

## **HAPPINESS—its NATURE and SOURCES Described, and MISTAKES Concerning it Corrected.**

By John Angell James

Many are saying, "**Who can show us any good?**" Look on us with favor, Lord. You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound. (Psalm 4:6-7)

Reader, this little tract comes to you with the high pretension, (and a higher one it cannot make,) of pointing out to you **what** true happiness is, **where** it is to be found, and **how** it is to be obtained. To such a subject you cannot be, ought not to be, and are not, indifferent. As one among the countless millions whose dwelling-place is in a valley of tears, and as a part of the "whole creation, which groans and travails in pain together until now," you are interested in a treatise which addresses you in the character of a comforter, to perform the charitable office of lightening your weeping eyes, and hushing the sighs of your troubled bosom.

Or if, perhaps, you have not been the subject of actual, or oppressive sorrow, but only of those restless and insatiable cravings after some suitable and adequate good, which all men feel, you may still profitably employ a few minutes, in reading these simple pages, the desire of which is to put you in possession of what you so ardently covet, and which you have hitherto, perhaps, so fruitlessly sought.

It may be you have commenced the desperate effort to reconcile yourself to dissatisfaction and sorrow. You have tried one experiment after another to extract happiness by various processes and have been unsuccessful in them all. The elixir could not be obtained. The ethereal spirit could not be caught; and in despondency you have abandoned exertion and hope, saying of happiness, as Brutus, just before he stabbed himself, said of virtue—that he had sought it wherever it was to be found, and had at length discovered that it was but a name. Revoke such a

conclusion, at least until you have perused this tract. There may be one source yet unexplored—one method untried—and that one may contain the object of your search.

The writer of this work is not a speculative theorist; he gives the result of extended observation, he embodies the testimony of thousands with whom he has conversed, and of multitudes besides. And, what is more, he offers the result of his own experience. He has tried the subject, and "has tasted, and handled, and felt," that which he presents to you. He has drunk at the fountain of living waters, and now offers his friendly hand to guide you to the crystal stream, of which, if you drink, you will thirst for no other, but in glad and grateful content say "It is enough!"

Many are saying, "**Who can show us any good?**" Look on us with favor, Lord. You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound. (Psalms 4:6-7)

Man is formed with a capacity for happiness, and with an innate, urgent, and irrepressible desire after it. This desire for happiness is a universal propensity, and appertains to him as man, irrespective of external and adventitious distinctions. His bountiful Creator has placed him in a situation where it may be obtained—and has not implanted in him an appetite for which he has made no suitable or adequate provision. If anyone therefore, is actually miserable—it is his own fault; and he has only himself to blame. Yet how few comparatively are happy, even in that lower degree which is obtainable by us in this present world! How small is the number whose aspect and conversation lead us to infer that they are contented, or even moderately satisfied! There is a hurry in their step; an anxiety, not to say a sorrow, in their look; a tone of complaint in their language; a restlessness in their habits; a perpetual change in their pleasures, which indicate, plainly enough—that they are not happy, and know not what bliss means, or how it is to be sought.

I may at once assign and explain the reason, why this is so; or, rather, I will quote the language of God himself, who, in

addressing the Jews, has disclosed the secret. "My people," said he, "have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water." Yes, there it is. Man was created for the enjoyment of God! His soul wanted, and still wants, an infinite object to love, serve, and delight in—and nothing less will satisfy him. God offered, and still offers Himself for the enjoyment of man; but instead of serving his Creator, man serves himself, and instead of seeking his felicity in the favor of God, he seeks it from other sources. Thus he forsakes the fountain ever full and flowing; hews out a cistern which breaks under his hand; lives the discontented victim of his folly and sin in turning away from God to the creature; and dies with the sorrowful lament of Solomon, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

It will be allowed by all, that **Adam** was perfectly happy in Paradise before his fall. No tear suffused his eye; no care wrinkled his brow; no fears disturbed his peace; no groan escaped his bosom. He was at rest. He rose in the morning without dread; passed through the day without a sense of need; and lay down at night without a sigh. Perpetual sunshine gilded his countenance, and untroubled serenity reigned in his soul. What made him happy? Not company, for one sole partner of his bliss shared with him the new-made world—not the pleasures of the table, for he ate only of the fruits that grew around him, and drank of the springs that watered the garden; not public amusements, for they had no existence—not music, for, with the exception of the feathered choir of the grove, there was but one voice besides his own, and no instrument, on earth—not the arts, for they were not invented—not science, for it had not begun its discoveries—nor literature, for it had not commenced its studies. Yet, notwithstanding the absence of all these sources of gratification which fallen man depends upon for the little happiness he has, the perfect and unfallen man was happy. And what made him so? The enjoyment of God! He looked up with filial eye to heaven, and said, "O God, you are my God. Your favor is life, and Your loving kindness is better than life itself!"

Think also of "the spirits of just men made perfect" in

heaven. Are not they happy? What makes them so? None of the amusements of earth are there—no mirthful parties, no festive scenes, none of the delights which now please the votaries of pleasure, are there. No, it is replied, for it is impossible they should be—they suit not that state. Just so. Yet those holy beings are happy. What are the springs of their felicity? The favor of God! Surely that must be happiness which was enjoyed by unsinning man in Paradise; and will be enjoyed by restored man in heaven. But perhaps it will be thought and said, that what suited the sinless man in Eden, and the sinless spirit in heaven, will not suit the sinful man on earth. Why not? For no other reason, that can be imagined, but because he is sinful. It cannot be because the favor of God is not suited to his nature as a rational creature; or because he has not faculties for such a kind of delight. What can be more adapted to the nature of a finite mind than the enjoyment of the favor of the infinite mind? If, therefore, the soul of man cannot enjoy God, this must be, not from any natural cause which is excusable, but from some sinful cause; and how sinful must it be? What a degradation and debasement of nature is it to have no taste, no disposition for the enjoyment of God; to turn away from our God for happiness; to have no inclination to seek it in him! To prefer many things, anything, everything—to God's favor, as a source of happiness! How startling!

But let us now look back to the passage from the Psalms which stands at the introduction of this tract. It presents to us two obviously distinct classes of people, which I will describe by designations very generally used, and as generally understood. "The people of the world," and "The people of God." Each class is marked by their peculiar views on the subject of happiness.

In the "many are saying—Who can show us **any** good?" we recognize at once the **people of the world**. Observe what it is they want, and are inquiring after—good. By this we are to understand, something that will please, gratify, satisfy—something that is adapted to give contentment and enjoyment. There is nothing wrong in such a desire. It is the instinctive and natural inquiry of a dependent, rational creature. It belongs to God alone to be the fountain of His own blessedness, and to contain all the springs of happiness

in Himself. God, and He only, is self-sufficient. All created beings are dependent, not only for existence, but for bliss. Man, especially as a fallen creature, must look outside of himself. He must travel, so to speak, from home for good. This desire and inquiry after "good," is neither virtuous nor wicked, it has no moral character, but is simply an instinct. It is right or wrong according to the choice we make to gratify the desire. It is a positive, absolute, and uncontrollable necessity of our nature to wish to be happy; for it is an impossibility to wish otherwise. In common therefore with the people of God, the people of the world desire good.

But notice also the indefiniteness of the inquiry—**any** good. Now what should have been the inquiry? What should now be the inquiry of every rational creature? I answer, it should have been this, "Who will show us **the** good? Tell us what is the chief good? Instruct us what is that good which our souls need, which God has provided for us, and which, when possessed, will satisfy us?" Is it not evident that such should be the nature and object of our inquiries? Ought we to be satisfied with anything, whether suitable or unsuitable, satisfying or unsatisfying? Is it worthy of a thinking being, in reference to so important a matter as his own happiness, to set out with so vague a guide as that word "any," in quest of bliss? Ought we not to institute a most rigid and anxious investigation into the constitution, condition, wants, woes, and capacities of our souls; and also into the provisions which God has made for our contentment and enjoyment? If there were no means of ascertaining these matters; or if all things were equally adapted to satisfy us, then it were rational to follow our own fancies—but when there is danger that shadows may be pursued instead of substances, and poison may be taken instead of food—we should be more intelligent, discriminating, definite, and settled in our choice.

Yet is not this the way of the multitude? Have they any precise notions of true happiness, either as to its nature, its sources, or the method of obtaining it? The great question "What is good?" is to them unsettled. The whole subject is to them enrap in impenetrable darkness. And hence they are running up and down in the world, and amidst the confusion of many voices we hear but one distinct and prevailing

sound, and that is "**any** good." What they want beyond the vague notion of happiness, they cannot tell you. One supposes it is wealth; another, rank; another, fame; another, pleasure; another, friendship; another, knowledge; another, love; and others, perpetually changing their opinion, conclude that it is all these by their turns. About nothing have the minds of men been more divided and unsettled—than the nature of the supreme felicity. Varro, a learned heathen, reckoned up more than two hundred opinions on this subject which existed in his time—a striking illustration of, and comment upon, the expression, "many are saying—Who can show us **any** good?" and no less convincing a proof of the necessity of an infallible oracle to decide the question; of a heavenly revelation to resolve the mystery. The oracle has been uttered; the revelation has been given, and yet "the many" with the answer in their possession, are still inquiring for "any" good.

You cannot fail to be struck with the sensuality of the question "Who will show us any good?" I use the term "sensuality," not in its grosser sense, as importing the indulgence of the lower appetites of our animal nature, but in a somewhat more refined meaning, as signifying the exercise of the mind on objects of sense, distinct from objects of faith. To such objects the inquiry is directed; it is a desire after something to be seen or heard, or handled, or tasted, or felt—something that can be known and apprehended apart from any special revelation from God; and which is adapted to our senses, appetites, and propensities as physical beings, and as placed in this present earthly state.

Is not this also most accurately descriptive of the disposition, ideas, tastes, and pursuits of the great bulk of mankind? They have not a notion of happiness but what stands associated with something seen and temporal. They live in a world of sense, not only as to their natural position, and their bodily habitation, but equally so as to all the exercises of their minds. **They have no conception of any happiness, which does not come from objects of an earthly nature.** "They mind earthly things." Their joys and their sorrows; their hopes and their fears; their aspirations and aversions; are all wakened and sustained by what can

be shown them—as objects of sense.

Now let me ask, is this rational? Only on the supposition, certainly, that this visible world is the whole comprising of being—the sum total of existence of the universe. But is it so? You know it is not. You know there are "unseen and eternal things," whether you look at them or not. The visible world as compared with the invisible, is but as the leaf on which the insect spends its short-lived existence, and which is all the region he sees or knows—compared to the great globe which we inhabit; or as the single drop of water, in which a community of microscopic organisms find the only world they know—compared to the boundless ocean. What a simplicity of language, and what a sublimity of subject is there in the expression, "The things that are unseen and eternal!" But how, it may be asked, do we know anything about that invisible world? By Scriptural revelation. And to make it known is the grand design of the inspired volume. The Scripture reveals an unseen God, an unseen Savior, an unseen heaven, an unseen hell, an unseen eternity, unseen angels and spirits—and all these are apprehended not by sense, but by the "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Do consider that we are as sure of the existence of an invisible world and its objects, as we can be of a visible one. Invisible excellence is infinitely greater than that which is visible, for the objects themselves are infinite. We are in reality a great deal more concerned with what is invisible, than with what is visible. Yes, the invisible things of another world are capable, from their and our own very natures, of being better known to us, and we may be more conversant with them in some respects, than we can be with such as appeal to our senses. Think upon the great and blessed **God**, our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; inhabiting his own eternity, filling immensity, possessing in infinite fullness all the sources of being, life, wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, and whatever else of perfection and glory we can conceive of. Contemplate the Lord **Jesus** Christ, the image of the invisible God; the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; the Savior of men; the Head of the Church; the Ruler of the universe. Behold the **salvation** which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Look

up into **Heaven**, the region of immortality, the world of unclouded light, the holy habitation of the eternal God, where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father; with the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, inheriting a fullness of joy in his presence. Are these realities—and have we no concern with them? What, is there a God who, though invisible, is so near to us, that he can be conversant with us wherever we go, and as soon as we are minded to be with him we find him with us?

"As soon as we close our eyes on things seen and temporal, and retire into ourselves, with a design to converse with him, he is immediately present with us, and it is as easy to converse with him, as it is with our own thoughts. As soon as we think we are with God, and He with us, in the twinkling of an eye we find Him. We look unto Him and are lightened; with the cast of an eye the soul may be filled with happiness, and replenished with a divine, heavenly, and vital light."

Is all this fact, and shall we not see and admit the folly and sin of turning our back upon such a world; of wandering away from such fountains of delight, with the inquiry, "Who will show us any good?" Is all this nothing, because it cannot be seen except by the eye of faith? Shall that which constitutes the glory of these objects, I mean their invisibility, be the ground and reason for despising them? Shall they be forsaken and forgotten because they are not visible to the eye, or audible to the ear, or palpable to the touch? Oh, is it come to this, that they who, to suit their twofold nature of body and spirit, are placed on the confines of both worlds, the border country of the visible and invisible states, that such creatures, so fearfully and wonderfully made, and so fearfully and wonderfully placed, should look for their happiness only to the visible and material, the mortal and corruptible, instead of the invisible and immaterial, the immortal and incorruptible? That all their excursions and researches after bliss, should be made, not into the unseen and eternal world, by means of faith, but in the world that is seen and temporal, by the aid of sense? Made with rational and immortal minds; made to be creatures of reason, rather than of sense, and of faith even more than of reason—shall we abjure our high distinction,

shall we put aside our prerogative, and by a voluntary degradation, and willing descent, come down and place ourselves on a level with the Atheist, who says, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die?"

Is it necessary to point out the result of such a course as this? Solomon proclaims it; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." Oh, with what a bitter emphasis of utterance would those who lived and died strangers to the blessings of true religion, and the love of God; who sought all their enjoyments from the visible world; who were contented with what could be shown them; who hewed out their broken cisterns which could hold no water; with what a bitter emphasis of utterance, I say, would they, could their voice be heard from beyond the impassable gulf, certify to us the truth of the verdict—all is vanity! Though warned by solemn voices from without, and gentle yet intelligible whispers from within; though admonished by impressive events in the history of others, and the painful experience of their own, they **trifled away life** in seeking the gratification of sense, instead of the joys of faith. Each period of existence, and each change of situation, found them urging the inquiry, "Who will show us any good?" No disappointment cured their folly, no experience corrected their mistake. The visible, and that only, engaged their attention; they determined to have happiness from that or not at all; and they died with the sullen conviction, if not with the candid confession, that they had lived unblessed—strangers to happiness.

Not that I mean to affirm that none suppose themselves happy, and have in reality a considerable portion of enjoyment, from visible things exclusively. Many doubtless have. There is certainly some pleasure in the gratification of the appetites; in the enjoyment of health, friends, property, fame. Even sinful objects have their pleasures. There could be no power in temptation if sin yielded no enjoyment. But what is designed in all I have said is that man, as a rational, moral, and immortal creature; as a sinner subject to the stings of a reproachful conscience, and under the displeasure of the God he has offended; as liable to all the vicissitudes of a tearful existence, and ever exposed to the

fear and stroke of death, needs something more for his happiness than can be found in the objects of sense. He has needs which they cannot supply; cravings which they cannot satisfy; woes which they cannot alleviate; and anxieties which they cannot dispel. For each one that is even tolerably successful in gaining felicity from visible objects, there are many who utterly fail. Their schemes are frustrated; their hopes perish; their air-built castles vanish as they journey on in life; and each ends a course of worldly-mindedness, by adding another to the millions of examples which had proved it to be vanity.

In some cases abundance and unobstructed enjoyment produce satiety. Tired of old pleasures they look about for new ones, and plead the oft-repeated inquiry, "Who will show us anything good?" Novelty perhaps comes to the relief of their discontented, restless, and dissatisfied minds; but novelty itself soon grows old, and still something new is wanted. There remains an aching void within, a craving, hungry appetite for bliss, unsatisfied, unfed. They hunt for enjoyment in endless parties of pleasure, in every place of amusement, in every scene of diversion; in the dance, and in the game; in the theater, and in the concert; amidst the scenes of nature, and in the changes of foreign travel—but happiness, like a shadow ever flitting before them, and ever eluding their grasp, tantalizes them with its form, without yielding them its substance, and excites their hopes only to disappoint them.

Such is the consequence of seeking happiness only from the objects of sense. This train of reasoning will be resumed in a subsequent part of the tract.

I now turn to the other class of people presented to us in the text we are considering, and whom I have called **the people of God**, because they are thus acknowledged in the Holy Scriptures. I mean those who live by faith; are born again of the Spirit; and love God supremely, habitually, and practically. They too have a desire after good, or happiness; and what is more, they know what it is, where it is to be found, and how it is to be obtained, and they also possess and enjoy it, at least in its beginning. You have heard the prayer of the other class, now listen to theirs. "Lord, lift up

the light of your countenance upon us!" Such is their desire, and such the sublimity of its object. Upon the supposition that their petition has been heard and granted, and indeed, in the consciousness that they possess the blessing they have sought, they declare that they experience a joy far superior to the joy with which the men of the world rejoice in harvest or in vintage, the times and sources of their wealth; a joy, bright, and pure, and serene as the region from which it descends—"You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound!"

Is it necessary to say, that by the light of God's countenance is meant his favor? The light of the countenance, the shining of the face, is a smile, and a smile is the symbol of delight. It is therefore as if the Psalmist had said, "Let the multitude, in their ignorant concern after felicity, seek their happiness from earthly sources, and from objects of sense—as for me, O God, I see, and thank you for having by your grace enabled me to see, that true blessedness can only be found in the enjoyment of your favor. With you is the fountain of life, and in your light alone can I see light. Your favor is the life of my soul, the bliss of my existence!"

Observe then, that the people of God consider his favor to be the very element of bliss for a rational and immortal creature. It is! for, as I have already shown, it was the bliss of Adam in Paradise, and is the happiness of angels and saints in heaven.

It is a question worth asking, and ought to be asked—since man as a sinner is under the displeasure of God, how he can become an object of the Divine regard—and in what way those who were by nature children of his wrath can become the sons and daughters of his love. The New Testament explains the mystery. "For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us! Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how

much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!" (Romans 5:6-10)

Wonderful scheme! Glorious plan of infinite mercy! This is love, its brightest manifestation, its richest commendation! God is love, and here He shows to the universe what His love can do—all it can do. No wonder the Apostle prayed for the believing Ephesians that they "might be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge." The people of God (and it is thus they have become such,) have believed the love that God has to them. They have given credence to the Gospel which declares the wondrous truth, and have, through faith alone, been reconciled to God. The enmity of the carnal mind in them, has been slain by faith in the cross of Christ; and now they love God, because God has first loved them. A new world has opened to them in their views of a God of love, and in their apprehensions of the love of God. That new world they enter by faith, and as its objects of contemplation, sources of interest, and springs of consolation present themselves to their minds, they take up the exulting strain of the apostle, even as they taste something of his delight, "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." This is now their happiness, the favor of God; and this is the way in which they have gained it, by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this you see something **DEFINITE**. The child of God is decided in his choice; fixed in his object; resolved in purpose; and settled in his plans. The mists of ignorance have rolled away and presented to him the object of his heart's desire—a fountain of bliss, near at hand, certain and satisfactory. Suspense is at an end. Incertitude is over. Vagrancy terminates. "Here it is!" he exclaims; "This is it! the very thing I need—all my soul can desire—provided by God—satisfying, infinite, eternal—the love of God in Christ!"

And as it is something definite, so it is something **SUITABLE**—just what man needs—something for the mind, for the heart, for the whole soul; the restoration to him, of that which he possessed and enjoyed when he came fresh

and pure from the hand of his Maker in Paradise; and for which he was in fact created, but which he lost by the fall—the leading him back to the tree of life in the midst of the garden, to feast again upon its precious fruits. What is so suitable for man's spirit as the love of God; indeed, where is there anything that suits it but this? **What are all the pleasures of time and sense, all the objects of this visible world—for man's heart—but as the dropping of pebbles into a deep chasm, which, instead of filling it up, only tell him how deep it is, by awakening the dismal echoes of emptiness and desolation?**

No, nothing but reconciliation to God, and the going back of the filial spirit through faith in Jesus Christ to enjoy the smile, and be assured of the love of the Father of spirits, can be ever deemed a suitable bliss for any of the children of Adam. This the Christian has. He feels the arms of everlasting love around him, and is sustained by the enfolding of these—he looks up to meet the light of God's countenance beaming upon him, and hears at the same moments the gracious words that fall from the lips of infinite benignity. "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you."

This is indeed "the chief good!" The supreme felicity, good in the full meaning, and deepest emphasis of the word. What being can we find greater than God, to make us happy; and what can we find even in God that is greater than His love? The smile of God is the daylight, yes, the noon-tide glory of heaven, in which redeemed spirits bask, and angels spread their wings and soar with ecstasies unknown to us. The highest and the lowest intellect meet here as in their common center. Reason and revelation alike proclaim that the supreme good of every rational and moral being must be the enjoyment of God.

How consonant is all this with what reason teaches us of the nature of the chief good; which demonstrates that, whatever it is—it must include the following characteristics; it must be something which all men may possess; it must be one and the same to all mankind; it must be something, which, while in itself fitted to make the possessor happy, is not prevented in its operation by some other thing which keeps him from

relishing it; it must be something which is not referred to or dependent on any other, but all other things must be embraced for the sake of it; it must be immutable, and not vary with the changing seasons and circumstances through which man is called to pass; and it must be sufficient to furnish a happiness adequate to the capacities of human nature, and of equal duration; it must not only be perfect while it lasts, but everlasting.

None, surely, will contend that anything can be man's supreme good, in which these criteria cannot be found; or deny that to be it in which they all unite. According to these characters we may infer, that neither pleasure, wealth, health, nor even virtue itself, constitutes the chief good. That high distinction belongs to the favor of God, obtained through faith in Christ. To this all the criteria apply, all men to whom the Gospel comes are invited to possess it; it is one and the same to all, to the savage and the sage, to the rich, and the poor, to the young and the old—it is independent of external circumstances, and may be enjoyed in sickness as in health, in poverty as in wealth, in solitude as in society, in the prison as in the palace, in death as in life. Nothing but itself being necessary to enjoy it exists by itself, and for itself, subordinating all other sources of enjoyment to its own supremacy, and imparting even to them, from its own infinite fullness, a limited capacity to make us happy. Being infinite, it is more than adequate to our nature, and being eternal, it is equal to our duration.

How exactly does the good provided for man by Scriptural revelation, agree then with that which reason demonstrates to be necessary for him! Let any man give to the human soul, with all its faculties of intellect, will, heart, conscience, memory, and limited knowledge, his profoundest attention and deepest study; let him fathom the depth of its capacity, and measure the height of its aspirations; let him attend to its yearnings after the infinite, and eternal, and immutable—let him read the record of its disappointments, as well as the journal of its experiments, and its discoveries; above all, let him do all this in reference to that one soul which is part of his own nature, and with which he may be supposed to be more intimately acquainted than with any other souls—and let him say, if it be not insult and a

mockery offered to such a being as this, to invite it to any other source of happiness, than the favor of God? Let him, when he has studied himself, and when he has found out that he has really a capacity for enjoying the infinite, eternal, and immutable—and can in fact be satisfied with nothing less; let him then study the nature of God, as he is revealed, not simply in the scenes of nature, which are his least glorious manifestations, but in the pages of the New Testament, where his whole name appears complete; let him think of the infinite collection of infinite moral excellences which make up the character of that Great Being we call God; let him recollect that it is the design of the whole scheme of redeeming mercy to open a way honorable to God himself, to bring back apostate man to the favor of God, and that every page of the inspired record is inscribed with an invitation to the naked, hungry, and degraded prodigal soul of man, to return to the arms, and house, and heart of his Divine Parent; and then let him say, if it be not as truly a dictate of sound reason, as it is a lesson of true religion, that man's happiness must consist of the favor of God, obtained through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

You have seen, then, the two classes, and their respective sources of enjoyment; now institute a **COMPARISON** between them.

Look at the worldling. Does he succeed in his quest for happiness? Is he satisfied? Let him possess all he seeks, all he wishes, all that earth can furnish; let rank be added to wealth, and fame to both; let a constant round of fashionable amusements, festive scenes, and elegant parties, follow in endless succession, until his cup is full to overflowing; and what does it all amount to? Solomon shall again give evidence, and answer the question. "I said to myself, "Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure and enjoy what is good." But it turned out to be futile. I said about laughter, "It is madness," and about pleasure, "What does this accomplish?" I explored with my mind how to let my body enjoy life with wine and how to grasp folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—until I could see what is good for people to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. I increased my achievements. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made gardens and parks for

myself and planted every kind of fruit tree in them. I constructed reservoirs of water for myself from which to irrigate a grove of flourishing trees. I acquired male and female servants and had slaves who were born in my house. I also owned many herds of cattle and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. I also amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I gathered male and female singers for myself, and many concubines, the delights of men. Thus, I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me. All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles. This was my reward for all my struggles. When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, **I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind!** There was nothing to be gained under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 2: 1-11)

Have not multitudes since Solomon's time made the same melancholy confession? Is it not a general admission, that the pleasure of worldly objects arises more from hope and anticipation, rather than possession? They are like **beautiful bubbles**, which, as they float, reflect the colors of the rainbow--but dissolve and vanish when grasped! Tell me, votaries of earthly good, have you realized what you expected? Are not the scenes of festivity and amusement resorted to, by many with aching hearts? Does not the smiling countenance often conceal a troubled spirit, and is not the laugh resorted to in order to suppress the sigh?

The history of Colonel Gardiner, that once mirthful, afterwards pious, and always brave officer, is an affecting illustration as well as proof of this. "His fine constitution," says his biographer, "gave him great opportunity to indulge in sinful excesses, and his good spirits enabled him to pursue his pleasures of every kind in so alert and sprightly a manner, that multitudes envied him, and called him by a dreadful kind of compliment—the happy profligate."

But no! such an association cannot be formed. Vice and happiness cannot be united. There may be gratification, amusement, pleasure, mirth, in sin—but not happiness. It is a profanation to call sensual pleasure by the sacred name of

happiness—and it is an impossibility to derive contentment, satisfaction, blessedness—from vice. So Colonel Gardiner found, for his biographer continues the account thus—"Yet still, notwithstanding his mirthful appearance, the checks of conscience, and some remaining principles of a good education, would break in upon his most licentious hours; and I particularly remember he told me, that when some of his companions were once congratulating him on his distinguished felicity, a dog happening at that time to come into the room, he could not forbear groaning inwardly, and saying to himself, 'Oh, that I were that dog!'"

Such was his happiness, and such is the happiness of multitudes who have nothing but objects of time and sense to gratify them. While there appear to be sunbeams on the countenance, there is a dense black cloud overshadowing their spirit. While a mirthful flower may seem to bloom upon the brow—there is a thorn all the while piercing it—or a worm be gnawing at their heart. They are gaily wretched, sumptuously unhappy, splendidly miserable. And even where the heart is not thus wretched, it is restless and dissatisfied. If it has not the pain of a diseased stomach, it has the craving of an empty one. It is subject to a morbid hunger for happiness, which nothing satisfies.

The following striking contrast between sensual and intellectual pleasures, is taken in the main from a learned treatise on "The Light of Nature," by Culverwell, one of the most brilliant writers of the seventeenth century—"The nobler any being is, the purer pleasure it has proportioned to it. The pleasure of the mind is more vigorous and masculine. The pleasure of the body is more soft, weak, and fragile. Sensitive pleasure has more of dross; intellectual more of quintessence. If pleasure were to be measured by bodily senses, the brutes which are more exquisite in sense than men are, would, by virtue of that, have a choicer portion of happiness than men can attain to. There can be no greater pleasure than that of the understanding embracing a most clear truth, and the will complying with its fairest good. It was a fine remark of an ancient Greek writer, 'There can be no pleasure unless it be dipped in goodness; it must come bubbling up from a fountain of reason, and must stream out in virtuous expressions and manifestations.'

"Bodily delights, like some temporary meteors, give a bright and sudden coruscation, and immediately disappear; whereas, intellectual joy shines like the stars with a fixed and undecaying brightness. Sensual pleasure is limited and contracted to the present moment; for sense has no delight, but in the enjoyment of a present object. But intellectual pleasure is not at all restrained by any temporary conditions, but can suck sweetness out of time past, present, and to come, the mind being not only able to drink pleasure out of present fountains, but can taste those streams of delight that have run away long ago; and can quench its thirst with such delights, which are yet to come. Does not memory reprint and repeat former enjoyments? And what is hope—but pleasure in the bud?

"Sensual pleasure is mixed and impure. Tell me, you that crown yourselves with rose-buds, do you not at the same time crown yourselves with thorns, since they are ever the companion of rose-buds? But intellectual pleasure is clear and crystalline joy, there are no impurities in it. Men are ashamed of some bodily pleasures; but who ever blushed at intellectual delights? Men grow weary of sensual pleasure, and languish and faint amidst such weak and fragile delights; nay, it is the law of our nature, that our body will better endure extreme grief than excessive enjoyment; but who ever was tired with intellectual learning? Who ever was weary of an inward delight, or who ever surfeited with a rational joy? Other pleasures ingratiate themselves by intermission; whereas intellectuals heighten and advance themselves by frequent and constant operations.

"Bodily pleasures do not fill and satisfy the soul; whereas rational ones fill it to its brim, nay will make abundant compensation for the lack of bodily pleasures—and turn a wilderness into a paradise. The lowest and worst of men glut themselves with sensual bodily pleasure; the greatest and wisest men delight themselves in intellectual enjoyment. Sensual pleasures make most noise and crackling; but mental pleasures, like the soft touches of the lute, make the sincerest, yet the stillest and softest music of all. Sensual pleasure is very costly; there must be much preparation and attendance, much abundance and variety. It is too costly for

everyone to be an epicure; whereas rational delight freely and equally diffuses itself—you need not pay anything for this; the mind itself proves a Canaan that flows with milk and honey. Sensual pleasure only suits some palates; a **sick** man cannot relish it, an **old** man cannot embrace it. But intellectual pleasure, like the manna, suits every taste; it is a staff for the old to lean upon, a cordial for the sick, and fit either for a genius or a clown. Sensual pleasures are toilsome and agitating, attended with turmoil and anxiety. Intellectual pleasures quietly lift and fill the soul, and give a composed rest.

"Men that are taken up with intellectual joy trample upon other inferior objects. See this in angelical pleasures; those courtiers of heaven do not come not near any carnal gratifications. The painted or feigned heaven of Mahomet would form a real hell to an angel or a glorified saint. Sensual pleasure is the delight of men, but intellectual delights the joy of angels, of spirits made perfect, yes of God himself! He is the blessed God and, as possessing all other perfections, so also the perfection of all true and real pleasure—in a most spiritual and transcendent manner. He has an infinite satisfaction in his own essence, attributes, and operations. His glorious decrees and plans are all richly pregnant with joy and sweetness; and every providential dispensation is an act of choicest pleasure. The laughing of his cronies to scorn must be a pleasure fit for infinite justice; the smiling upon his church, a pleasure fit for mercy and goodness. Miracles are the pleasure of his omnipotence. Varieties are the delight of his wisdom. Creation was an act of his pleasure, and it must needs delight him to see so much of his own workmanship, so many pictures of his own drawing. Redemption was an expression of that singular delight and pleasure which he took in the sons of men. To conclude, sensual pleasure is short-lived and soon over. 'Time is short!'—is its history and its sentence. But intellectual pleasure reaches to perpetuity, and lasts through eternity.

"Therefore convince the world that the very pith and marrow of pleasure does not dwell in the the body—but in a deep and rational center of the mind. Let your triumphant reason trample upon sense, and let no bodily pleasures charm you,

or tempt you, but such as are justly and exactly subordinate to reason. Do not envy 'the garlic and onions of unbridled sensual delights'—while you can feed and feast upon more spiritual and angelical dainties.

"Yet I could show you a more excellent way; for the pleasures of mere natural reason, are but husks in comparison of those **gospel delights**—those mysterious pleasures which lie hidden in Christ. In mental delights, you look only upon the candle-light of pleasure. But in gospel delights, you have the sunshine of pleasure in its full glory!"

Even if it were granted, that the possession of wealth, the gratifications of taste, and the indulgence of appetite, could give happiness in seasons of health and prosperity—they must inevitably fail in the day of sickness and adversity. If they were satisfying for a season—they are all fragile and uncertain! All the enjoyments of this life are like gathered flowers, which are no sooner plucked than they begin to lose their beauty and their fragrance while we look at them and smell them; and which, however mirthful and beautiful they appeared while they were growing, begin to wither as soon as they are in our hands!

What is it, that you are looking to and depending upon for happiness? Is HEALTH your idol, and the source of your happiness? How soon may we be smitten with disease—and doomed to wearisome nights and months of vanity in the chamber of sickness. Will riches smooth the pillow of sickness? Will the counting money or the surveying estates, when it can be done only in imagination, enchant the sleepless hours, and cheer the long sad days of ceaseless pain? Will the recollection of the parties you have attended, the pleasures you have enjoyed but cannot any longer enjoy—enliven the gloom of the solitary chamber? Will the sound of carriages at midnight, taking the votaries of pleasure to or from the scenes of fashionable resort, impart to your feverish frame any relief, or to your distressed mind any comfort? Oh, what, in that long, dark season of trial which may be coming upon you, will the pleasures and possessions of earth do for you?

What is it, that you are looking to and depending upon for

happiness? Is WEALTH your idol, and the source of your happiness? How justly is it called in Scripture, "uncertain riches!" and "deceitful mammon!" "Riches," said the wise man, "make to themselves wings and fly away as an eagle towards heaven." And is it not most strange folly to stake your happiness on that which, like an uncaged bird, may at any moment be upon the wing, and soaring where we cannot follow? What changes have we witnessed in the circumstances of men; what rapid falls from wealth to poverty! How many do we know who, by those vicissitudes which are ever going on in this commercial country, and in this speculating age, have descended from the sunny heights of prosperity—to dwell the remainder of their days in the gloomy valley of poverty below! This may be your case. Your treasure, like the volatile quicksilver, may slip through your fingers when you think you hold it firmest. What will you do for comfort then? Your friends, like summer birds, will migrate when your winter has come upon you! You will no longer be able to have parties—and who invites the child of misfortune to theirs? Those who once shared your hospitalities, will forget you in the season of your humiliation, for your presence will no longer grace their circle. What, then, will you do, when the world frowns—and you have no one else to smile upon you?

What is it, that you are looking to and depending upon for happiness? Is PLEASURE your idol, and the source of your happiness? How soon may you be unfitted by sickness or change of circumstances for this, and have the sweet and intoxicating cup dashed from your lips! How soon may your place be vacant at the resort of the mirthful and the fashionable! And then with what melancholy feelings will you contrast the amusements of the ball-room, the concert, or the party—with the abode of poverty or disease!

What is it, that you are looking to and depending upon for happiness? Are FRIENDS your idol, and the source of your happiness? Alas! alas! how soon may 'the spoiler' enter your earthly paradise, and convert that joyous scene into a desert, by the death of the most endeared objects of your affection! What! depend for your supreme felicity on the frail continuance of a beating pulse! Death enters, not only into the scenes of discord and strife, but also into those of the

purest love and sweetest harmony—and, disregarding the entreaties of marital or parental love, bears off the object to which, more than all the universe besides, you looked for your bliss!

Where, then, will you find satisfaction? The finite has failed—and the infinite God has not been sought! The human and earthly has been taken away—and the divine and heavenly has not been acquired? That one death has covered earth with sackcloth, and has thrown a pall over all that it contains. Is happiness, then, to be found amidst such uncertainties? Is it not building upon a quicksand, or pitching our tent upon the banks of a river perpetually liable to fall by inundations?

And if no affecting changes take place, what mixtures of care and vexation corrupt the nature, and diminish the amount of earthly enjoyment! What labor is necessary for the ACQUISITION of earthly pleasures! How is the strength exhausted and the spirit wearied in the chase—until the pursuer sits down jaded and faint, confessing with a groan that the object—let it turn out what it may—can scarcely pay for all this expenditure of toil and time! Then there is the disappointment of high-raised hopes, and exaggerated expectations; for, does not **fruition** always fall short of **anticipation**? Every object of earthly hope looks best when viewed at a far distance, or from behind; its face rarely equals expectation when it stops, turns round, and yields to our possession.

Then, there is the care and vexation about RETAINING, and the fear of losing our comforts. Care is the shadow of possession—and the larger the substance the broader the shadow it reflects. Fear, in such a world as this, where there are so many things to disturb and distress, is the natural associate of our enjoyments, and the stronger our affection the deeper is our anxiety—and the greater our dread of losing them.

Then, what a slight ADMIXTURE of what is painful, disgusting and annoying—will taint and spoil the greatest abundance and profession of what is agreeable and delightful! How full and sweet a cup will one drop of

wormwood embitter! Reckon up how many things must enter into the composition of earthly enjoyment—the absence of one of which will spoil the whole. Calculate the number of ingredients, company, health, ease of mind, weather, and self-approbation, necessary for a single day's pleasure! A man may have riches, but not health; he may have both these, and not have pleasant friends; he may have all three, and not an easy conscience; and he may have even this, in addition to the rest—and yet have a fear of tomorrow! One annoying event, is enough to cancel all our delight. Such is the peevishness of human nature, that if we have not all we want—we find little pleasure in what we have. And as we are more prone to dwell upon our troubles than our comforts—how vain it is to expect happiness from a world where our troubles are so numerous, and our comforts so precarious!

How soon also the pleasures of earth grow insipid, dreary and tedious—to him who has them ever at command, and in abundance! Enjoyment exhausts itself, and the laugh ends in a tear. He who is able to fathom worldly delights—soon touches the bottom, and finds it to be mud! Time, repetition, and custom, wear out enjoyment; and reflection breeds satiety, if not disgust. It is with those who give themselves up to worldly good, as it is with those who make the perfumes—they enjoy them not, as others do who come but seldom within their influence.

**What will these earthly pleasures do in the day of DEATH?** I pass by many of the scenes of life, or only allude to them in the general manner I have already done, such as the hour of sickness and the season of an unquiet conscience—and call you to anticipate the last and greatest change you must pass through—the hour of death! Oh! think of that solemn scene, when you will find yourself beyond the possibility of mistaking your destiny, and feel that you are upon the very borders of the grave, where you will see the world every moment receding, and eternity as rapidly advancing! Oh! to feel hope each day growing weaker, and the dread reality of death becoming each day more certain and more near! To read your sentence in the solemn looks of every countenance, and to feel it in the unutterable sensations of your own exhausted body and mind!

What can stand by you then, and comfort you—if this world has been your only object? What will shine into your dark chamber and still darker mind? What will calm your perturbation and enliven your spirit? Your mirthful **companions** like not the bed of death; it is not a scene for them, and they will forsake you, or only prove a kind of external conscience reminding you of your sins, as your own internal conscience reminds you of them from within; their presence will accuse you of sins they committed at your enticement, or that you committed at theirs. Will **riches** comfort you then? What, when you have nothing to do with them, but sign them away to another, and nothing shall remain of them for yourself, but the guilt contracted to obtain them, to the neglect of your soul, and the loss of salvation? **Sensual pleasures** will depart. Honor, rank, and fame, will not stop a single pang of the body, quiet a syllable of the accusations of conscience, or give one cheerful hope of immortality.

All things will look ruthlessly and impotently upon you, and, like ghosts of former possessions, glide silently and sullenly away before you, shedding no ray of light upon the gloom that is thickening around you; nor uttering a whisper of consolation in answer to your calls for help.

How will your **sins** rise to your recollection in that fearful scene! Conscience will seem then to be busy in collecting them altogether; multitudes of sins which you had forgotten, conscience shall now remind you of in death; and shall bind them as an intolerable load upon your spirit, with which to go into eternity and through it. **Fearful is the death of the worldling!** Oh, from what he departs—and to what he goes! What a parting! To leave all he loved and admired—and go to his eternal destiny! To have acquired nothing, and saved nothing—but what he can no longer keep! After crossing the dark waters of death, he will be set ashore in a vast and black eternity, naked and destitute, with nothing to relieve, support, or comfort him! Such is the end of those who spend life in saying "Who will show us any good?"

And who shall describe the scene that follows? It is done by one whose solemn pencil was guided by an unerring hand.

"There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, feasting lavishly every day. But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was left at his gate. He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man's table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores. One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torment in Hell, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side. 'Father Abraham!' he called out, 'Have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this flame!' " (Luke 16: 19-24)

**This is a fearful picture!** Of what? An infidel? No! An immoral and profligate man? No! A bloody tyrant? No! A remorseless oppressor of the poor? No! This is a picture of a worldling. Of a man who said, "Who will show us any good?" Of a man whose sin was that he sought his happiness entirely from earthly sources. It was not our Lord's intention to describe a man of ill-gotten wealth, but one whose whole happiness was derived from his wealth—one who cared for nothing but what he saw, and tasted, and handled, and felt, who had what he sought, and then, having passed his time in a life of earthly gratification instead of a life of faith, went away to spend his eternity in a state of banishment from that God whose favor was never, in his estimation, essential to his happiness.

Such a termination of his sensual course is just what the worldling might expect and ought to expect; for if he slighted God's favor, and did not even seek for it; if he made himself, or strove to make himself, happy without it; if he valued everything more than God, and set his wealth, or rank, or fame, or pleasure, above God's love; if he cared not for salvation, and thought heaven of such little consequence, as not to be worth his pursuit; has he any reason to complain of being denied that which he never asked for, and which he is not fit for? In banishing such a man from heaven God does but give him his choice—does but leave him to himself. There ends the earthly course, and begins the eternal one, of him who seeks for happiness in earthly vanities.

Now observe **the people of God** in the enjoyment of their sources of happiness. We have considered its nature, and have seen that it is the same in kind as that of Adam in Paradise, and of the inhabitants of heaven, though of course far less in degree than theirs—it is the favor of God. They have indeed their happiness. Do not dream that their place of abode is a barren desert, where no floweret is seen, and nothing verdant ever grows; or a gloomy valley, so dark, so deep, as to exclude every ray of sunshine; or a region of sighs and tears, where no smile of delight ever irradiates the brow, no note of joy ever sounds from the lip. Spare your pity! They need it not—but keep it for yourselves. They have discovered the springs of true delight, and, with joy exclaim, "I have found it! I have found it! O God, your favor is life, and your loving-kindness is better than life."

True religion is bliss. The truly pious man is the truly blessed and happy one. Christianity contains the secret of happiness. It was foreshadowed by the prophets as blessing all the nations. It was ushered into the world by an angel's voice as glad tidings of great joy to all people, and it lighted upon our sorrowful earth in the form of the infant Saviour, as the messenger of peace. Its development by the ministry of Christ and the writings of his apostles—while all the philosophers of Greece and Rome were ignorantly inquiring in what happiness consisted, and where it was to be found—revealed its true nature and its only source. The Bible is forever challenging attention to the blessedness of the children of God. And believers in reply to its repeated injunctions to them to "Rejoice in the Lord," and to "Rejoice evermore," respond, "We joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received salvation!" Yes Christianity has so great a power, and so obvious a tendency to bless, that the very frame and temper of a truly Christian mind is a habitual joyfulness, prevailing over all the temporary occasions of sorrow that can occur. Nor is this a mere theory, which cannot be reduced to practice; for we find, from the testimony of Scripture, observation, and experience, that true Christians have seen in the Gospel such causes of joy as have lifted them above their trials, and enabled them to say, "Though sorrowful, we are always rejoicing, and glory in tribulations also with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Not only have Christians been comforted

in their afflictions, but also upon their death-beds, as we shall presently consider, and martyrs have sung in their dungeons and in flames, by the power of faith in Christ.

In a former page I have represented the happiness of the people of God as arising from the Divine favor, and I shall now set before you in detail, the various **BENEFITS** which are the fruits of this favor.

1. As one of the fruits of this love, **all a Christian's sins are pardoned, and he himself is received into the number of the justified ones.** "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Blessed state, to be freed from the condemnation of the law and the wrath of God, to stand justified before him, and looking up through Christ, to see a smile upon his countenance, and hear his voice proclaiming, "Go in peace, your faith has saved you, your sins are all forgiven!" How ineffably delightful to approach the infinite and Holy One, with the consciousness that now no bolt is in his hand, no terror clothes his brow, but that his paternal love beams forth in every look! Who shall tell, or who can doubt, the felicity of living under the unclouded sun of God's forgiving love?

2. Connected with this, or in one view identical with it, is the blessedness of **being considered and loved as a child of God.** "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" A child of God! What an idea! How much of dignity and felicity must attach to such a relationship! To stand related to the infinite and eternal Father of the universe, by the choice of his own adopting mercy, as his child; and as his child to be considered, owned, treated, loved! Mysterious condescension! Marvelous grace! Unparalleled honor! Yet this is the felicity of every true Christian—and to complete the distinction, he is blessed with the spirit of adoption. Thus said the apostle, "You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby you cry Abba, Father!" And in this childlike spirit we have the evidence of our childlike relation, for it is added, "the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." To consider God as

our loving Father, to look up to him, to come to him, to feel towards him as such! Is not this happiness?

3. Another fruit of God's love to us is **the exercise of our love to him**. "We love him, because he first loved us." The Christian who believes the love that God has to him, cannot but love him in return. The exercise of love on any object which the judgment perceives to be worthy of it, is a pleasurable state of mind, and the pleasure must necessarily increase with the worthiness of the object and the intensity of the affection. Think then, of the felicity of loving God in his infinity! Think of the state of that heart which goes forth in supreme regard to a being of boundless perfection, of that soul which contemplates his peerless glories, and rises in a flame of pure and strong affection to him.

"I want," said the accomplished and beautiful daughter of the celebrated Cuvier, "an infinite object to love." And so do we all; and as the heart can never be satisfied without being beloved by an infinite being, so neither can it be satisfied without loving an infinite being. This is the bliss of a Christian, to have one object above every earthly thing, which has no defect, no fault; which is unlimited and eternal; in which, as in a measureless height or a fathomless depth, it may soar or rest without being confined or restrained.

4. The love of God has provided for **our sanctification**. Yes, this is "the will of God," and his love too, "even our sanctification." His love could not leave us in our sins. Our sins are our enemies—they rob us of our peace, and fill us with wretchedness. God's goodness bestowed not only being, but *purity* on Adam at his creation. His holiness was his happiness. God's *image* was no less essential than his *favor*, to Adam's felicity. Paradise would have been no Paradise without holiness, and was none as soon as holiness was lost by the fall. It is sin which has brought misery into the world, and as long as sin reigns in the human heart it must be the seat of misery. This is the cause of the restlessness and wretchedness of the human race; they blame their circumstances, and trace up to them the causes of their uneasiness; but those causes exist in themselves. Take a dislocated body and lay it upon a bed of down, it is

almost as uneasy as upon a bed of wood or stone, for the cause of pain is in itself. So it is with the soul. Let a man be in health, he is restless and discontented; and, amidst the greatest abundance, is almost as dissatisfied as the poor man in his cot. And why? Because his heart is under the power of sin!

Until the soul is renewed and sanctified, the passions subdued, the appetites controlled, the corruptions of the fallen nature mortified, the temper regulated, and besetting sins abandoned—there can be no peace for the mind. Now the love of God has provided for this in the scheme of redemption. Faith in Christ works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. It operates an entire change of mind, heart, and conduct. It puts away the works of the flesh, and produces the fruits of the Spirit. It does not make a man perfect, but it makes him holy. It cuts off sinful actions, expels sinful tastes, and casts out sinful feelings. It breaks the fetters of sin, and gives the liberty of true holiness—and this is happiness!

5. The Word of God assures the believer that **"all things work together for good to those who love him, to those who are called according to his purpose."** What an assurance! How tranquilizing, amidst all the trials, calamities, losses, and anxieties of life—to know that infinite love is employing omniscience and omnipotence to render the mixed good and evil, of which our history is made up, productive of benefit to us—to be assured that every tear is to end in a smile; every groan in a song; every loss in a gain; and that all our pains are ultimately to increase our pleasures! This is to gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles. And this is the happiness of those who live by faith, instead of sense.

6. The Christian who seeks his happiness in God, **finds delight in the various exercises of devotion.** What to others is a mere duty reluctantly performed, gladly ended or laid aside; is to him a privilege. What to others is a penance, rigorous and unwelcome, taken up to still the clamor or to avoid the stings of an uneasy conscience; is to him the indulgence of his taste, the impulse of affection, the enjoyment of a blessing. **Prayer** is the offering of a heart

that feels honored and happy to speak to God; the spirit of adoption in a child crying 'Father Father', to God, and loving to lighten its cares, to alleviate its sorrow, to give utterance to its affection, and to express its needs by pouring out its soul to the God of love. Oh, what a felicity is there in prayer to him who presents it in faith, fervor, and the spirit of adoption. Its words as they flow from his lips, come over the stormy cares and sorrows of the troubled spirit, like the voice of Jesus to the winds and billows of the sea of Tiberius, saying, "Peace, be still!" It lifts the soul half way between the conquered earth and the opened heaven; raises it above the shreds and fragments of the broken cisterns and their spilt contents, and places it at the fountain of living waters, opening the heart to receive the fullness of God, and bringing the fullness of God into the opened heart.

How precious to the Christian are God's thoughts expressed in God's words in the **Scriptures**—and how delightful is the perusal of them! In reading this Divine Book he exclaims, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover by them is your servant warned, and in keeping them there is great reward." Everything connected with the Bible is dear to his heart, and its parts contain so many sources of pure enjoyment, whether its sublime truths, its gracious invitations, its precious promises, its boundless prospects, its holy precepts, or its cheering prophecies. A single passage sometimes dwells upon his mind for hours, and feasts his soul as with manna from heaven. The discovery of a new meaning in some promise, precept, or prediction, unseen before, is like the joy of the botanist or geologist in coming upon a new specimen in his favorite science. Some blessed word is ever coming with fresh and balmy power to his anxious or troubled mind, proving its adaptation to all the various and changing scenes of life.

And then the sacred and solemn repose of the **sabbatic rest**, of that hallowed day which the worldling devotes to sensual delights! How calm, how serene, how soothing the

hymn of praise, the communion of saints, the unfolding and application of the word, the remembrance of the crucified, and the anticipation of the glorified Savior in the sanctuary of God! Is there no happiness in this?

All these exercises are not only duties—but privileges to true Christians, to all who, as the sons of God, have a blessed freedom in his ways. They are not drawn to heavenly things by the terrors of the law, or dragged to them by the chains of death and hell. Their duties are not extorted from them by the pressure of a spirit of bondage; nor are they the convulsive motions of a carnal dead soul—but the spontaneous, intelligent, and pleasurable activities of a living soul, into which a holy vitality has been infused by the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The law is in their hearts; yes, the divine lawgiver himself dwells there; the beauty of the command attracts them; the rectitude of the authority convinces them; the love of Christ constrains them; the delightfulness of the service engages them; the great rewards in heaven nerve them; the Holy Spirit inspires obedience into them; holiness becomes as natural and as agreeable to them as it is for the eye to see, the ear to hear, the palate to taste!

"They walk, run, fly on, in the pure ways towards eternal happiness; they are no longer shut up in the straits of sin, nor their faculties confined in the narrow dimensions of earth—but they walk abroad in the liberty of an emancipated spirit amidst the amplitude of divine, heavenly, and eternal realities. Their hearts rest not in finite things, but go to the Infinite one. Their thoughts are upon the first good. Their aim at the last end. Their liberty is joined to its great fountain. Their motion is to the true center; and this is a right, noble, royal posture of soul towards God, in whom all our happiness is."

7. Then behold the people of God in **the believing, hopeful prospect of everlasting life**. "Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." What an object, what a hope, and what a joy! Infinite and eternal glory, awakening an assured hope, and giving rise to an exuberant felicity. With them heaven is not a mere word, a term for some place they know not where, and of some bliss they know not what. They know its

meaning as importing the arrival of the soul in the presence of God, where there is fullness of joy, and at its place at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore; where it will see Christ as He is, and be like Him; where it will be perfectly holy! And in the light of perfect knowledge, the glow of perfect love, the purity of perfect virtue, and in communion with saints and angels—will be happy without imperfection, interruption, or end! Such is the heaven which the believer hopes for, and which shines upon his earthly path from the page of Scripture, like a glowing firmament above his head, and which follows him with its rays into every place, illuminating the darkest and gilding the dreariest scenes through which he may have to pass.

Blessed man! Whether he dwells in an earthly paradise or a wilderness—whether he enjoys the activity of health, or suffers the languor of disease—he carries about with him a hope full of immortality. If all be dark below, brightness comes from above. If earth be one vast desert, where no verdant spot can be seen in all the future, yet in the distance are seen "the delectable mountains," the everlasting hills, on which the souls of the blessed shall rest, and breathe the air of immortality! And he is moving towards them—every step brings him nearer—and he will soon be there! Hope, with him, is not a mere vague, loose, fluctuating expectation; but a firm, well-grounded, settled anticipation. He can say "For we *know* that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

He has much, perhaps, on earth, and if he dies he must lose it all; but still to die is gain; for if he goes from much—he goes to infinitely more! On the other hand, if he has little except sorrow, the moment of his death is the termination of his grief, and the commencement of his everlasting and uninterrupted felicity! Is not this happiness?

Such, then, is the nature, and such are the sources of a Christian's felicity; and it may be mentioned as one of its strongest recommendations, that it is independent of external circumstances, it requires neither wealth nor fame; neither health nor company, for its enjoyment. When by the

vicissitudes of life the child of God is deprived of his property, and he is called to descend from the lofty heights of prosperity into the dark and humble valley of **poverty**, his faith, and all its blessed fruits and privileges, descend with him, to irradiate the gloom, and throw a cheerful aspect over the scene of desolation. "All is not lost," he exclaims, as he looks up to heaven and onward to eternity—"I am still rich in spiritual blessings and immortal hopes. I am surrounded by the wrecks and fragments of broken cisterns, but there is the fountain still full and flowing. My noblest fortune is untouched, for that is God. I seem to rejoice more than ever in Christ, now that I have nothing else to rejoice in; and the objects of Divine and immortal glory appear the brighter, like the stars of heaven at night, by the darkness which surrounds me, and from the midst of which I view them.

But besides the loss of property, Christians, like others, are exposed to the attacks of **sickness** and disease. "Wearisome nights, and months of vanity, are appointed to them." But their religion follows them into the sick chamber, and is their nurse, their companion, and their comforter, giving patience in the day, and songs even in the night. How soothing are its consolations, how pleasant are its reflections, how bright are its anticipations! It speaks to the sufferers of the sources of their sorrows, and tells them that they all proceed from their Father in heaven; reminds them of His unerring wisdom, His infinite love, His unfailing fidelity, His gracious presence in the scene of woe, His merciful design in every chastisement of His hand, and the blissful outcome in which He will cause all to terminate. They can bear confinement, for God is with them. Their hours are not made heavy and irksome by the recollection of the mirthful scenes from which they are cut off, and the amusements to which they have no longer access. Their entertainment has come with them; they have brought the cup of their pleasure with them, and they can drink it amidst the languor of disease, as a refreshing cordial, or an exhilarating draught.

Nor is the dark valley of the shadow of **death**, a land of barrenness and drought, a scene of unmixed gloom, a spot impervious to every ray of true felicity. The Christian can

see the lights of his earthly comfort go out one after another without the fear of being left in rayless night. Generally speaking, he is more than submissive, composed, and tranquil amidst that solemn scene. No accent is more common, from the lips of a dying believer, than "Happy! happy!" Yes, happy even then. Their faith in Christ, and hope of heaven, seem then to put forth all their power. They see the last enemy advance, step by step, losing something of his terrors at every step of his approach, until, as he stands before them, lifting up his dart, and preparing to strike, they look at him with a smile, and exclaim, "Strike! I am prepared. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Though I fall I shall arise, and be more than conqueror, through him who has loved me! Thanks be unto God, who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

God seems in a very remarkable manner to bless and comfort his dying children. Many who have walked their pilgrimage amidst some degree of doubts and fears about their safety, have lost it all then, and have gone through the gloomy passage singing with raptures the song of assurance, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day." Such has been the fullness of grace poured into their souls, and such the light of glory that has beamed upon them from heaven, that fond mothers have been willing to leave their children, and affectionate husbands their wives, to depart and be with Christ.

But I do not mean to say or insinuate that even the people of God are *perfectly* happy in this world. For that is impossible! Subject to all the ills of life in common with others, and to the imperfections of a nature but partially sanctified, they can have acquired only the knowledge of what is happiness, with the mere commencement of its enjoyment. But even this is a blessed privilege. It is an unspeakable advantage to have our mistakes rectified, and to possess the truth on such an important point. It is a matter of thankfulness to be taken off from the pursuit of shadows, and to be introduced to the path that leads to the substance and the reality. If they have only the seeds of felicity sown in them, that is a mercy. In this respect they

are favored; for light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. And though they often appear but clods of the earth—ploughed up, harrowed, and broken by affliction; yet is there that blessed seed cast in them, that will certainly sprout up to immortality and eternal life; as all the beauties of a flower lie couched in a small unsightly seed.

But the children of God have more than the seed of heavenly bliss upon earth—they have its first fruits. In the joys of faith and holiness, the consolations and graces of the Holy Spirit, they have the pledge of heavenly felicity. They know the kind of happiness which awaits them, though they are as much at a loss to know the full measure of it, as a child of a year or two old can know the kind of life he is to live on earth, and the full measure of physical, intellectual, moral, and social existence he is to enjoy in the maturity of his age and of his acquirements. This is heaven; the perfect **knowledge** of God, the perfect **enjoyment** of his favor, the perfect **love** of his infinite excellences, perfect **obedience** to his commands, perfect **conformity** to his image—all this by a soul refined in its tastes, enlarged in its capacity, and immortal in its duration! And there is nothing of all this which the child of God does not begin to receive on earth. What other sources of enjoyment will be open to the blessed in heaven, it is not for us now to know, or even to conjecture, doubtless there are some which it is impossible for us to understand; but the fountain of delight will be God, and its essence the enjoyment of his love. He is the first truth; the chief good; beyond which nothing higher remains to be known, nothing richer to be enjoyed!

And now, reader, may I ask to which of these two classes you belong? Are you among the "many" who say, "Who will show us any good?" or among the few who pray, "Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us?" Are you seeking happiness from earthly things—or from heavenly things? To one or the other you must belong. There is no neutral ground, no midway spot, between things seen and temporal, and things unseen and eternal. What is it you covet, count upon, look to, for happiness? Is it the favor of God—or the world? What way does your heart turn—and to what does it point? You must know—you do know!

Perhaps some are attempting to unite both, and are seeking to derive happiness from the world and from religion too. It is a vain attempt, an impracticable effort. Remember, the question is whether we can give our hearts **both** to God and the world. I am now speaking of the supreme felicity; and, as there cannot be two supreme objects, the question is—which is supreme, God or the world? He who loves anything, or covets anything, more than God's love to him, cannot be a Christian. And it is perfectly clear that while to every real Christian there is nothing that can be loved more, and enjoyed more than God—so there are many things that cannot be loved and followed at all. They are of a nature so opposite, that they become tasteless and even nauseous to the soul that delights in God. He who is taken up in seeking after the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory, who believes and rejoices in Christ, who loves to commune with his Father in heaven, who is in the habit of enjoying the favor of the Most High, who is looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is daily conversing with such matters as are revealed in the Bible, and makes them the subject of meditation and prayer—cannot really be supposed to have any taste for the fashionable follies and mirthful amusements of life!

To enjoy the love of God in the morning, and the theater, ball, or party in the evening; or, on the same evening to go from a pious and delightful meditation upon the Scripture, to enjoy a game of cards, a dance, or a fashionable soiree—are tastes so dissimilar that they cannot co-exist in the same mind! So neither can a supreme love of wealth, or a supreme delight in home, or friends, or science, or literature—comport with a supreme love to God. If there is anything we prefer to God's favor, no matter what it is, we cannot be his children! All attempts, therefore, to reconcile the love of God and the love of the world are vain and futile! "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." So says the word of God. And Christ himself has declared that we cannot serve both God and Mammon. You must, therefore, make your choice.

Perhaps you are ready to say you do not see that Christians are happier than others; and that many of them appear far less so. There is some truth in the remark, but it admits of a satisfactory answer. Many who call themselves Christians are not so in reality. They are probably not hypocrites—but mere self-deceived formalists. They have never truly believed in Christ, nor experienced that great spiritual change, which is called being "born again," and without which there is no true love to God, or delight in His favor. Their profession of religion has separated them from worldly society, and worldly amusements, without introducing them to the felicities of religion itself. They are like Lot's wife, apparently fleeing from Sodom, but still leaving their hearts there.

Others may be true Christians, but are yet only partially instructed in the extent and richness of their privileges; it is the infancy of their knowledge, and they do not fully understand the blessings and privileges of a believer in the Gospel—which result in unspeakable joy. Or perhaps some whom you may happen to know are of a gloomy and nervous temperament, constitutionally prone to melancholy, and whom nothing earthly or heavenly can make as cheerful as some others. And then again your idea of happiness may be incorrect. You may confound it with laughter, merriment, levity, frivolity, or amusement; and suppose, that because you do not see these things in the people of God, they must be miserable. Their enjoyment, however, is serious, deep, inward. It is peace, contentment, satisfaction. It is the 'stillness' of enjoyment—not the 'bustle'. It is the repose, the tranquility, and serenity of a heart that has found rest from its weary pursuits and frequent disappointments. It is the sanctity of happiness, the happiness of sanctity—solemn, but not gloomy; serious, but not sad. And, on the other hand, cheerful, but not light; lively, but not trifling. In short, it is the commencement of the bliss of heaven—deep, devout, holy—which the worldling can as little understand as he does the source from whence it flows.

In addition to my own remarks, I introduce those of a justly celebrated writer—

"It is true that Christians are not happy after the manner in

which the worldling measures happiness. They are not happy, if the true signs of felicity are a volatile spirit, a continual glitter of mirth, a dissipation of time and mind among trifles, a dread of reflection and solitude, an eager pursuit of amusements; in short, a prevailing thoughtlessness, the chief propensities of which are for the study of matters of appearance and fashion; the servile care of imitating the habits and notions of the fashionable. It must be confessed that Christians have thoughts too grave, the sense of too weighty an interest, a conscience too solicitous, and purposes too high, to permit them any rivalry with the votaries of such flimsy felicity. Certainly they have a dignity in their vocation which denies them the pleasure of being frivolous. But you will see Christians often cheerful, and sometimes animated. And their animation is of a deeper tone than that of your sportive creatures; it may have less of carnal briskness, but there is more soul in it. It is the action and fire of the greater passions, directed to greater objects. Their emotions are more internal and cordial; they can be cherished and abide within the heart, with a prolonged, deep, vital glow. Did you think that these disciples of true religion must renounce the love of pleasure? Look then at their policy in securing it. The worst way of attaining pleasure is to live expressly for it—Christians live primarily for duty, and pleasure comes as a certain consequence. There is also, in the happiness of true religion, what may be called a principle of accumulation; pleasure does not vanish in the enjoyment, but, while passing as a sentiment, remains a reflection, and grows into a store of delightful consciousness, which the mind retains as a possession, left by what has been possessed. To have had such pleasure is pleasure; and is so still the more, the more of it is past. Whereas the delights of the children of folly when past are wholly gone, leaving nothing to go into a calm, habitual sense of being happy. Their pleasure is a blaze which consumes entirely the material on which it is lighted." (Foster)

It is possible, that you may have been also led to form incorrect notions of the happiness of true religion, by the somewhat injudicious and even inaccurate representations given of it by some writers and preachers. In their benevolent ardor for the salvation of souls, and their deep

conviction of the necessity of religion for this purpose, they have drawn a picture of true piety in which they have suppressed all the darker shades—the more austere characteristics of personal godliness; and have given a representation illuminated nearly all over with delightful images. They have shown the way of pleasantness and the path of peace—but not the hill of difficulty, and the slough of despond. They have shown the bright sky and flowery verdant path—but not the storm and the rugged road. They have shown the shout and laurel of victory—but not the tug of war. They have shown the glittering crown—but not the heavy cross. The Christian is represented rather as in Paradise—than as pursuing a hopeful though often a weary course to its happy bowers.

But true religion has its pains as well as its pleasures, just because it comes from heaven to maintain a deadly conflict in the soul with principles and dispositions which are rebellious against heaven, and destructive to the soul itself. It lights upon the path of man in the capacity of a guardian spirit, to take in charge "a perverted, sinful, tempted being, who must be humbled and reclaimed, taught many mortifying lessons, disciplined through a series of many corrections, reprov'd, restrained, and incited—and thus conducted onward in advancing preparation for the happiness of another world." Such an agent, having such a subject in charge, having to train the wayward child of earth for the pure felicities of heaven, "must be the inflictor of many pains during the progress of its beneficent guardianship." This is sufficient to account for that serious and occasionally somber aspect under which piety presents itself to your notice in those who are its true subjects. And what does all this prove and teach? Not that the ways of wisdom have no pleasantness, and her paths no peace; but that the pleasure is not so unalloyed, nor the peace so unmolested, as some of its injudicious friends would represent.

Of those, and they are many, who in the midst of wealth, fashion, and pleasure, are ready at times to fancy they need nothing, or but little, to complete their felicity, I ask—are there no moments when even you echo the word "vanity!" which comes from so many quarters around you? When

even your spirit sighs for something higher and better than all you possess? Are there no seasons of satiety, languor, disappointment, and boredom, when you are made to feel that the soul of man cannot be satisfied with seen and temporal things? No midnight communings with your own heart, when the painted mask falls off from the face of the world, and it stands before you an ugly impostor? Be admonished, then, to turn to the fountain of all good. Seek the favor of God, through Christ. Drink the crystal stream at which angels and spirits made perfect inhale full draughts of bliss. Partake the felicities of immortality. Look to heaven. Begin the everlasting career of a soul going on from joy to joy in the presence and favor of God.

But there are others, who sitting down amidst the wreck of their possessions, the memorials of their departed happiness, the scenes of disappointments, and the presages of future woe, exclaim with a sigh, "These tell me of enjoyments past, and those of sorrows yet to come. I have been so often, and so bitterly mocked with the 'shadows of enjoyment', that I have abandoned the pursuit, and under the iron hand of necessity am engaged, as the last resource of despair, in endeavoring to reconcile myself to wretchedness, and to extract one single drop of comfort, the only one I can hope for, from the consideration that felicity is in my case an impossibility."

Stop, before you come to such a conclusion, and weigh well what I now address to you. Have you never heard of one who came into our world "to bind up the broken heart, and to comfort all who mourn?" One who, as he stood amidst the sinful and sorrowful children of man, said, in accents of exquisite tenderness, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How soothing is this language! What music to the troubled spirit! It is the language of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, speaking as the Saviour of man—and inviting all the sons and daughters of woe, to the fountain of happiness which is opened in the gospel of his salvation! Thousands attracted by the sound, and led merely by the instinctive longings after enjoyment which every heart feels, but which in them had been so often disappointed—have come to the Gospel as to a last

and forlorn experiment, when every other resource has failed. And oh, what an unlooked-for discovery have they made!

They who had found no resting place in the world, and who had wandered through it in quest of some object, however insignificant, that might interest them, and for a moment at least remove the sense of that hopeless languor which lay dead upon their hearts—find now an object which their widest desires cannot grasp—even filial communion with God here, and the full enjoyment of him through the glorious eternity on the very threshold of which they now stand! They who have felt themselves too weak to resist the storms and roughnesses of life, have learned to lean with confidence on Omnipotence; and they who saw nothing in their present circumstances, or their future prospects, but one interminable wasteland of woe, in which even the grave had lost its terrors, compared with the desolate path which led to it—suddenly found themselves surrounded with the provisions of God's infinite all-sufficient love!

And what caused the wondrous change? What saved them from despair and raised them to the full assurance of hope? What produced a transition so great and so sudden, and which gave them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness? What? Mark well the answer! Faith! They believed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is the grand secret of human happiness. It is all wrapped up in that common, but transcendently momentous monosyllable, Faith! As our Lord said to the agonized parent who brought him his demon possessed child to be healed, "Only believe!" so do I say to the man searching after happiness, "Only believe!" That one step transports the soul, from the regions of otherwise hopeless sorrow, to the land of peace and joy. Nothing stands between the sad heart and immediate blessedness but unbelief; that gone, and faith come in its place—and happiness begins.

The Gospel is the grand universal remedy—the comforter of sinful and sorrowful man. But what is the Gospel? The glad-tidings announced in such passages as the following—"God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that

whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Such is the Gospel—the announcement that God loves our guilty race, has given his Son for their salvation, and will pardon, sanctify, and eternally save all who believe these facts, and with a penitent heart rest upon Christ for salvation. The real belief of this, which is faith, cannot fail to give peace to the conscience, and joy to the heart. Can a man really believe that God loves him, that the Eternal is favorably disposed towards him, that all his sins are pardoned, and heaven secured to him, and not be glad, grateful, and happy?

This faith we are called upon to have, and to exercise the next moment. It is true now that God loves our race, that Christ has died for us, and salvation with all its infinite and eternal blessings is offered; and therefore we are invited without a moment's delay to believe and come into the favor of God, the blessedness of his children, and the hope of eternal life. It is in Christ we are to rejoice, as well as to believe, and therefore are called upon to rejoice at once, for he is all, and his salvation is all. No long waiting or pious works can fit you for faith—on the contrary, faith is the spring and principle of all good works. We can do nothing good until we believe.

It is this wondrous and beautiful simplicity of the Gospel method of salvation, which prevents multitudes from understanding it; they are searching about for some great thing which they think they must do to conciliate God, by making atonement for their past sins; forgetting that the atonement has been made by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the only thing required from them, in order to participate in its effects, is to believe this fact, and to take to their bosom the peace it is calculated to afford. It is a mistake to suppose that God is unwilling to save the sinner; it is the sinner that is unwilling to be saved by God. "As I live says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." "God is love," and is waiting and willing to confer all the benefits of His infinite benevolence on those who really believe in His mercy, and in a spirit of confiding dependence trust to His promise.

**Saving faith has a great influence on all one's feelings, actions, and character. Though there is no merit in faith--there is wondrous power in it! Faith is the inlet both of happiness and holiness to the soul. To believe that the eternal God is reconciled to us, pardons all our sins, receives us to His special favor, gives us a title to eternal life, must from necessity be a source of ineffable delight, and the cause of an entire change in all our tastes, pursuits, and character!**

If there were a fellow creature on whose favor our life, liberty, or fortune depended, whom we had made our enemy, and whose anger we had incurred, we would of course dread and dislike him as long as we believed him to be opposed to us. But if a kindly message was sent by him, assuring us of his favorable disposition, that he was still our friend, and waiting, after our acknowledging our fault, to lay aside his displeasure, and to bestow upon us inestimable benefits—our belief of the message, if we really did believe it, would instantly change the whole state of our mind and conduct towards him! Enmity would give place to love; dread would give place to desire; fear would give place to hope; sorrow would give place to joy. We would hasten to his presence, throw ourselves at his feet, express as far as words could allow it, our gratitude; and be very anxious to please him. Like this is the change which faith in the Gospel produces in the heart and conduct of a sinner towards God, as soon as he believes the love which God has for him, as that love is expressed in the Gospel. True faith in Christ is the foundation of the believer's happiness, the means of his holiness, the spring of all his actions, and the true basis of his character.

Sorrowful reader, here is happiness. "Men shall be blessed in Him," said the Psalmist, when speaking of the Messiah. **The fountain of human happiness was unsealed when Christ was born!** "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy!" said the angel; "for unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord!" This message was dictated by him who made the heart, and knows what is fitted to give it joy. The Gospel addresses us not simply as sinful—but as miserable. God invites us to come and be made happy. He

meets the natural cry of misery, and the weary and undefined cravings of the unsatisfied spirit. His loudest and most general invitations, both in the Old and New Testament, are all addressed primarily, not to the moral feelings, but to the natural feelings—to the sense of misery and the desire of happiness. "Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the waters; and you without money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost! Why do you spend money on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and you will enjoy the choicest of foods." (Isaiah 55: 1-2)

Try this simple, and Scriptural, and effectual way to happiness! It **shortest**—the **best**—the **only** road to true happiness! Countless millions have tried other methods, and have all failed, and have died lamenting their folly in seeking their felicity from earth and earthly things. But who ever lamented their folly in seeking their happiness from God? Who in sickness, in misfortune, in death, repented they had believed in Christ, and attended to personal and experimental piety? Seek that happiness then which will stand by you when everything else fails, and abide with you amidst the changing scenes of life; which will sustain you amidst the agonies of the last conflict; which will go with you into the unseen world; and which in eternity will fill and satisfy the powers of your glorified spirit—and fill and satisfy them forever, without satiety, and without interruption! To possess this you must forsake the many who say, "Who will show us any good?" and be among the few who adopt and present the prayer of the Psalmist, "Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us!"

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