

## THE PLEASURES OF PIETY

NO. 2759

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 29, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE SUMMER OF 1858.

*“My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”*

*Psalm 104:34.*

IT has often been insinuated, if it has not been openly affirmed, that the contemplation of divine things has a tendency to depress the spirits. Religion, many thoughtless persons have supposed, is not becoming to the young—it checks the ardor of their youthful blood. It may be very well for men with gray heads who need something to comfort and solace them as they descend the hill of life into the grave. It may be suitable for those who are in poverty, and deep trial, but that it is at all congruous with the condition of a healthy, able-bodied, successful, and happy young man—this is generally said to be out of the question!

Now, there is no greater lie than that! No man is so happy but he would be happier if he had true religion. The man with the greatest abundance of earthly pleasure or treasure, whose barns are full, and whose presses burst with new wine would not lose any part of his happiness, had he the grace of God in his heart! Rather, that joy would add sweetness to all his prosperity. It would strain off many of the bitter dregs from his cup. It would purify his heart, and freshen his taste for delights—and show him how to extract more honey from the honeycomb! Religion is a thing that can make the most melancholy, joyful, and at the same time, it can make the joyous ones still more joyful! It can make the gloomy bright, as it gives the oil of joy in the place of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Moreover, it can light up the face that is joyous with a heavenly gladness! It can make the eyes sparkle with tenfold more brilliance, and happy as the man may be, he shall find that there is sweeter nectar than he has ever drunk before, if he comes to the fountain of atoning mercy, if he knows that his name is registered in the book of everlasting life! Temporal mercies will then have the charm of redemption to enhance them. They will be no longer to him as shadowy phantoms which dance for a transient hour in the sunbeam. He will account them more precious because they are given to him, as it were, in some codicils of the divine testament which has promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come! While goodness and mercy follow him all the days of his life, he will stretch forth his grateful anticipations to the future when he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever! He will be able to say, as the psalmist does in this Psalm, “I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.”

**I.** First, let us consider THE VERY PRECIOUS SUBJECT OF MEDITATION mentioned in our text: “My meditation of HIM shall be sweet.”

Christian, you need no greater inducement to excite you to meditation than the subject here proposed—“My meditation of HIM shall be sweet.” To whom does that word, “Him,” refer? I suppose it may refer to all the three Persons of the glorious Trinity. My meditation upon Jehovah shall be sweet. And, verily, if you sit down to *meditate upon God the Father*, and reflect on His sovereign, immutable, unchangeable love toward His elect people—if you think of God the Father as the great Author and Originator of the plan of salvation—if you think of Him as the mighty Being who has said that by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for Him to lie, He has given us strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. If you look to Him as the Giver of His only-begotten Son, and who, for the sake of that Son, His best gift, will, with Him, also freely give us all things—if you consider Him as having ratified the covenant, and pledged Himself ultimately to complete all its stipulations in the ingathering of every chosen, ransomed soul—you will perceive that there

is enough to engross your meditation forever, even were your attention limited to the manner and matter of the Father's love!

Or, if you choose, you shall *think of God the Holy Spirit*. You shall consider His marvelous operations on your own heart—how He quickened it when you were dead in trespasses and sins—how He brought you near to Jesus when you were a lost sheep, wandering far from the fold. How He called you with such mighty efficacy that you could not resist His voice—how He drew you with the wondrous cords of His almighty love. If you think how often He has helped you in the hour of peril—how frequently He has comforted you with a promise in times of distress and trouble, and if you think that, like holy oil, He will always supply your lamp—and until life's last hour He will always replenish you with His influences, still proving Himself your Teacher and your Guide till you get up yonder, where you shall see your Savior, face to face, in the blessed presence of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—in such contemplation you might find a vast and infinite subject for your meditation!

But, at this time, I prefer to confine the application of this word, "Him," to *the person of our adorable Savior*. "My meditation of HIM shall be sweet." Ah, if it is possible that the meditation upon one Person of the Trinity can excel the meditation of another, it is meditation upon Jesus Christ!—

*"Till God in human flesh I see,  
My thoughts no comfort find.  
The holy, just, and sacred Three  
Are terrors to my mind.  
But if Immanuel's face appears  
My hope, my joy begins!  
His name forbids my slavish fear,  
His grace forgives my sins"*

Precious Jesus! What can be a sweeter theme for my meditation than to think of Your exalted being—to conceive of You as the Son of God who, with the golden compasses struck out a circle from space, and fashioned this round world? To think of You as the God who holds this mighty orb upon Your shoulders, and are, at the same time, the King of glory, before whom angels bow in lowliest homage? And yet to consider You as likewise "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh,"—

*"In ties of blood with sinners one,"*

to conceive of you as the Son of Mary, born of a virgin, wearing flesh like men, clothed in garments of humanity like mortals of our feeble race? To picture You in all Your suffering life, to trace You in all Your passion? To view You in the agony of Gethsemane, enduring the bloody sweat, the sore amazement, and then to follow You to Gabbatha, the pavement, and then up the steep side of Calvary, "enduring the cross, despising the shame," when Your soul was made an offering for my sins, when You did die the reconciling death midst horrors still to all but God unknown? Verily, here is a meditation for my soul which must be "sweet" forever! I might begin like the psalmist who wrote the 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm, and say, "My heart is inditing (the marginal reading is *bubbles up*) a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made touching the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer."

Consider our Lord Jesus Christ in any way you please, and your meditation of Him will be sweet! Jesus may be compared to some of those lenses you have seen which you may take up and hold one way, and you see one kind of light, and then hold in another way, and you see another kind of light. And whichever way you turn them, you will always see some precious sparkling light, and some new colors starting up to your view. Ah, take Jesus for your theme, sit down and consider Him—think of His relation to your own soul, and you will never get through that one subject! Think of His eternal relationship to you—remember that the saints, in union with the Lamb, were free from condemnation before the world was made! Think of your everlasting union with the person of Jehovah Jesus before this planet was sent rolling through space—and how your guilty soul was accounted spotless and clean even before you fell! And after that dire lapse, before you were restored, justification was imputed to you in the person of Jesus Christ. Think of your known and manifest relationship to Him since you have been called by His grace. Think how He has become your brother, how His heart has beaten in most tender sympathy with yours—how He has kissed you with the kisses of His love, and how that love has been to you sweeter than wine!

Look back upon some happy, sunny spots in your history where Jesus has whispered to you, "I am Yours," and you have said, "My Beloved is mine." Think of some choice moments when an angel has stooped from heaven and taken you up on his wings, and carried you aloft to sit in heavenly places

where Jesus sits, that you might commune with Him. Or think, if it pleases you, of some pensive moments when you have had what Paul sets so much store by—fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. Think of seasons when the sweat has rolled from your brow, almost as it did from that of Jesus—yet not the sweat of blood—when you have knelt down, and felt that you could die with Christ, even as you had risen with Him. And then, when you have exhausted that portion of the subject, think of your relationship to Christ which is to be fully developed in heaven. Imagine the hour to have come when you shall—

*“Greet the blood-besprinkled bands  
On the eternal shore”—*

and range the—

*“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,  
Arrayed in living green.”*

Picture in your mind that moment when Jesus Christ shall salute you as “more than a conqueror,” and put a pearly crown upon your head, glittering more brightly than the stars! And think of that transporting hour when you will take that crown from off your own brow, and climbing the steps of Jesus’ throne, you shall put it on His head, or lay it at His feet, and once more crown Him Lord of your soul, as well as “Lord of all.” Ah, if you come and tell me you have no subject for meditation, I will answer—Surely you have not tried to meditate—for your meditation of HIM must be sweet!

Suppose you have done thinking of Him as He is related to you. Consider Him, next, as He is related to the world. Remember that Jesus Christ says He came into the world that the world, through Him, might be saved, and undoubtedly He *will* one day save the world, for He who redeemed it by price, and by power, will restore it, and renew it from the effects of the Fall. Think of Jesus in this relationship as “the Repairer of the breach, the Restorer of paths to dwell in.” He will come again to our earth, one day, and when He comes, He will find this world still defaced with the old curse upon it—the primeval curse of Eden. He will find plague, pestilence, and war still here, but when He comes, He shall bid men, “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.” War shall be obliterated from among the sciences. He shall speak the Word, and there shall be a great company that will publish it. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ shall surely come again! Christians, be waiting for the second coming of your Lord! And while you wait, meditate upon that coming! Think, O my soul, of that august day when you shall see Him with all His pompous train, coming to call the world to judgment, and to avenge Himself upon His enemies! Think of all His triumphs when Satan shall be bound, death shall be crushed, hell shall be conquered, and He shall be saluted as the universal Monarch—“Lord over all, blessed forever. Amen.” “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

Ah, Christian, you are not afraid to be alone a little while, now, for lack of subjects of meditation. Some persons say that they cannot bear to be even for an hour in solitude. They have nothing to do, nothing to think about. Surely, no Christian will ever talk so, for let me but give him one word to think of—Christ—and he may spell that over forever! Let me give him the word, Jesus, and only let him try to think it over, and he shall find that an hour is nothing, and that eternity is not half long enough for our glorious Savior’s praise! Yes, beloved, I believe that even when we get to heaven, we shall need no subject for meditation, there, except Jesus Christ! I know that there are some great divines and learned philosophers who have been telling us that when we go to heaven, we shall occupy our time in flying from star to star, and from one planet to another. They say that we shall go and see Jupiter, and Mercury, and Venus, and all the host of celestial bodies! We shall behold all the wonders of creation! We shall explore the depths of science, so they tell us, and they say that there are no limits to the mysteries we shall understand. My reply to people who imagine all this concerning heaven is that I have no objection that it should be so, if it will afford them any pleasure. I hope you Christians all will have, and I know my heavenly Father will let you have whatever will make you happy. But while you are viewing stars, I will sit down and look at Jesus. And if you told me you had seen the inhabitants of Saturn and Venus, and the man in the moon, I would say—Ah, yes—

*“But in His looks a glory stands,  
The noblest labor of God’s hands!  
God in the person of His Son,  
Has all His mightiest works outdone.”*

But you will say, “You will become tired, surely, of looking at Him.” No, I would reply, I have been looking at but one of His hands, and I have not yet thoroughly examined the hole where one of the nails went in. And when I have lived ten thousand years more, I will take His other hand, and sit down and look at each gaping wound. And then I may descend to His side, and His feet, and still I shall be able to say to Him—

*“Millions of years my wondering eyes  
Shall over Your beauties rove  
And endless ages I’ll adore  
The glories of Your love.”*

You may go flitting about as far as you like. I will sit there and look at the God in human flesh, for I believe that I shall learn more of God, and more of His works in the person of Jesus than you could with all the advantage of travelling on wings of light, though you would have the most elevated imaginations, and the most gigantic intellects to help you in your search! Brothers and sisters, our meditation of Christ will be sweet! There will be little else we shall need of heaven beside Jesus Christ! He will be our bread, our food, our beauty, and our glorious dress. The atmosphere of heaven will be Christ—everything in heaven will be Christ-like—yes, Christ is the heaven of His people! To be in Christ, and to be with Christ is the essence of heaven—

*“Not all the harps above  
Can make a heavenly place,  
Should Christ His residence remove,  
Or but conceal His face.”*

So you see that Christ is the very precious subject of our meditation! Our meditation of Him shall be sweet.

**II.** Now, in the second place, let me proceed to point out A BLESSED RESULT OF THIS MEDITATION. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet”

This result *depends very much upon the character of the one who meditates*. I know some persons who come to chapel who are very glad when they hear the minister pronounce the Benediction and dismiss the assembly. They are very glad when all is over, and they would rather hear the parting Doxology than the text. As for a meditation on Christ, instead of saying it is sweet, they would say, “It is preciously dry.” If they happen to hear an anecdote or a tale, they do not mind listening to that—but a meditation entirely upon Christ would be dry enough to them, and they would be glad to hear it brought to a close. Ah, friend, that is because of the taste you have got in your mouth—there is something wrong with your palate. You know when we have been taking a certain kind of medicine, and our mouth has been impregnated with a strong flavor, whatever we eat acquires that taste. So is it with you. You have got your mouth out of taste with some of the world’s poor dainties. You have got some of the powder of the apples of Sodom hanging on your lips, and that spoils the glorious flavor of your meditation on Jesus. In fact, it prevents your meditating on Christ at all. It is only a hearing of the meditation with your ears, not a receiving it into your hearts. But the psalmist says, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

What a mercy, dear friends, that there is something sweet in this world for us! We need it. For I am sure, as for most other things in the world, they are very, very bitter. There is little here that seems sweet, at first, but has a bitter flavor afterwards. And there are too many things that are actually bitter and void of any relish. Go through the great laboratory of this world, and how many will be the cases and bottles that you will see marked bitter! There are, perhaps, more of aloes put in our cup than of any other ingredient. We have to take a great quantity of bitters in the course of our lives. What a mercy, then, it is that there is one thing that is sweet! “My meditation of HIM shall be sweet”—so sweet, beloved, that all the other bitters are quite swallowed up in its sweetness! Have I not seen the widow, when her husband has departed, and he who was her strength, the stay of her life, and her sustenance, has been laid in the grave—have I not seen her hold up her hands and say, “Ah, though he is gone, still my Maker is my Husband. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”? What was the reason of her patient submission? Because she had a sweet meditation to neutralize the bitterness of her reflections. And do I not remember, even now, seeing a man whose property had been washed away by the tide, and his lands swallowed up and become quicksand, instead of being any longer profitable to him! Beggared and bankrupt, with streaming eyes, he held up his hands and repeated Habakkuk’s words, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there

shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Was it not because his meditation on Christ was so sweet that it absorbed the bitterness of his trouble? And oh, how many, when they have even come to the dark waters of death, have found that surely their bitterness was past, for they perceived through their meditation upon Jesus Christ, that death was swallowed up in victory!

Now, if any of you have come here with your mouths out of taste through affliction and trouble. If you have been saying of the Lord, with Jeremiah, “He has filled me with bitterness. He has made me drunk with wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel. He has covered me with ashes.” Take a little of this choice cordial—I can assure you that it is sweet—*Lacrymae Christi*, it is called. If you will take these tears of Jesus, and put them in your mouth, they will take away all the unpleasant flavor that is there now. Or again, I bid you take this meditation upon Christ as a piece of frankincense that was perfumed in heaven. It matters not what you have in your house—this shall make it suggestive of Paradise, and shall make it smell like those breezes that once blew through Eden’s garden, wafting the odor of perfect flowers. Ah, there is nothing that can so console your spirits, and relieve all your distresses and troubles as the feeling that now you can meditate on the person of Jesus Christ! “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.”

But, my dear hearers, shall I send you away without asking *whether you have all had such a meditation upon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?* I do not like to ever preach a sermon without pressing it home upon the consciences of all my hearers. I never care to bring to you the sword of the Spirit, and show it to you, and say, “Here is a sword, and it is sharp.” I always like to make you feel that it is sharp by cutting you with it! Would to God that the sword of the Spirit might penetrate many of your hearts right now! When I see so many gathered together even on a weekday, I am astonished. When I came to London, I did not fancy that there would be half such a congregation as this even on the Sabbath, much less on a weekday. But why have you come, my brothers and sisters? What did you come out to see? A reed shaken with the wind? What have you come to see? A prophet? No, but I say that you have come to see something more than a prophet! You have come to see and to hear of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord! How many of you really do meditate upon Christ?

Christian men and women, do not many of you live below your privileges? Are you not living without having choice moments of communion with Jesus? I think if you had a free pass to heaven’s palace, you would use it very often. If you might go there, and hold communion with some person whom you dearly loved, you would often be found there. But here is your Lord Jesus, the King of heaven, and He gives you that which can open the gates of heaven, and let you in to hold sweet fellowship with Him—and yet you live without meditating upon His work, meditating upon His person, meditating upon His offices, and meditating upon His glory! Christian men and women, I say to you—Is it not time to begin to live nearer to God? What is to become of our churches? I do not know what to think of Christendom at large. As I travel through the country, and go here and there, I see the churches in a most awfully dwindled state. True, the gospel is preached in most places, but it is preached as it might be by bumble bees in pitchers—always with the same monotonous sound, and little or no good is done! I fear that the fault lies in the pews, as well as in the pulpit. If hearers are meditative, preachers must be meditative. It is very true that water does not run uphill, but when you begin to meditate and pray over the Word of God, your ministers will see that you have gone beyond them, and they will set to meditate themselves, and give you the gospel just as it comes fresh from their hearts—and it will be precious food for your souls.

As for you who have never meditated on Jesus Christ, what do you think will become of you when your greatest bitterness shall be in your mouth? When you taste death, how do you hope to destroy its ill flavor? Yet, “that last, that bitter cup which mortal man can taste” is but a dire apprehension. When you have to drink that gall in hell *forever*—when the cup of torments which Jesus did *not* drain for you will have to be drained by yourself—what will you do? The Christian can go to heaven because Christ has drunk damnation dry for him, but the ungodly and unconverted man will have to drink the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah! What will you do then? The first taste is bad enough, when you sip the drops of remorse *here* on account of sin. But that future cup in hell—that terrible mixture which God deals out to the lost in the pit—what will you do when you have to drink that—when your meditation will be that you rejected Jesus, that you despised His gospel, that you scoffed at His Word? What will you do in that dread extremity? You business men, will your ledger serve you with a sweet meditation in hell? Lawyer, will it be sweet for you to meditate on your deeds when you go there? Laboring man, will it be a sweet

meditation to you, to think that your wages were spent in drunkenness, or your Sabbaths profaned, and your duties neglected? And you, professor, will it be a sweet meditation to sit down and think of your hypocrisy? And, ah, you carnally-minded men who are indulging the flesh, and pampering the appetite, and not serving the Lord, “whose God is your belly, and whose glory is in your shame”—will your career furnish a sweet meditation to you at last? Be assured of this—your sins must be your meditation, then, if Christ is not your meditation now! May there be great searching of heart among you! How often do your convictions disperse like the smoke from the chimney, or the chaff from the winnowing’s hand—they soon vanish. It will not profit you to live at this rate—hearing sermons and forgetting them. Take heed to the voice of warning lest God should say, “He that being often reprov’d hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

O wicked, men! Wicked men! I need to say just this last word to all of you who know not God, and then you shall go. I will give you a subject for your meditation. It shall be a parable. A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects, and said to him, “What is your employment?” He answered, “I am a blacksmith.” “Go home,” he said, “and make me a chain of such-and-such a length.” He went home. The work occupied him several months, and he had no wages all the while he was making the chain—only the trouble and the pains of making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, who said, “Go back and make it twice as long.” He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on, and made it twice as long. He brought it up again, and the monarch said, “Go and make it still longer.” Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it still longer. And when he brought it up at last, the monarch said, “Take it, bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him into a furnace of fire.” That were his wages for making the chain! Here is a meditation for you tonight, you servants of the devil! Your master, Satan, is telling you to make a chain. Some of you have been 50 years welding the links of the chain, and he says, “Go and make it still longer.” Next Sunday morning you will open that shop of yours, and put another link on. Next Saturday night you will be drunk, and put another link on. Next Monday you will do a dishonest action, and so you will keep on making fresh links to this chain. And when you have lived 20 more years, the devil will say, “Put more links on!” And then, at last, the command will be, “Take him and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire.” “For the wages of sin is death.”

There is a subject for your meditation! I do not think it will be sweet, but if God makes it profitable, it will do you good. You sometimes must have strong medicines when the disease is bad. God apply His own Word to your hearts, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

### EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

#### 1 JOHN 5.

**Verse 1.** *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*

These are very simple words, but they contain a great depth of meaning. The teaching conveyed by this Epistle is very profound, though the language is such as even a child can understand. There must be faith in Jesus Christ as the anointed Son of God—otherwise there is no new birth, no regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

**1.** *And everyone that loves Him that begot loves Him also that is begotten of Him.*

If we love the Father, we love the Son. If we love God, we love all His people! All who are born into the divine family are the objects of our affection.

**2, 3.** *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.*

Not that we talk about our experience. Not that we use endearing expressions concerning the Savior. Not that we are attentive to outward religious ordinances, but, “this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” A holy life is the best possible proof of true love to God.

**2.** *And His commandments are not grievous.*

To His people, they are charming, not grievous. They delight themselves in the law of God, and they only wish that they could be perfectly conformed to the divine will.

**3.** *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith.*

And the apostle gives a description of what kind of faith it is that overcomes the world.

**4.** *Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

So it is faith in Jesus which is, first of all, the evidence of the new birth, and which is, afterwards, the weapon wielded by the new-born soul, with which it fights till it gains the victory over the world!

**5.** *This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only.*

Cleansing us as to our lives, “not by water only.”

**6.** *But by water and blood.*

The blood which takes away the guilt of our offenses. There is a double cure for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. First, the putting away of all our past guilt, and then the delivering of our hearts from defilement, so that we live after a holy fashion.

**6, 7.** *And it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven.*

Or, “witness in heaven.”

**7, 8.** *The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

Blessed is the man who has that threefold witness—the Spirit of God quickening him, the water cleansing his daily life, and the blood delivering his conscience from trouble because he is delivered from sin by the atoning sacrifice of Christ!

**9.** *If we receive the witness of men.*

And we are constantly obliged to do that, for we could not get on at all if we did not believe our fellow men, yet—

**9-12.** *The witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself: he that believes not God has made Him a liar; because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and that life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life.*

Ah, then, my soul, if you have, by faith, embraced the Son of God, you have a life which can never die! You have the life of God within you! You have heaven begun within you and you have it now! Dear hearer, have you the Son of God? Have you taken Him to yourself by a distinct believing grasp, saying, “This Christ shall be mine—this blessed Jesus shall be my Savior”? Then you have the apostle’s inspired declaration, “He that has the Son has life.” And his other declaration is equally true, “He that has not the Son of God has not life.”

**13.** *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

The apostle said that they did believe, yet he wrote to them that they might believe on the name of the Son of God because he that believes needs to believe more—more as to matter, and more as to the firmness of the grip of his faith. There are some who do really believe on Christ who do not know that they have eternal life. They have it, but they scarcely realize that they have it—they are afraid to believe that it is theirs. But here the Holy Spirit assures us, through the apostle, that those who believe on the name of the Son of God have eternal life. Oh, what a comfort this is! Then you can never perish! There are some who say that you can fall from grace, but how can that be? What kind of life would that be? It would be temporary life! But the Scripture says, “He that believes on the Son has *everlasting* life.” Then, if it is everlasting, it is everlasting, and there cannot be any end to it! Our Lord Jesus Christ said to the woman at the well of Sychar, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

**14.** *And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*

We do not wish to have a more unlimited promise than that! We do not ask God to hear our prayer if it is not according to His will. The true child of God does not wish to have his own will, but he says, “No, Lord, You know much better than I do what to grant, so, when my will is contrary to Your will, Your will, not mine, be done! This is as gracious an assurance of answers to prayer as the true children of God wish to have. If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

**15.** *And if we know that He hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of Him.*

That is, *before* we actually receive the answers to our petitions. After the prayer of faith, we know that our request has been granted and we act upon the belief that we have already received what we

asked of God. A true man's promise is as good as the performance of it—we unhesitatingly take a note of hand, or a promise to pay when we know that it is drawn upon a reliable firm. We treat it as money. It passes from hand to hand, through the bankers, and is regarded as if it were the coin itself—then shall we not treat our God in this fashion when we have His promise to pay or to give? We have pleaded it in prayer, so let us rise from our knees, not merely *hoping* that we shall receive what we have asked, but *believing* that we shall surely have it! “If we know that He hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of Him.”

**16, 17.** *If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.*

There are multitudes of such sins, but there is a place beyond which, if a man passes in sin, he becomes henceforth dead, and utterly insensible—and he will never be quickened, and never be saved. If we knew a man to be in such a condition as that, the apostle's words would apply to such a case. “I do not say that he shall pray for it.” But, as we cannot tell that any man is in that condition, it is well for us to ask for grace to be able to pray for every sinner, however great his sin may be! We know that “all unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”

**18.** *We know that whoever is born of God sins not.*

That is to say, that is not the bent and current of his life. He makes mistakes, he falls into errors, and he sins, but that is not the habitual description of his life.

**18-21.** *But he that is begotten of God keep himself and that wicked one touches him not. And we knew that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

At the time of the Reformation, there was a general order that this text should be put around the communion tables. I think it is time that it was put around the communion tables again. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols”—for that is one place where idols are often found, though not by any means the only one.

**21.** *Amen.*

And we say, “Amen. So let it be.”

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