, and how obligated we are to do so—to depend upon Him for every blessing that we need, in order to our escape from the regions of despair, and our enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven—to delight ourselves in Him, who gives the desires of our hearts—to commit ourselves to Him, who will bring it to pass—to abide by Him, and maintain fellowship with Him, who is the sure and satisfying portion of the soul; and allow neither friends, nor acquirements, nor possessions, to occupy that place in our hearts which ought to be occupied with Him, who holds our souls in life, and who suffers not our feet to be moved.

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KILMARNOCK:

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## MEMOIRS, SERMONS, AND TRACTS,

BY THE REV. J. FLEMING, TROON.

1. Death of Captain K.—r.
2. Memoir of Margaret Barr, who died at Irvine, 16th April, 1828.
3. Card-Playing.
4. Memoir of Agnes Jackson, who died at Troon, 10th April, 1828.
5. True Religion the only Remedy for a Disquieted Soul.—Psalm xliii. 5, "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."
6. The Danger of Procrastination.—Psalm xxxix. 4, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."
7. Awful Warning.
8. The Sailor Boy.
9. The Packman.
10. The Cruel Master.
11. The Pious Colliers.
12. The Roaring Lion.
13. Man's Great Concern.
14. The Pleasant Journey.
15. The Best Refuge from the Pestilence.—Psalm xci. 9, "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation."
16. The Dreadful Plague.
17. Christian Watchfulness.—Mark xiii. 37, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."
18. The Great Deliverance.—Isaiah xxxviii. 17, "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back."
19. The Excellent Mother. An Authentic Narrative.
20. Speech, delivered at the formation of the Irvine Society for Promoting the Education of Females in India.
21. Tract.
22. Singular Conversion of Three Ayrshire Boys. An Authentic Narrative.
23. Speech, delivered at the Meeting of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, in support of a Day of Thanksgiving for an Abundant Harvest.









