

Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life

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"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6

A child is born into this world; it lives and thrives; it grows up into a boy, a youth, a man. He now occupies a certain definite station in life; the station which God has provided for him, be it high or low, be he rich or poor. He may be a farmer or a tradesman, a poor labourer or hardworking mechanic. These are mere incidental, external circumstances, quite unconnected with the point at which I am now aiming. But whatever he be externally, viewed internally, he is at this time, as the Scripture emphatically describes, "without God and without hope in the world." His life is at best but the life of an animal—not much removed from that of the beasts that perish; for though he has reason and intelligence, or it may be even an educated, cultivated mind, earth contains and bounds all his desires and hopes. Thus he lives, and thus but for the grace of God he would die, as thousands and tens of thousands die daily. But he is not so to die. There are thoughts in the bosom of God towards him, thoughts of an eternal date; plans and purposes, means devised, that his banished be not expelled from him. (2 Sam. 14:14.) As time then rolls on, it brings these secret purposes of God to light. Hitherto they have been like a river flowing underground, which at a certain spot emerges to the surface; or like those hidden springs couching deeply in the bosom of the earth, which gush up at a certain point, forming first a gentle rill, then a rapid brook, then a flowing river, which loses itself in the all-embracing ocean. The Lord, then, has a purpose of grace and mercy to manifest to this man—this animal man,

this carnal, worldly, careless, thoughtless man, if no deeper, no darker, no blacker title rightfully attach itself to him by the just judgment of God and his fellow men. But how does the Lord disclose and bring to light these hidden purposes—these thoughts of his heart towards him for good and not for evil? It is by beginning a work of grace upon his soul. But how does that work begin? It is scarcely possible either to define or describe it. The Lord has such various means of beginning and carrying on a work of grace, that we cannot lay down any definite mode for him to work by. But I believe the first stone of the spiritual building is often, if not usually, laid in a season of trouble. It was the case with myself about 30 years ago. I was, through a concurrence of circumstances, which came almost unexpectedly upon me and over which I had little or no control, cast into one of the most painful and perplexing trials that I have ever known in all my life. Now it was under, and in the midst of this most distressing trial, which in itself was not at all connected with religion, that the Lord was pleased first to communicate divine life to my soul. I have often questioned whether I have divine life, but if I have, I have never questioned as to the time when it was first communicated. I have thought sometimes that these seasons of trial, which though not themselves grace, yet seem to precede and prepare the way for grace, are described in the word of truth as "the breaking up of the fallow ground so as not to sow among the thorns" (Jer. 4:3); "as the preparation of the heart which is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:1); as the "softening" of it, of which Job speaks, and making it "tender," and susceptible of divine impressions, as in good king Josiah. (Job. 33:16; 2 Chron. 34:27.) In and by these troubles, then, the Lord often works; for these afflicting times become, as I found them, praying times, as the prophet speaks: "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." Thus the Lord may cast the man whose

case I am now considering upon a bed of sickness and languishing. It is now with him as Elihu describes: "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out." (Job 23:19, 20, 21.)

But in this affliction the Lord works with divine power upon his conscience; and now he feels, under the fears of death and the terrors of the Almighty, that "his soul draweth near unto the grave and his life to the destroyers." Eternal things begin to press with a hitherto unfelt power and weight upon his mind, and are seen in a light in which they were never seen before. With this new, this peculiar and vivid light on eternal realities, new life works. He gets his Bible down from the shelf, or, most probably buys a new one. The Scriptures that perhaps he learnt to read as a boy, but has much neglected, he begins to read with an earnestness, an attention, a diligence, an understanding of their meaning he never had before. Light as if from heaven falls upon this or that hitherto unobserved passage, and from it as thus opened to his understanding life enters into his conscience. He is thus brought into a new world. He now begins to see and feel that he has a soul to be saved or lost; and as eternal things press with greater and greater weight and power upon his mind, earthly things begin to sink in comparative value. His business that he is so deeply engaged in, his shop, his farm, that occupied so large a portion of his thoughts begin to drop their fast and firm hold upon him, and other thoughts, other feelings, other anxieties press upon his mind and occupy it nearly night and day. "I have a soul to be saved or lost," he often says within himself. "Death must soon come, or if delayed, it will come at last. As death leaves me, judgment will find me: how stand matters between God

and my soul?" The character of God as unspeakably holy, just, and righteous; the law as condemning all sin and reaching to the inmost thoughts and desires of the mind; and his own miserable condition as a sinner against and before the Majesty of heaven, and therefore exposed to the full fury of the wrath to come, without shelter or refuge—all these feelings and considerations press with increasing weight upon his conscience. No one need tell him that he is a sinner, and the worst of sinners, for he sees and feels it as plainly as he sees the sun at noon-day.

Now by this little sketch of the thoughts and feelings of an awakened soul I am not laying down a certain definite path for the Lord to walk in in his first movements upon the heart, but I am simply assuming, by way of throwing light upon the subject, that the Lord, by his Spirit and grace, produces some such or similar feelings and exercises in a man's quickened conscience. When, then, a man's eyes are thus enlightened and his soul quickened into spiritual life, and such effects as I have described follow upon it, he, as if instinctively, begins to look out how he may escape the wrath of God, what he shall do to be saved, how he shall obtain the pardon of his sins, find peace in death, and acceptance in that great and terrible day when the world shall be judged in righteousness. But why have I drawn this sketch? What is my object, and what connection has it with my text? This man, not altogether an ideal man, but one like whom many live and breathe, and perhaps some even here—this man is just the person who would have an ear for the words of the text. To this man, to such a man under such feelings and exercises, Jesus would seem specially to speak in them; for they contain the guidance, the instruction, the truth which he wants. They are words adapted eminently to a man whose eyes and ears and heart, are just opened to see, to hear, to feel the things of the kingdom of God, and to

whom the solemn matters of eternity are become present and living realities. Such an one wants something clear, positive, direct—something simple that he can understand, certain that he may believe, powerful that he may feel. I would not set one part of God's word above another, nor exalt one declaration of Jesus above another that fell from the same gracious lips; yet I cannot but think we can scarcely through the whole compass of divine revelation find words more suitable to a man in earnest about the salvation of his soul than those now before us. To him Jesus speaks, as it were, peculiarly and expressly, and drops these words into his anxious, inquiring spirit: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." It is almost as if he said: "Wanderer, forlorn wanderer, stumbling upon the dark mountains, or lost in some wild, tangled wood, without guide or companion, desirous to find the path, but unable to see the track, art thou seeking and anxiously longing to know the way to heaven? I am that way. Art thou sick and weary of this lying world, of thine own lying heart, of the lying profession of the day? Art thou seeking after truth, and wouldst buy it at any risk and any price? I am that truth. Art thou surrounded and encompassed by death in every shape and form, and wouldst fain be delivered from it? Is there death within thee and death without thee? Art thou seeking and longing for the pouring in of divine life into thy soul? I am the life. And wouldst thou come unto God and receive mercy at his hands, but knowest not how to come, fearest thou mayest be rejected, or art in any way trying to come in thine own strength or righteousness? Let this be written as with the point of a diamond upon the tablets of thine heart, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In unfolding these words, in harmony I trust with the Scriptures of truth and the experience of the followers of the Lamb, I shall divide my subject into two leading branches,

corresponding to the two clauses of our text; and show,

I.—*First*, how Jesus, according to his own declaration, is "*the way, and the truth and the life.*"

II.—And *secondly*, explain and enforce that memorable declaration which should ever stand before our eyes in all our approaches, in public or in private, to the Majesty of heaven, and which deserves to be written deeply upon every awakened soul: "*No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*"

I.—In showing how Jesus is "*the way,*" let me direct your thoughts back to the case which I assumed in the opening of my discourse, and to make the application still more plain and more pointed, let me assume that it is yours. You, then, are the anxious seeker, the earnest inquirer, the poor forlorn wanderer, the sensibly lost sinner who is groping for the wall like the blind, and groping as if he had no eyes. You are the man that wants to find the way to heaven. But what has put this into your mind? What has made you think about heaven and hell, death and judgment? How came your thoughts to be so exercised night and day on these things? Are you afraid of hell? Are you desirous of heaven? Was it always so? Has it been long so? How long? Was there not a certain beginning to these convictions of sin, and of your lost, undone condition, to your sighs and cries for mercy, to your desires after God? There is always a beginning in a true work of grace. We may not indeed in every case be able to discern plainly and clearly the exact, precise commencement; but if it be, as the Scripture declares, a divine work, a spiritual, supernatural operation upon the heart, and thus distinct from any or every work of the flesh, it must have a beginning, though that beginning may be hidden or obscured. The Lord himself tells us, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou

hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8.) There is something very remarkable, and I may add exceedingly instructive in these words. We see from them; 1. first, the *sovereignty* of grace. The wind bloweth where it *listeth*, or "willeth," as the word means; 2. that there is some *audible* and therefore *manifest effects*, "Thou hearest the sound thereof;" 3. an ignorance "*whence it cometh*," so that the soul cannot tell whence its new feelings spring or that they are from God; 4. an ignorance "*whither it goeth*," that is, of the blessed deliverance in which these convictions issue, and the glorious inheritance of which they are the pledge. Using the Lord's own figure, we know that there are certain divine operations and influences upon a man's conscience which the Lord compares to the wind blowing upon the earth, and as when the wind blows we know the fact that it does blow by the sound that it makes, and the effects it produces; so though you may not be able to point out the exact moment when the life of God entered your soul, yet there was a sounding, as it were, of the voice of God in your heart, and there were certain effects produced to which you can, more or less, look back. We are bidden to judge of a tree by its fruits; and so we are to judge of a work of grace by its effects. Now, then, just look back and see if you can find any of these effects as I shall attempt to describe them.

i. Your conscience being awakened and alarmed, the first thing you probably did, was to flee to your own obedience. You endeavoured to lead a new life; to leave off your old habits, to forsake your usual companions, to break off the practice of open sin and profanity, and become very strict, precise, and upright in your walk and conversation. By these means you sought to recommend yourself to the favour of God, to avert his displeasure, and make some amends for

your past carelessness and neglect. But by degrees light broke in more fully and clearly upon your mind; your conscience became sensitive and tender to a point never felt before; you began to see what your own works really were; that sin was mingled with all you said and did. This discovery somewhat tried and perplexed you; and not exactly knowing where the real fault lay, you set about to amend what was wrong, straighten what was crooked, and supply what was deficient. But with all your mending you could not much mend matters. Sin, like an old sore or a bleeding cancer, still kept breaking out, and forcing its way through every plaster and bandage, for they only fretted, irritated, and made the wound worse. It was with you like the leprosy in the house of which Moses speaks. Though the leprous stones were taken out and fresh ones put in; though the walls were thoroughly scraped and the house fresh plastered from the top to the bottom, yet the plague being in the wall again and again appeared. You became now more concerned than ever. But this led you to pray, and sigh, and groan more over your sad state and mournful condition; and you found some encouragement in praying; for a spirit of grace and of supplication was communicated, whereby you were enabled to pour out your heart before God. But this, though it gave some little relief, did not heal the sore, or remove the burden. You now got very unhappy; your mind became more and more distressed; guilt fell with greater weight and power upon your conscience; the law, which you never had thought about, or taken any notice of, except perhaps carelessly and formally to ask God to incline your heart to keep it, began to take notice of you, and, like a masked battery, to open its curses and threatenings. You began to see its exceeding strictness, its awful sanctions; its spirituality as reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart; and all this brought your soul sensibly into bondage and condemnation. But all this guilt and condemnation did not bring you off a covenant

of works; your eyes were not yet anointed and enlightened to see that you were altogether out of the track; nor did you know the meaning of the Lord's words in the text, "I am the way." You went on therefore as the Babel builders did, burning bricks for stones, and using slime for mortar. It was still your own obedience, diligence, resolutions, striving after holiness; and thus you were still building up your own works. But as you built, the Lord threw down; as you strove to please the Lord by works of righteousness, more and more did the law flash before your eyes; more and more was the sentence heard thundering in the secret depths of the soul, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." So that unless you continued "in all things"—and O what a broad sweep does that make! for "all things" embrace perfect love to God and perfect love to man, and you had neither,—you found yourself brought under the tremendous curse of God's holy law.

Now all this trying and painful work in your conscience, though you could not see it at the time, prepared your ears to hear, and your heart to feel and welcome the glad tidings of salvation by grace. You wanted this work, and you had not at all too much of it. If there be a building to erect, there must be a foundation laid in some proportion to it. The higher the wall, the heavier the roof, the larger the building, the stronger and deeper must be the foundation. So would the Lord erect a temple of mercy in your soul and fill it with his heart-gladdening presence, he has to lay the foundation deep; and this he does by giving you to see and feel your lost and ruined condition; opening up the spirituality and curse of his holy law, and making you tremble at his displeasure.

Now after a time, as your eyes were enlightened by the

blessed Spirit, and you read the word of God with an understanding heart, you got dissatisfied with the ministry under which you had hitherto sat, and with the professors of religion with whom you associated. Some unexpected circumstance brought you under the sound of the preached gospel; you got into the society of the living family of God; your ear was opened to hear and receive the one, and your heart to love and embrace the other. Now as you thus received the love of the truth you were led more and more to search the Scriptures with a prayerful heart, and as the Holy Spirit, the testifier to and revealer of Jesus, enlightened the eyes of your understanding, in these rays of divine light that broke in upon your mind, you began to see Jesus in a way you never saw him before. There was a veil hitherto upon your heart; the Lord Jesus had no beauty nor comeliness; you had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but your eye never saw him. But guilt and wrath and fear, exercise of soul, deep distress of mind, and it may be powerful temptations that almost drove you to despair, opened your ears to hear about Jesus Christ. This was the circumcision of the ear, or unstopping it, or uncovering it—all which are scriptural figures and expressions, to lay it bare for the entrance of the word with power. Jesus now began to appear to you in a new light, and you saw or began to see the beauty and blessedness of such a declaration as this, "I am the way." It was as if he spoke to you from heaven and said, "What, sinner, what are you about? Are you going to a broken law to save you? That can only curse and condemn you; there is no life and peace, nor rest, nor healing there. What, sinner! are you going to your own works to obtain justification thence? Is not sin mingled with all you say, think, and do? Can justification be there?" Thus would he now speak from the cross in his bleeding love, in his dying agony; he would speak from the sepulchre in which he lay entombed; more especially would he speak from the throne

of his grace where he is ever interceding for us. From all these would he speak to your inmost soul in heart-moving accents, "I am the way." And if he be the way, can there be any other?

ii. Now let us, with God's blessing, see *how* he is "the way;" and to see that, we must look a moment at who he is. He is God-Man. He unites two natures in one glorious Person. As God he is the co-equal, co-eternal Son of the Father. This he is by nature, by his very mode of subsistence as a Person in the glorious Trinity. But he has taken into union with his own Divine Person a nature like our own, but not a fallen or sinful nature; a nature human, yet without the sin of humanity either original or actual, but pure, perfect, spotless, holy; a nature that could suffer, bleed and die, for that was needful to put away sin; but a nature in which no spot or speck of sin could be found. In that human nature he has suffered and bled and died, and his intrinsic Deity giving to these sufferings and to that sacrifice eternal validity, he has become "the way" from earth to heaven, from sin to salvation, from error to truth, from misery to happiness, from sorrow to joy, from temptation to deliverance, from self with all its attendant miseries to himself with all his attendant mercies. How blessed it is when we are surrounded on every side with darkness, scarcely knowing what to think, or how to speak, or what to do, to have any light shining upon the path that leads from earth to heaven; to have any view of a crucified Jesus, any faith raised up in our soul to believe in his name, any hope communicated to cast anchor within the veil; and any love shed abroad in the heart towards him as a bleeding Lamb. When once he is thus presented to our spiritual eye, and manifests himself to our believing heart as "the way," we are made to walk in it; for if he be the way he is so, that we may walk in him as such. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

(Col. 2:6.) If I wish to go from one place to another, I must walk in the road that leads me there. I might see that road correctly drawn in a map; or I might stand upon a hill top and see it spread before my eyes; and yet never walk a single step in it. But, if I am to reach the place where that road leads to, especially if there be no other road to it, I must walk in it. Thus if Jesus be the way, the only way to heaven and God, I must walk in Jesus if I am to reach heaven and God; in other words, I must have a living faith in Jesus raised up in my soul by the power of God, for all other is in the flesh and worthless—a faith which gives me union with him, communion with him, nearness unto him, access to his blessed Majesty. But before I can thus believe in him he must be revealed to my heart, made known to my soul by the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit. Only in this way can I live a life of faith and prayer, be continually looking up unto God through him as the Mediator; receive his words as he speaks them; believe his promises as he manifests them; obey his precepts as he has revealed them; and day by day walk forward in him as the way from earth to heaven. If there be a way which leads from one place to another, the more you walk in it the more you will see what the way is, learn its nature, and get acquainted with its various points and parts. How familiar some roads are to us. How we know every hedge and tree, every turn and winding, and almost every stone in it. It may be a very rough road, very intricate and hard for strangers to find; it may be much up and down hill, and in some places so strait and narrow as hardly to be passable. Still, it is the way; and by long and continual walking in it, you come at last to know all its windings and turnings. Your feet get used to it, and being convinced it is the right, the only way, you press on and persevere in it. So in grace; if Jesus be the way, I cannot know him as such except as I walk in him. To walk in him I need spiritual eyes to see him; spiritual hands to take hold of him; spiritual ears

to hear his voice, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" and spiritual feet to move forward as his voice directs. Now if I am to do all this—not merely talk about it, but actually do it, it will be a daily exercise for faith, a daily subject of prayer, meditation, soul-exercise, and spiritual watchfulness; for directly I cease to walk in Christ as the living way, I walk in pride, self-righteousness, worldly-mindedness, unbelief, carnality, sensuality, and selfishness. If I walk in him, I walk in simplicity, sincerity, godly fear, uprightness, watchfulness, and prayer. If I walk in him as the living way, I shall lay my heart open to his heart-searching eye; I shall be longing and desiring to have my conscience sprinkled with his peace-speaking blood, and my soul to be clothed in his justifying righteousness; I shall earnestly desire to receive words of grace and truth from his lips, and smiles of pity and love from his face. I shall want him to guide me and keep me every moment; for if he is the way and I have to walk in him, I must keep close to him or else I shall go astray.

But as I seek thus to walk in him the living way, I shall find on every side allurements to draw me away from him. Sometimes a flowery mead may attract my footsteps as more pleasant to walk in than the rough, stony road; sometimes the way maybe so intricate and the path so narrow that there seems to be no road at all. I come to a stand still. There is no road; at least I can find none. At last I find it; but soon night comes on, and I cannot see the road on account of the darkness. Now may I leave it? No; I must wait till light comes; and when a beam of light falls upon Jesus in his Person and work, he is at once seen to be the way.

But again if I walk in him as the way, I shall have suffering, persecution, and contempt to endure, for all these lie in the way. I may offend near friends, dear relatives, bring myself

and my family to poverty, or what some dread as much, come down in the world, and lose caste and position. But did not Jesus walk in that way before me? Was not he despised and abhorred—"a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?" Was he not called "the carpenter," and were not his chosen companions poor fishermen? If then I walk in him, I must take up the cross and follow him. I must suffer with him that I may also be glorified together; for if we suffer with him we shall reign with him. I must not dream of a path of ease, worldly comfort, and self-indulgence, nor look for and expect the praise and approbation of men. I must expect to be misunderstood and misrepresented; to be vilified and slandered; hated by professors, and despised by the world. If they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more those of his household. It must be with us as the Lord said to his disciples: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John 15:18, 19.)

But Jesus also walked in a path *separate from sinners*. This was his character: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26.) He was *in* the world, but not *of* the world. He went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men; but never united himself to their company, or was one with them. So must we be separate in our walk and conversation from this ungodly world. Indeed we have no promise of acceptance whilst we are in it and united to it: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.)

But it is a way also of *tribulation*, for "through much tribulation must we enter into the kingdom of God." We have to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ (Col. 1:24); that is, fill up our measure of the afflictions which are appointed for Head and members. We have to be conformed to his suffering image to drink of his cup, and to be baptized with his baptism; to take his yoke upon us, that being yoked together with him in suffering we may learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.

It is a way also of *temptation*. We know how sorely the Lord was tempted in the wilderness; and though there victorious, yet Satan only "departed from him for a season." So must we be tempted by the Arch-tempter. Did not the Lord say to his disciples at the close of his sojourn here below, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me?" (Luke 22:28, 29.) If we are to inherit the appointed kingdom we must not only be tempted as he was, but continue with him firmly and steadfastly in his temptations. James, therefore, bids us "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2); and Peter tells us there is "a needs be" even if we are "in heaviness" through their number and variety. (1 Pet. 1:6.)

It is also a way of *obedience*. The Lord came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him. If he then be "the way," and he walked in obedience to his Father's will, so must we walk in all holy obedience to the will and word of God, as the Apostle speaks: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:14, 15, 16.)

The way to heaven is therefore a way of *holiness*. This is God's testimony: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there." (Isa. 35:8, 9.) As Christ is the way of salvation, so he is the way of sanctification; for he who of God is made unto us righteousness to justify, is also made sanctification to sanctify. (1 Cor. 1:30.) "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14); and though in our day men despise obedience, and hate the very word holiness, yet they will find at the last day that they only are "blessed who do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22:14.) Thus we see what a comprehensive direction the Lord gave when he said so simply and yet so clearly, so softly and yet so powerfully, "I am the Way." And if he is the way, he is the way at the end, as well as at the beginning and the middle. Dying Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59.) The dying martyr saw him at the right hand of God as the end of the way, stretching out as it were his loving arms to receive the spirit as it went forth from his mangled body. O what a safe way; O what a glorious way! and be it ever borne in mind the only way in which any can reach the heavenly shore.

But how we need the Lord's special help and grace thus to walk in him as the way. The life of a Christian is a life of faith and prayer. The moment he ceases to lead that life, I will not say he becomes dead, but spiritual life is brought to a low ebb in his soul. Nor is he safe for a single moment except as he is living a life of faith on the Son of God. Satan watches

him when he is off his guard. To be off his guard then, to be away from the watch-tower, is to expose himself to the subtle temptations of the wicked one. Where is he safe for a single moment from the curse of the law, the accusations of a guilty conscience, the fears of death, the terrors of hell, the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, except as he is walking in Christ as the way, and keeps close to his wounded side?

Thus, though Christ is the way, none can walk in that way except the Lord enable him by his Spirit and grace. But "what is impossible with men is possible with God;" and as "the lame take the prey," and the promise is sure to all the seed, and "the ransomed must all come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads," the Lord the Spirit does sweetly constrain, and powerfully enable all the saints, according to the measure of their faith, to walk in that way, and by walking in it to find present peace and future glory.

ii. But Jesus is not only the way, he is "*the truth*."

We are surrounded with error, encompassed with it on every side. The world is full of it; for what are all its pursuits and pleasures; its objects of covetousness, pride, or ambition; its very cares and anxieties, but so many wanderings and departings from the living God? Is not this *practical* error? And what are all its ideas about religion but *speculative* errors—errors in opinion, as its pursuits and pleasures are errors in practice? How God is to be worshipped; how sin is to be pardoned; how the sinner is to be accepted and justified; how he is to be led, and taught, and made meet for heaven—what wild, what vague, what erroneous opinions does the world hold on these most important points! And how full of error is the professing church! What blind leaders of the blind preach from the pulpit; what erroneous men, and

many in high places, spread their pestilent doctrines from the press. We ourselves under what errors, what false views of religion were we for many years held. And it needs must be so, unless we are taught of God. A veil of unbelief, is by nature over our mind, so that, even when we read God's word, the fountain of pure truth, we cannot understand it through ignorance, or misapply it through perverseness. Was it not so with the Jews of old? To them "were committed the oracles of God." (Rom. 2:2.) They held in their hands the Scriptures that testified of Jesus. (John 5:39.) But did they believe them? No; for as the apostle speaks, "their minds were blinded" (2 Cor. 3:14); and thus, according as it was prophesied of them, they could not believe, nor see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts. (Isai. 6:10; John 12:40.) We may wonder sometimes when the Bible is so universally spread in the land, that there should be still so much error taught. What is the reason? Man's heart is naturally full of error; and whilst full of error, truth, however pure, has no place in his soul. If I may use such a figure, it is like a pitcher full to the very brim of dirty water. What room is there in it for pure, clear water? Try to pour some in; it either runs over and falls to the ground, or becomes mixed with the dirty. So man's naturally erroneous spirit will either absolutely reject or pollute God's truth. Pure truth is only for a pure heart—that new heart which the Lord gives by his regenerating grace. When, then, by a work of grace upon the soul we are brought to see that we are surrounded with error, the first work is to empty out the dirty water—to see and renounce the false, erroneous notions and opinions which we have imbibed as with our mother's milk. There is something in truth especially suitable to the new man of grace. It is to the new born soul what the mother's milk is to the new born babe. When thus first divinely wrought upon, we desire to know the truth for ourselves, and this makes us go at once to the fountain head. We begin to read the word

of God with anxious eyes, and a prayerful, inquiring spirit. At first indeed we may feel great darkness of mind, and our rebellious spirit may work against the sovereign truth of God, as too humbling to the mind, or too much opposed to our false, fallacious ideas of the universal benevolence of the Almighty. But after a time the Lord is pleased to bestow upon us a child-like spirit, a willingness to receive the truth as he has revealed it. We want to know the truth for ourselves, and we feel that no price is too great to pay for it. We feel the pernicious consequences of error; how it blinds the mind and hardens the heart, filling it with rebellious cavillings against the Sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth. This wretched spirit causes bondage; and we feel that truth alone can make us free. In these early days there is a great struggle in our mind between truth and error, between the claims of free grace and free will. Still we desire to be right and to know the truth of God, for it is a question of life and death. I can look back to my early days, and call to remembrance how anxious my mind was to know the truth of God; how I used to read the Scriptures and books written by gracious authors, and how powerfully truth was commended to my conscience. In those days, though I had everything at stake—nothing to win, and everything to lose by a profession of the truth—friends, independence, position in life, prospects of preferment, educated and cultivated society, and everything indeed which my natural heart loved, I was made willing to abandon all for truth and conscience sake. At that time I counted scarcely any sacrifice too great to make for the truth of God when once it became known by divine power to my soul. I cannot explain it, though I have felt it and still feel it; but there is that in the truth of God which when brought into a man's heart with divine power is made very sweet and precious to him. It makes him free; it leads out of the world; it endears the Lord Jesus Christ; it fills his heart with sweet thoughts, and leads him up into spiritual meditation; and all this being

quite new and hitherto unknown, it makes heavenly things to be uppermost in his heart and take the precedence of all others.

But a man may read the Scriptures and gather truth from them, and yet not be a partaker of the truth savingly. He may have a clear and sound creed, may understand the truth in his natural judgment, and yet be far, very far from knowing it spiritually, savingly, and experimentally. Even the children of God may learn more truth in their heads than they have an experience of it in their hearts; nor may they at first see the connection of truth with the Person of Christ, and that Jesus himself is *the truth*. But when we are brought to believe in the Son of God with a living faith; when he is made in any measure known to our souls by a divine power, when he begins to speak to us out of the Scripture and commune with us from off the mercy seat, then we turn away our eyes and hearts from truth in the letter to truth in the Spirit; from truth as it stands merely in so many words and syllables in the Bible, to truth as revealed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ himself; for *he* is the truth. All other truth is, so to speak, dead truth. But we want living truth; we want one who himself can teach us his own truth; be in us as his own truth; open our hearts to receive what he himself says, and by receiving his words, receive himself. Almost anybody can learn truth in the letter from reading God's word, and the writings of gracious men who have laid it clearly down; but when we are divinely wrought upon we want to learn truth from Jesus' own lips, to get the truth out of Jesus' own heart, to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his blessed voice communing with us, opening up his own word to our souls, and whispering, "I am the truth; all except and out of me is error; look to me; listen to me, keep close to me: I will guide thee, and lead thee, and bless thee." Thus to be looking up to, believing in, and laying hold of incarnate Truth, is a very different thing from merely seeing truth written in

so many letters and words in the Scripture, or reading books written by gracious men who have clearly opened it up. The way to learn truth is to be much in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ; as you lie upon your bed, as engaged in your daily occupation, to be from time to time looking up to the Lord himself as he sits upon his throne of grace, and be begging of him to teach you himself, for he is the best teacher. The words which he speaks, they "are spirit and life." What he writes upon our heart is written in characters which will "stand every storm and live at last." We forget what we learn from man, but we never forget what we learn from Jesus. Men may deceive; Christ cannot. You can trust no minister really and fully. Though you may receive truth from his lips, it is always mixed with human infirmity. But what you get from the lips of Jesus, you get in all its purity and power. It comes warm from him; it comes cold from us. It drops like the rain and distils like the dew from his mouth; it comes only second-hand from ours. If I preach to you the truth, I preach indeed as the Lord enables me to speak. But it is he who must speak with power to your souls to do you any real good. Look then from me; look beyond me, to him who alone can teach us both. By looking to Jesus in the inmost feelings of your soul, you will draw living truth from out of his bosom into your own, from his heart into your heart, and thus will come feelingly and experimentally to know the blessedness of his own declaration: "I am the truth."

iii. But again, he says, "I am *the life*." We live in a dying world; and not only so, but we live in the midst of death within as well in the midst of death without. Our carnal mind is death itself. There is no spiritual life in man's fallen nature. He is encompassed, therefore, not only with error, as I have before shown, but he is surrounded on every side with death. Even in religion, in the solemn things of God, without Jesus everything is dead. What are called the means of grace are

good, not to be neglected or set aside; but they have in themselves no life. Preaching is good—dead without Christ. Prayer is good—dead without Christ. Meeting together is good—dead without Christ. Christian communion is good—dead without Christ. So we may run through the various means of grace. They are all of divine appointment; but Christ must put life into them all to make them effectual to us. Where he comes, there is life; where he does not come, there is death. Whatever soul he visits with his Spirit and grace, he brings life with him into it; whatever soul he leaves unvisited, there reign carnality and death; there sin abounds and flourishes; there pride and self-righteousness, presumption or hypocrisy bear the sway. Would we then live unto God, Christ must be our life—the life of our faith, hope, and love; the life of our preaching and hearing. In all our prayers, desires, affections—in everything of a religious nature, Christ must be our life.

And for this purpose he came from the bosom of the Father: "I am come," he says, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10.) He is "the Word of life" (1 John 1:1), "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), "the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15), "the bread of life" (John 6:48); and he has promised that "he that followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.)

But now the question comes, "How are we to get this life?" By drawing it out of him. Where do you get water when you are thirsty or need it? You go to the well; there it flows pure. If you lived in a mountainous country, you would take your pitcher at once to the fountain. How he invites us to come to the fountain and drink. "And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17.) Let me not then tarry at the stream when there is a

fountain. Shall I be little better than a Hindoo, worshipping an idol, when there is a living Christ at the right hand of the Father whom I may worship? Who can keep me from going to Jesus? If my heart is lifted up toward him; if I have a living faith in him, and he is pleased to communicate his Spirit, presence, and grace to my soul, who is to keep me from him? Anything that keeps me from him detains me in the arms of death; anything that brings me to him brings me into his loving embrace. To know him is life; for "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." To believe in him is life: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:25, 26.) To hope in him is life, for "we are saved by hope," and this hope is of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. (Rom. 8:24; Titus 1:2.) To love him is life—aye, better than life; to have union with him is life; to have communion with him is life; to know the efficacy of his blood and righteousness and dying love, is life; for he himself is life, and there is no life but what comes from him and is communicated by him; for without him we can do nothing. We pray: he must be the life of our prayers. We read: he must be the life of our reading. We speak: he must be the life of our conversation. We look up: he must be the life of every look. We sigh and groan: he must be the life of every sigh and of every groan. We sit at his table; but only "he that eateth him shall live by him." (John 6:37.) Thus in all these things Jesus is "our Life;" and if he be really and truly such to us, "our life is hid with Christ in God, and when he appears, we shall also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:3.)

Let me just briefly run over what I have endeavoured to bring before you in pointing out how Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Though he said these things on earth,

he is gone up on high, and thus may be said still to be speaking to us in these same words from heaven. Thus he sees us inquiring the way to heaven, anxiously desiring to reach that happy shore, yet scarcely knowing the way. He finds us wandering in a waste, howling wilderness, and it is as if he says, "My child, thou art going astray. Thou art looking here, or there, or everywhere, to thyself, to others, to all but to me, who am the way. Art thou full of fear and perplexity how thy soul is to be saved? I am the way: my blood cleanseth from all sin; my righteousness justifieth from all things from which thou couldst not be justified by the law of Moses; my love is stronger than death; my promises must all be fulfilled. If thou lookest to me, trustest to me, and walkest in me, thou shalt arrive safely where I am, for I have gone before to prepare a place for thee—a mansion in my Father's house. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Keep close to my wounded side; never stray from me; or if thou do stray, come back to me, I will receive thee; for I am the way."

Again, he finds us full of error without and within, scarcely knowing who is right or what is right; filled it may be sometimes with unbelief, with infidelity, with many wicked and vain thoughts; puzzled with a thousand apparent contradictions in the world, in the church, in the Bible itself; unable to unravel many deep mysteries, which the more we seek to disentangle the more are we lost in and confounded by them. Yet, amidst all this confusion of mind, we are still seeking, with all simplicity of heart and earnestness of spirit, to know the truth. Here, then, the blessed Lord again meets us with his own gracious declaration—"I am the Truth." It is he, even he, who contains all truth in himself, as the sun contains in itself all light. From him all truth comes; in him all truth centres. He is the truth of all the types, figures, ordinances, promises, prophecies, and precepts both of the

Old Testament and New. If, then, we know him, we know the truth; if we love him, we love the truth; and if we walk in him, we walk in the truth.

So is he "the Life." He has said, "Because I live ye shall live also;" and it is, therefore, as if he speaks from heaven to us in all our deadness, coldness, and earthly-mindedness, borne down and almost over-whelmed by a flood of earthly cares and anxieties, yet mourning and bewailing our backwardness, hardness, and want of life and feeling in the things of God—"I am the Life. Wouldst thou live *unto* me, thou must live *by* me. I must be thy life within, abiding in thee and thou in me; for as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, neither canst thou except thou abidest in me. Look, then, to me, believe in me, hope in me, cleave to me; I will maintain my life in thy soul, for I came that my sheep might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

As, then, we walk in him, we find him the Way; as we believe in him, we find him the Truth; and as we hang upon him, we find him to be the Life; and thus we can set to our seal that he spake these words for our comfort and encouragement when he was here below, and now ever lives at the right hand of the Father to make them good.

II.—But to keep us from all attempts to find our way to God by any other means, or any other Mediator, our blessed Lord bars out all other access, and builds a wall up by his own interdiction against every other approach unto God: "*No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*"

What can be more plain than this declaration from the lips of him who cannot lie? It is as if he would say, "Every other mode of access to God is cut off." And do we not find it so by the testimony of the Spirit in our own conscience? The strict

justice and eternal holiness of God bar every other mode of access to his divine Majesty. Sin has so separated between God and us; it has so defiled every human heart and polluted every human thought, that no child of Adam can ever approach a holy God by his own obedience or through a broken law. Here then we are cut off. But Jesus stands as a Mediator at the right hand of the Father with his garments dipped in blood, and says to every poor inquiring sinner, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. But he may come through me. Look not, sinner, to thine own obedience; look not, sinner, to thine own disobedience. Trust not thy good works; be not dismayed by thy bad works: No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. It is not on the footing of his own obedience, uprightness, or holiness that any man can come unto God, so as to find acceptance with him. None come right but he who comes by me."

Are not these things a matter with us of personal experience? Does not the holiness of God shut us out when we attempt to come to him, except through Jesus Christ? But we do, we trust, come from time to time to the Father through his dear Son, and find access through him. We view his blood sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat; we see him sitting there as the great High Priest over the house of God; we behold his beauty and blessedness, grace and glory, sweetness and suitability; and our desires and affections go after him. Through his precious blood and righteousness, we venture nigh, and God does not rebuke nor frown upon us, but by his Spirit and grace enables us to pour out our heart before him. We thus sensibly feel the difference between coming with Christ, and coming without Christ, coming with our own obedience, and coming with his. If we venture nigh with our own obedience, the way is blocked up; the Majesty of God as a consuming fire, as upon Mount Sinai, drives us back. But he never drives back a sensible sinner who comes

to him through Jesus. It is a way pleasing unto him, for it is a way of his own providing. You may say sometimes, "My sins are so great, my heart so hard, my nature so corrupt, how can I venture nigh?" Will you stay away? You can but perish if you go; you must perish if you go not.