

BELIEVE, AND BE AT REST.

BY REV. DWIGHT WILLIAMS.

All doubt is fear.
Believe and find thyself in rest.
What if the sun do not appear
For clouds across his breast,
And if he hide 'tis best.
God holds the mists for loving rain, and he
Sends shadows, lest
The heat too long continued be,
And thirst and faintness come to thee.
God moves apace;
Hath he not said: The thing I do
Thou knowest not now? What if thy sight
Be dim? His word is true,
And he will lead thee through
The paths obscure, and thou shalt see how
well.
He led; he knew
Thy way, and thou the joy shall tell
In praise of thy Immanuel.
In him confide;
He giveth life, and strong of heart
Thou shalt go forth, because the tide
Of power shall newly start,
And thrill thee as thou art
Surrendered only to his sovereign will,
This is thy part.
Believe and hold his promise still,
And he thy cup of joy shall fill.
—Advocate.

"SEALS" OF A SOLID CHRISTIAN.

In the Westminster Revision of the New Testament it is said of the house "built upon the earth without a foundation," that when the stream broke against it, "straightway it fell in." We occasionally hear the crash of some unhappy church member whose ill-built character has fallen in; others seem to be tottering over and threaten a fall every day. The reason is that they were either badly bottomed or badly built. They rested their structure on the loose earth of temporary excitement, or their own resolutions, or some other and delusion. Their fall is a warning to others to beware as to where and how they build their hopes for this world and the next.

First of all, let those who are undertaking a Christian life dig deep for the solid foundation. Deep conversions make strong Christians. Throw out the rubbish and gravel of old sinful habits, and fasten your trust on the Rock of Ages. Christ crucified is the corner-stone, and this foundation standeth sure. It was the ancient custom to put certain inscriptions on the corner-stones of edifices. Paul, in his second epistle to his son Timothy, calls such an inscription a "seal," and the use of the seal was to accredit anything as genuine. The great apostle tells us that the two certifying inscriptions of the base of every character founded on Jesus Christ are these, "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." Whatever other seals there may have been, these two are vital and significant. The first signifies God's recognition of his own redeemed child: the second describes what he requires of him. The first pertains to God's promise; the second to our performance. If the second is full of solemn caution, the first is full of solid comfort. Let all those who hope that they have been converted recently, or are about making a public profession of faith, look sharply to find whether the foundation of their heart-house (in which they expect to live) bears both these inscriptions.

I. Jesus knows who are his true followers. It is very easy to be misled by bad advisers in an inquiry meeting or elsewhere. It is very easy for pastors and church officers to be mistaken as to the real condition of applicants for church-membership. We cannot read the hearts of others; and some people are very blind and careless in reading their own hearts. But we cannot deceive the Master. Not a single sheep that he has ever gone after and brought into his fold but what he is acquainted with intimately. "I know my sheep," "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me." In my early youth, on a farm, I was a tender of sheep, and the flock recognized me very quickly and pushed up to get their noses into the basket of oats or salt. Some were so tame as to eat out of my hands. Those rustic experiences always come back to me when I read our Lord's sweet pastoral words about himself and his blood-bought flock. If you are a true convert, my friend, you will turn a deaf ear to teachers of error, and to all tempters, satanic or human; you will be glad to take your salt and your fresh clover out of your Shepherd's hands, and let him lead you into his green pastures.

Come humbly and honestly into his flock with the deep determination to follow Christ wherever he shall guide you. He puts his name upon you and knows everything about you. Not a bleat of distress will ever escape his quick ear. Jesus knows the voice of every one of his flock as well as a mother knows the voices of her children playing in the yard. "When I say my prayer," said a child to her mother, "then Christ says, 'Hark, angels, I hear a little noise.' Then the angels all keep still till I get through and say Amen." The precious and profound truth which is hidden from the skeptic and the proud scoffer had been revealed unto that babe in

grace. The almighty Saviour does hear the faintest "noise" of feeblest faith; but he loves to have us speak out loud and clear. Come boldly to the throne of grace that you may obtain mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus knows also your weaknesses, and the sins that most easily entrap you. Just how much of the old Adam you have to fight—just what a quick temper, or unruly tongue, or morbid melancholy, or nervous excitability, or sensual appetites, any of you have to contend against, the omniscient Shepherd understands perfectly. Pray do not surrender to these because they are "natural" propensities. The very object of divine grace is to give you a better nature. If your friends and neighbors do not detect any improvement in you, then your new structure is a flimsy affair—such as speculators run up in our cities to sell.

2. For bear in mind that if the first seal on the corner-stone is rich in heavenly comfort and cheer, the second one is fraught with solemn cautions. Let him that confesses the Lord Jesus Christ depart from unrighteousness. You cannot compromise by living for Christ on the Sabbath, and for self and the world during the week. You cannot build half the house on gravel and the other half on the rock. Use the plumb-line of God's word every day, on every utterance and every act. If you build out of the perpendicular line of right your character will soon "fall in." Nobody spies the cracks in the wall sooner than the sharp-eyed neighbor, who says, "I make no profession of piety, but my wall is as straight as yours." Don't be angry at his criticisms; profit by them. If your Master has his eye on you, he means that the world shall have an eye on you also. Build such a structure of godliness, stone upon stone, that all men shall take knowledge of you, that you are based on the everlasting Rock, and are growing up into a solid habitation of Christ through his Spirit. The grandest evidence of Christianity is a Christian.—Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler.

AT EASE IN ZION.

They came to the train heated and weary. They deposited their bundles and wrappings. They threw themselves into the cushioned seats and said, "Well, our hurry and trouble are all over now. We are in our section of the palace car and can be at ease." That was right, for they were passengers. They had bought tickets through to New York, and the railroad company was bound to take them there. It was their privilege to be at ease in that luxurious Pullman sleeper. They had no duties on the train but to rest and pass the time of the journey as pleasantly as they could. But it is not so with that party of sailors who go with their sea-chests and bundles to yonder vessel in the harbor. They say, as they deposit their traps in the fore-cabin, "Well, shipmates, we had easy times on shore. But now there is no certain rest for us day or night. We must be ready to weigh anchor, to reef sails, to climb the rigging, or to scrub the decks whenever the order comes." They are not passengers. They have shipped before the mast. They must do the duty of good seamen in calm or tempest until the voyage is ended.

Now, Zion does not mean a car or a ship. It is a name given to the church, because Zion was one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built. But the prophet Amos writes, "Voe unto them that are at ease in Zion." That hill in Jerusalem was fortified. It was the duty of the citizens to guard and defend it, to watch for enemies and be ready to fight if any appeared. To lie down in Zion and go to sleep leaving its gates open and its towers without sentinels was to invite their foes to come and conquer them. The Jews in the eighth century before Christ did not realize their responsibility and their danger. They wanted to have a good time. They took their ease, and in a few years found themselves captives in Babylon. Then they understood the warning of the prophet. Then they felt all the bitterness of the woe which he foretold. But then it was too late.

The woe of Amos was not uttered for the Jews alone. It comes down to us as the promises come. The Zion of to-day is like the Zion of old. It is the citadel of the Lord. And if we are the Israel of the new dispensation it is our duty to defend it. The church of Christ is not a passenger car in which we have only to make ourselves comfortable, and take our ease until we wake up at the celestial station. This is the popular idea, but not the Bible idea. The eloquent evangelist cries, "Come to Jesus and find rest." "Believe in Jesus and you shall have peace." But Jesus himself says, "If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." And again he says, "I come not to send peace on earth, but a sword."

Is there, then, no rest and no peace for the believers in Christ? Is our holy religion a lifelong warfare without truce or furlough? We answer to such questions both yes and no. We are enlisted as soldiers. We are sent into the vineyard as laborers. We are commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We are told to put on the whole armor of God, to fight the good fight of faith, to press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling. But while thus toiling, watching, marching and fighting, we have a joy that those who are at ease know nothing of. Indeed, the most miserable people in the world are they who have nothing to do. The blood stagnates in their veins. Even luxuries cannot tempt their sated appetites. They die by inches—of ennui. Give a man peace of conscience; deliver him from the fear of death; assure him that he has a home in heaven; that a Father, of infinite power and love, is watching over him, and will make all things work together for his good, and you cannot lay upon him loads that will crush him; you cannot summon him to toil or self-denial that will tempt him to complain. The more he has to do for God, the surer he is of the help and favor of God, and the greater is his joy in the Lord.

The church of Christ has a great deal to do in this world. She is to go into all the world and subdue it. A part of the responsibility for this campaign rests upon every member. Each has something to do, and a blessing waits upon the doing. The faithful servant finds joy and strength in serving his Lord. The unfaithful servant loses the stimulus and discipline of honest toil, and incurs the condemnation due to infidelity. Hence there is a twofold work for all who are at ease in Zion. They miss the happiness that they might secure, and they bring upon them the displeasure of the Master. The reason that Christians do not rejoice in the Lord, "rejoice always," as Paul exhorts, is that they are not earnest and zealous in the work of the Lord. It is exercise that warms our bodies and makes the blood bound in our veins. The traveller in the winter storm shivers, though in a closed carriage, and wrapped in furs. But the half-clad pedestrian who plods through the snow feels the perspiration starting from his brow. And it is so in spiritual things. The true prescription for the Christian who is sad and despondent is Christian work. We have known people who were almost ready to give up their hope, made cheerful and happy again by a little resolute self-denial for Jesus. Nothing quickens faith so effectually as taking up a heavy cross and carrying it. Let any whose souls are languid from spiritual sloth try it. Thousands are at ease in Zion because they have never proved the luxury of work—never tested the blessedness of being yoked with Jesus in doing good.

Another reason that so many are at ease in Zion is that not all ministers are good organizers. They talk in general terms about Christian duty, but they don't tell each man, woman and child just what to do. A soldier described to us this scene during the war: An army 10,000 strong was marching through Tennessee. They came to a broad, shallow river which they must cross. But, lo! the enemy had destroyed the bridge. The 10,000 men sat down on the bank, or leaned against the trees as if they knew not what to do. In a few minutes Gen. Howard rode up. He took in the situation at a glance. There was a forest close by. Ten thousand trees from it would bridge the stream. At once he ordered the pioneer brigade to advance and superintend the work; and then sent the whole force, by regiments and companies, into the woods. Soon the sound of axes was heard. In an hour or two the men came dragging their trees. They were placed in position as brought. Each did something, not much in itself. But the combined and organized work of all enabled the army to pursue its march with only a brief delay. Such a general every pastor ought to be. Thousands now at ease in Zion would be earnest workers if told just what to do. And if all were at work how soon the world would be evangelized.—Obadiah Oldschool, in Interior.

ARGUMENT OF PRAYER.

A frequent and favorite contributor to the *Advance* reports the true story of a layman who, when preaching Christ in the Eastern States, related the following facts before a large audience. It is a touching and remarkable testimony to the efficacy of fervent prayer when prompted in a heart by the Holy Spirit of God.

"I am nearing the sunset," said the venerable speaker. "A long life has been passed, and as I look back upon the route over which I have traveled, I can say it has been a land of deserts and of pits—a land of drought and of the shadow of death, which has brought to me a

thirst which only the water of life could quench. My childhood was spent in a prayerless home, my manhood was given to the study of those books which were the principal ones in my father's library, so far back can I remember. Of a studious nature, I read them carefully, and sought to satisfy the demand of the soul in the reasonings of Tom Paine, Voltaire and Rousseau. They did not satisfy. Later, I studied A. J. Davis, and in Spiritualism found only a temporary relief. Comte and Darwin were favorite authors, and their arguments were perfectly familiar to me. I read the Bible only to misinterpret its truths and to prevent its teachings; was ever ready to dispute with Christians, and prided myself on my power to puzzle them with my atheistical doctrines.

"One evening a neighbor, a devout Christian woman, came in, and I at once beset her with my favorite topic, seeking to undermine her faith and trust. She made but little reply, and after a few moments surprised me with the singular remark, 'Father L., hadn't we better pray?' and before I was aware of it, I was on my knees listening to a most wondrous prayer. She seemed to be before the open door of heaven, leading me, a way-worn pilgrim, to its very gates. She prayed as the birds sing, and with holy earnestness asked that light might flash into my darkened soul. Rising, she bade me good night, and left. Then the Holy Spirit took possession of my heart. The Christian boldness, united to a womanly modesty and simplicity, the peaceful joy which irradiated her countenance, compelled me to ask, 'What is the cause of such serene joy?'

"I had seen Christians die in triumphant peace, and the question came up, 'What gives them this trust, and what sustains them in an hour when they stand on the confines of the other life? That night I prayed, and no light came to me. I read the Bible, but it was a sealed book. My skepticism and infidelity were so dark and dreary, and the long-winded, worse than useless, life stood out in such appalling contrast with the life of my little friend, who seemed to live in an atmosphere of joy and song, and then again I prayed and begged for light, and at last my prayers were answered, and for a year I have rejoiced in Christ as my Saviour, my Redeemer. My wife has become a Christian, and joy and sunshine, and prayer and peace, are abiding guests in my home."

LOYALTY TO THE CHURCH.

It is a very commendable thing for Christians to have charity one for another, and to entertain kindly feelings towards the members of other religious denominations. It is not only commendable, but it is a part of our Christian duty. As fellow soldiers in a common cause, fighting the hosts of sin and iniquity, it behooves the members of all orthodox churches to cherish feelings of fraternal friendship towards one another. Time is too precious to be wasted in foolish bickerings over ways and means for prosecuting the work in hand. The needs of the hour are too great to admit of unprofitable wrangling over points of doctrine. Such bickerings and such wrangling do no good, and often result in much harm.

But there is such a thing as being too liberal in one's religious views. Every church has certain fundamental points of doctrine upon which its stability as an organization depends. To these points of doctrine its members subscribe, and the church has a right to demand that they shall be loyal to them. If such were not the case, what becomes of the power of authority of the church? Or what is the necessity of trying to perpetuate the church as a distinctive organization? If these fundamental doctrines are laid aside and declared to be of no effect, then the ideas of the founders of the church are lost sight of, and there is a revolution. The church cuts loose from its former moorings, and becomes, to all intents and purposes, a new organization.—*Star and Crown.*

THE TOUCH OF CHRIST.

One of the sweetest pictures in Mark's story of the wonderful being with whom everybody felt at home is that of the group of little children brought to him that "he should touch them." Whether it was superstition or faith that presented them, we know not; but the homeless, childless Nazarene took the darlings in his arms and blessed them. Any one might be willing to caress a sweet babe; but who would care or even dare to touch a loathsome leper, whose very breath was deadly contagion? One of these wretched outcasts, with disease running riot over his horrid countenance, approaches our Lord and kneels to the ground. No wife or child or kinsman could give the

poor wretch a kiss if he were dying. "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" What a model prayer for us all! With a yearning of divine pity Jesus puts forth his clean, pure hand, and touches the living putrefaction. In an instant the leprosy is gone; Christ's hand has opened all other hands to a hitherto detested outcast. Here is an object lesson for us. What a rebuke that touch of the leper gives to our hateful, selfish spirit of caste and pride! Shame on us that we are so willing to touch jeweled hands and sit beside silks and sealings, and yet shun the ill-clad, ill-colored outcasts as not fit to be touched! This is the curse and shame of our professed Christianity; it is above touching the lepers. And to-day the only practical solution of the great burning problems of how to reach the neglected masses,—and how to reform the drunkard,—and how to evangelize the heathenism of our huge cities, lies in two words, Christian contact. The personal contact of culture, piety and love with ignorance, vice and misery; that's the remedy. Soul must touch soul. The loving hand must not refuse to touch the lepers. If we do Christ is not in us. Oh, blessed Jesus, give us thy tender compassion that we shrink not from stretching forth the helping, healing hand to every sinning, suffering creature in our path!

"Oh, strengthen us, that while we stand Firm on the rock and strong in thee, We may stretch out a loving hand To wrestlers with the troubled sea!"

THE COUNTRY BOY.

The country lad who is trained to simple ways and homely virtues, and who learns what a dollar is worth by actually earning it, under the laws of imperative necessity, has a tremendous advantage over the town boy. The country schools are far inferior to the town or city school, but this is counter-balanced by the fact that the country boy is trained to work from the time he can pick up corn-cobs to run the kitchen stove, till he goes out to his own home. The country boy has a mile or so of walk to and from school which give him vigorous appetite and health. The country boy or girl is face to face with practical realities. He sees how slowly money is made on the farm; he is taught from youth up the need of economy; he has the nature of saving first explained to him every day in the week; he is not exposed to the temptation of the saloon, or the ballroom; he is not tempted so much to be a lady's man before he has occasion to use a razor on his downy cheeks. He may be a trifle rude, he may not feel easy in company, but in the long, closely contested race of life, it is the chap that trudges to school bare-footed in summer and in stogies in winter, whose mother cuts his hair with the sheep shears, that leads the chap that goes to the city school, with the starched shirt front and fancy slippers, and whose head is shaved with the lawn mower in the barber shop.

Such has been our observation, and we think we know what we are talking about. Speaking from experience, we never read any books with such avidity as those we devoured while the horses were resting at the end of the plow land. The boys we envied forty years ago, because they wore cassimere and laughed at our jeans, have dropped so far back in the race that we have almost forgotten them. The chaps who had plenty of money at college, and the city-bred fellows, have not been as a rule heard from much since; while the country boys who wore the plain clothes and kept close to their books in the old college, are leading the thought in Iowa and other States to-day.—*Iowa Homestead.*

WEAKNESS AND HELPFULNESS.

It is well we are weak, for out of our weakness is born the helpful hand of sympathy we give to others. Did we all feel perfect and strong in our perfection, there would be little charity in us for the shortcomings of others. Many a man, through humiliating failures, has been fitted to be the most noble helper of his kind. It is well the gospel truth is made to flow to the world through the imperfect hearts of men rather than through the perfect hearts of angels. Angels would not, and could not, understand us; therefore, they could not help us. Even God incarnated himself that he might understand by experience how to deal helpfully with the children of men. Therefore, if thy weakness and thy failures make thee more kindly and more helpful to thy unfortunate fellows, thank God for them, and take courage in the thought that out of them comes blessing to some one.—*Thought Etchings.*

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