

Our Daily Walk

Daily Meditations and a Prayer for Each Day

By
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VOLUME Two

About the Author:

The ministry of Dr. F.B. Meyer was one of the most widely influential in the twentieth century. He had memorable pastorates in York, Leicester and London, which were sufficient of themselves to establish his lasting fame. But his influence was worldwide. Like John Wesley, he was an incessant traveler. ... Everywhere his intimate and memorable presentation of the Gospel brought blessing to multitudes. His biographer, Dr. W.Y. Fullerton, has described Meyer as “one of the greatest heralds of the faith delivered to the saints”. His outstanding gifts as preacher, expositor, pastor and administrator were all subordinated to his supreme aim—to win men and women to Christ, and to lead believers into closer fellowship with Him.

About this Series:

Here is the perfect gift book of daily devotional readings by one of whom it may truly be said that the world was his parish and Christ was his life. Each day’s reading for the year is given a theme based upon a text of Scripture and provides a concise exposition followed by a prayer. Our Daily Walk is a veritable treasure house of wisdom and courage and whoever possesses and uses it for a year will surely find his devotion to Christ deepened, his zeal for Christian service quickened and his life enriched.

Note: This devotional can be accessed at: www.lifebpc.com/devotions
It is also available for downloading on to Palm handheld devices.

THE CHOICE OF A LIFE-WORK

1 Kings 3:7-9 "And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"

WE shall never rightly choose our life-course until we are determined to put first things first. Wealth, honour, fame, the surpassing of our rivals, are not the chief things to be considered, or our judgment will be impaired and our vision distorted. It was because Solomon desired and sought the kingdom and glory of God, that He gave him also the things for which he did not ask (1Ki 3:13; Mat 6:33).

Impressed by the greatness of his responsibilities, the young king had gone to Gibeon to worship God. He wished to fulfil his opportunities to their highest measure, and to serve his fatherland, but he realized his inefficiency. Do you feel like this? You realize the wonderful opportunities and responsibilities of life in this marvellous age, and long to be of service to God and your fellows, but what can you do? You are but as a little child, and "know not how to go out or come in." "Going out" stands for the active life in the world of men; "coming in" for the hours spent in the home, in recreation and society. It is like the systole and diastole of the heart's action, which should be alike consecrated to God and of service to man.

Solomon asked for an *understanding* heart, that he might discern between good and bad. We all need this faculty, that we may discriminate between things that look very much alike, but are different in nature and direction (Heb 5:14; Phi 1:9-10). It is not an endowment of intellectual power, but of moral taste and discernment. It has been said, that the difficulty in life is not to discriminate between white and black, but to choose between the different shades of grey. In our fellowships, recreations, literature, business—we are in urgent need of the understanding heart, which listens for and heeds the voice of God.

Solomon offered a thousand burnt-offerings upon the altar (1Ki 3:4). We are required to present our *bodies as living sacrifices unto God*, which is our reasonable service. Our career is often determined by our circumstances, or by our special gifts and talents, and, on the whole, we succeed best in doing what we like best. But if we yield ourselves to do God's will, He will direct our paths.

PRAYER—*O God, make us diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. May we prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good. AMEN.*

GOD'S REQUIREMENTS

Micah 6:8 "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

MICAH was a man of the people, and a true patriot. In his day, the political outlook was dark in the extreme, and the prophet felt that one thing only could save his country, and that was a deep and widespread revival of religion. To the inquiry of the people as to whether Jehovah desired the sacrifice of animals, or little children, who were immolated by the heathen people around in order to rid their consciences from sin, the answer came that God required something more spiritual and searching: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, etc."

Let us make this threefold message our own. *To do justly*, giving not a fraction less than can be rightly claimed from us. Every one of us must acknowledge the righteous claims of our home-circle, and of our neighbours, and we must adjust these claims, giving each his due.

Let us love mercy. There are some who have perhaps forfeited all claim on our mercy—the prisoner, the fallen, the helpless, our enemies—we must help all these not grudgingly, but cheerfully and willingly. Do not try to *love mercy* till you begin to *show* it. Dare to step out into a life of unselfish beneficence, and as you do so, you will come to love it. St. James insists that pure religion as much consists in visiting the widow and fatherless in their affliction as in keeping oneself unspotted from the world.

Let us also walk humbly with God—not lagging behind, nor running before, but walking with Him, hand in hand. All down the ages, from Enoch onward, there have been those who walked with God in unstained robes. It is not in sacrifices, or rites, or church-going, or almsgiving, though these will follow afterwards, but in holy and humble *living*, that the heart of true religion is realized.

Is that all? No! What is to be done for those who have tried and failed, who are conscious of guilt and sin? In the closing verses of this book is the answer. There we learn that God will not only forgive, but will subdue our iniquities. He will turn again and have compassion upon us, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. He delighteth in mercy! Who is a God like unto Thee?

PRAYER—*O Lord, may Thy all-powerful grace make me as perfect as Thou hast commanded me to be. AMEN.*

THE DIVIDED HEART

Matthew 6:21-22 “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”

James 1:8 “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

THE closing paragraphs of Matthew 6 are full of instances of a divided heart. The Greek word for care means that which divides. Some are divided by *anxiety*. The anxious soul cannot take a strong straight course, any more than a man can sleep who is wondering whether he has bolted the front door or wound up his watch. Some are divided by *contrariness*—a most difficult and complicated disposition of soul. We would like to be pleasant, helpful, agreeable, and amiable, but are conscious of cross-currents that restrain and make us awkward and disagreeable, and we find ourselves rent between two strong influences, the one to be Christlike and gracious, the other to be distant and angular. Others are divided by *fitful* and *passionate impulses*. Happy are they who can hold them well in check. Even St. Paul tells us that he was conscious of these two wills—the better self which longed to do the will of God, and the lower, selfish, passionate self, which brought him into subjection. St. Augustine tells us that, though the prayers of Monica, his mother, greatly affected him, he was constantly swept back from his ideal by an outbreak of passion.

Bunyan also illustrates the same condition, saying that two selves were at war within him. The Devil came and said, “Sell Him!” But he resisted, even to blood, saying, “I won’t!” But, as the Tempter continued urging, “Sell Him!” Bunyan finally yielded, and suffered an agony of remorse, as, on the one hand, he accepted Christ as his only Hope, and on the other, was prepared to barter Him away.

A divided heart lacks the first element of strength—it is *unstable*. The men who leave their mark on the world are those who can say: “This one thing I do.” But we need more than concentration, we need *consecration*. We must not only be united in ourselves, we must be united in God. Let us make the prayer of Psa 86:11, our own: “Unite my heart to fear thy name.” Yield yourself to God that He may disunite you from the world, and weave you into His own life.

PRAYER—*O Faithful Lord, grant to us, we pray Thee, faithful hearts devoted to Thee, and to the service of all men for Thy sake. AMEN.*

THE CHILD HEART

Matthew 18:2-3 “And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

OUR Lord bids us seek the child-heart! Not to be childish, but childlike! It is recorded of the illustrious soldier, Naaman, that after he had washed in the Jordan waters, his flesh came to him as that of a little child. It is a noble combination—the stature and strength of the full-grown man united with the winsome purity and sweetness of a little child. It is not possible for any one of us to attain these two qualities unless we are prepared to pay the price. The orders of rank in the Kingdom of Heaven are diametrically opposed to those of our earthly kingdoms. Here men are ever striving to rise above their fellows; but in Christ’s Kingdom they stoop to serve, and in stooping become crowned!

The King of Glory girded Himself with a towel, and kneeling down washed the feet of His disciples, and the nobles in His Kingdom are those who have become willing to be the servants of all!

Simplicity, humility, and freedom from self-consciousness are the natural traits of early childhood; alas! that they so quickly learn from us to seek for notice, patronage, and the first place! How happy that little one was as he nestled to the Saviour’s heart! Three times over in this chapter the Master speaks about “these little ones.” How dearly He loved the children, and each time must have pressed the child closer to Himself!

It is the childlike hearts that agree on earth in the symphony of prayer. One may go East and the other West, but beneath the touch of the Spirit of Love, they will be of one accord, i.e. in attuned fellowship with each other and with Christ (Mat 18:19-20). The child-spirit, also, will be willing to forgive and forget (Mat 18:15, Mat 18:21, Mat 18:22).

PRAYER—*Grant, O Lord, that I may become as a little child in Thy kingdom. May my heart be filled with Thy love, my lips with gentle, helpful words, and my hands with kind, unselfish deeds. AMEN.*

THE CRY OF THE HEART FOR FORGIVENESS

Psalm 51:1 "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

Isaiah 44:22 "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."

THIS staircase has been trodden by myriads of penitent souls. Few of God's elect saints have passed through life without having painfully climbed its stairs. On the wall opposite the pallet in the cell where St. Augustine died, this first verse was set out where his eyes could constantly see it.

The Psalmist uses three words for the forgiveness he craves—that his *transgressions* might be blotted out, like the legends scribbled over the ancient Gospels of the palimpsest; that his *iniquity* should be washed away, as the soil from linen; and that all traces of his past sin should be forgiven and cleansed away, even as leprosy in the case of Naaman was so obliterated that his flesh became as a little child. How tenderly Jesus responded to the agonized cry of the leper for cleansing: "I will, be thou clean!"

How wonderfully these petitions of the soul burdened with the sense of sin are answered! Do you ask to be purged with hyssop? Listen to the voice of God saying: "I even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember thy sins." He purges us with the Blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. Do you ask to be made white as snow? "These are they who have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." Do you ask to hear joy and gladness? "It is meet to make merry and be glad, for this, my child was lost and is found." Do you desire to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God? Give Him your broken and contrite heart; think not that He will despise it! The fragrance of a broken box of alabaster fills Heaven and earth to this day!

PRAYER—*Let there be no doubt with any one of us that Thou dost forgive, even to the uttermost, all those who draw nigh in penitence to Thee; that so, those of us who are sad because we are sinful, may have this day the joy of the Lord. AMEN.*

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CLEANSED SOUL

Psalm 51:2 "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

Revelation 22:14 "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

IN the last chapter of the Book of Revelation there is a very interesting change from the Authorized to the Revised Version, which accentuates a line of thought which cannot be too often emphasized. The A.V. reads: "Blessed are they that *keep His commandments*, that they may have the right to the Tree of Life." The R.V. reads: "*Blessed are they that wash their robes.*" May we not be thankful that this is the condition, rather than the absolute keeping of His commandments, which might induce legalism and Pharisaism into our character and experience. We are very conscious of our sin day by day, but as we wash our robes and make them white through the Blood of the Lamb, we may approach the Tree of Life and eat of its fruit.

There are two other references to the Tree of Life in this wonderful chapter. In Rev 22:2, we are told that it yields each month the food appropriate for the month; in Rev 22:19, we learn that each of us has a distinct and individual part in that tree. Its leaves are for our healing, and its fruit is suited to every phase of human experience. The Tree of Life was originally planted in Paradise together with the Tree of Knowledge (Gen 2:9). As the latter fed the soul-life of our first parents, with knowledge of good and evil, so the former stood for the life of the spirit nurtured and fed by the Spirit of God.

When we learn of its monthly yield, are we not reminded that whatever each passing experience of human life may require, it will be met out of the fullness of the Divine supplies. January days with their new resolves and hopes! February days with storms and frosts! May days with the flowers of Hope! June days with warmth and light. September days of fruition! December days of sickness or old age! But whatever month or day there is always a supply of adequate and suitable grace to be obtained from the fellowship of our dear Lord. He completes our every need, and perhaps we are led through these varying experiences in order to give the opportunity of learning phases and utilizing resources in our Saviour, of which, otherwise, we should have known nothing.

PRAYER—*Give us grace, O Lord, to come to Thee for daily cleansing, and for all our needs in the various circumstances through which we are called to pass, that by our holy living we may glorify Thee in our daily life.*
AMEN.

THE BIBLE AS A SAFEGUARD

Psalm 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

THE PRAYER: "Teach me Thy statutes" occurs eight times in this wonderful Psalm. It may be said to be its keynote. God's statutes are the path of purity. If a young man will take heed to them, his way will be cleansed. The passage of the Word of God through the heart, like the running of clean water through a pipe, will purify it. Constant study of the Bible is the condition of soul-health.

Consecration is closely associated with Bible study (Psa 119:10). Holiness is *wholeness*—that is, the whole-hearted devotion of a whole nature to God, the consecration of every power to His service. This leads us to lean hard on God, and to seek His companionship and fellowship. Psa 119:11 tells us of a good thing laid up in a good place, and the result. In the midst of a London season, and amid the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, William Wilberforce wrote in his diary: "Walked from Hyde Park Comer, repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort"; John Ruskin said: "It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which to my child's mind was most repulsive, the 119th Psalm, has now become, of all, the most precious to me in its glorious passion for the law of God."

The study of the Bible enables us to bear witness for God (Psa 119:13). An inspector on one of our railways once told me that he had a vision of God whilst studying his Bible and kneeling in prayer. From this he went to his duties on the station platform. At one end of the train, a man offered him some whisky, but he was able to answer, "I have had a better drink than that," and pointed him to the Water of Life (John 4:14; Rev 22:17). At the other end of the train, another man asked him for a Testament, the slang phrase for a pack of cards, and my friend was able to pass on to him a Pocket Testament! It is when the Word of God fills the heart that it overflows through the lips and actions, and it is what flows over from us that really helps and blesses our fellow-men. "*Out of him shall flow rivers of living water.*" Let us live in fellowship with God through His Word. This will light up our life with gladness, amid many sorrows. Wait not for Heaven, but here and now, day by day, be joyful in heart and life (Psa 119:14-16).

PRAYER—*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. AMEN.*

THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Romans 10:9 “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

SALVATION is a great word. It is conjugated in three tenses: *The Past Tense*. We were saved at the moment when we first trusted Christ. This salvation is a distinct and definite matter, which is ours at the moment we exercise simple faith in Jesus. “Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom 5:9).

The Present Tense. “To us who are *being saved*, Christ is the power of God,” such is the accurate rendering of 1Cor 1:18. We are being saved perpetually from the love and power of sin. The disinfectant of Christ’s presence is ever warding off the germs of deadly temptation. The mighty arm of the Divine Keeper is always holding the door against the attempts of the adversary. The water is always flowing over the eye to remove the tiny grit or mote that may alight. “We are being saved by His life” (Rom 5:10).

The Future Tense. We are being kept by the power of God unto a salvation which waits to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. 1.). Salvation is a great word. It includes the forgiveness that remembers our sin no more; deliverance from the curse and penalty of our evil ways; emancipation from the thrall of evil habit; the growing conformity of the soul to the image of Christ, and the final resurrection of the body in spiritual beauty and energy, to be for ever the companion and vehicle of the redeemed spirit.

PRAYER—*Oh blessed Spirit of God, we pray Thee to give us the assurance of being the children of God, the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty; and so prepare us for the glory to be revealed to us, and for that great hour when the whole creation, which now groans and travails in pain, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. AMEN.*

OUR GLORIOUS STANDING!

Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

THE characteristics of this glorious standing. *It is present:* “Now.” If we are in Christ, we need not wait in doubts and fears for the verdict of the great white Throne. Its decisions cannot make our standing more clear, or our acceptance more sure, but we shall learn there the meaning of God’s dealings with mankind, and triumph in the successful vindication of His ways. We can never be more free from the condemnation of God’s righteous law than we are at this present.

It is certain: “There is no condemnation.” You must catch this accent of conviction, and be able to speak with no faltering voice of your assured acceptance with God, if you would enter upon the rich inheritance of this chapter, to which these opening words stand as the door of passage. The shadow of a peradventure cannot live in the light of that certainty of which the Apostle speaks.

It is invariable. There are some who live on a sliding scale between condemnation and acceptance. If health is buoyant and the heart is full of song, they are sure of their acceptance with God; but if the sun is darkened and the clouds return; when the heart is dull and sad, they imagine that they are under the ban of God’s displeasure. They forget that our standing in Christ Jesus is one thing; our appreciation and enjoyment of it quite another. Your own heart may condemn you; memory, the recorder of the soul, may summon from the past evidence against you; the great Accuser of souls may lay against you grievous and well-founded charges; your tides of feeling may ebb far down the beach; your faith may become weak and lose its power and grip; your sense of unworthiness may become increasingly oppressive—none of these things can touch your acceptance with God if you are complying with His one all-inclusive condition—“no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus.*” This mystic union with the Son of God is only possible with faith working by love (1John 3:23-24).

PRAYER—*We commit ourselves to Thy care and keeping this day; let Thy grace be mighty in us, and sufficient for us, and let it work in us both to will and to do of Thine own good pleasure, and grant us strength for all the duties of the day. AMEN.*

THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

IT is of the utmost importance to know that we have been born from above of the incorruptible seed of God's implanted nature. How can we be quite sure that we are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty? The beloved Apostle gives us many assurances in the first Epistle of St. John. If we are the children of God we shall be content to be unknown of the world (1John 3:1). The leaders and rulers of society may view us with contempt, as they did our Lord, but we shall refuse to enter into any alliance with the children of the world, and shall lose our taste for the things that used to appeal to us.

We shall be very sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, as Philip was when he tore himself away from the revival in Samaria, to go to a lonely spot in the desert, and there await the arrival of the Ethiopian statesman. There was no hesitation in his obedience to the command: "Arise, and go toward the south, and he arose and went" (Acts 8:26-40). Are we being obedient to the call and command of our Lord to tell the good tidings of the Gospel to those who have never heard? Or do we make all sorts of excuses for our apathy?

We shall certainly love the brethren (1John 3:14). We may begin by loving them with our strength, and by sacrificing ourselves on their behalf, but we shall pass through the different phases of self-sacrifice until at last we come to love with the Spirit of Christ. We shall be very sensitive for the honour of our Lord, and when men speak ill of Him, we shall hasten to avow our discipleship and devotion.

We shall be very sensitive about sin. Directly we have offended against the law of Love, we shall be restless and unhappy until we have confessed and been forgiven and cleansed. We shall hasten at once to our merciful and faithful High Priest that He may remove the stain. An old Puritan once said that a sow and a sheep might fall into the same miry pit; the one would wallow in it, whilst the other would never rest until it was extricated and cleansed!

PRAYER—*O God, make me increasingly conscious of the indwelling of Thy Holy Spirit; may He witness with my spirit that in spite of all my sins and shortcomings, I am still Thy child. AMEN.*

THE SEVENFOLD WORK OF GOD'S SPIRIT

Isaiah 11:2 "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;"

WE have in this chapter a wonderful forecast of our Saviour's person and Work; and probably no other single paragraph in the Old Testament seems to sum up so perfectly the sevenfold work of God's Holy Spirit. The stock of Jesse might seem to be cut down to its roots, but it would yield the Messiah. The Mother of our Lord was so poor that she could only offer the two pigeons of the humblest and poorest, as the expression of her thanksgiving at His birth, but He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and in His baptism was anointed and empowered for service by the same Spirit.

Notice the beautiful alternative rendering of Isa 11:3 in the Revised Version. "His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord." In the margin the literal meaning of delight is scent! The phrase might be translated: "He shall draw His breath in the fear of the Lord." Our Saviour, though living in this world, was never infected by evil surroundings. Let us seek to live like this—in the world, but not of it! We know instinctively when we inhale the foetid air of certain places and society. What a difference there is in the pure ozone of the ocean or the breath of the hills! If our lot is cast amid the murky atmosphere of the great city, let us be more careful to inbreathe the pure air of Holy Scripture and prayer.

The Holy Spirit of God anoints for service by descending *upon* us, and then builds up within us His sixfold grace. We all need wisdom in the spirit, and understanding in the intellect; we all need counsel and direction as to our life purpose, and might to execute the divinely-given plan; we all need to become students in the knowledge of God, and in devout reverence. Why should we not make each of these the subject of our special dealing with the Lord, who gives freely to all who will yield their wills, minds, and lives to His control (Gal 5:22). Then all creation will respond to us; there will be a new beauty in heaven above and earth beneath, the preface and augury of that new creation which shall emerge when our Saviour returns to bring in the millennium of blessedness and peace.

PRAYER—*Lord Jesus, tenant of our hearts; fill us with Thy Holy Spirit, and fit us for that new life when all evil passions shall be subdued, and the knowledge of Thy redeeming love shall flow over the worm as the waters cover the ocean-bed! AMEN.*

GOD'S CHALLENGE TO MAN

Job 38:4 "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding."

IN this mighty chapter, God seems to draw near to the perplexed and stricken soul, who sits brooding over the problems of human life, and points out that mysteries equally insoluble are above his head and under his feet; that he lives and moves amongst them. Man frets and despairs over a mystery forced upon him by sorrow and loss. He cannot interpret it, and is shaken to the heart; but the whole universe teems with mystery. Man cannot explain the creation of the world, the separation of sky and earth, the reflex influences of the one on the other. Light and darkness, wind and rain, snow and ice, storm and sunshine; the instincts of the animal creation—these defy man's absolute understanding.

But who frets at the inscrutable mystery which enshrouds these natural phenomena! We use all of them, and make them serve our purpose.

We cannot be surprised, therefore, if we discover similar mysteries in God's dealings with ourselves. He does not answer our questions by always telling us His secret reasonings. His thoughts and ways are as much higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth, and we could not more understand His reasons than tiny children can the mysteries of human life. But behind all mystery the Father's heart is beating, and a Father's voice is pleading, that we should trust Him. Little children, you cannot understand, but you are infinitely dear to Me; I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; "what I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Trust me, and "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

PRAYER—*O God, there are so many mysteries in the world, and in human life, and our eyes grow tired with straining into the darkness. Help us to believe in Thy unchanging love, and to trust where we cannot see or understand. AMEN.*

GOD'S HERITAGE IN HUMANITY

Deuteronomy 32:9 "For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."

Ephesians 1:4 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:"

WE do not become God's property when we consecrate ourselves to Him, but only awake to see that we are already His, and assume that manner of life which they should live who are not their own, but have been bought with a price (1Cor 6:19-20). The three symbols of God's care of His own, as enumerated by Moses in his Song, are exquisitely beautiful.

"He kept him as the apple of his eye" (Deu 32:10). Almost instinctively we raise our hand to protect the eyes if anything threatens us, and it is thus with God's care to us. How carefully the eye is preserved from impurity and evil by the strong bony socket in which it is set, by the eyebrows and lashes which catch the dust and grit, by the eyelid closing over, and the tear-water washing it. Thus the soul which God loves may pass through the evil of the world without taint or soil, because of His gracious keeping power.

"As an eagle" (Deu 32:11). When the young eaglets are able to fly, but hover about their nest, unwilling to venture from the cliff, the mother-bird breaks up their eerie home, drives the fledglings forth on to the air, compels them to use their wings, flutters beneath to catch them if they are inclined to fall, and bears them up on her strong wings until they can fly alone. So it is in life that sometimes God has to break up the happy conditions to which we have been accustomed from our birth, and drive us forth. But it is for our good since only so can we acquire the glorious powers of sustained flight on the wings of the wind.

Divine leading (Deu 32:12). God teaches us to go as a mother her little child; His hand leads and guides our tottering steps (Hos 11:3-4).

The Epistle to the Ephesians gives us a list of the blessings, like a string of pearls, which God our Father, the Owner and Lover of our souls, heaps upon us, and is waiting for us to appropriate and use (Deu 1:3). His love to us is no passing fancy, but the carrying out of an eternal purpose. He redeems us from the love and power of sin; He abounds towards us with the riches of His grace; we are kept and sealed by the Holy Spirit; and ultimately shall be presented before Him, without blemish, to the praise of His glory.

PRAYER—*What can I lack if I have Thee, who art all good? Verily, the heart is restless, until it rest in Thee alone. AMEN.*

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES

Matthew 23:37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”

OUR Lord’s ministry began with an octave of Blessedness, but it ended with a sevenfold woe, which He pronounced on the religious leaders of His time. He did not threaten, but pronounced the inevitable outworking of their evil ways.

Men often quote the punishment that follows sin as indicating some harsh or vindictive sentiment on the part of the Divine Being. They do not understand that, whereas human sentences are often arbitrary, God’s judgments are natural, i.e. they are the inevitable result of wrong-doing. The penalty is part of the constitution of the universe. The final judgment of the great White Throne will only announce the penalty which man’s sin has produced.

God is merciful as well as just, but if a man will tamper with explosives, He does not save his face or limbs. Our Lord was not animated by personal invective when He pronounced the terrible judgments of this chapter. There were tears of sorrow in His voice as He said, this temple is no longer My Father’s House, but “your house which is left unto you desolate.”

We read of the “Wrath of the Lamb,” but it is the counterpart of Love; not vindictive wrath, but the bitterness of disappointed Love! Notice the gleam of light at the end of this chapter. Jesus seemed to hear the welcome which would be accorded to Him in that day when He shall finally appear to vindicate and save His brethren according to the flesh (Mat 23:39).

PRAYER—*O Lord, make us, we implore Thee, so to love Thee that Thou mayest be to us a Fire of Love, purifying and not destroying.*
AMEN.

MY GUEST-CHAMBER

Mark 14:14 "And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?"

THERE had evidently been a previous understanding between our Lord and the good man of the house, who was probably a devoted friend and follower. Jesus knew that His death was being plotted by the chief priests, and that Judas desired to betray Him that very night. He wanted to take part in the Passover Supper, and therefore did not tell the two disciples, whom He sent to prepare the supper where it was to be held, lest any should overhear, and His arrest should take place. The locality of that last gathering with His disciples was revealed to the two by the sign of the man bearing the pitcher of water when they reached Jerusalem, and only to the remainder of the party when they actually arrived.

Our Lord knew what treachery meant in the home-circle. You may be experiencing this. Your familiar friend, in whom you trust, may be absolutely unreliable—a sieve through which your secret confidences filter, or an adder waiting to sting! But Christ experienced this also, and suffered as we all do, from the feeling of restraint in the presence of one who is unsympathetic and critical (John 13:31).

Jesus knew what devoted friendship means. What He could not confide to the band of apostles He was able to make known to the good man of this house. They had evidently conferred together and arranged that this room should be at the Master's disposal, furnished and prepared for His reception.

Our Lord asks us for the use of our guest-chamber. He still stands at the door and knocks, saying: "If any will open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me." There is a room in each heart, which He covets for Himself. We are His by right of creation and redemption; let us be His by choice. Having given the guest-chamber of our heart to Him, may we go on to give our spare room to His disciples, and our loving hospitality to those who go forth for the sake of His Name (3John 1:5-8).

PRAYER—*Is there a thing beneath the sun*

That strives with Thee my heart to share?

He, tear it thence, and reign alone,

The Lord of every motion there. AMEN.

KEEPING STEP!

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

A YOKE—for two! All through His earthly life Jesus was saying: take My yoke. *What was His yoke?* It was surely His desire to do the Father's will. This was the watchword of His life (John 5:30; John 6:38). So persuasive was His appeal, that the sons of Zebedee left their father and boat; Andrew and Simon their fishing-nets; and Matthew his toll-booth to become His disciples. Women forsook their sins, and men their ambitions, in order to become His humble friends, and followers. Saul, the proud young Pharisee, heard His appeal, and abandoning everything that might lead to high honour and worldly success, counted it his highest glory to be associated with Christ in redeeming a lost world.

But this association or fellowship requires *agreement* and identity of purpose. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Hence there can be no fellowship between light and darkness; between the Christian soul and the unbeliever (2 Cor 6:14-18; 1John 1:6-7).

The Yoke means subsoil ploughing. The salvation of a lost world, or of one human soul is no child's play. Christ saw before Him the hard surface of mankind, the spirit of man caked over by long years of neglect and resistance. Before salvation can be effected the subsoil has to be turned up, and the thoughts of many hearts revealed (Jer 17:9-10).

The Yoke means fellowship. The Divine and the human united in feeding the five thousand; in turning the water into wine; in the raising of Lazarus! There has never been an island redeemed from cannibalism to service for Christ, or a paralytic cleansed and healed apart from the co-operation of the Divine and Human.

Yoke-bearing anticipates the Harvest. So we plough the furrow in Hope, knowing that one day the Harvest will be ripe, and One like unto the Son of Man will thrust in His sharp sickle and reap. What joy to share in that Harvest-Home!

PRAYER—*The fetters Thou imposest, O Lord, are wings of freedom. Put round about my heart the cord of Thy captivating love. Bind me to Thyself as Thou bindest the planets to the sun, that it may become the law of my nature to be led by Thee. AMEN.*

OUR RESOURCES

Hebrews 13:5 "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

SUCH things as ye have, plus! The Greek literally means that there is within us an undeveloped power only awaiting the call, and there will be enough. I may be speaking to people who wish that they had more money, or more brains, or more influence. They dream of the lives they would live, of the deeds they would do, if only they were better circumstanced. But God says No! You have present within the narrow confines of your own reach the qualities that the world is wanting. *Use them*, and be content with the things that you have. You have never explored the resources of your own soul.

"Such things as ye have"—Moses had only a rod, but a rod with God can open the Red Sea. David had only five pebbles, but these with God brought down Goliath. The woman had only a little pot of oil, but that pot of oil with God paid all her debts. The poor widow was scraping the bottom of the barrel, but with God the handful of meal kept her child, herself, and the prophet until the rain came. The boy had only five tiny loaves and two small fish, but with Jesus they were enough for five thousand men, beside women and children. Estimate what you have got, and then count God into the bargain! He never lets go of your hand. He will never leave nor forsake those that trust in Him!

Therefore be content! The most glorious deeds that have blessed and enriched the world have not been done by wealthy men. Our Lord had none of this world's goods; the apostles had neither silver nor gold; Carey was only a poor cobbler; Bunyan a travelling tinker; Wesley left two silver spoons. It is not money, but human love and God that is needed. Therefore do not be covetous; do not hoard, but give! Be strong and content. With good courage say: "The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear"—for life or death, for sorrow or joy!

PRAYER—*The soul that to Jesus has fled for repose,*

He cannot, He will not, desert to its foes.

That soul, though all hell should endeavour to take,

He'll never, no never, no never forsake! AMEN.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

Psalm 65:1-2 “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.”

WHAT raptures there is here! It reminds one of a lark at dawn filling regions of air with music which threatens to rend its tiny throat. The Psalmist is in fellowship with God. He is enjoying his prayer and praise so much that it seemed to him as though all flesh must wake up to enjoy it also. His iniquities and transgressions are purged away. He feels that God is causing him to approach into His secret place, and all nature takes on a new radiance and beauty.

The personal pronouns for God—Thou, Thee, Thy, occur at least twenty times in thirteen verses! We remember that Wordsworth speaks of a presence that rolls through all things: “A sense sublime of something deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the blue sky—a motion and a spirit.” The poet was a lover of the meadows, and the woods, and mountains!

To many of us, also, nature seems but the slight covering or garment, which only partially, conceals the glory and beauty of God’s presence. The bush still burns with fire. The mountain-heights are filled with the horses and chariots of angelic guardians. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.” There is no voice or language that the ordinary sense of man can detect, but when our hearts are clean, and our ears open, we realize that we are in touch with Him whom some day we shall see face to face, but who even now reveals Himself to the pure in heart (Mat 5:8).

PRAYER—*O God our Heavenly Father, renew in us the sense of Thy gracious presence, and let it be a constant impulse within us to peace, trustfulness, and courage on our pilgrimage. AMEN.*

LOVE'S CONFIDENCE!

John 11:3 "Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

THE lapse of years made it possible for the Apostle to draw aside the veil which curtained the happy friendship and fellowship of Christ in the home at Bethany. It was the one green oasis in the rugged wilderness through which He passed to the Cross!

There were diversities in that home, Martha, practical, energetic, and thoughtful for all that could affect the comfort of those she loved and served; Mary, gifted with spiritual insight and tender sympathy; Lazarus, probably a man of few words, quiet and unobtrusive, but Jesus loved each one (John 11:5).

The sisters never doubted that Christ would speed at all hazards to save Lazarus after the breathless messenger had brought the tidings of his sickness. Anything less than infinite love would have rushed instantly to the relief of those troubled hearts; Divine love alone could hold back the impetuosity of the Saviour's tender heart until the Angel of Pain had finished her work. He wanted to teach His disciples never-to-be-forgotten lessons, and also He was eager for the spiritual growth of the faith of the sisters.

This chapter might be more truly known as "The Raising of Martha," for our Lord enabled her, matter-of-fact and practical as she was, to realize that He was the Resurrection and the Life. He insisted that *her faith* was an essential condition in the raising of her brother to life. The emphasis is on the word "*thou*" (John 11:40). Our Lord always needs the co-operating faith of some true heart to be with Him when He works a miracle, and He chose the least likely of the two sisters to supply the pivot on which He could rest the lever of His Divine help. As she withdrew her objection to the removal of the stone, her faith suddenly became capable of claiming the greatest of Christ's miracles.

He calls to us also to help our brethren. In many cases those who have received life from Christ are still bound about with grave-clothes, old habits and evil associations cling to them and impede their progress, and He bids us "Loose him and let him go." He asks for our co-operation in the emancipation of those who have been held fast in the power of the Evil One.

PRAYER—*O God, we rejoice that we can turn to Thee in the midst of great anxiety, and commit all our troubles to Thy sure help. As Thou art with us in the sunlight, be Thou with us in the cloud. Sustain us by Thy near presence and let the comforts which are in Jesus Christ fill our hearts with peace. AMEN.*

LIFE ABUNDANT: GRACE ABOUNDING

Romans 5:17 “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

NOTICE that word *Receive!* We first receive forgiveness, or reconciliation, then abundance of grace (Rom 5:11-17). We cannot merit or earn either one or the other; all that we have to do is to *take* what God offers, by an act of the will which accepts and appropriates. If men are lost, it is because they refuse to receive the grace and love of God, secured to us, in spite of our failure and sin, through the second Adam. We must believe that we have received, even when we are not conscious of any new experience (John 1:12). It is a blessed thing, when our emotional life is at a low ebb, and we feel out of sorts, to receive, to inbreathe, to drink in the “abundance of grace,” and to know that He is working in us in power.

There is no limit to the abundance of God’s supply—it *abounds!* The Apostle keeps using that word, which really means “running over “ (Rom 5:15, Rom 5:17, Rom 5:20). And the result of receiving more and more out of God’s fullness, is that we *reign*, not in the future life, but in this. Ours becomes a royal, a regnant, a triumphant life.

This glorious life in which we are daily victorious over sin, daily using and scattering the unsearchable riches of Christ, daily helping others up to the throne-life, is within the reach of every reader of these words. God wants you to enter upon it; He has made every provision for it, and is at this moment urging you to enter upon it. The only thing for you to do is to receive the abundance of His grace and of the gift of righteousness. Open your heart and life and He will fill it; dare to believe that He has filled it, even though you don’t feel it; and go forth to live a royal life, distributing the largess of His royal bounty!

But we must pour out as God pours in! Only so will He be able to trust us with His fullness. Our love to others, our willingness to help them, our forgivingness and patience must go to the point of self-exhaustion, if we would know the abundant life and the grace that flows over.

PRAYER—*For souls redeemed, for sins forgiven; For means of grace, and hopes of heaven, Father, what can to Thee be given, Who givest all? AMEN.*

OUR PRAYER LIFE

Daniel 6:10 “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”

THE chosen hour. It was at the time when Daniel’s enemies appeared to have accomplished his downfall and death—“when the writing was signed”—that this heroic statesman knelt down and prayed, and gave thanks to God. These are times when prayer is the only way out of our perplexities. George Muller said: “Our very weakness gives opportunity for the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to be manifested. That blessed One never leaves and never forsakes us. The greater the weakness, the nearer He is to manifest His strength; the greater our necessities, the more have we ground to rely on it that He will prove Himself our Friend. This has been my experience for more than seventy years; the greater the trial, the greater the difficulty, the nearer the Lord’s help. Often the appearance was as if I must be overwhelmed, but it never came to it, and it never will. More prayer, more faith, more exercise of patience, will bring the blessing. Therefore our business is just to pour out our hearts before Him; and help in His own time and way is sure to come.”

The chosen direction. “His windows open towards Jerusalem.” There the Holy Temple had stood, and the Altar of Incense; there God had promised to put His Name and meet His people. When we pray, our windows must be open towards our blessed Lord, who ministers for us in Heaven, mingling the much incense of His intercession with the prayers of all saints (Heb 7:25; Rev 8:3).

The chosen attitude. “He kneeled upon his knees.” It is most appropriate to kneel before God in homage and worship. St. Paul bowed his knees, even though his hands were chained, to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 3:14). But we can pray also as we walk, or sit, or ride. Nehemiah flashed a prayer to the God of Heaven before he answered the king’s question, but he also prayed before God day and night. Let us contract the habit of praying and giving thanks three times a day. At even, morning, and noon, let God hear your voice.

PRAYER—*Thee we would be always blessing,*

Serve Thee as Thy hosts above;

Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing

Glory in Thy perfect love. AMEN.

THE MIDNIGHT WRESTLE

Genesis 32:1,24 "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ... And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

SUCH is our mortal life! We meet angels before we encounter our Esaus! Their unseen squadrons must be counted on as one of our permanent assets.

"Oh purblind souls! We may not see our helpers in their downward flight, nor hear the sound of silver wings, slow beating through the hush of night?" But they are surely present (Psa 34:7; Heb 1:14). If we accustom ourselves to their presence and help, we may presently come, like Jacob, to an experience of the Eternal, before which all else will dwindle into insignificance. When our Rachels and Leahs, the babble of the children, the lowing of the herds are away; when the only sound is the low murmur of the brook, or the sigh of the night wind; when the sense of loneliness steals over the spirit, and the starry hosts expand overhead, it is then that we may come into personal contact with One, whose delights from of old were with the sons of men. He is the Word of God, but He is also the Saviour, the Lover and Friend of man.

In our first meeting, He will wrestle with us to break down our stubbornness; He will touch the sinew of our strength till we can hold out no more; He will withdraw from us till we insist that we cannot let Him go; He will awaken a mysterious longing and urgency within us, which He alone can satisfy. And as the memorable interview ends, He will have taught us that we prevail best when we are at our weakest, and will have whispered in our ear, in response to our entreaty, His own sublime Name, Shiloh, the Giver of Eternal Peace!

Why should you not meet that Angel, and let Him make you a prince?

PRAYER—*Be not weary of me, Good Lord. I am all weakness, but Thou art Almighty, and canst put forth Thy strength perfectly in my weakness. Make me truly to hate all which Thou hatest, fervently to love all which Thou lovest—through Jesus Christ. AMEN.*

THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 16:7-10 “After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.”

THE Spirit of Jesus often shuts doors in the long corridors of life. We pass along, trying one after another, but find that they are all locked, in order that we may enter the one that He has opened for us (Rev 3:7-8). Sometimes in following the Spirit’s guidance we seem to come to a blank wall. The little missionary band found themselves facing the sea. They had not contemplated crossing to Europe, but there seemed no other course open. They walked to and fro on the sea-wall or landing-stage, looking over the restless waves, and noticing the strange costumes of sailors and travellers who had gathered in the thriving sea-port, which bore the name famous to all the world for the Siege of Troy.

It was with such thoughts in his heart that St. Paul slept that night in his humble lodging, and in his dreams, a man from Macedonia, like one he had seen on the quay, stood and beckoned to him (Acts 16:10).

Where it is possible for the judgment to arrive at a right conclusion, on the suggestions that may be supplied by the Divine Spirit, we are left to think out the problems of our career. Within your reach are the materials needed for formulating a correct judgment; use them, balance the *pros* and *cons*, and looking up to God to prevent you from making a mistake, act. When once you have come to a decision, in faith and prayer, go forward, not doubting or looking back.

A small door may lead to a vast opportunity. St. Paul might have been discouraged by his reception in Europe. He looked for the *man* whom he had seen in the vision, but the only trace they could find of the worship of God was the gathering together of a few women. How startled they must have been by the sudden appearance of these missionaries, but a mighty work for God began in the life of at least one of them “whose heart the Lord opened.” Let us not despise the smallest opening, for we can never tell into what a wide place it may conduct us.

PRAYER—*O God, since we know not what a day may bring forth, but only that the hour for serving Thee is always present, may we wake to the instant claims of Thy holy will; not waiting for tomorrow, but yielding today. Consecrate with Thy presence the way our feet may go; and the humblest work will shine, and the roughest places be made plain. AMEN.*

SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

Revelation 21:16 “And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.”

THE cube was evidently a favourite unit of Hebrew measurement. The Holy of Holies was a cube, and so was the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, which St. John saw in a vision, “coming down from God out of heaven.” We are reminded of the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge (Eph 3:18). Ought not this to be the measurement of every well-ordered life?

There must be *Length*—i.e. the issuing forth of the soul as it leaves the things that are behind and reaches forth to those that are before. We must never be satisfied with that whereunto we have already attained, or think that we are perfect.

But with length there must be *Breadth*. Our life must reach out on the right and left to help others. The Cross stands for unselfishness, and those who claim to have been crucified with Christ must live, not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and through Him for all that He cares and loves. The world is full of lonely, weary, and desolate lives, to whom Christ would send us if we were ready for His use.

There must also be *Depth*. We must dwell deep! The Apostle says *rooted*,—i.e. we must strike our roots into the subsoil; *grounded*—we must have our foundations in the very depths of a life hidden with Christ. From His life we must arise as fountains spring from the depths of the hills. Tree roots need to spread as far underground as the branches above.

There must be *Height*. Our ideals should always be rising. We must fix our affections on things *above*, not on things on the earth. Let us by thought and prayer thither ascend and dwell where Christ sits on the right hand of God (Col 3:1-4).

PRAYER—*O Eternal God, sanctify my body and soul, my thoughts and my intentions, my words and actions; let my body be a servant of my spirit, and both body and spirit servants of Jesus; that doing all things for Thy glory here, I may be partaker of Thy glory hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

CULTIVATING CHEERFULNESS

Proverbs 17:22 "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing."

A HAPPY and cheerful heart is a matter of cultivation. We cannot afford to abandon ourselves entirely to our moods. There are times when we feel depressed and sad, for no special reason, except that a mood is on us! It is at such times that we need to anoint our heads, and wash our faces, that we may not be consumed by our fretfulness, or impose our depression upon others, for nothing is worse than to be a wet blanket! (Mat 6:16-18.)

On the other hand, there is nothing more objectionable than to be always in the presence of a comic person who thinks that every occasion must serve for frolic. After a time one gets as tired of funny stories and perpetual punning as of gloom, but while avoiding this extreme, we must not fall into the other of wearing a lugubrious expression and giving way to a moodiness of spirit, which cannot be accounted for.

We may alter our dispositions and moods by a resolute action of the will. We can refuse to look miserable, to speak mournfully, to be pessimistic, to pass on depression. In a spirit of unselfishness we can put on a cheerful courage, array ourselves in the garments of joy, anoint ourselves with the spirit of praise and thankfulness, and go forth into the world to shed sunbeams rather than shadows on the path of life. Do not nurse your sorrow of heart, lest your spirit and the spirits of others be broken.

We can promote a cheerful heart by dwelling on the bright things of our lot; by counting up the mercies which are left, rather than dwelling on what we have lost. When the heart is full of the light and love of God, can it be other than cheerful? How can this be obtained except by a living union with Jesus Christ. In Him there is an infinite supply of peace and joy, sunshine and light. Let us open our hearts to him, and *put on* these things as we array ourselves each morning in our garments (Isa 61:3-10).

PRAYER—*Through all the changing scenes of life,*

In trouble and in joy,

The praises of my God shall still

My heart and tongue employ. AMEN.

THE DAYS OF NOAH

Hebrews 11:7 "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

WE do well to give heed to the description given of the "days of Noah", for our Lord said, that as it was in those days, so shall it be in the days that close the present age (Mat 24:37-39). The world of that time had made great progress in the arts and civilization of life. But, as it has happened repeatedly all through human history, great luxury produced infamous immorality, cruelty, and widespread indifference to the claims of God. Things took place in those olden times which have their counterpart in the great cities of our time. In its feverish atmosphere sin of every kind abounded, and in mercy to the race, there was no alternative than to bring that wicked generation to an end. "They ate, they drank; they married, and were given in marriage, and knew not, till the flood came and carried them all away."

Amidst all this, Noah lived an unblemished and righteous life. He walked in daily converse with God (Gen 6:8-9). His Almighty Friend was able to reveal to him His intentions. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

Keep near to God, that you may hear the accents of His still small voice. Our happiest experience is when we walk with Him in unbroken fellowship, and He takes us into covenant with Himself. Through any one individual, whose heart is perfect toward Him, God will save others. We too shall cross the Flood of Death and enter the new life of Resurrection, but we must be quick to detect His voice, and our hands deft to fulfil the revelations of our Divine Teacher and Friend.

PRAYER—*Lead me, O Lord, in a straight way unto Thyself, and keep me in Thy grace unto the end. AMEN.*

LOVE OF HOSPITALITY

Hebrews 13:1-2 "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

OUR text refers to that memorable scene when Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent, probably inclined to slumber in the heat of noon. Suddenly he saw three men apparently waiting for alms and help. Plenty of travellers had come to his door before, seeking help and hospitality which he had given freely. But though the heat was great, though he may have been disappointed again and again in the recipients of his bounty, he felt it better to be disappointed a hundred times than to miss the chance of showing hospitality and welcome. Therefore he sprang to his feet, called to Sarah for help, and the two of them quickly ministered to the three unknown men. How thankful he must have been that he had not refused to entertain them, for two of them were angels, and the third was the Son of God!

In our crowded lives, where room is scarce, it is less easy for us to care for the people who may be cast as strangers amongst us, but there is a hospitality of the mind that we can all exercise, when we open our hearts to some story of sorrow. None of us are quite aware, except we have suffered in that way, how much it helps some people to be able to pour out their burdens and sorrows. It is much to have a hospitable mind, to have a sympathetic ear, and to make room in our heart for the story of human pain, sorrow, and loneliness, which some, who are comparative strangers, may want to confide in us. We may rebuke ourselves that our hearts do not more nearly represent the hostel or inn into which sad or weary souls may creep for shelter. Although you cannot say much, there may always be the open door of your heart where the lonely and desolate may enter and find in you a fire of sympathy, kindness, and good-will.

Thus cold hands may find warmth, and souls that are frozen for want of love and sympathy may be sheltered and refreshed, and we shall find that in showing love to a stranger we have been ministering to our dear Lord Himself, who said: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me."

PRAYER—*Help me, Blessed Lord, to bear the infirmities of the weak, to succour those that are over-borne in the fight of life, and to bear the burdens of others. AMEN.*

A CHANGED OCCUPATION

Luke 5:27-28 "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him."

THE trade between the Orient and the vast populations on the Mediterranean, passed through the Lake of Galilee, making a highly profitable trade for Capernaum, and the smaller cities and towns. The custom-house in which this man, Levi, held a lucrative position was probably quite near the lake, which was much frequented by our Lord, and thus he may have had opportunities of listening to His teaching. On the other hand, it is possible that the Saviour's summons to him was absolutely unexpected, though it elicited an instant response, for he rose up, left all, and followed Jesus. No doubt he returned later to make up his books, and hand in the balance that may have been in his charge.

Our Lord called him Matthew—which means "a gift." He was a great addition to the band of disciples, and the gift of his Gospel to the Church has made the whole world his debtor. Matthew conceals, with beautiful modesty, the fact that he prepared a great feast for the Master, which was perhaps partly to signalize his adherence to his new calling, and partly as an opportunity to introduce his new-found Friend to the publicans and sinners—i.e. the excommunicated persons of the city (Luke 5:29-30). That feast may have been the first step to the foundation of the Christian Church. Our Lord gladly availed himself of the opportunity to declare His purpose to seek and save the lost, to create a new society on that principle, and to make possible the enclosure of these lost sheep with the flock.

If Zacchaeus happened to be in the party that day, it is likely that for him it was the inauguration of a new life, and as he sat there under the fascination of Christ, he resolved to make reparation to any whom he had cheated and over-charged!

Let us see to it that there is more joy in our life. Let us seek the people who think themselves for ever excommunicated from the Church. It may be that we shall find Matthew, or Augustine, or John Bunyan among them!

PRAYER—*O God, wherever Thou leadest we would go, for Thy ways are perfect wisdom and love. Blend our wills with Thine, and then we need fear no evil nor death itself, for all things must work together for our good. AMEN.*

THE WITNESS OF CONSCIENCE

Romans 2:15 “Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)”

CONSCIENCE holds the mirror to the inner life, and shows us just what we are in the light of God’s infinite purity and righteousness. The word is derived from the Latin *con*, with; *scio*, I know. Conscience is what a man knows with or against himself.

Sometimes we can meet ourselves with a smile; this is what we term a *good* conscience; at other times we do not like to meet ourselves, but feel ashamed—we cannot deceive ourselves, or hoodwink conscience. We know, and we know that we know, that this is right and that wrong; this is good, and that evil. Conscience is an ill bed-fellow, says the old proverb, and when we are troubled with evil dreams, turning, tossing, starting up in fear, rest becomes impossible. It is very necessary to keep on good terms with your conscience, and we do not wonder that the Apostle made it his aim to preserve a conscience void of offence towards God and man (Acts 24:16).

All men have a conscience, else God could not judge them; there would be no standard by which to try or convict, but in most cases conscience is uninstructed. It judges rightly, so far as it knows, but its knowledge is scant, and its power of making accurate distinctions is limited. The Christian conscience is illumined and instructed by the light that falls on it from the face of Christ. See to it that your conscience is constantly corrected by Christ’s standard. Never tamper with conscience, nor gag her protestations, nor drown her voice. Never say it does not matter for *once* in a way. Never dare to let her voice wear itself out. To behave thus is to tamper with the most delicate moral machinery in the universe. Let us see that our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience in the blood of Jesus, so that we may draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Heb 10:19-23).

PRAYER—*O Lord, give me Thy Holy Spirit in greater measure, that His saving presence may cleanse my conscience, and His holy inspiration enlighten my heart. AMEN.*

CO-OPERATION IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Luke 5:7 "And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink."

WE all want to fill our nets and boats with the fish that we have caught for Christ. How shall we do it? There are certain conditions for successful Christian service which must be observed.

Our nets must be clean. They were "washing their nets." It was a good thing that this necessary work had been performed; otherwise they would have been unable to sail at a moment's notice, and to let down their nets at the Master's command (Luke 5:4). "If a man shall cleanse himself, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use." Let us see to it that we are always ready to respond to Christ's call.

We must be prepared to obey Christ in little things. Our Lord first asked Peter to put out his boat a little from the land. He knew what He was going to do afterwards in making great demands on Peter's obedience and faith; but first, He made this slight request. With alacrity the Master's wishes were complied with, and the floating pulpit, rising and falling with the ripple of the water, was at the Lord's service as He sat down and taught the people. Remember that whenever you lend your empty boat to Jesus, He will pay for it by giving it back to you filled with fish.

Christ's will must be obeyed even against our own judgment. Peter had spent the whole of his life apprenticed to the lake, and knew everything of the art of fishing. When our Lord bade him: "launch out into the deep, and let down your nets," it was against all his knowledge and practical experience to let down his nets in the *daytime*, especially as he had toiled all night in vain! Happily for him, he said: "At Thy word I will let down the nets!"

We must be willing to share with others. He might have kept the haul for himself, but he longed that the others should share in the Master's bounty, "and they came and filled both the boats."

PRAYER—*O God, Thou hast committed our work to us, and we would commit our cares to Thee. May we feel that we are not our own, and that Thou wilt heed our wants while we are intent upon Thy will. AMEN.*

THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Luke 11:1 "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

THERE is no other such Teacher as Christ. He was the Master in the art of prayer, and has taught all the greatest intercessors among the sons of men. His own example has been their incentive. It was because they saw Him praying that one of the disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray—an example of the power of unconscious influence. If a boy kneels in prayer in the school bedroom, he will be almost sure to start others praying.

Be natural in prayer. Do not repeat prayers the face of which has become worn away by constant usage. Find out approximately what your needs will be; and ask for the needed grace as a child of a father.

Intercede for others. Do not use exclusively "I," "me," and "my," but "we," "our," and "us." Remember how Christ interwove intercession with every petition of the prayer He taught His disciples.

Be sure to receive as well as ask. No beggar is content with asking. He plies his errand until he receives. Alas, that we are so often content to ask with no thought of receiving. Before we rise from our knees, having pleaded for something that is contained in the Divine promises, we should dare to believe that we do receive the petitions that we have desired. "Have Faith in God" really means reckon on God's faithfulness to you. Do not look at your faith. He who is ever considering his health will become an invalid; he who always looks down at his faith will cut the very roots from which faith grows, will shut out the beam by which faith lives. Look away to the character of God—the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy for ever.

Leave the ultimate answers to your prayer to His infinite wisdom. Not infrequently, to reverse our Lord's words, children ask for stones and not bread; entreat for scorpions and not fish. Under such circumstances it is wise and good of God to say "No" to our requests, and to give us what we would ask if we knew all as He does. When we get to heaven we shall have to thank Him as much for the unanswered as for the answered prayers.

Be sure to give the Master time to teach you how to pray. It is necessary to wait for Him, when we feel less earnest, as when the fire burns most vehemently. He likes the regular hours for His pupils, and that they should not hurry impetuously away from His gracious words.

PRAYER—*Teach me to pray, O Lord, as Thou didst teach Thy disciples of old, and winnow my prayers that I may desire and ask only those things that are according to Thy Will. AMEN.*

THE FIRST LESSON

Luke 11:2 "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

HEAVEN is "the Father's House." It is our Home. We are strangers and sojourners here, and on our way home. What fascination is in the word! Home will draw the sailor, soldier, explorer, prodigal from the ends of the earth. God has given to most of us the dear memory of what Home is, that we may guess at what awaits us and be smitten with homesickness. "Blessed are the homesick, for they shall reach home!"

But the charm of Heaven will be *the manifested presence of our Father*. All doubts and misunderstandings will be dissipated. We shall know and see, as we are seen and known. In the closing verses of Jude we are told that we shall be set before the presence of His glory, without blemish and in exceeding joy. It is as though our Saviour will introduce us to the manifested presence of the Father.

But we need not wait till then. If we know our Lord, we know the Father. It troubled Christ that His disciples had been so long with Him in familiar intercourse and yet had not realised that the beauty and holiness which shone from His nature were beams of the Father's character. To have Jesus is to have the Father. To know Jesus is to know the Father. To pray to Him is to pray to God, for He is God manifest in the flesh. He is not simply an incarnation of God, in the sense of the old Greek mythology, adopting a cloak or disguise which was afterwards cast off. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

There must be *reverence in our prayer*. God is in heaven and we upon the earth. We must not rush unceremoniously into His presence, as though it were a common and too-familiar room, where ceremony and respect are laid aside. There should be the constant remembrance that in prayer we stand in the presence-chamber of the great Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the Universe. We wipe our shoes and remove our hats when we enter the home of our friend; let us not forget our manners in the opening sentences of prayer. Angels veil their faces and cry "Holy!"

But there may be a blessed *faith and trust when we pray*. The Father of Jesus awaits us. He ascended to His Father and our Father. We pray to One who loves us in His Beloved Son with an everlasting love, and holds out the golden sceptre towards us.

PRAYER—*I adore Thee, Heavenly Father! There is no limit to Thy power, or to Thy love. Thou art greatly to be praised! Thou art greatly to be loved! Accept the homage of my soul and life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

HONORING GOD

Luke 11:2 “And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.”

GOD’s name is His Nature—His attributes, the various qualities that go to make Him what He is. When we ask for it to be hallowed, we ask that all which obscures it should be swept away as mists before the dawn. We thank God for all that is known of His wonderful Being, for the message of Nature, for revelation given to seers and prophets, for the Word who came from Him, and for the Holy Spirit who reveals Him. But there are still vast unexplored tracks in God’s Being of which we know nothing, and there are myriads that know still less than we do. By their sinful ignorance and superstition, men have misunderstood and misrepresented the character of God; therefore we need to pray that in this world, and in all other worlds, His glorious personality should be understood, appreciated, and loved.

When we pray “Hallowed be thy Name”, it is to remind ourselves of the greatness and glory of God our Father. Before you utter petitions for yourself, be still! Compel the intruding crowd of daily needs and desires to remain outside the fence which surrounds the mountain foot. Go up to meet with God, desiring to look at the needs of the world and of your own little life as subordinate to your own great desire that God should be loved, honoured, and obeyed. Put God’s interests above your own. Enthroned Him in thought and petition.

In a world that neither knew nor hallowed God’s Name, Jesus set Himself to reveal and unfold all its wonderful depths. Let us try every day to know more of that Name, and to make it known. It is through ignorance of God that men turn from Him. They have distorted views, obtained from the lives and words of professedly religious people which are often a sad travesty and misrepresentation of God. If only men really knew God, surely the love with which He has loved them would enter and fill their hearts.

It is said that the passion of the French soldiers for Napoleon was so great, that even when mortally wounded they would raise themselves as he came riding past on his charger, and cry: “Long live the Emperor!” It is when we have become wholly absorbed in bringing glory to God in the highest, that we shall know peace in our hearts, and become the channels of goodwill to men, as men of good-will, i.e., the doers of God’s Will.

PRAYER—*Heavenly Father, unveil to me, I humbly ask, the sweet mystery and beauty of Thy Name—Abba Father. AMEN.*

GOD'S GOVERNMENT

Luke 11:2 "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

IN one of those sublime flights with which the Epistles of St. Paul abound, he tells us that the time is coming when the Son shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall abolish all rule, authority and power. From this we are at liberty to infer that the Kingdom was originally the Father's; that by man's sin and fall it has been alienated from His control.

The Lord Jesus became incarnate for the purpose of regaining the Kingdom by His agony, blood, and tears; though it is not as yet His, it is being acquired. When therefore we pray: "Father, Thy Kingdom come," we are asking that the complete victory of Jesus Christ may be hastened; that He may speedily triumph over all obstacles and enemies; that truth may reign in government, art, and science; that trade may be free from trickery and fraud; that tyranny may be extinguished, corruption exposed; that He may send forth His Angels to gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity, destroying that last enemy, death, and bringing in the golden age when all men shall know and love the Father and become His obedient children.

There are many explanations of the Kingdom of Heaven. Perhaps as a rough and ready way of interpreting the phrase, we may say *Divine Kingship*. When we grasp that idea, it becomes the dominant note of life. It is the masterkey which opens every lock. Just to believe, deep down in your soul, that the Father of Jesus—our Father—is King. That the God who is moved by the fall of a little bird from its nest, who is described in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost son, is King of the world and all its forces, and of everything in human life. To know and believe this is to get something which is worth everything else.

Will you not, here and now, place yourself under the government of the King? Let Him govern your heart, that you may love only within the limits which His pure and holy Spirit can permit. Let Him govern your mind, that no unholy thought be allowed to lodge and strike root within you. Let Him govern the books you read, the companionships and friendships you form, the methods of your business, the investment of your money, the way in which you spend your leisure—all must be under the government of His Kingdom, for He will not be King at all unless He is King in all.

PRAYER—*Hasten, O God the coming of Thy Kingdom, and the consummation of Thy redeeming work. May the Kingdom of Christ come in us and through us; His voice speaking through our lips; His power working through our touch; His love beating in our heart. AMEN.*

GOD'S WILL

Matthew 6:10 "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

MANY people shrink from God's Will. They think that it always means pain, or sorrow, or bereavement. They always feel melancholic when you speak of doing the Will of God. Alas! how the devil has libeled God. The Will of God is the will of a Father. It is the Fatherhood of God going out in action. "It is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish." "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

If only the Will of God were done on earth, as it is done in heaven, there would be peace between the nations, and love and happiness in all our homes. Love would cement the union of all men in a city of blessedness. The fact of the world's present condition is no argument against the beneficence and blessedness of the Will of God. It is because men will not do the Will of God that things are as they are!

In our own life we shall never be really right or happy until we have got to the point of saying: "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." We may not *begin* there. The first step is to choose it, then we shall come to accept it lovingly and thankfully; but, finally, we shall rejoice and delight in it. If you cannot say "Thy Will be done," say: "I am willing to be made willing that Thy Will should be done." If your will is like a bit of rough and rugged iron, tell God that you are willing for it to be plunged into the furnace of His love, so that all which is unyielding and obstinate may pass away before the ardent heat of the Divine Fire. Depend on it that He will not fail, nor be discouraged with the long process that may be required; and that He will not be rough or violent. He will stay His east wind. He will keep His hand on the pulse, that He may be aware of the least symptom that the ordeal is too strong.

At first there may be a twinge of pain, as when a dislocated limb is pressed back into its proper position, but afterwards there is the blessed restoration of healthy vigour. You will only lose what you would gladly give up if you know as much as God does of what promotes soul-health. "Whosoever," said our Lord, "will do the Will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." "In His Will is our peace."

PRAYER—*Most Gracious God, to know and love whose will is righteousness, enlighten our souls with the brightness of Thy presence, that we may both know Thy Will and be enabled to perform it. AMEN.*

GOD'S PROVISION

Matthew 6:11 "Give us this day our daily bread."

IF you want daily bread, and would pray for it aright, you must ask as a child; and you must put first, before your own satisfaction, the hallowing of God's Name, and the doing of His Will. Implicitly you suggest that if He gives you bread, you will use the strength it gives for His service.

Let us ever think of God as the bountiful and generous Giver. Too often He has been described as hard and austere, and as a result, men dread God and only think of Him when they have done wrong. But we should describe Him as the All-Giver, who gives all things to all with the most royal generosity. He gives sunbeams and dewdrops, showers and rainbows, grace and glory, His beloved Son and His Spirit, human love and friendship, the daily spreading of our table, the provision of all that we need for life and godliness. Whether we wake or sleep, whether we are evil or good, whether we are pleasing to Him or not; to those who forget and blaspheme Him equally as to the saints and martyrs of the Church, God gives with both hands, pressed down and running over. We cannot buy, we do not merit, we cannot claim, but we may rely on Him to *give*. God is Love; and Love cannot refrain from giving, or it ceases to be Love.

Yet how low God stoops! He is so great, that His greatness is unsearchable. He dwells in the high and lofty place. His sun is ninety-seven millions of miles away from our earth; He has filled the heavens with countless constellations, for each of which He has a name. He puts the Himalaya into a scale, and the islands are as dust in His balances; but Jesus has taught us to say, "Our Father, give us bread!" When we get troubled about the immensity of heaven and the distances of the universe, let us come back to the discourse of which this prayer is part, and which tells us that the great God thinks about the clothing of the lilies, the down on a butterfly's wings, the food of the young lions in the forest, the store of acorns that squirrels accumulate for their provision. It is wonderful to remember that from the first days of man's sojourn on earth, our Father has been laying up stores for us. Though we may be among the youngest children of Time, we come to a table as richly plenshed and provided as those who first tasted of His bounty. "Fear not, it is your Father's good pleasure to *give*."

PRAYER—*Heavenly Father, let me not be anxious about tomorrow's provision or path, but trust Thee to provide and lead for today. Open Thine hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing. AMEN.*

GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Luke 11:4 "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

FORGIVENESS is the exclusive prerogative of Christianity. The schools of ancient morality had four cardinal virtues—justice in human relations; prudence in the direction of affairs; fortitude in bearing trouble or sorrow; temperance or self-restraint. But they knew nothing of mercy or forgiveness, which is not natural to the human heart. Forgiveness is an exotic, which Christ brought with Him from Heaven. As long as He abode on earth, He forgave, and He left it as an injunction and example that His people were to forgive even as they had been forgiven.

Our Lord does not mean that God's forgiveness is measured by our own, or that our forgiveness is the cause of God's. Neither of these is the true rendering of this clause; but that God cannot forgive an unforgiving spirit. The only sure index that our contrition and penitence are genuine is that we forgive those who have wronged us. If we do not forgive, it proves that we have never attained that true position of soul before God in which He is able to forgive.

How is it with you? Do you forgive? Or are there men and women that you obstinately refuse to forgive? If there are, it shows that your own soul is not right before God; your love to God is gauged by your love to men; your relationship to God is indicated by your relationship to your fellows. The man who does not love the brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. Discover where you are today. If there is anyone in your life that you refuse to pray for and forgive, know that your heart is wrong with God.

Do the *first* thing, begin to pray for them, and say: "Forgive us—that one who has hurt me, that man who has wronged me; he needs forgiveness, but I need it equally. We are both in the wrong. I might have made it easier for him to do right than I have done." *Second*, ask for the opportunity to meet him. *Third*, claim that when you meet, there may be in you the royalty of God's grace, that you may bear yourself with that rare, gracious love which covers the multitude of sins. Be willing that through your lips God's pitying mercy may pass forth in words of human kindness and tenderness.

PRAYER—*Forgive us, we pray Thee; put away our sin, as far as the east is from the west. Remember it no more, east it behind Thee as into the depths of the sea. May we be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven us. AMEN.*

GOD'S DELIVERANCE

Matthew 6:13 "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

OUR Lord couples His own prayer with ours when He says, pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." We remember that He was led into the wilderness by the Spirit, that He might be tempted, and that "in all points" He was tempted like as we are, though in His case there was no sin. It is wonderful to know that by some marvelous oneness of nature the Son of God Himself pursued the dreaded track of temptation.

And while we have this moral nature which links us, upon the one hand, to the eternal Christ our Captain, who has gone through the same ordeal, we are also linked to every other man, woman, and child the world over. For, though we might suppose that there were such diversities of life that some might be secure of an immunity from temptation, yet a closer inspection of our common lot reveals the fact that it is inevitable to us all.

Temptation creeps into the sick-chamber equally as into the heyday of our health. It finds its way into the seclusion of the student even as it dogs the steps of the man of the world doing his business. It comes to the minister, with its tendency to elation or despondency, as well as to the criminal; to the poor as well as to the rich. There is no life, however guarded, that is not exposed to the blast and hot wind of temptation. Therefore we utter this prayer as one— "*as.*"

But let us take heart! Remember it is the Father to whom this prayer is addressed. He made us, and knows just what we can stand; He loves us, and His tender succour is always by our side. He draws near, saying, "I am with you in this dark valley, and am able to make you stand; I would not have brought you here had I not counted the cost. I am able to be a very present help in this time of trouble. I have carried others through this ordeal, and I can carry you; only keep near my side; look away from the tempter to my face; cease to trust yourself and depend absolutely upon Me, and I, who brought you to this testing-place, will lead you out. Be of good cheer! See, there awaits you the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to each soldier who has stood true to Him in the hour of trial, and you could not get that if you did not bear this. It is because I want you to win that I am giving you the chance of this hard fight."

PRAYER—*Father, be it so; my heart and my flesh fail, but Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Forbid that we should be overcome with evil, help us to overcome evil with good. AMEN.*

GOD'S TRIUMPH

Revelation 11:15 "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

IN the midst of this babel of varying voices there has never been wanting the cry of the Church: "*Thine is the Kingdom!*" The rule of men is Christ's by right, but as Absalom made himself king in opposition to David, so has Satan made himself the prince of this world in opposition to Christ. Our earth is the scene of a great revolt under the leadership of Satan, but Christ is the rightful King of men for all that. His Kingdom is spreading from heart to heart, and ere long the prince of this world shall be cast out, and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord. Everyone will then say: "*Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory!*" But it is our privilege to say it *now*—when appearances seem all against it; *now*, when the usurper's power is so strong!

It is not enough, however, to say it in general, we must say it in particular. We must say to Christ our Lord, as the men of Israel said to Gideon: "Rule Thou over us, for Thou hast delivered us."

"*Thine is the power.*" The millionaire says: "Mine is the power of money"; the orator, mine is the power of moving crowds by speech; the author, mine is the power of written words and songs; the scientist claims, mine is the power of extracting the secrets of nature. But after a time wealth vanishes, the tongue is paralysed, the mind decays, and so we learn that we have no inherent power. Visions of what is good, and the desire to do it come to us, but how to perform, that is the difficulty, and we cry: "Give me power for service, over myself, power to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world." And in answer there comes this word of the ascended Lord: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth"; and as we catch the words, we answer thus: "*Thine is the power.*" It is Thine that it may be mine!

"*Thine is the glory.*" Let us live out the spirit of this prayer. When anyone praises us for some excellence or achievement in life or character, let us never forget to look up to Him and say: "*Thine is the glory.*" Let us so live that men may be arrested by the radiance of our characters, that they may say: "How glorious must the Christ be who has made these so fair," and be constrained to follow Him.

PRAYER—*Help us O God, to enthrone Christ in our hearts, that having glorified Him, we may receive His Spirit as rivers of living water. AMEN.*

OUR ASSENT

Revelation 7:12 "Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

AMEN means, "So be it—*certainly*." It is the word constantly translated in the Gospels by "verily." It contains the consent of the heart and the response of the life. Amen means that you appropriate each word that is spoken, that your heart says "Yes" to it and stamps it with the seal of its consent. Let your life say "Amen" to God, "Amen" to Providence, "Amen" to Redemption, "Amen" to the Song of Heaven.

When tried and perplexed with the troubles and problems of life, turn from these—which make the brain dizzy and the heart sick—and consider the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—"Our Father"—from whom every ray of love in the universe has emanated. And remember that nothing can be permitted or devised by Him which is not consistent with the gentlest and truest dealings that an earthly father could mete out to his child. So shall you be able to say: "Amen, Lord."

We must not dwell upon the dark and perplexing questions that seethe and boil around us. We must look up to the blue sky of undimmed sunshine, our Father's heart. He must be Love, beyond our deepest, tenderest, highest conceptions of what love is. In His dealings with us, and with all men, love is the essence and law of His nature. In proportion as you humbly believe in the Father, you will be able to say "Yes," which is a true rendering of the Greek word in our version, translated "Even so" (Mat 11:26).

Our Lord was able to say, not only "Even so, Father"; but, "*I thank Thee*" and there shall come a day when the four-and-twenty elders, representing the redeemed Church, shall see the judgment of her great opponent, and say, "Amen, Hallelujah!" (Rev 19:4). Here we can say "Amen," and not often "Hallelujah"; there the two—the assent and the consent; the acquiescence and the acclaim; the submission to the Will of God and the triumphant outburst of praise and adoration. Let us anticipate that age when we shall know as we are known; when we shall be perfectly satisfied, perfectly jubilant, perfectly blessed; when every shadow of misunderstanding and misapprehension shall be dispelled, and we shall join in the Hymn of the Redeemed Church: "Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the Ages."

PRAYER—*O God, there are many things we dread, but we are enclosed in Thee; they cannot touch us except by Thy permission, and if Thou dost permit things that seem evil to enter our life, it must be well. Make us believe that all things are working together for good. AMEN.*

A PSALM OF BLESSEDNESS

Psalms 1:1-2 “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”

THE Blessed, or Happy, man is described negatively (Psa 1:1). There is a gradation in the attitude, the sphere of influence, and the condition of his companions. In *attitude*, we may begin by *walking*, advance to *standing*, and end by *sitting*. If we would avoid the sitting, let us guard against walking or standing. In the *sphere of influence*, the beginning of backsliding is when a man listens to counsel; he then drifts into the path trodden by sinners, and finally is hardened enough to sit where scornful talk surrounds him on every hand. The *condition* of evil companions. We should be repelled if we were to be plunged suddenly into contact with the scornful, but our moral interests may not be specially outraged by the counsel of the wicked. Indeed, the advice which wicked men give sometimes resembles closely what our heart suggests and our taste prefers. It is so specious, so apparently sensible and natural, that we are captivated by it. Only gradually do we slide from those who forget God to those who set His law at defiance or openly blaspheme Him.

Our motive in going amongst ungodly men must be carefully considered. If it is to help and save them, as our Lord did, no harm will come to us. But if we go into the way of sinners for our own amusement, need we be surprised if the bloom pass off the fruit, and the fine edge from the tool? Let us examine ourselves. Are we startled and shocked now, as we used to be, by an indecent illusion or a blasphemous word? Is there a coarsening process at work? Even where we are not injured by worldliness, we may suffer by contact with the low ideals of our fellow-Christians. Let us watch and pray; let us consider one another and exhort one another day by day, lest any be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13).

The Blessed, or Happy, man is also described *positively* (Psa 1:2). This delight comes as naturally as appetite for food, when the soul is in a healthy condition. Under the inspiration of that delight, we shall meditate on God's Word continually, storing it in the heart, and reciting it when travelling, or in darkness.

Remember that the Lord knows the way you take. He is sensitive to every jolt and lurch, to the stony hills and the easy valley, to the foes that lie in wait. In His keeping you will never become as the light chaff, or the perishing way of the wicked written in the dust.

PRAYER—*We commend ourselves, and those we love, to Thee, dear Lord. We put our hand in Thine, that Thou shalt lead us by the untrodden way. AMEN.*

A PSALM OF LIFE

Psalm 23 “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

THIS is “the Nightingale” among the Psalmist choristers! The first that we learn in infancy, the last we whisper with dying lips. It implies consecration, for God is *this* only to the soul which is wholly surrendered to Him. You cannot have all of God, or God in all, until you are willing to surrender your all. Do you want to put “My,” the pronoun of possession, before the Name of God? He, then, you must be willing to answer His voice, and follow where He leads. “My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me, but a stranger will they not follow.”

Morning: The Shepherd’s leading. When He puts forth His sheep from the fold in the dewy morning, He goes before them over the grass or up the mountain-track towards the pastures. It would never do for the flock to precede Him. Whatever roughness you find on your path, remember that the Shepherd has gone before. “He *leadeth* me.” Remember also that His name and character are involved in bringing you through “for His Name’s sake.”

Noon: The alleviations of rest. In all lives there are times when He makes us to lie down, or leads us by the waters of rest. Sometimes it is a period of convalescence after an illness. Sometimes a holiday, an interval between the pressure of engagements, a respite when the stress and strain of toil is over—these are our quiet pasture-lands. At other times, in the midst of life’s rush and turmoil, our soul is kept at rest in God’s peace. The heart rests for part of a second between its beats. “He *maketh* me to lie down!”

Night: the oil and the cup. The flock has reached the fold where it is to shelter. At the doorway stands the Shepherd, watching each one as it passes. This one has grazed and torn its head in getting through a hedge, and for it there is the anointing oil. Near His hand is the food and water, from which He fills the bowl, to wash the face, or give refreshment; and as it overflows, there is evidently enough and to spare!

Goodness and Mercy follow the flock, as the Shepherd precedes. “The House of the Lord” is the fold from which we shall go out no more, and the Lamb shall be our Shepherd and abiding joy for ever.

PRAYER—*O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, the busy worm is hushed and the fever of life over and our work is done; Then Lord in Thy mercy grant us safe lodging, a holy rest and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

A PSALM OF COMMUNION

Psalm 116:13 "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD."

Matthew 26:27-28 "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

EVERY Christian disciple should partake of the Lord's Supper regularly. It is a *Sacrament*. In the days of the Roman republic, the youths were brought to the altar and sworn to serve their country to the death. So our first Communion is our oath of allegiance to our King, It is a proclamation, or confession, of our faith. We bear witness to the death of Christ as our hope of forgiveness and salvation. We testify our desire to put His cross and grave between us and the world. It is also a bond of Christian union.

It is a Pledge of the Covenant. The Death on the Cross was God's sign and seal to the new covenant, the provisions of which are recited in Heb 8:1-13. When we drink the wine it is as though we said: "Remember thy Covenant." Let me appeal to all, and especially to the young disciple, to draw near and take the bread and wine, and to meditate deeply and reverently on that supreme Gift which demands our self-giving. "What shall I render unto the Lord? I will take the cup, I will pay my vows" (Ps 116:13-14).

The expression in this Psalm is remarkable: "*I will take the cup of salvation.*" When we enquire *what salvation*, we read: "Thou hast loosed my bonds" (Ps 116:16), and we are reminded of Rev1:5, "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood." We are tied and bound by our sins; our sinful habits bind us fast in our thongs. But our Lord looses us by His cross.

Notice how triumphantly the Psalmist avows his loyalty to his Heavenly Master. Again, and yet again he avows: "O Lord, truly I am thy servant. *I am thy servant.*" And we are the servants or bond-slaves of Jesus. If it be asked what "the sacrifices of thanksgiving" are, we may reply: First, the sacrifice of ourselves (Ro 12:1). Next, the sacrifice of our praise and gifts (Heb 13:15-16). Not grudgingly or thoughtlessly, but with cheerful eagerness, let us come to the altar of God. Because of all we owe to Him, let us never cease to live and serve, to praise and give.

PRAYER—*We pray that we may eat and drink, and do whatsoever we are called to do, in remembrance of Christ, and to show forth His life. May the spirit of worship pervade every act of daily life. AMEN.*

A SONG OF THE SANCTUARY

Psalm 26:8 "LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."

PROBABLY we never value the House of God so much as when we are severed from it. The author of this Psalm was evidently in exile.

He envied the very birds that nested in the holy places where he had been wont to worship. The pilgrims who were on their way thither, and the door-keepers who stood on the threshold, seemed to his ardent longing in better case than himself. Robinson Crusoe missed the sound of the church bell when no longer able to obey its call. There is a strange fascination in the sound of worship for those who for years have been deprived of its privilege. Let us be thankful for "the means of grace" and reverently make good use of them whilst they are at our disposal.

In order to find God's Tabernacles "lovely", we must love the Lord of Hosts as our King and God. Put God in His right place in your heart and life, and you will love His Palaces. When God is worshipped as King, we shall be reverent, we shall be punctual, we shall come with prepared and expectant heart. Any detraction in the manner of the minister, the singing of the choir, the atmosphere of the place, will not affect the soul which is occupied with God.

It is blessed when the high ways to Zion have a place in a man's heart—when he is set on them, dreams of them, and loves them because of the goal to which they lead. On our earthly pilgrimage we have our valleys of depression and weeping, as well as our transfiguration heights. Thank God that life is not one long dull monotony. Let us not find fault with the road, but make the best of it. Every phase of our experience has its compensations. Look out for them. If you take the valley you will find the water-spring; if you take the hill, you will get the horizon. But be it valley or hill, either brings you to your desired goal.

This Psalm makes it clear that God is the Shield of His people. In the night He is our Sun; in the day, when the sunbeams strike us like swords, He is our Shield (Ps 121:5-6). Whatever your lot, God will be its make-weight and equivalent. When the soul has incurred disaster and pursuit, what a comfort it is to hide in God as our Shield. What an iron-plated door is in the rush of fire along the corridor, that God is to the soul that escapes to Him. He besets us *behind*, as well as *before*.

PRAYER—*Give us grace, we beseech Thee, not to miss, by our apathy or unbelief, aught which Thou waitest to bestow. Teach us how to appropriate what Thou dost offer, and to receive what Thou wouldst impart. AMEN.*

A PSALM OF GRATITUDE

Psalm 103:2 "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:"

THE psalmist is fond of addressing the soul, as though to arouse it from lethargy. Within is a whole choir of minstrels, let them all awake! All that is within should be attuned to God and His praise. Let us not repine for the past, or strain after the future. We often forget the rare benefits of the present moment, because we suppose that there is something more absolutely satisfying ahead. *Here and now* God is forgiving, healing, redeeming, crowning, satisfying, and executing righteous acts. Live in the present! Live in God, the same yesterday, today, and for ever! It is enough. The past records of God's dealings with His people are an incentive to faith. What He was, He is. He is a fountain brimming to the full with pitying love, which flows over in mercy and forgiveness.

There are four comparisons and contrasts in Psa 103:10-18. "As the heaven....As the east....As a Father....As for man." The ancients thought that the sky was solid, a kind of blue ceiling. What an immensity of new meaning we can read in the words: "As the heaven is high above the earth." There is an infinity of distance above us, but not more infinite than God's mercy. To the Eastern mind, east and west were the points at which the sun appeared to rise on earth's surface, "pillowing his chin on the orient wave," and drawing the curtains of the night. For us the telescope reveals the almost inconceivable distance of the earth from the sun, but this is the distance to which God has removed our transgressions. A father's pity for his weak and tiny offspring is very touching. The strongest plea with God is that of helpless weakness! The Son of God was made in the likeness of man, and "He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust."

The last contrast was in our Lord's mind when He pointed to the flowers at His feet (Mat 6:30). Generations of flowers bloom and die in the broad expanse of nature—so frail, so beautiful, so transient. The generations of mankind are not more permanent. But the mercy of the Lord dates from everlasting and endures for ever.

The Psalmist's voice is heard, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" We are reminded of the conductor of a vast orchestra and choir, whose trained ear missed the note of the piccolo. So God will miss your voice if you refrain from His praise.

PRAYER—*O Blessed God, ever engaged in giving Thy choicest gifts to us Thine unworthy children, accept the gratitude for which we have no words. May we rejoice in all the good Thou sendest us. AMEN.*

THE PSALM OF PENITENCE

Psalm 51:3-4 "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

THIS psalm is a temple-staircase, worn by the feet of myriads of penitents. The page is wet with the tears alike of the most saintly and the most sinful. Augustine had them written on the walls of his tiny cell at Hippo, that he might appropriate them constantly. Perhaps they are more precious to us at the end of life than the beginning.

Note the definitions of sin. It is an *erasure* or *blot* on the fair page of life; hence the cry, "*Blot out my transgressions.*" Oh that God would blot out the scribblings and smudges of our later years, and bring back the fresh beauty of our youth! It is a *stain* on the white robe of the soul; hence the petition: "*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.*" There is but one way into the Holy City: "*Blessed are they that wash their robes, and make them white in the Blood of the Lamb.*" It is *leprosy*; hence the cry, "*Cleanse me from my sin; purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.*" There was special significance then, for thee and me when Jesus reached forth His hand and touched the leper, saying: "*Be thou clean.*"

Note the condition of forgiveness. It is confession. Transgression must be acknowledged. We must realise that sin is not only against man, but God, to whom man belongs, and who is affronted by all sin as committed directly against Himself. And our confession must not be superficial, but deep and heart-searching. We must go back to our earliest origins, to our connection with a sinful race, to our inward and hidden parts.

Note the cry for purity and righteousness of life. The clean heart has to be *created*, for there are no materials within us out of which it can be shaped or moulded. Eph 4:24 tells us that full provision has been made for this. We desire a "right," or steadfast spirit, which shall not deviate to the right or left, but bear straight onward to the goal. The Greek word for sin is "missing the mark." We long for a spirit that shall not be deflected. We desire a "free" or willing spirit. Yea, what a transformation is here! But it has been effected in myriads (1 Co 6:11).

PRAYER—*Heavenly Father! Forgive us our many sins, ignorances, and failures, and cleanse us from all iniquity for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. May we hate sin as Thou dost, and may Thy grace sink deeper into our hearts, purifying the springs of thought and action. AMEN.*

THE SOUL'S THIRST FOR GOD

Psalm 63:1 "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;"

THE longing of the soul for God only makes itself felt when all lesser delights and earthly joys are relegated to their right place. If you are not conscious of this soul-thirst it is because your heart is trying to satisfy itself from the world, and is engaged in digging wells that can hold no water. The woman rightly said to Jesus that she came all the way to draw water, because there was no alternative; but as soon as He satisfied her soul-thirst by opening the spring within her, she "left her waterpot." Most of us are so occupied with business, pleasure-seeking, moneymaking and trifles, that we have no time or care for God.

"My soul shall be satisfied" (Psa 63:5). It takes very little and very much to satisfy the soul. Very *little* of this world. As our Lord said to Martha, only one thing is really needful. Yet very *much*, because anything less than God will not suffice; more, we cannot ask. To desire God is to have Him. To thirst for the water of life is to drink of it. Therefore our Lord says: "*Blessed* are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Let us not long for things and people which are not here with us. We may be in poverty and deprivation and loneliness, yet all things and all people are ours at *this moment*, because we have God. Why not, here and now, say: "I have God, and therefore I have all that is good in every one and every thing!" Why should the fish lament, which has the ocean to swim in?

"My soul followeth hard after Thee" (Psa 63:8). God sometimes seems to withdraw from the soul, as the mother will release her hold of the baby who is learning to walk, so that it may be encouraged, without knowing it, to follow her as she retreats with outstretched hands. Did not Christ withdraw from the woman, inclining her to follow hard after Him (Mat 15:21-28). So let us "follow on to know the Lord."

As we close this portion, let us ask if we can truly repeat the first verse. Can we say of God: "Thou art *my* God"? He is ours, but we must seek Him. We must, so to speak, build the fences of our faith in an ever-enlarging enclosure of God, our Father and Portion. It is not enough for the emigrant to have what he calls "a claim." He must open up the resources that lie buried in his piece of land. The diamonds of the Cape were first discovered through a child playing with a white stone, but they have been *sought* ever since.

PRAYER—*O God, some of us are full of infinite desire. Wilt Thou open Thine hand and satisfy our longings. Be nigh unto us as we call upon Thee. Hear our prayer and save us. AMEN.*

THE PSALM OF INHERITANCE

Numbers 18:20 "And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel."

Lamentations 3:24 "The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."

IT is a wonderful thing when we can look upon God as being our portion, when we can lay our hand upon all His nature and say there is nothing in God which will not in some way contribute to my strength and joy. It makes one think of the early days of the settlement of emigrants in the Far West of Canada or Australia. The settler and his family would slowly travel forward, with their implements and seeds, till they reached the plot of ground allocated to them by the Government. At first the family would encamp on the edge of it, then they would prospect it, and go to and fro over its acres with a sense that it all belonged to them, though it needed to be brought under cultivation. In the first year, within the fence hastily constructed, the farmer and his sons would begin to cultivate some small portion of their newly-acquired territory. This would yield the first crops; next year they would press the fences farther out, until at the end of a term of years the whole would have been brought under cultivation.

So it is with the mighty nature of God. When first we are converted and led to know Him for ourselves, we can claim to apprehend but a small portion of the length and depth and breadth and height of His love; but as the years go slowly on, amid the circumstances of trouble and temptation and the loss of earthly things, we are led to make more and more of God, until the immensity of our inheritance, which can never be fully explored or utilised, breaks upon our understanding. No wonder that the Psalmist breaks forth into thanksgiving in Psalm 16:6-7 and Psalm 91.

The devout soul rejoices in God as his great inheritance. When He is always present to our mind, when we are constantly making use of Him, when we find ourselves naturally turning to Him through the hours of the day, then such quiet peace and rest settle down upon us that we cannot be moved by any anxiety of the present or future. Death itself will make no difference, except that the body which has obscured our vision will be left behind, and the emancipated soul will be able more fully to expatiate in its inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled and unfading (1 Pe 1:4-5).

PRAYER—*We thank Thee, O Lord, that all things are ours in Christ, working for us, co-operating with us, and bearing us onward to that glorious destiny for which Thou art preparing us. AMEN.*

THE SILVER LINING IN THE DARK CLOUD

Psalm 42:5 "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

Psalm 42:11 "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Psalm 43:5 "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

THESE two Psalms are evidently one. See how the same refrain rings through them both! They are generally allocated to that sad time in David's history, when the rebellion of his favourite son, Absalom, drove him as an exile beyond the Jordan (2 Sa 15:14). But amid the great sorrows that rolled over his soul, there was one glad ingredient. Thrice over the Psalmist encourages himself to *Hope!* For many a sorrowful soul, this is a true emblem. Amid all the disappointment and despair of life, there is always one chord of Hope—God! We may stand amid the wreck of our earthly hopes. Through misconduct or mistake, as the result of folly or sin, we may have reduced ourselves and those dear to us to the last degree of misery; but the soul may always turn from its low estate to God, sure that He will have mercy, will abundantly pardon, and will turn again the adverse pressure of the tide.

See how the broken-hearted may still speak of God! This man had grievously sinned. He seemed to have forfeited all claim on God's recognition and care. He had brought shame and disgrace on the cause of religion. All down the years the story of his wrong-doing would give the enemies of truth abundant reason to blaspheme. And yet see how he dares to speak of God! He describes Him as the God of his life, as his Rock, as the Health of his countenance, the God of his strength, and the Gladness of his joy. This is a great lesson! We may change, but God changes never. We may turn our face from Him, or allow some evil thing to loom between ourselves and the clear shining of His face. But he shines on, and when we confess our sins, and put them away, we find ourselves afresh in the clear shaft of His illuminating rays. You may have lost all hope in yourself, your friends, your circumstances, but you must never lose your hope in God.

The past, which can only be viewed with repentance, is forgiven; the present, in which God is willing to be All-in-all; the future, when again the soul shall praise Him with joyful lips. Hope looks into the future. "I shall yet praise Him."

PRAYER—*Our Father, forgive, we pray Thee, our murmuring and discontent, our perverseness and waywardness. Teach us to discern the silver edge of the lowering clouds, and to trust Thy love, which is leading us safely and by a right way to our home. AMEN.*

THE PSALM OF THE DOORKEEPER

Psalm 84:10 “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

THIS psalm has been a favourite with God’s people in all ages when Carlyle was leaving, in doubt and despondency, his quiet mountain name at Craigen-puttock for the untried tumult of London. He quoted this Psalm for comfort to his brother and himself, saying: “I turn my thoughts heavenwards, for it is in heaven only that I find any basis for our poor pilgrimage on earth. As surely as the blue dome of heaven encircles us all, so does the providence of the Lord of Heaven. ‘He will withhold no good thing from those that love Him.’ This, as it was the ancient Psalmist’s faith, let it likewise be ours. It is the Alpha and Omega, I reckon, of all the possessions that can belong to man.”

In absence and distance, the heart of the true believer turns to God. He believes that he has direct access to Him, and that his prayer will be accepted (Psa 84:8). David, as the anointed King, had the right to ask that God, who was his Shield, should look upon his face; but we have even a better plea, for we may ask that God would look upon the face of His own glorious and beloved Son, and accept us in Him (Psa 84:9).

Let us imitate the humility of this man, and be willing to take the lowest place (Luk 14:10-11); but we must be on our guard against being proud of our humility. Some people take the back seats that they may be asked to come to the front. They mistake the Lord’s words. It is said that there is always room at the *top*; it is equally true that there is plenty of room at the *bottom*; and if men and women will really gird themselves with a towel and wash the feet of the disciples, if they are prepared in the literal sense to be doorkeepers and to give themselves in service, they will be allowed to do their work with little praise save that of the King Himself.

To all such lowly souls God gives grace and glory (Psa 84:11). With both hands He will give and give again. Only we must practise the habit of *taking*. *Grace* is the bud of which *Glory* is the flower. If God has given the one, He will not withhold the other. (Rom 5:1,2). If anything is withheld from us, we may be sure that it is not absolutely for our good. No *good* thing will the Father withhold; but He will not give us scorpions, however beautiful their appearance; nor stones, though painted to resemble bread.

PRAYER—*Teach us to abide with Thee in our daily calling, and to realise that each sphere may be a temple for priestly service. AMEN.*

THE VOICE OF GOD IN NATURE AND REVELATION

Psalm 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."

VERSES 1-6: Those whose hearts are in tune with God can hear voices in nature which are inaudible to the ordinary man. The poet Blake says: "When the morning sun ascends the eastern sky, *you* may behold only a light yellow disc, whereas I shall see and hear the infinite multitude of the heavenly host, crying, Holy, Holy, Holy!" Yet, though there is no speech nor language, is it not true that "their words are gone forth to the end of the world"? There is no nation of men that has not heard the voice of nature speaking of God (Act 14:16-17; Rom 1:20-21).

In Psa 19:7-11 the Psalmist describes the effect of the Word of God when the Spirit of Truth works through it and by it on the soul. There are many ways of reading the Bible—as a history, as a revelation of man's gropings after God, as a piece of great literature; but the best way is to ask the Divine Spirit to make it a medium through which He may approach our innermost nature. Listen to God's voice speaking within you. Be still, that you may hear. The Spirit searches into the deep things of God, and reveals them to our spirit (1 Co 2:10). All that God has ever said or been to others, He will say and be to you, if only your heart is lowly and contrite. "Speak to me, Lord, by Prophet and Psalmist, by lyric and prose, by narrative and appeal. Speak through Thy Word to restore my soul, to rejoice my heart and to enlighten mine eyes!" When to the quiet and waiting soul God uses His own Word thus, it is more to be desired than fine gold, and is sweeter than the taste of honey from the comb.

The effect of God's Word, when used by the Holy Spirit, is very remarkable (Psa 19:11-14). It convinces of sin. Just as linen is shown to be discoloured against freshly-fallen snow, so we realise our errors and cry to be cleansed from hidden and secret sins.

David knew little of the glory and wonder of the Cross, where God spared not His own Son, but in Him stooped to reconcile man to Himself. The starry heavens, telling of the glory of God, and even the Law itself, are not able to tell us what the Cross of Jesus does, of Love that matched itself against hate, and of Grace that would not be turned away by human sin.

PRAYER—*I pray Thee, gracious Lord, that I may not miss any of those lessons which Thou art desirous of teaching me by Thy Spirit, Thy Word and Thy Providence. AMEN.*

THE PSALM OF ASCENSION—PSALM 24

Ephesians 2:4-6 “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:”

THIS 24th Psalm is apparently in two parts, and yet there is one theme, the ascent of the holy soul and the triumphant Saviour into the presence of God. For us, the ascension of our Lord precedes our own; but in the days of the Psalmist that order was reversed.

Our Lord's Ascension. In an outburst of poetry, kindled by the Divine Spirit, the Psalmist anticipates the coming of the King of Glory to the doors of the Eternal City—that ideal City which through the ages has beckoned forward the hearts of saints and patriots, and which in Rev. 21 is seen descending to our earth. It was as though the doors of the Unseen barred His entrance. They had opened to God, but never before to “God manifest in the flesh.” It was a new thing that He should take our nature with Him into the unseen and eternal world.

The soul's ascension (Psa 24:3-6). In Christ we have ascended and are seated at God's right hand. No change in your emotions, not even the being overtaken by a fault can alter that. But we have to make our calling sure. What is ours in the divine purpose must be claimed and appropriated as a living daily experience. There are certain qualities of character which are requisite to those who should be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man, not hereafter only, but now and here and always (Luk 21:36).

We must have *clean hands*. The money that we earn must be clean money. If we are writers, artists, mechanics, professional or commercial men or women, we must never produce anything which would defile the imagination or heart. We must have a *pure heart*. In Isa 33:14-17, which is a parallel passage, the Holy Spirit is compared to a devouring fire, in the presence of which no evil thing can live. Let us ask Him so to possess us, and to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by His inspiration. We must *not lift up our soul to vanity*, i.e., we must not allow ourselves to be inflated with the applause or rewards of the world. Many sell their souls for these, and only at the end of life awaken to discover how worthless they are. We must *not swear deceitfully*, i.e., we must be absolutely transparent and sincere, for only the true can stand in the presence of the King of Truth.

PRAYER—*May we live as those who have been raised with Christ, and who are seated with Him. AMEN.*

THE SLEEPLESS WATCHER

Psalm 121:3-5 "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand."

THIS psalm has been called the Traveller's Psalm. When the pilgrims started forth from their distant homes to go up to the Temple, not one of them could forecast his experiences before he reached home again. There were perils of rivers, perils of robbers, perils in the wilderness, perils in travel from wild beasts. It was well, therefore, that they should commit themselves and their dear ones to the care of One who neither slumbered nor slept. It is not enough for the body to be kept; we need the soul to be kept from all evil, as we go out into the world with its microbes of temptation, or come back to the luxury and comfort of our dwelling. There is temptation everywhere; not for one moment are we absolutely immune.

There is a difference between slumbering and sleeping. The mother or nurse watching the child may sometimes get a few moments of slumber; it is not very restful, yet there is a brief pause of unconsciousness. But this never comes to God. Not for one moment does He slumber, or ceases His watchful care of us. God keeps us by besetting us behind and before, and lays His hand upon us (Psa 139:5). As a sentry goes to and fro before the palace given to his charge, so God's peace, like a sentinel, keeps watch and ward around the soul. We speak of the castle-keeper, the inner circle of defence; so God's presence is our keep. We think also of the safe, around which the fire may play, but cannot touch its contents; so the child of God may walk in the midst of peril and temptation, but God is round about him; he is inside the secret place of the Most High, and no weapons formed against him can reach that inner sanctuary. Let us hand over the keeping of our souls to Him as to a faithful Creator (1 Pe 4:19).

The dosing words of this Psalm remind us of John 14:1-6. There will be one last going out and coming in, when the house of our life shall be left vacant, and we shall go forth to the Father, to the House of many mansions, to the great company which awaits us on the other side. Then in the transition between this world and the next, and amid all the mysteries that shall crowd upon us, we need fear no evil, for whatever Eternity may bring to us, we shall always be sheltered and kept by Almighty care.

PRAYER—*Almighty God! Thou knowest that I have no power of myself to keep myself. Keep me outwardly in my body and inwardly in my soul, that I may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul. AMEN.*

THE SECRET OF THE QUIET HEART

Psalm 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

Ruth 3:18 "Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day."

PARADISE has vanished from our world, as the picture of a landscape vanishes when swept by storm. And our race stands in much the same plight as did Naomi and Ruth in this old-world story. We have lost our inheritance, and the one barrier which stands between us and despair is the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, thank God, we need have no doubt as to the sequel. For as Boaz claimed back the estate for Ruth, so may we be confident that Jesus Christ will never be at rest till this sin-stained and distracted world is restored to her primitive order and beauty, as when the morning-stars sang for joy.

Jesus is our near Kinsman by His assumption of our nature. He is the nearest and dearest Friend of our race, who stooped to die for our redemption. And the fact that He carried our nature in Himself to heaven, and wears it there, is an indissoluble bond between us. Sit still! Do not fret! He will never fail, as He will certainly never forsake!

Let us seek the quiet heart in our prayers. Prayer must arise within us as a fountain from unknown depths. But we must leave it to God to answer in His own wisest way. We are so impatient, and think that God does not answer. A child asked God for fine weather on her birthday, and it rained! Some one said, "God didn't answer your prayer." "Oh yes," she replied, "He did, God always answers, but He said No!" God always answers! He never fails! Be still! If we abide in Him, and He abides in us, we ask what we will and it is done. As a sound may dislodge an avalanche, so the prayer of faith sets in motion the power of God.

In times of difficulty—be still! Thine enemies are plotting thine overthrow! They laugh at thy strong confidence! But hast thou not heard His voice saying: "This is the way, walk ye in it"? Then leave Him to deal with thy foes from whatever quarter they come. He is thy Rock, and rocks do not shake. He is thy High Tower, and a high tower cannot be flooded. Thou needest mercy, and to Him belongeth mercy. Do not run hither and thither in panic! Just quietly wait, hushing thy soul, as He did the fears of His friends on the eve of Gethsemane and Calvary. "Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him." "Be still, for He will not rest, until He hath finished the thing this day."

PRAYER—*If this day I should get lost amid the perplexities of life and the rush of many duties, do Thou search me out, gracious Lord, and bring me back into the quiet of Thy presence. AMEN.*

DAYS OF GLADNESS

Nehemiah 8:12,17,18 "And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them. ...And there was very great gladness. ... Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner."

GLADNESS is health. If you can get a patient to look on the bright side of things, you have done a great deal to bring back the tides of life. Whenever we are optimistic and glad we are looking at things from the divine side, and imbibing some of God's eternal gladness. And cherishing this temperament, we shall know what Nehemiah and Ezra meant when they said: "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh 8:10).

If you have some secret sorrow, tell it to God, but do not impose it needlessly upon men. Anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not to men to fast, and He who sees the secret tears will comfort you openly (Mat 6:17-18). The pain and sorrow of the world is undeniable, even worse than many of us realise, but this is largely due to the intrusion of sin and selfishness which can only be expelled by Love. But even this gives opportunity for that unselfish ministry and devotion which are the keys of the blessed life. In so far as we dedicate our lives to help Christ in His redeeming work of delivering souls out of the power of darkness and translating them into the Kingdom of Life and Light, we share in His perennial blessedness.

It must have been a time of unusual joy when the returned exiles reviewed the finished wall which now engirded the city. There was the *consciousness of a finished work*. It is always delightful when we have done to the very best of our ability a piece of work that needed doing. One of the elements of a thoroughly enjoyable holiday is to be able to look back on a bit of good construction, a piece of brick or stone work which will endure in the edifice of our own lives or of other people's.

In addition, there was the *Book of the Law of God*, in which they read from day to day. Let us take the Bible with us on our holidays! We shall find that it will yield new meaning as we study it by lake or mountain; as we ponder it in country lanes, or by the seashore. One like the Son of Man will walk beside us, and apply its teaching till our hearts burn within us, and we are no more sad.

PRAYER—*We thank Thee for eyes that see, and hearts that love, and natures that can enjoy Thy good and perfect gifts. O Father, in Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. AMEN.*

GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

Isaiah 64:8 "But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."

THE potter's craft is almost the oldest in the world, and its method has hardly differed through the ages. Jeremiah as well as Isaiah refers to it (Jer 18:1-4). While the prophet was standing watching the potter, he saw him take a piece of moistened clay from the lump that lay beside him, and placing it on the wheel, he began to shape it after a design which was in his thought. As it approached completion, the clay collapsed under his hands, some part falling on the ground, and some on the wheel itself. To Jeremiah's surprise, the potter did not sweep the recalcitrant fragments away, but gathered them up, and *made them again* into another vessel. This is what God does still.

The Master-workman is our Father. "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father." Some who read these words have themselves been parents. They have tasted the ecstasy of parentage, as the child has been laid for the first time in their arms. At that moment a new passion has arisen in the heart, and new resolves have compelled the soul. To shield, defend, educate, help, love and teach to love—all this is included in that first embrace. The compulsion of the child's helplessness is a supreme motive to father or mother. Prayers are offered that find an echo in the heart of God, from whom they sprang.

Has God put these sentiments in human hearts, and has He not their original and pattern in Himself? For a moment do not think of yourself as a child, but of God as your Father. Your spirit has come forth from the Father of Spirits. You were called into existence by His word. You carry in your nature some thought or conception to which He desired to give expression. Is He not conscious therefore, of responsibility to perfect that which concerns you? Of course you may thwart Him, as the clay was marred in the hand of the potter. You may take your journey into a far country and waste the precious formative years in selfish indulgence. But if you will let the Great Father work out His full purpose in your training, your unfolding, and your prayer-life specially, you will find with Isaiah, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard such an One as our God, who worketh for him that waiteth for Him.

PRAYER—*O God, our Father, may we never doubt Thy enduring mercy. May we not be frightened by the noise of the wheels in Thy great workshop. Enable us to believe that Thou art weaving the fair fabric of our life on the loom of daily circumstance. We beseech Thee to perfect that which concerneth us. AMEN.*

GOD'S PREPARATIONS

Isaiah 64:4 "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."

THIS chapter is a casket of precious jewels. Let us look at some of them! What wonder that St. Paul loved that fourth verse, which he quotes in 1 Co 2:9! Here we read that God works for those who wait for Him; to the Apostle these words conveyed the thought that those who wait for Him must be those who *love* Him, and that God has thought out His prepared plan, so that they have only to believe in Him and go forward, to find that the path has been levelled for them to walk in. Those that love God are not afraid of the mountains that block their way; they know that God will make them flow down, and will reveal a pathway for their steps. The men of this world, from of old, have never heard with the ear, nor perceived with the eye, what our God will do for His own!

Often, as we tread the pathway of service, rejoicing that He loves us, and working such righteousness as we can, we meet God coming toward us, as the father meets his children, who have gone out to welcome him on his return from work. Or, in the hour which we dread, the hour of that operation, of that dreaded meeting, the hour of bereavement, as we walk along the path—we shall see a light approaching us, growing ever brighter. It is the herald-ray of God's approach. "Thou *meetest* them that remember Thee in Thy ways!"

It is in the midst of such loving-kindness that we become most conscious of sin. All our righteousnesses, which passed muster in the sunlight, in His searching sight seem as filthy rags, and we realise how evanescent are our resolutions. "We all do fade as a leaf."

Perhaps we are most ashamed at our failure in the life of prayer. We do not stir up ourselves to take hold of God.

Here we must use special caution in speaking to others of those hidden passages of the soul, in which God our Father is pleased to meet with us and refresh us, lest we lead to take the higher path those who have not trod the lower. Each soul knows its own secret from the Lord, and we must live only as we have received. St. Bernard's motto was: "My secret to myself."

*There is a secret place of rest,
God's saints alone may know;
Thou shalt not find it east nor west,
Though seeking to and fro;
A cell where Jesus is the door,
His love the only key;
Who enter will go out no more,
But there with Jesus be.*

NIGHT AND MORNING!

Psalm 30:5 "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

THE Night of Doubt—the Morning of Faith. It is indeed a memorable moment in the history of the human spirit, when we suddenly wake up to see that the Almighty is the All-Loving Father, that the righteousness of God is no longer a ground of anxiety and fear, but of assured hope; that He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. What a glad hour it was to Thomas when, after a week of the blackness of darkness, he stood again face to face with Jesus, and learnt that His heart was beating in sympathy, and that His pierced hands were held out to him. Dare to believe that the Love which died for thee is dealing with all the mysteries, misfits, and dark problems of thy life. Weeping may tarry for the night in which you shut yourself in with yourself, but she is only a lodger! Joy will come in the morning, when you open your heart to Christ.

The Night of Perplexity—the Morning of Vision. We cannot explain all the dealings of God with man, still less the mysteries of the Divine Nature. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, though judgment and righteousness are the habitation of His Throne. But from time to time we obtain some broken vision of His Purpose and Achievement and Objective. Then the voice of Joy rings through our heart; then our mouths are filled with laughter and our tongues with singing! Men call *us* dreamers, but we count *them* blind. Sooner or later Christ will come! The power of Satan will be broken and his reign ended. The things that prophets and kings foretold, and died without seeing, shall be realised. The children of Light will lift up their heads, because the time of Redemption will have come. Sorrow and sighing will flee away, and in that glad Morning there will be the shout of Joy!

The Night of Bereavement—the Morning of Reunion. Their stay with us was all too short! We had only begun to fathom their sweetness and beauty. We little dreamed that we would only be allowed to sip the cup of bliss that they had brought into our lives. And then they heard a Voice that called, and saw a beckoning Hand, and they arose and went! Ah, that night of Weeping! But the Morning of Joy cometh, when we shall see again their radiant faces welcoming us on the other side. In that fair Morning, Joy will be at the full tide, never to recede.

PRAYER—*Blessed Christ! The storm is high, the night is dark. Come to me, I beseech Thee. In Thy presence is fulness of Joy. AMEN.*

THE FORTRESS OF THE HEART

Proverbs 4:23 "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

IN most of the old castles there is an inner keep, which is protected, not only by mighty walls and bastions, but by the portcullis at the gate, and sentries at every approach, who challenged every one that passed in and out. So the heart is continually approached by good and evil, by the frivolities and vanities of the world and the insidious suggestions of the flesh. It is like an inn or hostelry, with constant arrivals and departures. Passengers throng in and out, some of them with evil intent, hoping to find conspirators, or to light fires that will spread until the whole being is swept with passion, consuming in an hour the fabric of years to ashes.

We need, therefore, to be constantly on the watch; we must keep our heart above all else that we guard, for out of it are the issues of life. Our Lord says that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:" The devil and the world without would be less to be feared, if there were not such strong tendencies to evil within—many of them inherited from long lines of ancestors, who, alas! pass down to us the worst features of their characters equally with the best.

Keep it Clean. Just as the eye of the body is perpetually washed with tear-water, so let us ask that the precious blood of Christ may cleanse away any speck of impurity. Remember how delicate a thing the heart is, and how susceptible to the dust of an evil thought, which would instantly prevent it becoming the organ of spiritual vision. *Sursum Corda!* Lift up your hearts! We lift them up unto the Lord!

The Sentinel of Peace. Then the Peace of God will become the warden or sentry of the heart, and *it passeth understanding!* We can understand the apparent peace of some men. They have made money, and their gold-bags are piled around them as a fortress; they have rich and influential friends, within whose protection they imagine they will be sheltered and defended; they enjoy good health, and are held in high esteem. We can understand such peace, though it often proves ephemeral! But there is a peace that passeth understanding! It is to this that our Lord refers when He says, "*My Peace* I give unto you; not as the world giveth." "Let not your *heart* be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

PRAYER—*Keep me, Heavenly Father, as the apple of Thine eye; defend me by Thine Almighty power; hide me from this strife of tongues and the fiery darts of the wicked one. May my heart be as the palace which the Stronger than the strong man keeps in perfect peace. AMEN.*

THE PERSISTENCE OF LIFE

Luke 20:37-38 "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."

WHAT is Death? It is not a condition but a transition; not an abiding-place, but a passage; not a house, but a doorway. The Scripture refers to it as a *birth*—"the first-born from the dead"; as an *exodus*—"after my exodus," says Peter; as a *striking of the tent*—"I must shortly put off this tabernacle;" as the *weighing of an anchor*—"the time for me to loose-off from the shore is come." Each of these metaphors accentuates the fact that Death is but a momentary act. We are absent from the body one moment, present with the Lord the next.

Persistent Personality. In that other field we shall surely recognise each other, and shall be as close akin, yea, closer than we were in long-past happy days, when heart to heart had sweet converse, or co-operated in useful ministry. Abraham will still be Abraham; Isaac, Isaac; and Jacob, Jacob. Not bodiless ghosts, but living personalities etherealised and transfigured. Moses and Elijah were recognised as such by the startled disciples on the Transfiguration mount; and Mary knew the Master in the Garden. What gain would it have been that Jesus promised the dying thief that he should be with Him in Paradise, if, when he reached there, he could not recognise the Lord?

Persistent Love. Love will never fail! But how can it exist without an object; and how can it forget! Why did Jesus promise the "many mansions," unless He meant that there should be homes! He knows that the heart clings, even in the light of Resurrection, to the dear objects of human affection, else He would never have mentioned Peter's name, nor have sent a message to His disciples, nor come a second time for Thomas! And will He ignore those natural cravings for *us*, whom He has loved better than Himself? How deep and sweet His assurance: "If it were not so, I would have told you!" Charles Kingsley asked that on the grave stone, which stood above his wife and himself, should be inscribed the words: "Amavimus, Amamus, Amabimus"—*We loved, we love, we shall continue to love.* And who shall challenge the truth or appositeness of these words?

Persistent Activity. "His servants shall serve Him!" The tasks we bungled here with our apprentice-hands will become possible; and unravelling our tangled skeins, we shall weave such fabrics as our wildest dreams never imagined.

PRAYER—*I pray Thee, O Lord, to deliver me from the fear of death; and when mine eyes open in the dawn of heaven, may I see Thee standing to welcome me, and may I receive Thy Well-done! AMEN.*

GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE

Isaiah 46:4 "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

WHAT a marvellous promise is this! In days of foreboding, when we fear what may lie behind the veil of the impenetrable future! Disease? Poverty? Suffering? Bereavement? We cannot tell, but we may turn in confidence to our God. He knows just how much we can bear, for He has made us: "I have made, and I will bear, and will deliver you."

Even to old age! The hoar-frost may silver the head, the sound of the grinding may be low, the silver cord may be frayed even to the breaking, lovers and friends may have passed on to the other world; like the last apple on the bough, we may be left alone; but in the second childhood as in the first—"Even to your old age—I will carry you"; "For Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear" (Heb 13:5).

PRAYER—*O God, our Father, we are Thine, May we never doubt Thy enduring mercy. We thank Thee! AMEN.*

MARCHING ORDERS

Joshua 1:9 "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

IT was a host of young men and women that stood on the verge of Jordan, waiting the signal to enter the Promised Land. God had said that He would give them every place upon which the sole of their foot should tread (Jos1:3). What an incentive this was for pressing on! Every time an Israelite put his foot forward on the territory of Canaan, he realized that piece of land would come into the possession of his people.

There is a counterpart of this in our own experience. We must learn to put down our foot upon the Promises of God's Word, and say: "*These are mine by right, and shall be mine in actual enjoyment.*" In General Gordon's journal, he tells us that often before he reached some strange or hostile tribe, it seemed as though they had been given to his faith and subdued before he reached them. In combating your spiritual foes, dare to believe that God has given them into your hand, and go forward assured that not one of them shall stand before you. This is a blessed promise: "*There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*" (Jos1:5). It does not matter how fierce the tempter, how often you have failed, how inveterate the bad habits, if you will dare to believe that God is with you, not one of all the band of besetting sins shall be able to stand before you. God cannot fail, and will not forsake; be strong, and go forward!

The one thing that God asks of all of us is that we should obey up to the hilt.

Here are our marching orders, and we must keep them well before us:

(1) We must meditate upon the Scripture day and night; it must not depart from our heart or mouth.

(2) We must be strong even when obedience seems impossible, and when all influences are brought to bear to weaken our resolution, we must still dare to obey the voice of God. And as we advance we shall find that the dreaded forms of opposition are but shadows; when they are touched with the spear-point of faith, they will divide and we shall pursue our way.

PRAYER—*Before we enter upon our work and warfare, wilt Thou graciously equip us with the armour of light, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. May we hear Thee saying: Fear not, I am with thee, I will help thee. AMEN.*

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

THE heart of true religion is to believe that Christ is literally within us. We must not simply look to Him as our Mediator, Advocate, and Example, but as being possessed by Him. He is our Life, the living Fountain rising up in the well of our personality. The Apostle Paul was never weary of re-affirming this great fact of his experience, and it would be well if each of us could say every day, before starting forth on our daily duty: "Christ is in me; let me make room for Him to dwell."

We must say "No" to self, that the life of Christ may become manifest in and through us, and our standing become a reality in daily experience and conduct. When evil suggestions come to us, we must remember that we have entered a world where such things have no place. We are no longer in the realm of the god of this world, but have passed into the realm of the risen Christ. Let those who are tempted believe this, and assert it in the face of the tempter, counting upon the Holy Spirit to make their reckoning a living experience.

In Eph 6:13-17 is described the armour of the Christian soul; in Col 3:12-14 the habit or dress which he wears beneath his coat of mail. We must be careful to be properly dressed each day. If we lose our temper over trifles, or yield to uncharitable speech, it shows that we have omitted to put on the girdle of love; if we yield to pride, avarice, envy and jealousy, we must not simply endeavour to put off these evils, but take from the wardrobe the opposite graces. It is not enough to avoid doing wrong. Our Master demands that we should always do and be what is right. When we fail in some sudden demand, it is because we have omitted to put on some trait of Christ, which was intended to be the complement of our need. Let us therefore day by day say: "Lord Jesus, wrap Thyself around me, that I may go forth, adequately attired to meet life's demands." *In Christ* for standing; *Christ in us*, for life; *we with him*, for safety.

PRAYER—*Set my heart on fire with the love of Thee, and then to do Thy will, and to obey Thy commandments, will not be grievous to me. For to him that loveth, nothing is difficult, nothing is impossible; because love is stronger than death. AMEN.*

ORDERED STEPS

Psalm 37:23-24 "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand."

It is a mistake to think of our Lord's sufferings as a fact of history come and gone, an incident of the great past. It is this, but much more. He does not leave us to bear all the burden of life, unaided and alone. *He shares everything with us now*—our pain, our griefs, our weariness. "In all our affliction He is afflicted, and the Angel of *His Presence* saves us." As another has put it: "Not standing over against me, holding back a hand that might help, but side by side; nay, even, 'closer than breathing.' Within the inmost hiding-place of my sufferings, He suffers also, bears my griefs and carries my sorrows, as though they were His own. If only we will avail ourselves of His sympathy and help, they who watch us shall see One like unto the Son of Man walking in the fiery furnace, by our side."

God is ordering all things in our life to secure the best results here and hereafter. In the darkest sky there are a few inches of blue. Happy is the soul which watches these, and dwells on them, and believes that they will widen until the darkness is passed, and all the sky is clear! We often forget that what seems to be a disaster is really the seed of a joyous harvesting. If we had visited this earth of ours in one of the great eras of the past, we should have found it covered by a dense mass of vegetation. But that era was not destined to last. Volcanic action of the fiercest character overwhelmed those mighty trees, and hurled them into the dark caverns and cellars of the yawning gulfs which seamed the planet. You and I, had we been there, might have cried: "Wherefore this waste?" To our poor and limited vision, it would have seemed a contradiction to the ordered progress of the Creator's plan. Why hurl into the bowels of the earth all this fair growth! But out of that cataclysm, the profuse vegetation, pressed together in the heart of the earth, became coal to give us light and heat.

Once, when staying in the country with a friend, he took me into his garden and showed me the weather-vane over his coach-house, and asked if I could distinguish the sentence woven into its texture. I discovered it to be: "God is Love!...Yes," he said, "for I have found that whatever comes to me is from the quarter of the Love of God!"

PRAYER—*Help me to believe, O Lord, that all things are of Thee; and that Thou hast a plan for my life, of which each passing incident is a part. AMEN.*

CO-OPERATING WITH GOD

1 Corinthians 3:9 "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

IN this chapter the Apostle describes the Church as a garden or vineyard, in which the Divine Spirit is ever at work, superintending, directing, inspiring, and calling all His servants to co-operate with Him, whether they be Paul, Apollos, or Cephas; or as a vast temple, rising through the ages, requiring labourers to lay the foundations, others to build the walls, and others to put the final touches in the light of an accomplished purpose. In each case, the design, the successive stages of advancing progress, the engagement of the workers, the direction of their labours and their reward is entirely with the Husband-man and the Master-Builder. It is not *our* work, but *His*; we are not responsible for the results, but only to do His Will; He repays us by generous rewards, but there our responsibility ends. When the Garden stands in the mature beauty, and yields the prolific fruitage of autumn; when the Building is completed and stands in symmetrical glory amidst the wrecks of time, then those who have co-operated will stand aside, and "God will be All in all."

All through *human industry* there is this co-operation between God and man. *He* stores the cellars of the earth with gold or coal, and it is for man to excavate it; *He* fills the hedgerows and woodlands with wild fruits and flowers, it is for man to cultivate them; *He* fills the earth with iron, copper, and other priceless treasures, it is for man to work them into all manner of useful implements. In every harvest-field, garden, orchard, industry, and employment of natural law for the purpose of civilization, there is this combined effort of God and man. God's energy works according to laws, which man must study as the key to the unlocking of the forces which he uses to flash his messages, guide the aeroplane or motor, or speed him across the ocean.

In the Church the same law prevails. God has given the Word, but the company of preachers has been needed to proclaim it. The Words of inspiration burn with the fire of God, but man is called in to translate them into every language under heaven. The saving power of Christ waits to heal and bless, but He needs the co-operation of the human hand and life as the medium through which His virtue passes. Those whom God calls into fellowship in serving others may count on Him for the supply of all their needs (1Co 3:21-23).

PRAYER—*Heavenly Father, show me how I may work with Thee, and in what direction are Thy energies going forth that I may walk and work in fellowship with Thyself. AMEN.*

GLORYING IN INFIRMITIES!

2 Corinthians 12:9 “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

THE Apostle seems to have enjoyed wonderful revelations of God. Not once or twice, but often he beheld things that eye hath not seen, and heard words that ear cannot receive, and God felt it was necessary for him to have a make-weight lest he should be exalted beyond measure (2 Cor 12:7).

What the thorn or stake in the flesh was it is impossible to say with certainty. He may have suffered from some distressing form of ophthalmia. We infer this from the eagerness of the Galatian converts to give him their eyes (Gal 4:13-17), and from his dependence on an amanuensis. His pain made him very conscious of weakness, and very sensitive of infirmity, and kept him near to the majority of those to whom he ministered, who did not live on the mountain heights, but in the valleys, where demons possess and worry the afflicted. Be willing that your visions of Paradise should be transient, and turn your back on the mountain summit, where the glory shines, as our Lord did, in order to minister to souls in anguish (2 Cor 12:4; Mat 17:14-18).

On three separate occasions the Apostle besought the Lord for deliverance from his infirmity, and finally received the assurance that though the thorn could not be removed, yet sufficient grace would be given to enable him to do his life-work, and he was more than content. On the one hand, there was the buffeting of this messenger of Satan; but on the other, there were the gains of meekness, humility, and of greater grace than would have been possible if he had not needed it so sorely—and he gladly accepted an infirmity for which there were such abundant compensations.

Do not sit down baffled by your difficulties and infirmities, but run from them to claim Christ's abundant grace and strength, that at the end of life you may have done all that was set you to do, and more, because the greatness of your need made you lean more heavily on His infinite resources. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.”

PRAYER—*Help us, O Lord, to look on the bright side of things; not on the dark cloud, but on Thy rainbow of covenant mercy; not on the stormy waters, but on the face of Jesus; not on what Thou hast taken, or withheld, but on what Thou hast left. Enable us to realise Thine all-sufficiency. AMEN.*

HOW TO MEET DISCOURAGEMENTS

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

NOTICE the marvellous antithesis of this chapter: light and darkness; life and death; pressure, perplexity, pursuit, and persecution; but side by side, victory, elastic hope, and the brightness of Christian faith. The decay of the outward man and the renewal of the inward; the light affliction and the weight of glory; the brief moment of earth's pilgrimage contrasted with the eternity of reality and bliss.

It is very important that we should not miss the mighty blessing which is within the reach of every troubled soul. Of course it is quite possible to sit down before troubles and afflictions, hopeless and despairing, confessing that we are over-powered and defeated; it is also possible to be hard and stoical, bearing adversity because we cannot help or avoid it, but the highest Christian way is to be thankful that the earthen vessel is breaking if only the torch will shine out; to be content that the dying of Jesus should be borne about in our mortal body, if only His life will thereby become manifest.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of grief shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee in trouble to bless;
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

PRAYER—*Fix my heart, O Lord, on Thyself, that amid the changes and chances of this mortal life I may be kept steadfast and unmoveable and ever abounding in Thy work. AMEN.*

THE HOME OF GOD IN THE HEART OF MAN

Isaiah 57:15 “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

THIS verse has reference to God’s two Homes—the *macrocosm* of the great universe and the *microcosm* of the human heart. Our God is so great that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but He is so lowly and humble that He will stoop to fill the heart of a child. He bids us learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart.

The humble and contrite heart. It seems almost too wonderful to believe that the Eternal One will care to come and live with the child of time; that the Infinite and Holy God will descend to the narrow limits of a human heart! (see John 14:23).

PRAYER—*Spirit of purity and grace,*

Our weakness, pitying, see;

O make our hearts Thy dwelling-place,

And worthier for Thee. AMEN.

A CURE FOR ANXIETY

Psalm 37:5 “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”

THIS psalm from which our text is taken breathes the spirit of optimism. The Psalmist says: “Do not fret. Evil is transient, evil-doers shall be cut off, in a little while the wicked shall not be.” You will not remove the evils of the world by all your anxiety, or by wrath. It is not worthwhile to lose your peace of mind. Be quiet in your heart, full of prayer, looking up to God that He would interpose to deliver.

In this Psalm there are excellent preservatives of the inward tranquillity of the soul when faced with anxiety, or with high-handed wrong.

Trust in the Lord (Psa 37:3). Reckon on Him. Expect great things from your Almighty Guide and Friend. He cannot fail you.

Delight in the Lord (Psa 37:4). If your life twines about earthly things, of course you will be at the mercy of externals. Familiarise yourself with God’s way of thinking and looking at things. If this is the bent of your life, you will lose your taste for things of the earth, while you will have great desires for the things of eternity, and God will give you perfect satisfaction in these, because He will give you Himself! The petitions of the heart are very sacred to God, and He never, never forgets them. “He *shall* give thee the petitions of thine heart.”

Commit thy way unto the Lord (Psa 37:5). The margin suggests “Roll thy way upon the Lord.” It is not enough to roll the responsibility of selecting our way on God in the great crises of our life. We must do so in the small decisions of every hour. Our lives are made up of trifles. To neglect these is to leave it to drift at haphazard. We need perpetually to look up to our Heavenly Friend, saying, “I cannot see over the hedge, I must leave with Thee the decision whether I should go this way or that.”

Rest in the Lord (Psa 37:7). There is so much clamour in the world, and often our heart becomes filled with its noise, so much so that we cannot hear His still small voice. But when every sound has died down into silence, we shall hear the voice of God telling us of things which will answer our questions and still our doubts. Let your requests be made known unto God, and His peace shall sentinel your heart against all intruders.

PRAYER—*My God and Father, enable me to roll my way upon Thee, to trust Thee, and to believe that when I stand with Thee in the perfect daylight I shall understand what now I take on trust. AMEN.*

CHEERING PROMISES

2 Peter 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

PRECIOUS faith and precious promise are necessarily linked together (2 Pet 1:1-4). The promises excite the faith, and faith reckons upon the fulfilment of promise. One is sometimes asked why it is that God's Word seems to fail, and that the righteous do appear to be forsaken! But surely the reason is, not that there is any failure on God's side to fulfil His promises, but that the promise is not claimed. It is possible to carry around a pocket-full of bank notes and cheques, and to die of starvation because they have not been cashed. When you have found a promise that just fits your need, do not rest content until you have laid it before God, and *claimed* its fulfilment.

Note that everything which is needed for life and godliness is already granted to us in Jesus our Lord (2 Pet 1:3). We have not to pray to our Father for things which He has not anticipated, but to claim those which He has already given. The one purpose of God's preparation is that we should not only escape the corruption which is in the world, but become "partakers of His Divine Nature." What a marvellous promise is this, which almost passes human thought and comprehension, that we should become animated and filled by the very nature of God!

Note the recurrence of the phrase "these things" in the following verses. When they abound in us we cannot be idle or unfruitful. The octave of qualities enumerated reminds us of those Chinese boxes, each of which contains a smaller one, until we finally arrive at some precious article enclosed in the innermost. Faith apprehends everything else—manly courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, kindness, and above all, love. To be deficient in "these things" is to be *short-sighted*.

The Apostle says that the soul which has incorporated into itself these qualities of character will be welcomed into the Eternal Kingdom. It will enter the Harbour royally, with every sail set and pennant flying, and receive a choral entrance from the eager crowds that await its approach (2Pe 1:11). Let us be diligent in our appropriation of God's great and precious promises, so that we shall never fail.

PRAYER—*Grant us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, always to seek Thy kingdom and righteousness; and of whatsoever Thou seest us to stand in need, mercifully grant us an abundant portion; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE

Luke 12:29-31 "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

AT the time when our Lord spoke these words, the fields of Palestine were carpeted with wild flowers, and the air was redolent with their fragrance, bespangling the pastures, clustering in the hedge-rows, and hiding in the woodland glades. There was as careless a life as that of the birds which were flying overhead. "They toil not, neither do they spin." For some plants, like the exotics of the greenhouse and nurseries, there must be extreme care and expense in their cultivation, in the provision of heat and the experienced skill of the horticulturist. But our Lord was not alluding to these, but to the flowers of the grass, which grow amid the wilds of nature, or in the gardens of the poor, and to Him these were very beautiful.

This prodigious growth teaches us that God loves beautiful things, and expends thought and skill in their production. He might have made the world without a daisy, and human life without the beauty of childhood. But since He clothed with beauty the short-lived flowers of the wilds; the ephemeral insects of a summer day; the shells of the minute creatures that build up the solid fabric of the rocks—surely this prodigality, this lavishness, this prolific superabundance of creativeness, must mean that He can and will withhold no good thing from them that trust Him.

Of course we must fulfil our part! We are not to be careless and improvident; we must certainly sow and reap, and toil and spin; but when we have done all, we must rely upon our Heavenly Father whose good pleasure it is to *give*, believing that it is vain for us to rise up early, and sit up late, and to eat the bread of sorrows, for our God will give us all that we need, even whilst we sleep. He will not allow His trusting children to starve, or to go unsheltered, unclothed, and unshod. "Fear not, little flock," says the comforting voice of the Good Shepherd, "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

PRAYER—*Gracious Lord, grant to me, Thy poor needy creature, sometimes at least to feel, if it be but a small portion of Thy hearty affectionate love; that my faith may become more strong, my hope in Thy goodness may be increased, and that love, once kindled within me, may never fail. AMEN.*

LIFE AND DEATH

Philippians 1:21 "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

HOW close life and death are! In this verse there is only a comma between them, and every one of us stands where that comma stands, between life and death. Life is the vestibule of death, and death is close on the heels of life. The systole and diastole; the throb and beat of the pulse; the swing of the pendulum this way or that!

St. Paul is enamoured with the *joys of life*. He was a toiler and a traveller, and lived amid the busy throng that jostled him in the streets. The philosopher, as he passed, carrying his scrolls of learning, said: "To me to live is *knowledge*"; the soldier, passing, looked with contempt on the man of letters, and said: "To me to live is *fame*"; the merchant in passing, said, with pride: "To me to live is *riches*"; the toiling masses passed by, saying: "To us to live is *toil and trouble*." Amid all these, the Apostle strikes in with no bated breath, saying joyously: "To me to live is neither wealth, nor labour, nor fame, nor glory, but *Christ*." If you had asked him just what he meant, he would probably have replied, as Tyndale brings out in his translation, that "*Christ was the origin of his life*."

If we would become partakers of the divine nature, we also must have such a definite experience. We can trace our natural life back to our parents, and our spiritual life must begin in the hour when, in early childhood, or later, we are made partakers of the nature of the risen Saviour (John 1:12-13; 2 Pet 1:4).

Christ must be the model of our life. Every man works to a model. Consciously or not, we are always imitating somebody, and every true follower of Christ seeks to approximate to the measuring of the stature of our Lord—"Beholding, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

Christ must be the aim of life. That His will may be done on earth as in heaven; that others may know and love and serve Him as we do; that He may be the crowned King of men—that must be our purpose and aim. External things have no power over the one who can say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"; then we can triumph over Death itself, and say: "To die is gain."

PRAYER—*The mountain peaks of the Christ-life that we would live call to us, but they often seem too steep and high for us to reach, but Thou knowest and hast an infinite compassion for Thy children. Fulfil in us the good pleasure of Thy will, and realise in us the ideals Thou hast taught us to cherish. AMEN.*

DECISION FOR CHRIST

Luke 14:27 "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

NOTICE the threefold repetition of these solemn words: *he cannot be My disciple* (Luk 14:26, Luk 14:27, Luk 14:33). There is a sense in which the way of salvation is easy. One look of faith in Christ, and we receive eternal life and are assured by Him that we can never perish; but that faith must carry in its heart the germ of discipleship, the tenacity, determination, indomitable resolve to learn everything that the Master has to teach. We are not only saved from sin, but we are saved to learn, redeemed to be taught. The education is free, but there are certain things which we must be prepared to forego if we would be entered in His School. The disciple must bring the unbiased and disengaged mind to the grace of God, which comes disciplining us, teaching us to deny ungodly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world.

What are the things which we must cultivate for discipleship?

A supreme love (Luk 14:26). Our Lord does not ask us really to hate those related to us by natural ties, but to give to Himself so much love that compared with all else, it should be as sunlight to starlight; that for love of Him we should be willing to act as one who hates all other loves when they conflict with obedience. We are first converted from the natural to the spiritual, and then from the spiritual to the natural again.

The denial of self (Luk 14:27). We are not simply to cut off this or the other indulgence, but to put the Cross of Christ between ourselves and the gratification of our own will. We must be willing to follow the Lamb, though the old Abraham cries out in grievous pain.

Renunciation (Luk 14:33). We must be prepared to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. As a matter of fact, Jesus gives us back all that is right and beautiful to use for Him, but there must be a definite loosing hold on things, and the placing of all in His pierced hands. Abjuring our ownership, we must be willing to act as His almoners and trustees. It is this that gives savour to life, making it sparkle and resist decay.

PRAYER—*Accept us as we now yield to Thee our entire being with all that we possess. It is our one desire to be utterly, only, and always for Thee. AMEN.*

PROFIT AND LOSS

Mark 10:28-30 "Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

THE principles of this world, and those of our Lord are widely different. The world is set on grasping all it can—accumulation, self aggrandisement, the piling up of fortunes, the gradual or speedy climb up the ladder of fame, the gathering of hosts of friends. Looking after "number one" is the readiest way of expressing this principle of life! But it is unsatisfactory and disappointing. The soul which is the centre of its own circumference is doomed to realize that there are more forfeits than prizes, more bitterness than success, more dark hours than bright ones.

On the other side, Christ's principle of life is to give, to trust, to bless! His measure must be always pressed down and running over. The cloak must follow the coat; the second mile must be gladly thrown in with the first. To be willing to surrender *all* for the sake of others, is the ordinary claim of the King on those who own Him as their Lord.

In every age there have been thousands who have gladly accepted this as their rule of life. Peter and the rest of the Apostles were the leaders of a host which no man can number, who have left all to follow Jesus. He had nowhere to lay His head, and they have been homeless, wandering in the world, with no settled abiding-place; He was poor and they have gone amongst their fellows, saying: "Silver and gold have we none, but such as we have we give." But how great has been their reward. Before we can understand what Christ is willing to do for us, there must be not only a taking-hold, but a letting-go. We must step out from the boat, and withdraw our hand from it. It is even good, like St. Paul, to need all things, since by faith we come to possess all. Read the wonderful series of paradoxes to which he gives utterance in 2 Cor. 4.

The Lord promises eternal life as the crown of all. When we kneel at the Cross, and see Jesus as our own Saviour, we *have* eternal life, but we cannot realise all it implies until this mortality is swallowed up of life.

PRAYER—*Thou hast called us to minister and witness, to go amongst men as our Saviour went, bearing in our hands the balm of Gilead. May we not be disobedient to this heavenly vision. AMEN.*

THE ONE-TALENT MAN

Matthew 25:24 "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:"

THE five-talent men, are the geniuses of the world, successful in everything they touch. The two-talent men, on the one hand, are not exposed to the temptations of genius, but are not quite at the minimum. But why did the man with the one talent make such ill use of his gift? Surely, this is a true touch of life! One-talent people can do so little, that they do nothing. They are crushed and enfeebled by a sense of their own insignificance and inferiority. Many start life with high and pure aims, but presently they find their opportunities so meagre, their influence so limited, their power so scanty, that after a few struggles they give up in despair.

But the world will never be saved and helped unless the one-talented people, who are the great majority, can be aroused to a sense of their responsibility. Five men can put the whole energy of their manhood behind their single talent, whilst the one man with five talents has only the driving power of one. It is probably a greater thing in God's sight to use one talent faithfully than many. No one notices the man with his humble one talent. There is no outburst of praise or cheering. It is a greater test of the quality of the soul to go on doing one small thing well, than to be able to turn with brilliant versatility from one talent to another. The monotony of life presses hard on those who have only one string to their bow, one tune to play, one act to perform in the great factory where labour is carefully subdivided.

But the one thing that our Lord demands of each of us is to be *faithful*—faithful in a very little. He is watching each of us with great eagerness as we live our daily life, because He knows, as we cannot realise, how much our position in the other world depends on our fidelity in this. It is for our sake that He is so anxious that we should make good use of our one talent.

Have you only one talent? Are you doing anything with it? Remember it is the ounce-weight that may turn the scales where hundred-weights are balanced; it is the tiny tug that can move the great liner. Be thou faithful in thy very little, and thou shalt receive the "Well done" of thy Lord.

PRAYER—*O Lord, at the end of every day, may we stand before Thee to hear Thy verdict, and when all the toil and labour of our life is ended, may we hear Thee say: "Well done, good and faithful servant! thou hast been faithful in a few things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" AMEN.*

JESUS, THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT

Hebrews 8:6 "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."

Hebrews 10:23 "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"

THIS is called the Better Covenant. There are no *ifs*; no injunctions of "observe to do"; no conditions of obedience to be fulfilled. From first to last it consists of the *I Wills of the Most High*.

I will put my laws into their minds, refers to the intellectual faculty, which thinks, remembers, and reasons.

I will write them upon their hearts, the seat of the emotional life and affections. What a man loves, he is pretty certain to follow and obey. "A little lower," said the dying veteran, as they probed for the bullet, "and you will find the Emperor." So with the Christian who has been taken into the Covenant with God, the law is inscribed on the deepest affections of his being. He obeys because he loves.

I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. This last clause is even better than the first, because it implies the keeping power of God. If we are to be a people for His peculiar possession, it can only result from the operation of His gracious Spirit, who keeps us, as the sun restrains the planets from becoming wandering stars.

All shall know Me. Oh, wonder of wonders. Can it be? To know God! To know Him as Abraham did, to whom He told His secrets; as Moses did, who conversed with Him face to face; or as the Apostle John did when he beheld Him in the visions of the Apocalypse. And that this privilege should be within the reach of the least!

I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more. As a score is forgotten when blotted from a slate, so shall sin be obliterated from the memory of God. It will be forgotten as a debt paid years ago.

Do you ask how God can call this a covenant, in which there is no second covenanting party? The answer is easy: Jesus Christ has stood in our stead, and has not only negotiated this covenant, but has fulfilled in our name, and on our behalf, all the conditions which were necessary and fight. He has become our Sponsor and Surety, so God is able to enter into these liberal terms with us, if we will identify ourselves with Him by a living faith. This is the new and better covenant.

PRAYER—*Holy Father! I claim from Thee the fulfilment of Thy Covenant Promise, that Thou shouldst write Thy law upon my heart, and remember my sins and iniquities no more. May I hear Thee say: "Thy faith hath saved thee; Go, and sin no more!" AMEN.*

CAST DOWN? WHY?

Psalm 42:6 "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar."

THE lament of the soul, its cause! Many have been brought to this condition—Jacob said "all these things are against me"; Job complained that God had refused to listen to his prayer, and had fenced up his way; Elijah prayed that he might die; John the Baptist had his doubts; even our Lord Himself cried: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

It may arise from physical weakness. Our nature is like a finely-attuned harp, and may easily become tangled and discordant. When we are in good health, and the zest of living is strong within us, the soul sings songs without words, and the heart suns itself in the consciously-realized love of God; but when the lamp of life burns low—the joy of the Lord, the sense of His Love are apt to decline.

It may arise from temperament. Some seem born in the dark, and carry through life a predisposition to melancholy. Their nature is set to a minor key. They gaze on the lowering clouds, rather than on the patches of blue. Thomas had such a temperament, yet our Lord called him to be an apostle! Rightness of heart generally shows itself in gladness of heart; but there are those who mourn in Zion, and are more prone to tears than smiles! The valley of shadow is part of the highway to the Holy City; and the souls that are called to tread it may yet find the valley of Baca to be a place of springs.

Now as to the cure. Make much of your standing in Christ! Our feelings are as fickle as April sunshine. But our standing in Jesus is unalterable. John Bunyan used to say that he had two sorts of money. That which was deposited in the bank, and that which he had in his pocket. The former was, on the whole, permanent, while the other was always changing. Thus he said it was between him and the Saviour. His feelings, like the loose coins in his pocket, were always changing, but his capital was lodged safely in the strong keeping of Christ.

Cease introspection and live in the progress of Christ through the world. He is ever going forth to new conquests, and we must not stand as loiterers, feeling our pulse. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Canst thou not take thy place in His ever victorious army! Miss Feeblemind, and Mr. Ready-to-halt, in the care of Great-heart, will go over the River singing!

PRAYER—*Gracious God, give me to behold the rainbow of Hope on the dark storm-clouds that brood over my life: may I rest confidently on that Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which was sealed by the precious Blood of Christ. AMEN.*

COURAGE IN LIFE'S STORMS

Acts 27:23-25 "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

SAID a boy to his mother, "What is fear like? I have never seen him." Paul might have said as much, because his life was hid with Christ in God. He had learned to detect the voice of Christ. Some cannot do so, for it needs the practised ear and the obedient will. But all through his Christian career the Apostle seems to have derived comfort and strength from special revelations. Through the murky darkness of the storm, Christ's ministering angel sped to his hammock, and standing beside him, bade him be of good cheer. And there is no storm that beats on our life which does not bring God's angels also to our help, though we may not see their forms or hear their voice. The one condition of Angel-help is that we belong to their Master. We must be able to say: "Whose I am, and Whom I serve."

The Prayer of Faith. In Act 27:24 the R.V. rendering is "granted." It signifies that Paul had asked and God had granted his prayer, and given him his request. What a promise this is! It is said of Miss Havergal that she went to stay with a family not one of whom was definitely for Christ. On the first night of her stay she wrote her well-known hymn, "Take my life, and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to Thee." And during her short sojourn under that roof she won for her Lord the entire household. So we may claim that all who sail with us in the ship of our life shall become God's children.

The Courage of Faith is consistent with Commonsense. Even though Paul had God's assurance, he felt that he must do what he could, as though all depended on his sagacity. Faith ought not to make us act presumptuously or foolishly. Holy calm and stillness rule in the heart of him whose mind is stayed on God.

We are likely to encounter many storms in our life before we anchor in the Fair Haven of Eternity, but in the heart of every cyclone there is a point of rest; and in the fiercest storm that sweeps our world, we may hide in the secret place of the Most High, and sing *Psa 46:1-11*.

PRAYER—*By day and by night, in life and in death, may I ever be true to Thee, O Lover of my Soul, my ceaseless Friend, my unchangeable Saviour. Into Thy hands I commit my spirit! AMEN.*

GOD'S SALVATION AND COMFORT

Isaiah 12:2 "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

THIS exquisite Psalm of Hope seems prepared, for the day when Jew and Gentile, gathered into one Church, shall stand on the shores of Eternity with palms of victory. Here is the Song of Moses and the Lamb!

Salvation was peculiarly associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, which was the type of that consummation of God's purpose, which shall take place when His Tabernacle is with men, and He shall dwell with them (Rev 21:3). Do not fear, God is with us, as Strength, and Song, and Salvation. He shares our wilderness march; we are folded under the shadow of His tent; we are permitted to reckon on Him as our Partner and Companion. Notice the emphasis on the word *my*. The weakest saint can claim all needed supplies from God; and He admits the plea, saying: "Child, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine" (Luk 15:31).

Unfailing supplies— "wells of salvation" (Isa 12:3). On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles the priests drew water in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Siloam, and poured it forth in the Temple, while the Choir chanted this verse in memory of the rock-water that followed the desert march. Every attribute of God, every means of grace, every helpful and loving ministry, every promise of Scripture is a Well, and faith is our pitcher (John 7:37).

But we must draw. Faith is the bucket, which we let down into the fulness of the Divine supply. It is not simply the general belief that God hears and answers prayer, but the specific and particular belief that God has answered or will answer your prayer for some special needed grace, and that it is yours. Believe that ye have received. Draw water out of the well!

"Thou comfortest me" (Isa 12:1). There is no such Comforter as God. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." He is expressly described as "the God of all Comfort." Is it not too much to ask that Thou shouldst stoop out of Thy high heaven to comfort me, whose heart is heavy with grief and whose eyes are red with weeping? He wipes the tears from all eyes, and staunches the very fountains of grief. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." I shall yet praise Thee!

PRAYER—*Make us to know, O God, the riches of the glory of Thine inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of Thy power toward them that believe. We would so live that sweet music may come to Thee. AMEN.*

A SHELTER FROM THE TEMPEST

Isaiah 32:2 "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

WE are reminded that this prophecy was uttered in a time of great unrest. The clouds of war were gathering dark on the horizon, and Israel was looking for help from the arm of flesh. In this emergency the voice of the prophet was heard, saying: "Look not to Egypt, but to God" (Isa 31:1). The kingdom depends on the king: "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes rule in judgment." When all politics and commerce, social and domestic life are under the sway and guidance of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God will come, and the Will of God shall be done on earth, as in heaven. The Lord Jesus is many-sided enough to meet all the varied needs of His people. Some need a covert from the tempest, others rivers of water to quench their thirst, others the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. But He is all and equal to all. When a man or woman owns the sway of Christ, eyes and ears are cleansed, there is no longer the hesitation of stammering confession, the judgment becomes rectified and the heart opened to a new generosity. First righteousness, then peace—such is heaven's eternal order.

This is a marvellous chapter! Note the words of warning to the women of Jerusalem. After all, the religious and political life of a nation is very much what the women make it, and there can never be a widespread deepening of religious life unless the women, who have such great capacity for God, turn to Him in repentance and faith.

Are our conditions similar? Surely they are! For if in the days of Solomon it was true that all things were full of labour and stress, how much more true is it in our time! The tides of human life are high and stormy, and there is no sense of security. We may surely plead that we need the quiet resting-places and sure dwellings, in which our souls may shelter! The promise is made to "*My people*"—to those who have heard and obeyed the voice of the Good Shepherd. If you are one of the weakest and lowliest of these, you may draw comfort here (Isa 32:18).

PRAYER—*Bring us, O Lord, through the troubled waters of life into a haven of repose. Hide us secretly in Thy pavilion from the strife of tongues and the fiery darts of the wicked one. May we be at peace with Thee, with ourselves, and with all. AMEN.*

THE ROCK OF AGES

Isaiah 26:4 "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:"

THE love of God, like a cleft rock, is the age-long shelter of His people, land rears itself above the tumultuous waters of time. The lightning the lighting that flashed from me thunder-clouds of Calvary has riven it. A cleft was made in it by the spear that pierced the heart of our Lord, and this was followed, as it was withdrawn from the gaping wound, by blood and water. But there sinful souls may hide! God had said to Moses: "Behold, there is a place by Me, and it shall come to pass that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by, for thou canst not see My face, and live." So he speaks to us all, and promises that the water and the blood shall be the double cure from the wrath and power of sin.

It is free! The sinner need not seek to acquire the shelter of that Rock of Ages by the labour of his hands, or the fulfilling of the demands of the law. It is not required that he should burn with a zeal that knows no respite, or flow with tears that refuse to be staunched. To be helpless and forlorn, to be in peril of condemnation, to be contrite and humble—this is all that is required. To have no Mediator, no Refuge, no Helper beside, and to lift the eyes of faith to the Saviour—that is the sole condition of being lifted by unseen hands into the cleft of that Rock.

It holds all that the soul needs. Is the soul naked? There is dress for it. Is it helpless? There is grace for it. Is it blackened by sin? There is cleansing for it. Is it sick? there is healing for it. Toplady, the Calvinist, and Wesley, the Arminian, agree here: "Thou, O Christ, art all I want; more than all in Thee I find."

It is for ever. It is the Rock of Ages! Time may beat upon it, but it cannot alter it or impair it. Whilst this fleeting breath is drawn, when eyes close in death, when unknown worlds are entered, when the judgment throne is set, always and for ever the soul may shelter in the cleft Rock of the unchanging Redeemer, and Peace, like a double window, intercepts alarm from the heart which is stayed on God and trusting in Him.

PRAYER—*Rock of Ages! cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee. Let the water and the blood, From Thy riven side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure, Save me from its guilt and power. AMEN.*

PRAYER THAT OBTAINS

Luke 11:9 "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

THERE are many conditions of true prayer. For instance, it must be earnest. There are times when we know we are on the line of God's purposes, when we may dare to be *importunate*. Prayer must be offered in the *Name of Christ*, i.e., it must be in harmony with the nature of Christ, which was devoted to the glory of God and to the blessing of men. That Name will eliminate the ingredient of selfishness which will mar any prayer by whomsoever offered. Prayer must also be based on some *promise* of God, which is presented to Him as a cheque or note is presented to a bank.

All these are but steps to the faith that obtains, for it is, after all, not prayer but *faith* that obtains promises. That is why our Lord lays so much stress on receiving. Much of our prayer fails because we forget that He said, "Every one that asketh, *receiveth*"; and again, "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, *believe that ye have received them*, and ye shall have them" (Mar 11:24).

So far as one can describe the process, it seems something after this fashion. The soul reverently kneels before God, glorifying and praising Him for His greatness and goodness. It is conscious of needing some very special gift which is promised. In the Name of Christ it presents the request with the confidence of a child. With earnestness of desire and speech it unfolds the reasons why the gift sought is so necessary. But it does not leave prayer at this point to go away in uncertainty as to what the issue shall be. By an act of the spirit, the suppliant seems to receive definitely the spiritual or even the temporal gift; and realises that it has received, that the special grace has been imparted, to be discovered and used under stress of need; that the temporal gift has also been received, though it may be kept back until the precise moment when it can be delivered, in much the same way as a present may be purchased long before the time of handing it to its destined possessor (1 Sam 1:15, 1 Sam 1:18, 1 Sam 1:27).

This is what Christ meant by "receiving," and it has a mighty effect upon prayer, because it makes it so much more definite. It leads to praise, because we are able to thank God for His gift. You must take as well as pray.

PRAYER—*We rejoice that our Saviour ever lives to intercede as our High Priest and Mediator. Through the rent veil, let our prayers ascend to Thee mingled with the fragrance of His merit in whom Thou art ever well pleased. AMEN.*

ANSWERED PRAYER

John 15:7 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

OUR Lord expected answers to His prayers, and in all His teaching He leads us to feel that we shall be able to obtain, through prayer, what otherwise would not come to our hand. He knew all that was to be known of natural law; but notwithstanding His perfect acquaintance with the mysteries of His Father's government, He said: "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My Name."

When we consider the lives of some who have wrought mightily for God, it is clear that they learned a secret which eludes many of us. This is from the biography of Dr. Burns Thomson: "When much together as students," writes his friend, "we agreed on special petitions, and the Lord encouraged us by giving us answers, so early and so definite, as could only have come from Himself, so that no room was left for the shadow of doubt that God was the Hearer and Answerer of prayer. Once the answer came the same day, and at another time whilst we were yet speaking. My friend often spoke of our agreement, to the glory of Him who fulfilled to us His promise; and I refer to it to encourage others." This is but one leaf out of the great library of prayers, intercessions, and supplications, which stand recorded before God.

Prayer which is to prevail must be: For the glory of the Father. Whatever petition we offer must be tested by this thought: will it be for the glory of God? It is for this that our Saviour lives and pleads (John 14:13).

It must be in Christ's Name, which stands for Nature. In other words, when we pray it must not be as our self-nature but as the Christ-nature indicates. It is not enough to mention His Name at the end of our prayer: His Spirit must pervade every petition.

We must bear fruit (John 15:16). Answers to prayer largely depend on our ministry to others. If we are living for the accomplishment of God's purpose and the coming of His Kingdom, we may ask whatever is necessary for the achievement of our endeavour.

We must abide in Christ; then the sap of the Holy Spirit rising from the hidden root will produce desires and petitions like those which Christ ever presents to His Father (John 15:7).

PRAYER—*All our desire is known unto Thee, therefore perfect what Thou hast begun, and what Thy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer. We seek Thy face, show us Thy glory. AMEN.*

THE POWER OF SMALL THINGS

Matthew 17:20 "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

THE grain of mustard seed is the smallest of seeds, but Jesus says that it is a fitting emblem of the Kingdom of God, and the unostentatious beginnings of the Christian era. The number and social position of the disciples was insignificant in the extreme. And the first germ of truth sown in the heart of man, woman, or child, is sometimes equally insignificant. It may be just a sentence, a text, a passing remark which results in a mighty harvest (Mar 4:30-32).

What is it that enables this tiny seed to make such a prodigious increase? It lies in its receptive power, as it receives into its nature the mighty forces which slumber in the soil, the effect of sunbeams, moisture, and air. So long as a little aperture is kept open, there is no limit to the fertility and usefulness of the plant. You may be but a child, and your life seem weak and ineffective, but if you will open your heart to God by faith, He will pour in His mighty fullness, and the tiny seed become a great tree of strength and usefulness, grace and beauty.

Let us not despise the day of small things. Faith may be as a grain of mustard seed, but as it is used it will grow. Your effort to do good may seem so insignificant that it would be hardly missed, if it were discontinued, and yet out of it may emanate some mighty work which will bring help and comfort to thousands. How many orphanages, schools, and philanthropic efforts have owed their origin to the most infinitesimal beginnings. One destitute child cared and ministered to for Christ's sake has led to another, until finally thousands of little ones have received a good start in life. What could be more insignificant than the beginnings of the Gospel message in many a heathen country. Do not be discouraged. Like Gideon, you may be only a cake of barley bread, but by faith you may overturn the tents of Midian. Like the little lad, you may only be able to place five tiny loaves and two small fish in the hands of Jesus, but He will bless them and make them sufficient to feed the multitude. A stone may bring Goliath to the dust; an arrow may pierce through the armour of the mailed warrior. Have faith in God; Reckon on God's faithfulness to you!

PRAYER—*Lord, increase our faith. Give us a child-like faith to receive what Thou dost offer, and from this moment may a new sense of the presence and power of God, through the Holy Spirit, come to us. AMEN.*

THE BASIS OF PEACE

Romans 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"

Colossians 1:20 "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

THE basis of redemption and peace was laid on Calvary, when our Lord died for the sins of the world. In Lev 17:11, we learn that "the life of the flesh is in the blood"; from which we infer that the forth-flowing of the blood of Christ was the forth-pouring of His soul as a sacrifice for sin.

It may be asked: Granted that the blood of Christ represents His soul which was poured out for sinful men, how did this marvellous act of self-sacrifice constitute a basis for peace? The full answer to that question is impossible in our present limited knowledge. It is one of the secret things which belong to the Lord our God, hidden from us now, to be revealed when we are full-grown.

But never suppose that the shedding of Christ's blood was necessary to make God love us, to appease His wrath or wring from His unwilling hand an edict of redemption. "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.*" The Father does not love us because Jesus died, but He went to the Cross because of God's love for us who chose us to be joint-heirs with His Son.

But there is one condition to be fulfilled. The access into Peace is open only to those who believe. We are justified by faith; we have peace through believing. The Apostle says that "through our Lord Jesus Christ we have *now received* the Atonement" (Col 1:11). The redemption is accomplished; we have but to receive it. The atonement of peace is made, it is only for us to take it. "For as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." As we receive eternal life, and the Holy Spirit with open and thankful hearts, relying on the Divine assurance by faith, we enter into the great inheritance of Peace, and the gifts of God in Grace and Nature become our own.

PRAYER—*O Most Merciful Lord, Grant to me, above all things that can be desired, to rest in Thee, and in Thee to have my heart at peace. Thou art the true peace of the heart, Thou its only rest; out of Thee all things are hard and restless. In this very peace that is in Thee, the one Eternal God, I will sleep and rest. AMEN.*

THE RECEPTIVITY OF FAITH

Hebrews 10:22 "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Ephesians 3:17 "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,"

FAITH is our power of appropriation. The pity is that we are so slow to make use of our Lord's resources! He does not force Himself upon us. Though He brings with Him gold tried in the fire that we may be enriched, and white raiment for our clothing, and eye-salve for our blindness; and though He knows how urgently we need these things, He will not force them on our acceptance. Rather, He stands and knocks, as a travelling merchant knocks at the door, who has wares to dispose of, and we need to open the door and receive the gifts which are offered, without money and without price (Rev 3:18-20; Isa 55:1-2).

Faith is our reception of the spiritual to make good the lack of the physical. It is a drawing on the Eternal for the deficiencies of our earthly pilgrimage. Probably when we look back on our present life, we shall find that our deficiencies were permitted, and even assigned, that we might be driven to avail ourselves of the fullness of the Lord Jesus (John 1:16; Eph 3:19). We were allowed to wander in the sultry heat, that we might know Him as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land; we were exposed to wild tempests and storms, that we might make for alcoves and harbours in Him that we should otherwise have missed.

It has been truly observed that Job's rebellious moods arose when he thought that God was afar off, but there was a difference when he realised that God was suffering *with* him. Remember that you are not divided from God by a deep chasm. He knows your sorrows. In all your afflictions *He* is afflicted. We have not a High Priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. When Jesus saw the sisters weeping, He not only succoured them, but entered into their distress, and wept with them.

Are you weary with burdens that are crushing you? Is your lot cast with them that hate peace? Is your heart oppressed with loneliness? Take Jesus into account. Don't face your difficulties alone, but meet them in the fellowship of your Saviour. Have faith, i.e., *reckon* on God. Let the Lord Christ *dwell* in your heart, and He will be responsible for all, as you reckon on Him for all.

PRAYER—*O Lord, I open my nature, and since my capacity is small, I pray that by love and faith, by patience and suffering, Thou wilt enlarge my heart, that it may be filled with all the fullness of God. AMEN.*

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

James 2:26 "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

JAMES is described as "the Lord's brother" in Gal 1:19. He was surnamed "the Just," and was much respected beyond the limits of the Christian Church for his saintly life. While St. Paul deals specially with doctrine, James is concerned with practice; Paul expounds the wonderful significance of Christ's death and resurrection; James expounds the teaching of our Lord, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. Paul insists on *faith* as the means of justification before God; James lays stress on the *works* to which faith must lead.

It seems likely that James had seen Paul's Epistles, for he uses so many of the same phrases and examples, and probably set himself to combat those who abused the teaching of the great Apostle. There were plenty in his time who believed *about* Christ, and prided themselves in the orthodoxy and accuracy of their creed; and James maintains that this is not sufficient to save the soul.

As far as orthodoxy goes, no creed can be more absolutely orthodox than that held by evil spirits. Repeatedly, during our Lord's life, they acknowledged that He was the Holy One of God, but their belief had no effect on their character; it only filled them with fear and dread (Jas 2:19).

"Faith without works is dead." It is good to test ourselves. We must see to it that our heart is pure and our way absolutely transparent. In our dealings with those around us, we must always seek to *realize* our highest conceptions of love and duty. Even when our efforts of goodwill and affection are not reciprocated, we must never lower the high standard of our action, but always keep before us the conception of our Saviour's life in the Home at Nazareth. Be merciless to yourself, but always merciful to others, always bearing the burdens of those around you, always moderating your pace to the weak and weary, as Greatheart did for the pilgrims. Even Rahab was justified by a faith which wrought itself out in beautiful and unselfish *action* (Jas 2:25; Heb 11:31). Remember our Lord's words in Matthew 7:20-21.

PRAYER—*Help us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to add to our faith, brotherly kindness, and pardon the unkind word or impatient gesture; the hard and selfish deed, the failure to give kindly help where we had the opportunity. Enable us so to live that we may daily do something to lessen the tide of human sorrow and need, and add to the sum of human happiness. AMEN.*

THE GREAT SHEPHERD

Hebrews 13:20-21 "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

It is most comforting that our Heavenly Father is "*the God of Peace.*" He is the God of the gentle zephyr, of the evening glow, of the mother's brooding care; and may be trusted by His gentleness and patience to make us great. Bruised reeds are not trampled beneath His feet, and the smoking flax is fanned into a flame. Do not be afraid of God—He is the God of Peace!

He brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep. As our Lord descended into the Valley of Death, He breathed His departing spirit into the Father's hands. He knew that the path of life would unfold before Him. He knew that the Father's welcome awaited Him. And God did not fail Him! However low He went, when He descended into Hades, the Everlasting Arms were always beneath Him; and Him did God raise up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

And will God do less for the Flock! There are many of the sheep that have been scattered in the cloudy and dark days. Will every sheep and lamb be recovered, and led to the green pastures and beside the quiet waters of Paradise? Yes, every one! The great Shepherd would not be content if one were missing of those whom the Father has given Him (John 10:28-29). Remember His own parable of the Shepherd who left the ninety and nine to recover the one. If you have come to Him by your will and choice, you are included in the Father's gift.

We are secure in the position which His grace has given us. It is secured not only by the promise of God, but sealed by the Blood of the Cross. That is the meaning of the words: "The Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant." Note that word *eternal*, which carries us back to the timeless past, when this compact was made. We may therefore humbly believe that our names are written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8; Rev 21:27). But we are saved to save others! It is thus that we make our calling and election sure (2 Pet 1:10).

PRAYER—*We thank Thee, O blessed Master, not only that Thou hast cleansed us from our sins, but that Thou hast entered into, and ratified by Thy precious blood, the eternal covenant which has made us Thine for ever. AMEN.*

AN AUTOGRAPH LETTER

2 Corinthians 3:3 “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

THE apostle Paul’s life was made weary by the incessant opposition of his enemies and critics, who sowed discord in the churches which he had formed in Europe. Amongst others, they visited Corinth and challenged him to produce letters of commendation from the leaders of the Church. With justifiable indignation he cries: “Why should I carry letters, when my converts, given me by the Lord, are circulating everywhere, with the attesting signature of Christ upon them?” Surely they are a sufficient guarantee and proof that I have been commissioned and sent forth by the Lord Himself.

St. Paul gave utterance to a true and striking description of a Christian disciple. *He is an autograph letter*, the Author and Writer is the Lord Himself—“an epistle of Christ.” The ink is “the Spirit of the Living God.” The pen is the teacher or preacher of the Gospel, “ministered by us.” The material is the heart and life—“not on tables of stone, but on hearts of flesh.”

We ought to be Christians in large type, so that it would not be necessary to be long in our society, or to regard us through spectacles, in order to detect our true discipleship. The message of our lives should resemble the big advertisements which can be read on the street-boards by all who pass by. The merit of good letter-writing is to state what the writer wants to say as clearly and concisely as possible. Sometimes we have to wade through long and weary pages before we can get at the gist of our correspondent’s meaning. Let us take care that the message of our lives is clear, concise, and unmistakable.

We are to be pens in the hand of Christ—our sufficiency is of God, who *makes* us ministers. Milton’s pen had only to yield itself relentlessly to the hand of the daughter or amanuensis, to whom the blind master dictated his immortal words. And the messages which we are to inscribe on the hearts and lives of men do not originate in us, but with Christ. If others are used more than we are, it is because they are more meet for His use (2 Tim 2:15-21).

PRAYER—*Live in us, blessed Lord, by Thy Holy Spirit, that our lives may be living epistles of helpfulness and blessedness. May the Name of the Lord Jesus be glorified in us. AMEN.*

SONGS OF PRAISE

Luke 1:46-47,68 "And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,"

THESE two songs have floated down the centuries, stirring human hearts with the ecstasy of their triumph. It is not given to all to be able to express their exultation in words so eloquent and musical, but all may become as saturated with the words of Scripture as Mary was, and all may triumph in Jesus Christ as gladly as did Zacharias, and show forth His praise, as did these two holy souls.

The most wonderful thing for us all is that God looks upon *our* low estate. The greater His blessing, the more unworthy we feel of it. There is no reason why He has stooped to our lowliness and obscurity except that He would. He does great things for the weakest and merciful things for the unworthiest, for His Name's sake—"Holy is His Name." In other words, there is no accounting for the putting forth of God's power and love, except His own glorious character.

Princes are put down from their thrones, because they have become proud and tyrannical; whilst those of low degree are exalted by God, because in obscurity they have been educated in virtue, which cannot but rise to the level of its specific gravity. The rich are often sent empty away, because they have no taste or desire for true riches which alone can satisfy. Whether the hunger be for love, or for the power to do good, or for the best gifts that the Spirit of God can bestow, whoever fulfils the conditions of humility and faith—these are "filled with good things." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, *for they shall be filled.*"

The little babe, known afterwards as John the Baptist, was probably lying in his father's arms, when he burst forth into this glorious song. Let us see to it that we use every opportunity of making known God's wondrous salvation, of pointing men to the only source of forgiveness. Nothing so encourages faith as the proclamation of what God is prepared to do for those who trust Him, and when it dawns upon men that there are treasures in Christ which shall enrich their poverty and dissipate their hopelessness, they will yield themselves to be led into the ways of peace even by a little child!

PRAYER—*We thank Thee, O God, for life and light and love; for the light of Thy mercy shining across our path, revealing to us Thy infinite love without beginning or end. May the Name of our Lord Jesus be glorified in us. AMEN.*

LOVE TRIUMPHANT OVER DEATH

Revelation 1:18 "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

IT was not possible, said St. Peter, that our Lord should be holden of death (Act 2:24). It behoved Christ to suffer; but all the bitter waters of suffering could not quench His love. He was the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, every man, even those who pierced Him, is included in His great love.

Christ died, not only to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, but to rob death of its terrors, and deprive it of its sting. In death our Lord Jesus destroyed both the Devil and his power; the prince of this world has been judged, and cast out of the seat of power (Heb 2:14-15; John 12:31; John 16:11).

Let us not be afraid of the mystery of death. Christ has shown us that it is the gateway into another life. There is the same spirit, but a different environment. It is a condition of existence in which the same voices are heard, the same human fellowship persists. During the forty days in which Jesus tarried on our earth after His Resurrection, He solved many of the problems of life after death, and illuminated its mystery. To die is to be with Him, and to be welcomed into the great company of loving spirits (2 Pet 1:11).

Let us not fear the loneliness of death. The soul passing through the dark valley becomes aware of Another by its side—"Thou art with me." Death cannot separate us, even for a moment, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Jesus died alone; He felt forsaken; but none of us need pass through that terrible experience; for He has said: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself."

We need not fear what comes after death. The curse and penalty of sin have been put away for ever. "Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again." That which others call death, we dread no more than sleep. Our bodies lie down exhausted with our long working-day, to awake in the fresh energy of the Eternal Morning, while our spirit is presented before the Presence of His Glory, faultless, and with exceeding joy (Jud 1:24).

PRAYER—*O God, may we so trust Thee this day, that, when the day is done, our trust shall be firmer than ever. Then, when our last day comes, and our work is done, may we trust Thee in death and forever, in the spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

CALENDAR FOR READING THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD IN A YEAR

By the late Rev. R. M. M'CHEYNE, M. A.

THE ADVANTAGES

- 1. THE WHOLE BIBLE WILL BE READ THROUGH IN AN ORDERLY MANNER IN THE COURSE OF A YEAR.** - The Old Testament once, the New Testament and Acts twice. I fear many of you never read the whole Bible, and yet it is all equally divine. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect.”* If we pass over some parts of Scripture we will be incomplete Christians.
- 2. TIME WILL NOT BE WASTED IN CHOOSING WHAT PORTIONS TO READ.** - Often believers are at a loss to determine towards which part of the mountains of spices they should bend their steps. Here the question will be solved at once in a very simple manner.
- 3. THE PASTOR WILL KNOW IN WHICH PART OF THE PASTURE THE FLOCK ARE FEEDING.** - He will thus be enabled to speak more suitably to them on the Sabbath: and both pastor and elders will be able to drop a word of light and comfort in visiting from house to house, which will be more readily responded to.
- 4. THE SWEET BOND OF CHRISTIAN LOVE AND UNITY WILL BE STRENGTHENED.** - We shall often be led to think of those dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, who agree to join with us in reading these portions. We shall oftener be led to agree on earth, touching something we shall ask of God. We shall pray over the same promises, mourn over the same confessions, praise God in the same songs, and be nourished by the same words of eternal life.

DIRECTIONS

1. The centre column contains the day of the month. The first two columns contain the chapters to be read in the family. The two last columns contain the portions to be read in secret.
2. The head of the family should previously read each chapter for family worship, and mark two or three of the most prominent verses, upon which he may dwell, giving a few explanatory thoughts and asking a few simple questions.
3. Frequently the portion named in the calendar for family reading might be read more suitably in secret: in which case the head of the family should intimate that it be read in private, and the chapter for secret reading may be used in the family.
4. The portions read, both for family and private readings, would be greatly illuminated if they were preceded by a moment's silent prayer - "*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.*" (Ps. cxix. 18).
5. Let the conversation at the family meals frequently turn upon the chapter read. Thus every meal will be a sacrament, being sanctified by the Word and prayer.
6. Let our private reading precede the dawning of the day. Let God's voice be the first we hear in the morning. Mark two or three of the richest verses, and pray over every line and word of them. Let the marks be neatly done, never so as to abuse a copy of the Bible.

April									
Family					Secret				
Leviticus	4	Psalms	1-2	1st	Proverbs	19	Colossians	2	
Leviticus	5	Psalms	3-4	2nd	Proverbs	20	Colossians	3	
Leviticus	6	Psalms	5-6	3rd	Proverbs	21	Colossians	4	
Leviticus	7	Psalms	7-8	4th	Proverbs	22	1 Thess	1	
Leviticus	8	Psalms	9	5th	Proverbs	23	1 Thess	2	
Leviticus	9	Psalms	10	6th	Proverbs	24	1 Thess	3	
Leviticus	10	Psalms	11-12	7th	Proverbs	25	1 Thess	4	
Leviticus	11-12	Psalms	13-14	8th	Proverbs	26	1 Thess	5	
Leviticus	13	Psalms	15-16	9th	Proverbs	27	2 Thess	1	
Leviticus	14	Psalms	17	10th	Proverbs	28	2 Thess	2	
Leviticus	15	Psalms	18	11th	Proverbs	29	2 Thess	3	
Leviticus	16	Psalms	19	12th	Proverbs	30	1 Timothy	1	
Leviticus	17	Psalms	20-21	13th	Proverbs	31	1 Timothy	2	
Leviticus	18	Psalms	22	14th	Ecclesiastes	1	1 Timothy	3	
Leviticus	19	Psalms	23-24	15th	Ecclesiastes	2	1 Timothy	4	
Leviticus	20	Psalms	25	16th	Ecclesiastes	3	1 Timothy	5	
Leviticus	21	Psalms	26-27	17th	Ecclesiastes	4	1 Timothy	6	
Leviticus	22	Psalms	28-29	18th	Ecclesiastes	5	2 Timothy	1	
Leviticus	23	Psalms	30	19th	Ecclesiastes	6	2 Timothy	2	
Leviticus	24	Psalms	31	20th	Ecclesiastes	7	2 Timothy	3	
Leviticus	25	Psalms	32	21st	Ecclesiastes	8	2 Timothy	4	
Leviticus	26	Psalms	33	22nd	Ecclesiastes	9	Titus	1	
Leviticus	27	Psalms	34	23rd	Ecclesiastes	10	Titus	2	
Numbers	1	Psalms	35	24th	Ecclesiastes	11	Titus	3	
Numbers	2	Psalms	36	25th	Ecclesiastes	12	Philemon	1	
Numbers	3	Psalms	37	26th	Songs	1	Hebrews	1	
Numbers	4	Psalms	38	27th	Songs	2	Hebrews	2	
Numbers	5	Psalms	39	28th	Songs	3	Hebrews	3	
Numbers	6	Psalms	40-41	29th	Songs	4	Hebrews	4	
Numbers	7	Psalms	42-43	30th	Songs	5	Hebrews	5	

May								
Family					Secret			
Numbers	8	Psalms	44	1st	Songs	6	Hebrews	6
Numbers	9	Psalms	45	2nd	Songs	7	Hebrews	7
Numbers	10	Psalms	46-47	3rd	Songs	8	Hebrews	8
Numbers	11	Psalms	48	4th	Isaiah	1	Hebrews	9
Numbers	12-13	Psalms	49	5th	Isaiah	2	Hebrews	10
Numbers	14	Psalms	50	6th	Isaiah	3-4	Hebrews	11
Numbers	15	Psalms	51	7th	Isaiah	5	Hebrews	12
Numbers	16	Psalms	52-54	8th	Isaiah	6	Hebrews	13
Numbers	17-18	Psalms	55	9th	Isaiah	7	James	1
Numbers	19	Psalms	56-57	10th	Isaiah	8-9:7	James	2
Numbers	20	Psalms	58-59	11th	Isaiah	9:8-10:4	James	3
Numbers	21	Psalms	60-61	12th	Isaiah	10:5ff	James	4
Numbers	22	Psalms	62-63	13th	Isaiah	11-12	James	5
Numbers	23	Psalms	64-65	14th	Isaiah	13	1 Peter	1
Numbers	24	Psalms	66-67	15th	Isaiah	14	1 Peter	2
Numbers	25	Psalms	68	16th	Isaiah	15	1 Peter	3
Numbers	26	Psalms	69	17th	Isaiah	16	1 Peter	4
Numbers	27	Psalms	70-71	18th	Isaiah	17-18	1 Peter	5
Numbers	28	Psalms	72	19th	Isaiah	19-20	2 Peter	1
Numbers	29	Psalms	73	20th	Isaiah	21	2 Peter	2
Numbers	30	Psalms	74	21st	Isaiah	22	2 Peter	3
Numbers	31	Psalms	75-76	22nd	Isaiah	23	1 John	1
Numbers	32	Psalms	77	23rd	Isaiah	24	1 John	2
Numbers	33	Psalms	78:1-37	24th	Isaiah	25	1 John	3
Numbers	34	Psalms	78:38ff	25th	Isaiah	26	1 John	4
Numbers	35	Psalms	79	26th	Isaiah	27	1 John	5
Numbers	36	Psalms	80	27th	Isaiah	28	2 John	1
Deuteronomy	1	Psalms	81-82	28th	Isaiah	29	3 John	1
Deuteronomy	2	Psalms	83-84	29th	Isaiah	30	Jude	1
Deuteronomy	3	Psalms	85	30th	Isaiah	31	Revelation	1
Deuteronomy	4	Psalms	86-87	31st	Isaiah	32	Revelation	2

June								
Family					Secret			
Deuteronomy	5	Psalms	88	1st	Isaiah	33	Revelation	3
Deuteronomy	6	Psalms	89	2nd	Isaiah	34	Revelation	4
Deuteronomy	7	Psalms	90	3rd	Isaiah	35	Revelation	5
Deuteronomy	8	Psalms	91	4th	Isaiah	36	Revelation	6
Deuteronomy	9	Psalms	92-93	5th	Isaiah	37	Revelation	7
Deuteronomy	10	Psalms	94	6th	Isaiah	38	Revelation	8
Deuteronomy	11	Psalms	95-96	7th	Isaiah	39	Revelation	9
Deuteronomy	12	Psalms	97-98	8th	Isaiah	40	Revelation	10
Deuteronomy	13-14	Psalms	99-101	9th	Isaiah	41	Revelation	11
Deuteronomy	15	Psalms	102	10th	Isaiah	42	Revelation	12
Deuteronomy	16	Psalms	103	11th	Isaiah	43	Revelation	13
Deuteronomy	17	Psalms	104	12th	Isaiah	44	Revelation	14
Deuteronomy	18	Psalms	105	13th	Isaiah	45	Revelation	15
Deuteronomy	19	Psalms	106	14th	Isaiah	46	Revelation	16
Deuteronomy	20	Psalms	107	15th	Isaiah	47	Revelation	17
Deuteronomy	21	Psalms	108-109	16th	Isaiah	48	Revelation	18
Deuteronomy	22	Psalms	110-111	17th	Isaiah	49	Revelation	19
Deuteronomy	23	Psalms	112-113	18th	Isaiah	50	Revelation	20
Deuteronomy	24	Psalms	114-115	19th	Isaiah	51	Revelation	21
Deuteronomy	25	Psalms	116	20th	Isaiah	52	Revelation	22
Deuteronomy	26	Psalms	117-118	21st	Isaiah	53	Matthew	1
Deuteronomy	27-28:19	Psalms	119:1-24	22nd	Isaiah	54	Matthew	2
Deuteronomy	28:20ff	Psalms	119:25-48	23rd	Isaiah	55	Matthew	3
Deuteronomy	29	Psalms	119:49-72	24th	Isaiah	56	Matthew	4
Deuteronomy	30	Psalms	119:73-96	25th	Isaiah	57	Matthew	5
Deuteronomy	31	Psalms	119:97-120	26th	Isaiah	58	Matthew	6
Deuteronomy	32	Psalms	119:121-144	27th	Isaiah	59	Matthew	7
Deuteronomy	33-34	Psalms	119:145-176	28th	Isaiah	60	Matthew	8
Joshua	1	Psalms	120-122	29th	Isaiah	61	Matthew	9
Joshua	2	Psalms	123-125	30th	Isaiah	62	Matthew	10

YEAR 2007
O For a Closer Walk with God!

January 7 & 14 – Confession to God

1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

January 21 & 28 – Confession to God

Psalms 139:23-24 – Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

February 4 & 11 – Forgiveness from God

1 John 2:1 – My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

February 18 & 25 – Prayer

Hebrews 4:16 - Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

March 4 & 11 – Prayer and the Peace of God

Philippians 4:6-7 – Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

March 18 & 25 – Answer to Prayer

Jeremiah 33:3 – Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

April 1 & 8 – Attitude for Prayer

2 Chronicles 7:14 – If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

April 15 & 22 – Walking with God

Micah 6:8 – He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

April 29 - Gospel

Acts 4:12 – Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

May 6 & 13 – Knowing God

Psalm 46:10 – Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

May 20 & 27 – Knowing God

Jeremiah 9:23-24 – Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

June 3 & 10 – Communion with God

Psalm 27:4 – One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

June 17 & 24 – Communion with God

Psalm 84:10 – For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

July 1 & 8 – Communion with Christ

Revelation 3:20 – Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

July 15 & 22 – Love for God

Mark 12:30 – And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

July 29 – Gospel

Titus 3:5 – Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

August 5 & 12 – Love not the World

1 John 2:15-16 – Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

August 19 & 26 – Assurance from God

Romans 8:28 – And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

September 2 & 9 – Confidence in God

2 Timothy 1:12 – For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

September 16 & 23 – Protection from God

Psalms 37:23-24 – The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

September 30 – Gospel

Isaiah 55:6-7 – Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

October 7 & 14 – Help from God

1 Corinthians 10:13 – There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but 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.