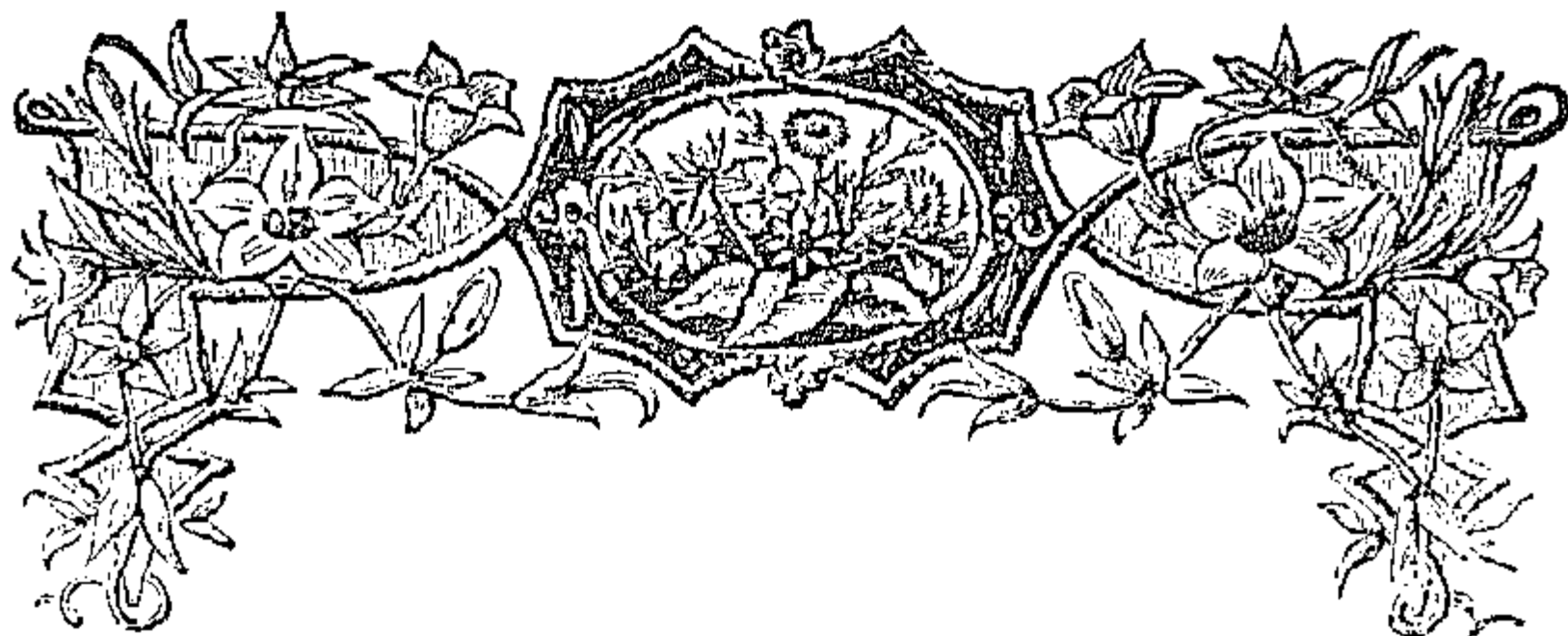


a community called ...

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THAT WORD "UTTERMOST."

DURING a short visit which I recently paid to a distant town, I was informed that an old friend, formerly a missionary in the South Sea Islands, lay on his death-bed. I went to see him, and found him exceedingly weak and very near his end. His mind had been wandering; but, fortunately, at the time I called he was quite himself. After the first greetings and inquiries were over I spoke to him of the sinner's great and only trust, the Lord Jesus Christ, and expressed my hope that he enjoyed abundantly the comforts he had so often ministered to others. He was too feeble to say

much in reply, but the warm grasp of his hand, and his expressive look, told me that he found the Saviour very dear and very precious. I repeated a few portions of the Scripture which I deemed appropriate, and among the rest that verse from the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

In tones scarcely audible, but with deep feeling and earnestness, he replied, "How much that word 'uttermost' includes!"

He had, no doubt, often thought of it, often spoken of it from the pulpit, often quoted it to trembling and anxious sinners seeking salvation, often by its use encouraged and strengthened the weary disciple of Jesus in times of despondency through sore trial and temptation, and often repeated it as he had stood by the beds of the sick and the dying; but, after all, he felt that he had never yet fathomed its depths of mighty meaning. And even now though in the light of heaven he sees in it in

conceivably more than the most enlightened of God's saints ever saw on earth, he will still feel, and it will be his joy to feel, that he does not yet know "how much that word 'uttermost' includes."

Reader, your conscience, if it be awake at all, tells you that you have been a great sinner. You sinned when you were a child; you sinned in your youth; you have sinned since you became a man. Not a day of your life has passed without sin; and it may be that some sins you have committed were of such enormity that the recollection fills you with bitter shame, and you think that they are almost too great to be forgiven. "That word 'uttermost,'" then, may drive away all your fears, and fill you with hope and joy. The sacrifice which Jesus offered on the cross was for "the sin of the world," and it "cleanseth from all sin." He is now, moreover, in heaven, as our great High-priest, pleading, on behalf of all penitent and believing souls, the merits of his blood. Go, then, to his feet, confessing what a sinner you have been, and believing in

his power to forgive sins. As soon as you do that your sins will be blotted out and remembered no more.

"All that," perhaps you say, "is very wonderful; but then suppose I were forgiven to-day, I am so prone to do wrong that I should very soon be as guilty as ever. Evil thoughts and desires are continually rising up in my heart, and these are ready to break out in evil words and actions." Still there is comfort for you in "that word 'uttermost.' " It were a grievously wicked thing to sin because you knew there was mercy; but the promise is always true, that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Besides, Jesus died not only that you might be forgiven, but that your heart itself might be so changed that the love of sin should be overcome.

But again, you may say, "It is not only the weakness and sinfulness of my heart that troubles me—that were enough; but I am exposed to strong and many temptations. I

am placed among people who have no love for what is good, and who, if they saw me anxious about my soul, would laugh at me, and do their utmost to lead me into sin. Then, too, I find it said in the Bible that not only will men tempt me, but that I shall be exposed to Satan's temptations too." And do you think that the Lord does not know this, or that he is unable to help you? He knows every thing—all that man can do, and all the craft and malice and power of the evil one; and if you only trust and seek him, he will make you "more than conqueror" over all. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

It was in the immediate prospect of death, and with eternity close at hand, that the good man whose death-bed we have described was comforted with the thought of the exhaustless fullness of "that word 'uttermost.' " And of all the thoughts we can cherish in the prospect of our own last struggle there is none so

sustaining as this, that the Saviour in whom we are exhorted to trust is an omnipotent Saviour. "The sting of death"—that which gives to it its chief terribleness—"is sin;" for to die unpardoned is to pass into the presence of the great Judge of all, and thus to be condemned forever. But Jesus, by the gracious assurance of his pardoning love, takes away the sting, and he also promises to sustain and comfort the spirit as it enters the dark valley of death, and to give to it an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom. There are millions of blessed spirits before the throne of Jesus in heaven who, when the body was sinking in death, were enabled to say in holy triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Your body will be committed to the grave, and a few years hence it will be so completely dissolved that not a particle will remain which the most searching examination could distin-

gush from its mother earth. But Jesus promises that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," fashioned like unto his glorious body, liable no longer to disease and suffering, and incapable of death. This, too, is included in "that word 'uttermost.'"

No words can describe the glory of the inheritance of the saints. The most expressive words and the most striking figures which language can furnish are used to represent it. It is a city, a kingdom, a crown, a paradise; it is enduring riches; it is an endless festival; it is life. Still, when we have pondered all, we are told that we have at best but a faint idea of its grandeur, and that we must die to know what it is. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

Nor will the redeemed ever lose that bliss. To the uttermost ages of eternity of which we can conceive—nay, for evermore—Jesus will keep them from all evil, and crown them with everlasting joy.

All "that word 'uttermost'" includes,

reader, may be yours. Jesus offers it to you now. He, even now, entreats you to accept it with the most loving earnestness. Go to him confessing your sins, and, believing in his name, he will not, he cannot cast you out.

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