

Our Daily Homily

By
F.B. Meyer
VOLUME Six
Preface

With the issue of this volume of "Our Daily Homily," the top stone is placed on a structure which has occupied many of my brightest hours for more than three years.

Amid the pressure of a busy life, and the inevitable demands of a considerable church-organization, it has been an untold refreshment to turn to the devout study of successive chapters of the Bible, with the view of obtaining a message for oneself, and to pass on to others.

We must all have our "Temple of Peace"; and if this may not be a spacious and well-stocked library, it may at least be that collection of sacred literature which contains the noblest thoughts of the holiest men, inbreathed and borne along by the Spirit of God. Here is the secret of serenity, the treasure of tranquillity, the clue to perennial comfort.

It has been impossible altogether to exclude the personal element from these pages, because the sheets have been printed from the types of my own daily experience, set up by the many altering circumstances of joy and grief, conflict and peace, which befall each of us. But the one refrain has been the reality of the unseen; the nearness of God; the vindication of the Christian, as the only true policy of life; the duty and blessedness of doing all God commands, and bearing all He permits; the uplifting and light-bringing power of simple trust in Him who liveth, and was dead, and who is alive forevermore.

None of my books is dearer to me than this, or seems to contain more of my innermost thought; but at best it is only a handful of meal in the barrel, which may God multiply till He send rain on the earth.

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

FREDERICK BROTHERTON MEYER (1847–1929)

*British preacher, author, and
spokesman for public righteousness*



Meyer's ministry was worldwide, but his base was London. He was born and educated there, held pastorates at some of London's largest free churches, and conducted his moral crusades from that city.

An ardent Baptist and premillennialist, Meyer applied Christian principles to social ills such as drunkenness, prostitution, unmarried mothers, and unwanted children. One of his best crusades occurred in 1911 when he

successfully stopped a prize fight that was to be held at Earl's Court between Jack Johnson of the United States and a British contender. Meyer endured scorn for his efforts: a London newspaper called him "Meddling, Maudlin Meyer."

Meyer was involved in the Blue Ribbon movement (prohibition); the Purity, Rescue, and Temperance work of the Central South London Free Church Council (which closed brothels and counseled prostitutes); and the Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society. He served as president of the National and World Sunday School Unions, president of the National Union of Christian Endeavor, and founder of South London Missionary Training College. He was also the author of more than seventy books. He preached around the world. Melbourne Hall (Leicester), a center of social and evangelistic activity, was built in 1881 under his leadership.

- *Who's Who In Christian History* - Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Joshua 10:14

“And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.”

THE sun seemed to stay its course in mid-heaven, and hasted not to go down; but there has been no day like that, and there will be none. You may bid the setting sun of another's life stay its downward track toward the western sea, but in vain. It may be some revered minister, some sainted parent, some life dearer to you than your own; but it obeys not your bidding. Surely and inevitably the little daughter of Jairus fades like a flower plucked from its stalk; and Lazarus sinks into his death-sleep, despite the eager message of the sisters to the Life-giver.

So with the sun of your own life. Slowly and steadily it descends. Work while it is called today; for the night cometh, in which no man can work. Finish the work that your Father has given you to do; there is only just time enough for it to be done within the span of your days. Our one anxiety should be that nothing divert us from His path, or intercept the communication of His grace.

But there is one Sun that goes not down. “Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” (Isaiah 60:20) Ah, precious Sun of Righteousness, when once Thou hast risen upon the soul, Thou shalt know no setting, ever higher and higher shalt Thou rise until the perfect day; no twilight or night can come where Thou art; no darkness draw its veil across the sky! Neither life nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which has broken upon our hearts, through the wall of cloud.

Joshua 11:23

“So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.”

THIS is almost an exact parallel of the words addressed by Peter to the crowds on the day of Pentecost: “Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this.” In His representative capacity, as the Head of His Church, and the Forerunner of the great host of the redeemed, it was necessary that Jesus should first receive from God the Father all that spiritual inheritance which He was to communicate to those who should afterward believe in His name: and having received, He is prepared to give. “Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you.”

The whole land of spiritual blessing is now in the hand of Jesus. The prince of this world is cast out. The power of the Anakim is broken. The seven nations of Canaan and all the power of the enemy is under His feet. His are the rivers of the fullness of the Holy Ghost, and His the mountains of fellowship; His the slopes where the vines of Eshcol ripen and the corn of Canaan goldens; His the green pastures and the still waters of communion, as well as the rocky defile of death. Whatever, then, you desire, you must seek at His hand, in whom it is vested for thee, and me, and every believer: and He will give it.

The land had rest from war. Cease, then, from strife. You will not win by sore wrestling. The lame take the prey. Learn to take; let Him cause you to inherit; let Him give according to the division allotted you in the providence and determination of God. “It shall be given to those for whom it is prepared.” “They that receive the abundance of grace shall reign.”

Joshua 12:6

“Them did Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel smite: and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it for a possession unto the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh.”

WE must not press a type, or analogy, unduly, though we may employ it to illustrate a doctrine well established from other parts of Scripture. Such an illustration is here. It is remarkable that the two tribes and a half which Moses settled beyond the Jordan took little part in the national life, and were soon wiped out of their inheritance. They were apparently absorbed by the nations whom they were supposed to have superseded.

This was partly due to the devotion of the people to their material prosperity. In the words of Deborah, Reuben preferred to sit among the sheepfolds, to hear the piping of the flocks, rather than to take part in the emancipation of Canaan from Midian. But, looked at typically, may we not say that whatever Moses gives will ultimately evade our grasp and slip from our possession? Like the tables of stone, it will fall from our hand and be broken in pieces. All that you try to be or do in the power of your own resolution and energy will inevitably fail and deceive you. The land looks fair and the tenure seems good, but you will not be able to retain it.

The deepest blessings of the spiritual life cannot be won or held in the strength of our own purpose, even though it be a holy and earnest one. These things can be ours only in so far as we abide in Christ, in whom our inheritance is vested, and from whom we receive it as we need, by faith. We can hold nothing apart from abiding fellowship with Jesus. And this is our privilege. Let us lift our hearts to the blessed Spirit, asking that He would reveal to us that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, but which God hath prepared for those that love Him.

Joshua 13:1

“Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.”

THIS is true in many directions:-

Of the Bible. — How many pages of our Bibles are unpossessed! We have not underlined any verses in them, or put any marks in the margin to indicate that God has spoken through them to our souls. They are as clean as when they came from the printers. It is well sometimes to consider this, and to resolve to master some unfamiliar portions of God’s Word, believing that no word of God is devoid of power. To many believers the Bible, which God intended for their possession, is yet an unexplored continent.

Of Doctrinal Truth. — Doctrine groups texts, and compares them. Doctrine is to isolated texts what natural laws are to particular facts. We should know the doctrines of the Bible. We should understand what is meant by Predestination; the unction of the Holy Ghost; and the Second Advent. How much unoccupied land there is here, which, if brought under cultivation, would yield grapes, and corn, and other produce for the refreshment and strength of the soul!

Of Spiritual Experience. — Talk with some deeply-taught saint, and you will see how little you have traversed of the good land beyond the Jordan, or know of its blessed extent. To know the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ seems given to but few; but it need not be. There is no favouritism in the Kingdom which excludes some poor souls from the richer portions, and shuts them up to barrenness and a northern aspect. Rise, go through the land in the length and breadth of it; it is all yours; the gift of God in Jesus Christ; claim and possess it.

Joshua 14:11

“As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.”

MEN sometimes lose heart as they grow old. They say: My intellect will become impaired, my physical strength will abate, my power for service will wane. Yes: but if the outward man decays, the inward man shall be renewed day by day.

Those that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: whether to war, to go out for service, or to come in for fellowship and rest. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. He shall satisfy thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's. God's angels are always young. The drain of the years is amply met by the inflow of His all-sufficient grace. There is no reason why we should decline in usefulness and fruit-bearing with the increase of years; but the reverse. The last sheaves that fall beneath thy sickle shall be the heaviest; and the width of thy swathe shall be greatest as the angel of death touches thee and bids thee home. The secret lies in wholly following the Lord.

But Caleb did not rely on his strength to win Hebron. Very modestly and humbly he said, “It may be that the Lord will be with me.” Not that he for a moment doubted it. Could it be for one moment supposed that the God whom he had wholly followed for eighty years would desert him in the supreme crisis of his life? But he put it thus in the sweet lowliness of his soul, because he counted not himself worthy. The strongest men are they who count that they are helpless as worms; and who put their weakness at the disposal of God's might. To each of us comes the promise of God: “My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

Joshua 15:19

“Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.”

CALEB had conquered his giants, and so he was able to give his daughter an inheritance of land and springs of water. It was when Jesus had overcome the sharpness of death that He opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers; it was as He trampled under His victorious feet the principalities and powers of darkness that He gave to His Church the upper and the nether springs.

There are two departments in our life, which are closely related and yet one. We occupy the one in our contact with men and our work in the world; the other, in our holy moments of meditation and prayer. Christ's sheep go out to their manifold activities, and come in to feed on the green pastures beside waters of rest. In each of these we stand in daily need of the springs that are fed from the River which proceeds from the Throne of God, and which is an emblem of the Holy Ghost.

On the Lord's Day, in the House of God, or in private prayer, we climb the hills and stand on the margin of the upper springs that rise there; in the solemn hush we hear the murmur of their waters. On Monday we descend into the valley amid the clang of the battle and the cries of human need; but, thank God! plentiful springs are there also. Upper springs from the Mount of Transfiguration; nether springs for the Valley of Humiliation. Upper springs for the days of health and abounding activity; nether springs for days of depression, and pain, and death. Upper springs in praise, adoration, and rapture; nether springs for taking the yoke, bearing the burden, and drinking of His cup. Let us partake freely of the refreshing water which flows from the River of God.

Joshua 16:4

“So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.”

WHAT a wonderful wealth of blessing these children of Joseph came into! There were the precious things of heaven, the dew, and the deep that couched beneath; the precious fruits of the sun and of the growth of the moon; the metals of the ancient mountains and the everlasting hills; the precious things of the earth, and the fullness thereof; and, above all, the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush (Deuteronomy 33:13-16). Surely they were blessed with all manner of blessings — more than they had asked or thought! The rich gifts of God’s grace! An inheritance which could not have been won by their prowess or arms, but was the free gift of God’s love — to be taken and enjoyed!

These things happened to them as types; the spiritual counterparts of all are ours in Christ. He is precious — nay, priceless: His promises are exceeding great and precious. The blood by which we were redeemed is precious, has meanings not yet explored; the very trial of our faith is precious as the gold taken from the everlasting hills. How much preciousness there is for us who believe! (1 Peter 2:7). But we are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, because we have not taken our inheritance.

We need to do more than ask for it. He that asketh should not rest satisfied till he receiveth. We must take by a faith which claims, appropriates, employs. Open your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, that He may cause you to receive and enjoy all His precious gifts. In Christ all things are yours: go in and possess; take your inheritance; believe that you do receive; thank Him, and go on your way rejoicing.

Joshua 17:18

“But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.”

THE mountain was steep, irregular, covered with forest. “This shall be yours,” said Joshua to the children of Joseph; “you are a great people, and have great power; cut down the forest, terrace the slopes, turn their bare declivities into cornfields and vineyards; fill these vast untenanted spaces with life and song.”

There is always room higher up. — When the valleys are full of Canaanites, whose iron chariots withstand your progress, get up into the hills, occupy the upper spaces. If you can no longer work for God, pray for those who can. If you cannot move earth by your speech, you may move Heaven. If the development of life on the lower slopes is impossible, through limitations of service, the necessity of maintaining others, and such-like restrictions, let it break out toward the unseen, the eternal, the divine.

Faith can fell forests. — Even if the tribes had realized what treasures lay above them, they would hardly have dared to suppose it possible to rid the hills of their dense forest-growth. But as God indicated their task, He reminded them that they had power enough. The visions of things that seem impossible are presented to us, like these forest-covered steep; not to mock us, but to incite us to spiritual exploits which would be impossible unless God had stored within us the great strength of His own indwelling. Difficulty is sent to reveal to us what God can do in answer to the faith that prays and works. Are you straitened in the valleys? Get away to the hills, live there; get honey out of the rock, and wealth out of the terraced slopes now hidden by forest.

Joshua 18:8

“And the men arose, and went away: and Joshua charged them that went to describe the land, saying, Go and walk through the land, and describe it, and come again to me, that I may here cast lots for you before the LORD in Shiloh.”

IN every age of the Church’s story, God has sent forth men to walk through and describe the land of our spiritual inheritance. They have become dissatisfied with the low attainments of their brethren, and with great desire have followed the Divine suggestions which pointed to a wider knowledge and enjoyment of the possibilities of Christian living. In the first ages, this was the work of men like Chrysostom and Augustine; the later ones, of the Reformers; in later ones still, of men whose names are still fresh in the memory of the Church.

But there is a sense in which all the experiences of life, all our walkings through the land of promise, all our discoveries of springs and valleys and far-stretching campaigns of territory, are not intended for ourselves alone, but for others. We are led by a certain path, that we may know how to direct a poor wanderer on his way. We are comforted, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble. Our Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, that we may communicate those blessings to our fellows. We are shown the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, that we may be able to unfold their joy and helpfulness to others. We are saved that we may become workers together with God.

The books which come to us from holy men who have traversed the land are of priceless value, like this Domesday book which Joshua prepared. But we who cannot write books should yet describe the land. “Come and hear, all ye that fear God; and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.” There is a Divine warrant for experience meetings of the right sort, where the form is subordinate to the fresh and living Spirit.

Joshua 19:49

“When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them:”

SINCE Joshua prefigures the Lord Jesus, we are led to think of his inheritance in the midst of his brethren.

In the midst on the Cross. — “They crucified Him, and with Him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.” Forasmuch as we partook of flesh and blood, He shared the same; and since we were under the curse of a broken law, He also bowed beneath its weight, and was made a curse for us. He took the mid-current of pain; where the pressure was heaviest, there the Lamb of God bore the sin of the world. On Him God made to meet the iniquities of us all; alike of those who refuse, as did the one thief, and of those who accept, as did the other.

In the midst, in the gatherings of His People. — “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”. He is the centre of unity. We come from different quarters with our peculiar prepossessions and preconceptions, with no special affinity to each other; but touching Him, we become one with all who touch Him also. See that, not the sermon, nor the supper, nor the form of worship, is the centre of fellowship; but Christ always and in all. Then let Him be the centre of thy home life and thy business life under all circumstances.

In the midst in Heaven. — “In the midst of the throne, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing.” All the circles of the redeemed, of angels, and of all other beings, revolve around Jesus, as their common centre. They thus become concentric. Jesus is the Heart of Heaven; the Sun of Paradise; the Essence of its bliss; the Centre of its love; the innermost Soul of its life.

Joshua 20:9

“These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.”

IT is interesting to note this provision, made in the Land of Promise, for the passing over of sins which were not sins of presumption. In this verse there is that great word “Whosoever.” These cities of refuge were not for Hebrews only, but for *whosoever* had killed any person, without malice or forethought, but quite unintentionally, and had fled thither. Some poor Gentile might be sojourning among the chosen people, and suddenly find himself liable to the pursuit of the avenger of blood; but the gates of the refuge city were open to him, and the elders of the city were bound to give him a place that he might dwell among them (Joshua 20:4), not only safely, but in rest and peace.

Herein there was a foreshadowing of the days when God should open the door of faith unto the Gentiles. “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all them that call upon Him.”

There were two mysteries made known to the Apostle Paul: one he unfolds in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the other in the Epistle to the Colossians. First, he teaches us that the Gentiles may be fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise of Christ through the Gospel. Next, he expatiates on the riches of the glory of this mystery, among the Gentiles, that the living Saviour is prepared to dwell in their hearts also, as the Hope of Glory. It is a serious question, how far we are participating in our inheritance. The gates of the promises made to Abraham and his seed are open for us to enter in and dwell there; but there is too much backwardness and hesitancy in us all. “*Whosoever will*, let him take.”

Joshua 21:45

“There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.”

SUCH will be the summary of our lives, as we review them from the land of the sunset. We shall see plenty of our own failures, shortcomings, and sins, and sadly acknowledge them. We shall see that our unbelief and disobedience have deprived us of the enjoyment of much that God intended for us. We shall see that whatever was lacking was in no wise due to Him, but to ourselves. The land of our inheritance had been all given us in Jesus; but we suffered the lack of much, because of our failure to enter in.

There may be long delays in the fulfilment of promise. — But delays are not denials; and it is better to let the fruit ripen before you pluck it. Wait till God drops it into your hand; it will be ever so much sweeter.

There may be enemies and obstacles. — But they will give back, before the will of God, as the gates of night roll back before the touch of the dawn. Do not scheme, or fret, or be impatient; God is doing all to make thy life full of favour and blessing. Wait on Him, and keep His way; He will exalt thee to inherit the earth. Thou art as safe as if the gate of pearl were behind thee; thy joy cannot rust or be stolen; every wind is a south wind; every shore thy native land; every circumstance a rough packing-case containing the gifts of thy Father's love.

There may be ignorance and weakness. — But God can deal with this also. Take to Him thine imperfect apprehension, thy faltering faith, He can make right what is wrong, and adjust thee to receive all He waits to give. Heaven will be full of wonder at the way in which God has kept His word, and done all that He had promised, and more.

Joshua 22:27

“But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD.”

THE two tribes and a half made the mistake which all Christendom has made since. They endeavoured to erect an outward symbol of unity in this altar. They hoped that it would secure them from excision from the rest of Israel. They sought to *make* a unity, instead of accepting this as a fact, and endeavouring to *manifest* it by three pilgrimages a year to God’s altar at Shiloh.

Similarly, some Christians set up a church, a system, a creed, and mode of worship, and maintain that the Divine unity can only be realized in connection with one or other of these. You must be a votary at their altar of Ed, or you run the risk of their accusing you of the sin of schism. They substitute an outward for an inward unity, and a mechanical for a vital spiritual fellowship.

If we belong to Christ, we belong to one another. The Church, with all its members, is one vine, one body, one family; and therefore we have to manifest, rather than to make the unity, concerning which our Lord thought so much in His intercessory prayer. “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be One in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”

We are one in the thought of the Father, one in the redemption of the Son, one in the possession of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Let us be one in our relation to others, pitying, loving, aiding each other, forgiving and restoring, avoiding unkind comparisons and criticisms, remembering that the failure or success of one is that of all, and endeavouring to hasten the hour when the manifested oneness of the Church shall compel the world to believe that the Father sent the Son.

Joshua 23:11

“Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.”

LOVE is the crown of human nature; its regal chaplet of flowers; the bond by which the sentient universe is made one; the trait in which we most nearly resemble God — for God is love. We may love God from four parts of our nature (Luke 10:27). From the *heart*, the seat of the emotions; from the *soul*, the seat of individuality or will; in the *strength* of our activities; and in the *mind*, the organ of thought and intelligence. Some natures are more prone to one, and others to another. Each is a gate into the metropolis of Love, or by which the love of God may enter us. And it is of small consequence which gate you use, so long as you use one, and in this way enter the city.

Many people are accustomed to impute love to the heart only, instead of associating it also with other departments of the inner life. Because you have no emotion of love, you therefore conclude that you do not love. But there may be the love of soul, wherein the will crowns Christ as King; or the love of the strength, wherein all the energy of life revolves around Jesus; or the love of the mind, in which all thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Choose which you will.

But we must take heed to ourselves. The love of God will come naturally and easily in us as the fruit of the Spirit, unless we do anything to mar or hinder it. Love begets love; think then how much He loved you, when He gave Himself for you. Take heed to your speech, acts, intentions, volitions, affections; watch as well as pray; keep yourselves in the love of God; love one another and so abide in His love; and in you also the love of God will be perfected.

Joshua 24:19

“And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.”

IT seemed as though Joshua sought to damp down the enthusiasm of the people. They were all on fire to serve, but he repressed their ardour, crying, “Back, back! This is no place for you.” We are reminded of a precise analogy in the Gospels, where our Saviour said to Peter and the rest, “Ye cannot follow Me now” (John 13:31-38). *Why this Divine reluctance?*

The answer is clear, when we consider the sequel in each case. In the one, we have only to turn a page in our Bibles, to come on all the disobedience, anarchy, and backsliding of the Book of Judges; in the other we see that Peter denied and the rest forsook Him. How obviously it was shown that there was a moral incompatibility between their self-confident assertions and the service of the Holy God. But this incompatibility was present to the Spirit’s discernment when these strong asseverations were made, first by the Israelites, and secondly by the Apostles.

So it becomes us to speak very reverently and leniently of our ability to obey. We are probably overestimating our powers. Created might wanes and fails beneath the searching demands of the Holy One. Perpetual failure has weakened us; for when once a door has been broken through a wall, that spot is always weaker. A fallen ancestry has predisposed us to fail. To will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. No one can look thoughtfully into the workings of his own nature without realizing the terrible paralysis which has befallen it. We need then that God should counteract our fickleness by upholding us with His steadfast, or constant, Spirit (Psalm 51:10).

Judges 1:27

“Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.”

HOW persistent evil habits are! They have dwelt in our lives so long that they dislike being dislodged. Why should they quit their dwelling-place and go out into the void? Sometimes, at the beginning of our Christian life, we make a feeble effort against them, and hope to cast them out; but they stubbornly resist. Whenever a remonstrance is addressed to us, we are apt to reply, “Do not find fault; we couldn’t help it. These Canaanites are self-willed and persistent, they *would* dwell in the land.”

But the one point that Israel should have borne in mind was that they had no right there. The land was not theirs, it had become Israel’s. And, moreover, God was prepared to drive them out; so that His people would have no fighting to do, but only to chase a flying foe. One man was to chase a thousand (Joshua 23:10).

So these evil habits have no right to persist in the believer’s life. The whole soil of his heart has been made over to the Son of God, and there should be no part left to weeds. “Sin shall not have dominion over you,” said the Apostle. Nor is this all. The Holy Spirit is prepared to lust against the flesh, that we may not fulfil it in the lusts thereof, or do the things we otherwise *would*. The hasty temper may be *natural* to you: but seeing that your position in Christ is *supernatural*, this Canaanite must be conquered. There is a complete deliverance possible to all who will open their hearts to the might of the Spirit of God. Talk no more of these Canaanites who *would* stay in the land; but say of the blessed Spirit, “*He* is well able to drive them out.”

Judges 2:18

“And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.”

THIS was better than nothing. It was better to have even the fitful gleam of deliverance than to settle down under a monotony of servitude; but how much better it would have been if their national history had been a steady progression from one degree of prosperity to another, like the sun rising toward the perfect day! It was of God’s kindness and grace that the judges created these temporary respites; it was the fault of their own infidelity and sin that they were not always delivered.

This fitful life is too often the experience of the believer. We have our Gideons, and Baraks, and Samsons; times of revival, times of deep and blessed experience, followed by backsliding and relapse; times when the flood-tide of grace rises high in our soul, to be succeeded by the ebb, with long stretches of desert sand. Thank God for the judges; but be on the alert for the reign of the kings, for David and Solomon, Josiah and Hezekiah — *for the reign of the King.*

The days of the judges were those in which there was no king over Israel. The fitfulness of our experience is often attributable to our failure to recognize the kingship of Jesus. We worship other gods — the gods of the nations around; the idols of the marketplace, the studio, the camp and the bar. The aims and practices of the worldly and ungodly too much engross our thoughts, and sway our behaviour. Alas for us! Is it strange that God leaves us to reap much bitterness, recalling us when He can, but longing to be able to do some permanent work of salvation and edification? Oh, let us gladly accord Him what is His right, to “sit and rule upon His throne.”

Judges 3:20

“And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat.”

GOD’S Messages are often secret. — When Eglon was assured that Ehud had brought a Divine message, which could only be delivered in secret, “a secret errand” (Judges 3:19), he fearlessly bade all his retinue go forth from the audience chamber. And in utter loneliness the one passed to the other the message of death. So there are crises in our lives when God’s messengers bring us the secret message, in which none can intrude or interfere.

God’s Messages must be received with reverence. — When Ehud said, “I have a message for thee,” Eglon rose out of his seat. This was a mark of respect, the attitude of attention. It is with similar awe that we should ever wait for the revelation of the Divine will. “What saith my Lord unto His servant?”

God’s Messages leap out from unexpected quarters. — Ehud was left-handed; his sword was therefore on his right side, and he appeared unarmed. No one dreamed of looking for his sword, except on his left side; he was therefore allowed to pass unchallenged into the presence of the king. So Nathan strode into David’s presence, who thought his sin was undiscovered, and said, “Thou art the man.” Cultivate this surprise with sinners.

God’s Messages are sharp as a two-edged sword, and cause death. — A scimitar is sharp at the edge, and blunt at the back to strike; whilst a two-edged sword is made to pierce. God’s Word pierces as a two-edged sword to the dividing of soul and spirit in the recesses of the being, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. When the Eglon of self has received its death-wound, the glad trumpet of freedom is blown on the hills.

Judges 4:9

“And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.”

BARAK preferred the inspiration of Deborah’s presence to the invisible but certain help of Almighty God. It was Jehovah who had commanded him to draw his forces toward the River Kishon, and had promised to deliver Sisera into his hand. But he seemed unable to rise to the splendour of the situation. If only he could have Deborah beside him he would go, but otherwise not. He is mentioned in Hebrews 11 as one of the heroes of faith; but his faith lay rather in Deborah’s influence with God than in his own. Thus he missed the crown of that great day of victory.

It is the mark of the carnal Christian that he has no direct dealings with God for himself, but must needs deal with Him through the medium of another’s prayers, and words, and leadership. Barak must have Deborah. It is faith, though greatly attenuated and reduced by the opaqueness of the medium through which it passes. Such do not attain “unto the first three.” God cannot honour them as He does those who have absolutely no help or hope save in Himself. “Them that honour Me I will honour; and those that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

If God tells you to go alone to a work, be sure and obey. Go, at whatever cost. Dare to stand by yourself if God is with you. In such hours we realize what Jesus meant when He said, “Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it.” Yet if you are unbelieving, your unbelief cannot make God’s faith of none effect. He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. He will still deliver Israel.

Judges 5:31

“So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.”

So sang Deborah; and we may take up her strain, making it our prayer for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

We desire it for His sake. — It cannot be for His glory that His followers should be weak-kneed and decrepit, waning and flickering, backsliding and inconstant. Men will judge Him by them, and will count His light a vanishing luminary if He cannot maintain the glow and fire in those that follow Him. Besides, how great the anguish of His heart must be when those on whom He has expended pains and care deceive and fail Him!

We desire it for their sakes. — Think of the beneficent ministry of the sun — awakening bird and blossom; painting the rich colours of natural beauty; ripening fruits; gladdening children and grandsires; carrying everywhere healing with his beams. If he were conscious of the good he imparts, what blessedness would be his! Would he grudge the expenditure of his vitalizing forces, when from millions of upturned lips he heard himself blessed? Such may the bliss of the Christian worker be if, without diminution of light and heat, his life grows to the perfect day. Blessed are they who bless. If it is happy to receive, it is far happier to impart. “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

We desire it for the sake of others. — The world is sunless enough! Many are perishing for a bath of sunshine! Darkness broods chill and deathly. Let no clouds dim your pathway, or, if they do, transmute them to gold. Shine forth, ye righteous, in the kingdom of your Father, satellites of the greater central Sun of Righteousness!

Judges 6:14

“And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?”

THE strength-giving power of a look from the eyes of Christ! Gideon was weak enough. He said, quite naturally, “Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house” (Judges 6:15). But from the moment of that look, accompanied by that summons, he arose in a strength that never afterward faltered. How truly “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”

It was a look of expectation. — Gideon felt that the angel expected him to save Israel. It is a great matter to excite hope in a man. Tell him that you are anticipating some noble deed from him, and you may light a spark that will set his whole soul aglow. It is of immense importance to stir the timid and retiring with fresh conceptions of the possibilities of their lives.

It was a look of encouragement. — Those gentle, loving eyes said, as though they spoke, “I will be with thee; do not hesitate to look for Me in every hour of need.” Such looks Christ still gives us across the battlefields of life; and if our eyes are fixed upon Him, we shall surely hear Him saying to us, “My grace is sufficient for thee: go in this thy might!”

It was a look of strength-giving might. — It carried help with it. On its beam new spiritual force sped from the speaker to the listener; from captain to cadet. So from the excellent glory one look from Jesus will bring reinforcement. As He looks on us He imparts His strength to us, and says, Go in this thy might. “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

Judges 7:13

“And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.”

LIKE most dreams, incoherent and grotesque! Whoever heard of a cake of barley bread upsetting a tent! To the dreamer and his comrade, there was no sense in it. But how much it meant to the two Hebrews, who had crept up to the other side of the curtain, in the thick darkness, and were drinking in each word!

The dream was very humbling. — It brought Gideon back to the simplicity and helplessness of his own resources. In the gathering of these crowds of warriors, in the notoriety he had achieved, in the loyalty of the three hundred, there was much to inflate his pride. Therefore God brought him face to face with himself. He was only a cake of barley bread at the best. Before God can uplift, use, and anoint us, He must show us what we are, humbling and emptying us, bringing us into the dust of death. Before God can use thee to work a great deliverance, He must convince thee of being only a cake of barley bread. “Five *barley* loaves, and two *small* fishes.”

It was full of hope. — A cake of barley bread might be a worthless thing; but if God were behind it, it would upset a tent! So when the weakest life is placed at the disposal of the Almighty, and taken in hand by Him, it becomes mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.

It is full of teaching. — How much has to be learned by us on these lines! We are too strong for God. We vaunt our might, we count our warriors, we magnify our generalship. This may not be! So God brings us down to the brook and tests us there; and reduces our force to three hundred men, and ourselves to barley-cakes, and there gets the victory with His right hand, and His holy arm.

Judges 8:18

“Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.”

IT was a magnificent tribute to the royal bearing of this illustrious family. All the children had the stamp of kingliness on them, which had impressed even these barbaric princes. Would that a similar confession could be extorted from those who behold the members of the royal house of Jesus!

The children of a king! It is within the reach of any who aspire to it. By the second birth we become the children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, and the Spirit witnesses to our sonship, teaching us to cry, Abba, Father. As children of the great King we should bear the sign of our high lineage in our bearing and walk.

Royalty of Demeanour. — There is an aristocratic bearing in the scions of noble houses among men. The head is lifted high, the mien is proud, the manner distant and reserved. But in the family of God, meekness and lowliness, humility and contriteness, are marks of family likeness. We walk as Jesus walked, of whom the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

Royalty of Dress. — The king is marked by the brilliant orders glittering on his breast. Purple and ermine become those who date their descent from a line of kings. But the emblem of our family is the cross; our colour is scarlet; our insignia is the towel and basin that speak of lowly service.

Royalty of Occupation. — The earthly king does nothing servile. He is waited on with lowly obeisance. But they who are of the same family as Jesus are found performing the lowliest acts of service, in jails, hospitals, and slums. In this they follow closely on the steps of Him who went about doing good.

Judges 9:3

“And his mother’s brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother.”

IS not this the reason why God has set us in families? Had He so chosen, each of us might have been created alone as Adam was, and sent out with no special connection with others of our race. But instead, we are closely connected. It is very rarely that a man is so utterly bereaved as to be destitute of some relative.

Between a man and his brother there is a special tie. It may be truly said, in the case of brothers, that a doorway has been made through the walls which ordinarily part men, which may be bricked up or filled with debris; but the wall there will always be thinner than anywhere else, and some day the doorway may be opened for the passage of the messenger of peace. Men are always more inclined to follow the man of whom they can say, “He is our brother.” Brotherhood, sisterhood, relationship of any kind, is therefore a very precious talent; and it becomes us solemnly to ask ourselves whether it has been put to use. Have you ever spoken or written to your brother or sister about Christ?

As soon as Andrew had found Jesus, he started off to find his own brother Simon; and Simon was glad to follow him because he was his brother. Had another tried, it is as likely as not that he would have repelled him. But what could he say to the man who had shared his childhood’s sports, and had helped him haul in a net of fish many a time after a night of hard work?

This is the reason that Jesus has so strong a hold on human hearts. He is our brother, bone of our bone; not ashamed to call us brethren; and this constitutes a moving argument why we should be inclined to follow Him.

Judges 10:16

“And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.”

THIS is a very strong way of stating the pitifulness of God. It is applying to Him terms borrowed from our own experiences as men; and in no other way could we realize the tender love and compassion of our Heavenly Father. Israel's miseries were due to the sins with which their history was marked; but God's love brooded over them, longing to deliver.

This is the explanation of God's first words to Adam. — One of the versions substitutes for “Where art thou?” the words “Alas for thee!” as though God were treading the glades of Eden with a broken heart, grieved for the misery of His children.

This was the lament of God's Spirit throughout the Old Testament. — “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Mine heart is turned within Me; My compassions are kindled together.” “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!”

This led to the Incarnation and Passion of our Lord. — He looked, and there was no man; He wondered that there was none to help, therefore His own arm brought salvation.

This characterized our Lord's earthly life. — When He beheld the city, and foresaw all the evil that would accrue to it, He could not hold back His tears. “His soul was grieved.” In all likelihood, you, my reader, may be suffering keenly the result of your own mistakes and sins in earlier life. The troubles that hem you in are the direct outcome of your having forsaken God. He could, and would, have saved you; but you made it impossible, because you withdrew yourself from His care. And now He grieves over you. If only you would forsake your sins and turn to Him, He would assuredly raise up a Jephthah for your help.

Judges 11:12

“And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?”

JEPHTHAH’S procedure was admirable in his quiet expostulation, before resorting to force in the defence of home and country against the aggression of Amalek. It was quite clear that Ammon had no right to the lands of which Israel, at God’s command, had dispossessed the Amorites. “Thou doest me wrong to war against me.” But before repelling the invasion, Jephthah did his best to show the unreasonableness of Ammon’s pretext.

Thus our Lord expostulated with the servant that smote Him. “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?”

It is in this way that we are to act still. “If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

In the Master’s judgment, the wrongdoer injured himself much more than any one else; and therefore earnest words of expostulation were desirable to stay him from his own destruction.

How admirable it would be if we would act in such a spirit of meek conciliation! Then our cause might fairly be submitted to the Judge of all (Judges 11:27); and we should be strong in after-times to stand for the sacred rights of others.

There is no need to bribe God’s help, as Jephthah did, by his rash promise. He will give gladly and freely out of His own heart of love the help and deliverance we need, if only our cause is rightly ordered before Him. “Who delivered, and doth deliver; He will yet deliver” (2 Corinthians 1:10). When we are right with our fellow men, we can confidently count on God’s almighty helpfulness.

Judges 12:6

“Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.”

IT was only the omission of “h,” but it meant the death of the man who missed it. One little letter, and the whole wonder and beauty of a human life was forfeited. It is only recently that the peace of an empire was in jeopardy, because a full-stop was misplaced. This scene has become proverbial of those who exact compliance with some arbitrary test, before admitting their fellows into their sect or church. But how thankful we should be, that our admission to the privilege of the Kingdom of God does not depend upon our pronunciation; that the reality of the new-birth is not tested by the accuracy with which we utter the creed; that we shall not be excluded from the gates of the New Jerusalem because we fail in the utterance of an “h”!

Our acceptance with God does not depend on how much we believe. The woman who was healed had very inadequate notions of faith and Christ. She thought that His garment would communicate blessing, yet she was cured. The dying thief had but a glimmering ray of knowledge of the majesty and power of Jesus, but he entered Paradise in His company. The prime necessity with us, is not faith in the sense of *creed*, but as standing for trust. It is not our belief about Christ, but our trust in Him; not our ability to answer the questions of the Catechism, but our coming to Him, and finding rest to our souls — this only is necessary to pass us across the fords of Jordan. “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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

Judges 13:23

“But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.”

MANOAHE was a pessimist, given to dark foreboding, fond of anticipating misfortune. So soon as he realized that he had seen the face of God, he made sure that his wife and he would die. His wife, on the contrary, was prone to look on the bright side of things, and she must have been an admirable help-meet. How much some of us owe to the temperament of those with whom we live? Many a time would Christian sit down to die, and succumb in the dark waters of the river, if it were not for Hopeful, who pierces the gloom, and beholds the light shining beyond the cloud.

Often enough Foreboding whispers, “We shall surely die.” It is the voice of conscience, dreading the result of sin. It is the voice of mistrust, which fails to look beyond the hills for its help. It is the voice of human frailty. At such times let us look back and recount the blessings of the past. Did not God receive our burnt-offering? Did He not conspicuously answer our prayers? Did He not give His only begotten Son? Has He not led us by His right hand and holy arm? Has He not delivered us in seven troubles? Besides, has He not pledged Himself for the future? Has He not showed us “all these things”? It is impossible to believe that He will allow us to be overwhelmed.

His love in time past forbids me to think,

He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.

Trust Him, O suffering saints, doing His will in the teeth of opposition and hate! Fear not the faces of men; be not dismayed before their threats — He is with you to deliver you. They may fight against you, but they shall not prevail; their proudest threats shall fail of their fulfilment.

Judges 14:14

“And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.”

YOUNG lions roar at the saints. The lion of hell gives them no little trouble. Though he may not come upon the path of holiness — for no lion shall be there — yet he comes very near it. “He goeth about like a roaring lion.” Temptation may well be compared to the attack on Samson by the young lion of Timnath.

The lion’s carcass, lying where Samson had rent and cast it, became the home of honey-bees. And as the hero went back to look at it in after-days, he obtained meat and sweetness.

How apt the parable! Every conquered temptation yields these two things — strength and sweetness. We are more than conquerors, not only vanquishing the foe, but dividing the spoils of victory.

It yields strength. — Each time we overcome sin, the strength of the temptation passes into our hearts; as the Indian warrior supposes that the might of each warrior whom he levels to the dust, enters into himself. To resist impatience, makes us more patient in proportion to the strength of the temptation we resist. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.”

It gives sweetness. — There is a new gentleness to those who have been tempted; a humility, a modesty, a consciousness of the presence of God, through whom the victory has been secured; a new zest for the Word of God. How sweet are thy words to my taste! Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. The life that is hid with Christ in God is full of sweetness and gentleness. “The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.”

Judges 15:18

“And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?”

IT had been a great victory. With the jawbone of an ass Samson had smitten a thousand men. But he knew where to attribute the glory. It was not he, but the Spirit of the Lord which had come mightily upon him. This is distinctly recognized when he called unto God, and said, “Thou hast given this great deliverance by my hand.” It was because he had been expending his strength for God, had been, so to speak, burned up by the Divine fire, that he was able to claim God’s interposition for his thirst.

This is the great law of prayer. We have no right to count on God in the agony of a crisis, unless we have been walking in fellowship with Him previously, or are exhausted in fighting His battles. There is nothing that we may not claim of Him when we are living in the current of His life, or when we are exhausted in His service. “Thou hast given this great deliverance by the hand of thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst?”

God’s springs burst out in unlikely spots. He is never at a loss. If there is no natural spring, He can create one. If all around the mighty rocks reflect the sultry heat, and our spirit seems on the point of exhaustion, then in the wilderness He will cause streams to break out. Be of good courage, fainting warrior! The God who made thee, and has used thee, knows thy frame, and what thou needest before thou askest. Hereafter the place shall be known as “the spring of him that called!” He can cause the refreshing stream to pour forth from the flinty rock; He can turn the bitter water sweet for thee to drink thereof; He quenches thy soul-thirst with the water of life.

Judges 16:20

“And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.”

BEWARE of unconscious deterioration! Grey hairs may be here and there upon us without our knowing it. The Lord may be gone out on feet so noiseless, that we are not aware that His Spirit has glided along the corridor, and through the doorway, whispering, Let us depart.

Deterioration is unconscious because it is so *gradual*. The rot that sets in on autumn fruit is very gradual. The damp that silences the violin or piano does its work almost imperceptibly. Satan is too knowing to plunge us into some outrageous sin at a bound. He has sappers and miners engaged long before the explosion, in hollowing subterranean passages through the soul, and filling them with explosives.

Spiritual declension *blunts our sensibility*. The first act of the burglar is to gag the voice that might alarm, and poison the watchdog. So, sin blinds our eyes, and dulls our keen alertness to the presence of evil. Thus, the stages of our relapse are obvious to all eyes but our own. We are drugged as we are being carried off captives.

The progress of evil within us is a matter of unconsciousness, largely because we are *quick to discover reasons to justify our decadence*. We gloze over the real state of affairs. We call sins by other names. We insist on considerations which in our eyes appear to justify our conduct. We still attend to our religious duties, and try to persuade ourselves that it is with us as in times past. To avoid deterioration we must ever watch and pray, and realize that we are the temple of the Holy Ghost. Then shall the peace of God as a sentry guard our hearts and our thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Judges 17:10

“And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.”

MEN crave for a priest. In every age of the world’s history, where there has been a tent indicating the presence of human life, there has been an altar indicating man’s consciousness of God, and a priest suggesting his consciousness of unworthiness to enter into the Divine presence. Man has perpetually taken one of his fellows whose character seemed less blemished than that of others, and after setting him apart with special rites from the ordinary engagements of life, has promised him maintenance and honour, if only he will act as a priest. Be my priest; say for me to God what I cannot say. The sacrifices offered by thy hands are more likely to avail with Him than those rendered by mine.

(1) *Let us beware of the religion which ignores man’s craving for a priest.* — The world abounds with attempts at religious systems, from which the conception of the priest is eliminated. These reduce the worship of God to a system of high-thinking, but fail to deal with man’s consciousness of sin, and his yearning for a settled basis of peace.

(2) *Let us remember that all human priests must ultimately fail.* — God has put them all aside, setting up the priesthood of the blessed Lord. “... ..We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.” (Hebrews 8:1-2) Stars are needless when the sun has arisen. The human priesthood is rendered unnecessary since the Son of God has passed into the heavens to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. No one has a right to pose as a priest to others, except in the sense that all Christians are such.

Judges 18:24

“And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?”

WHATEVER can be taken from us has the mark and signature of man upon it. Since the Jewish priests were not permitted to continue, by reason of death, it was evident that they were men at the best; and nothing that man makes is adequate to supply the immortal cravings of the soul which, having come from God, craves for God.

Change cannot take away our High Priest. — All around us is in a state of flux. No two days in the most brilliant summer are quite the same. The hues are deepening toward autumnal decay. But He continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood. All that He was years ago, He is still, and will be. What to our forefathers, that to us — “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

The concerns of other souls cannot take Him away. — It is not difficult to conceive of the attention of a human priest being diverted from those who once claimed all his help, to fresh interests and younger generations. But, however many they be who flock as doves to the windows of Christ’s mercy, they will never be able to divert an atom of His love and sympathy from us.

Sins and failure cannot rob us of Him. — Indeed, they make Him nearer, dearer, more absolutely necessary. The bands of Danites left Micah wailing: when he wanted the comfort of his priest most, lo, he was gone; but neither principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can separate us from Him who ever liveth to make intercession. “And having an high priest over the house of God: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith... ..” (Hebrews 10:21-22)

Judges 19:1

“And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah.”

IT will be sufficient to ponder these words, which occur four times in this book, without reading further in this terrible chapter, which shows the depths of depravity to which man may sink apart from the grace of God. Where Christ is not enthroned as King, drunkenness, impurity, cruelty, selfishness, are supreme, and pursue their ravages unchecked. How different where He reigns in righteousness, and where His will is done as it is done in heaven!

The Book of Judges depicts the state of the heart which has not admitted the Kingship of our Saviour. Where there is no recognition of this, and a man does as he likes, then the heart breeds all manner of uncleanness; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

In connection with the present marvellous movement afoot in our colleges, five hundred Japanese students met recently under the motto, “Make Jesus King.” Oh that this might be our life-motto! We must crown Him Lord of all.

Let young men and women, who may read these words, specially ponder this suggestion. Perpetual failure in life indicates failure in consecration. If you are continually broken in upon by raids of evil, it is certain that you have never enthroned the Son of God. He is never Saviour in the fullness of His power till He is acknowledged King. Directly the coronation has taken place, He assumes the responsibility of putting down all rule, authority, and power; overcoming the evils that had held sway; and bringing every thought into captivity. Such are the warnings and appeals of this chapter and the next. “Make Jesus King.”

Judges 20:13

“Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel:”

THE earnestness and promptness with which Israel dealt with and put away this evil thing were very commendable. They had gathered from all the land, even from Gilead beyond the Jordan. They were knit together in a perfect unity of feeling and action. They resolved to subordinate all things beside to the excision of this evil.

So must it be in the Church. The Lord Himself took Ananias and Sapphira out of the infant Church; and the Apostle very earnestly besought and commanded the Corinthians to put away from among them the wicked person, who had committed a sin that would not be named among the Gentiles. “... .. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

At the close of this age God will send forth His angels, to sever the wicked from among the just, and to cast them into the furnace of fire.

In our own life it is impossible altogether to avoid contact with such people. Indeed, to do so, as the Apostle says truly, we must go out of the world. But we can abstain from their friendship and company. It is an altogether different thing to have dealings with a worldly man in business, and to admit him into bosom fellowship and comradeship in our leisure hours. The first is permissible, but not the second; else our companions will seduce us from our loyalty to God. Beware of taking on the colour of the ground on which you lie. “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” (John 17:15)

Judges 21:7

“How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?”

AMID the gross evils of this time, the people of Israel were very tenacious of their vows, which had been ratified in the presence of God, and under the solemn sanctions of the Tabernacle. Because they had sworn not to give their daughters in marriage to Benjamin, they had to devise an expedient to obtain wives for the six hundred who had escaped massacre, that the tribe should not become extinct.

The same spirit was manifested by Jephthah, when he said, “... .. for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.” (Judges 11:35) No doubt there was the implied conviction that God would avenge the violation of an oath solemnly taken in His name.

What new emphasis is added by this conception to the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.” (Hebrews 6:17) Since He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, that He would bless and multiply Abraham and his seed. If then you are of the faith of faithful Abraham, you have the right to claim the fulfilment of God’s promise in this double aspect: He will *bless* and *multiply*. And it is impossible for Him to alter or fail in the word He hath spoken.

The Psalmist said that God’s statutes; i.e., the things which He established, were His songs. Surely we have every reason to sing, who know that the covenant of God’s love is as steadfast as His throne. Let us turn His statutes into songs. He has given us exceeding great and precious promises; and we can rejoice that “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20) “But the word of the Lord endureth forever... ..” (1 Peter 1:25)

Ruth 1:20

“And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.”

So she spoke, as many have spoken since, not knowing that God’s ways are ways of pleasantness and *all* His paths peace, when they are not isolated from the plan of our life, but considered as parts of the whole. We cannot pronounce on any part of God’s dealing with us until the entire plan has been allowed to work itself out. How grieved God’s Spirit must be, who is lovingly doing His best, when He hears these words of murmuring and complaint! Let us lift the veil, and notice the pleasant things in Naomi’s life.

True, her husband and sons were dead; but their deaths in a foreign land had left her free to come back to her people and her God; to nestle again under the wings of Jehovah; and to share the advantages of the Tabernacle.

True, Orpah had gone back. Mahlon and Chilion were both buried in Moab; but she had Ruth, who was better to her than seven sons.

True, she had no male child to perpetuate her name; but little Obed would, within a few months, be nestling in her aged arms, and laughing into her withered face.

True, she was very poor; but it was through her poverty that Ruth was brought first into contact with that good man, Boaz; and, besides, there was yet a little patrimony which pertained to her.

Yes, Naomi, like thousands more, thou must take back thy words. Thou didst deal bitterly with thine own happiness in leaving the Land of Promise for Moab; but God dealt pleasantly with thee in thy return and latter end. “Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.” (Psalm 33:18)

Ruth 2:12

“The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”

IN after-days this was a favourite image with David in his wanderings and escapes among those same hills. Perhaps he had received it as a fragrant legacy from the life of his good ancestor, Boaz. At least on one occasion, Jesus employed it in saying that He had wished to gather Jerusalem as a hen her chicks.

How warm, cosy, and safe, the chickens are when they have gathered under the wings of the brooding hen! It must be a very heaven for them. The storm may roll through the sky, the heavy raindrops fall, the hawk may hover above, poisoning itself on its wings; but the body of the parent-bird is interposed between them and all that threatens. What wonder that the Psalmist said that he would hide under the shadow of God’s wings till all his calamities were overpast!

Are you sheltering there? Have you come out of the storm and tempest to hide there? Can you say of the Lord, “... .. He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” (Psalm 91:2)? If so, remain in happy confidence. God is between you and all evil or alarm. Be still; yea, be still.

If you have not come to trust under the outspread wings of the Cherubim, do as Ruth did. Leave the land of your nativity, the far country of Moab; leave your people and your gods; tear yourself away even from some twin-soul, dear as Orpah; come across the border-line, and glean in the fields of the Gospel. There you will meet with the true Boaz, who will show kindness unto you, and you will become affianced to Him, and live at home forevermore in the house of bread, where you will be blessed indeed.

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.”

BOAZ had many good traits — his religious demeanour and speech, his courtesy in greeting his servants, his refusal to take advantage of Ruth’s trust; but none are more satisfactory as an index of a noble character than this well-known and acknowledged promptness of action, when he had once taken in hand the cause of the needy. From of old, Naomi had recognized this quality in her kinsman, and knew that he was a man of his word, who would assiduously complete what he had undertaken to perform.

It is a characteristic that we should do well to cultivate. Let us not arouse hopes, and finally disappoint them; let us not make promises to forget them. Our words should be yea, yea. Those who commit their cause to us should feel perfectly at rest about our executing what we have promised.

How true this is of Jesus! If we have put our matters into His hands, we have no further need of worry or fear, but may sit still in assured trust. For Zion’s sake He does not hold His peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake He will not rest. He has undertaken the cause of the Church, albeit that it is so largely composed of Gentiles, and He will not be in rest until the marriage-feast is celebrated. He has made Himself responsible for thee and me; and He will not rest until He has played the part of a Goel to the furthest limit, and accomplished our redemption. When we have fully yielded ourselves to Him, and have tasted the joys of complete rest, we may assuredly say with the Apostle, “... .. 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.” (2 Timothy 1:12)

Ruth 4:10

“Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.”

SO this exquisite idyll, which began with three deaths and famine, ends with marriage rejoicings. Shall not all God’s idylls end thus? Shall it be left to the dream of the novelist only to make happy forever after? God has eternity at His disposal, as well as time. Only trust Him; “thy darkest night shall end in brightest day.”

It is impossible not to read between these lines and see the foreshadowing of another marriage, when the purchase of the Church shall issue in her everlasting union with the Son, in the presence of God the Father. Let us, however, apply these words to ourselves as individuals.

The Lord Jesus has purchased us to be His own, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with His precious blood.

He has also won back our patrimony; this earth is His; and shall be yet rid of all intruding evil, to shine as the brightest jewel in His crown.

He has received the shoe, the symbol of dominion and authority. He is not only our lover, but our Lord.

He waits to take us to Himself, in a love that shall not cease, and compared to which all the love we have ever known is as moonlight compared with sunshine.

1 Samuel 1:15

“And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.”

HANNAH’S soul was full of complaint and grief, which flowed over into her face and made it sorrowful. But when she had poured out her soul before the Lord, emptying out all its bitterness, the peace of God took the place of her soul anguish, she went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. What a glad exchange! How great the contrast! How much the better for herself, and for her home!

Is your face darkened by the bitterness of your soul? Perhaps the enemy has been vexing you sorely; or there is an unrealized hope, an unfulfilled purpose in your life; or, perchance, the Lord seems to have forgotten you. Poor sufferer, there is nothing for it but to pour out your soul before the Lord. Empty out its contents in confession and prayer. God knows it all; yet tell Him, as if He knew nothing. “... .. ye people, pour out your hearts before him. God is a refuge for us.” (Psalm 62:8) “... .. in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” (Philippians 4:6)

As we pour out our bitterness, God pours in His peace. Weeping goes out of one door whilst joy enters at another. We transmit the cup of tears to the Man of Sorrows, and He hands it back to us filled with the blessings of the new covenant. Some day you will come to the spot where you wept and prayed, bringing your offering of praise and thanksgiving.

1 Samuel 2:19

“Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.”

WHAT happy work it was! Those nimble fingers flew along the seams, because love inspired them. All her woman’s art and wit were put into the garment, her one idea and ambition being to make something which should be not only useful, but becoming. Not mothers only, but fathers, are always making little coats for their children, which they wear long years after a material fabric would have become worn out. How many men and women are wearing today the coats which their parents cut out and made for them long years ago!

Habits are the vesture of the soul. The Apostle bade his converts put off the old man, “... .. which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts:” (Ephesians 4:22) and to put on the new man, “... .. which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephesians 4:24); to put off anger, wrath, and malice, whilst they put on mercy, humility, and meekness. What words could better establish the fact that habits are (as the name indicates) the clothing of the inner life! Where and how are habits formed? Not in the mid passage of life, but at its dawn; not in great crises, but in daily circumstances; not in life’s arena, but in the home, amid the surroundings of earliest childhood. Oh that the spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness may ever be exhibited before those with whom we daily come in contact!

By their behaviour to each other and to their children; by the ordering of the home life; by their actions, more than by their words; by the way in which they speak, and spend their leisure hours, and pray — men and women are making the little coats which, for better or worse, their children wear ever after, and perhaps pass down to after generations.

1 Samuel 3:10

“And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.”

SEE the urgency of God! Four times He came, and stood, and called. Mark how He stands at the door to knock. At first He was content to call the lad once by name; but after three unsuccessful attempts to attract him to Himself, He uttered the name twice, with strong urgency in the appeal, Samuel! Samuel! This has been called God's double knock. There are seven or eight of these double knocks in Scripture: Simon, Simon; Saul, Saul; Abraham, Abraham.

How may we be sure of a Divine call?

We may know God's call when it grows in intensity. — If an impression comes into your soul, and you are not quite sure of its origin, pray over it; above all, act on it so far as possible, follow in the direction in which it leads — and as you lift up your soul before God, it will wax or wane. If it wanes at all, abandon it. If it waxes follow it, though all hell attempt to stay you.

We may test God's call by the assistance of godly friends. — The aged Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child, and gave him good advice as to the manner in which he should respond to it. Our special gifts and the drift of our circumstances will also assuredly concur in one of God's calls.

We may test God's call by its effect on us. — Does it lead to self denial? Does it induce us to leave the comfortable bed and step into the cold? Does it drive us forth to minister to others? Does it make us more unselfish, loving, tender, modest, humble? Whatever is to the humbling of our pride, and the glory of God, may be truly deemed God's call. Be quick to respond, and fearlessly deliver the message the Lord has given you.

1 Samuel 4:3

“And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.”

ISRAEL had been defeated with great loss. Their only hope of being able to hold their own against the Philistines and the people of the land was in the protection and help vouchsafed to them by God. They knew this, and thought that they would be secured, if only the Ark of the Covenant were on the field. They forgot that it was only the material symbol of a spiritual relationship; that it was useless unless that relationship was in living force; and that the bending forms of the cherubim, emblematic of the Divine protection, would not avail if their fellowship with the God of the cherubim had been ruptured by backsliding.

There is a sense in which we are always sending for the Ark. The reliance on outward rites, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, on the part of those who are alienated from the life of God; the maintenance of the forms of prayer and Scripture reading, which no longer express the passionate love of the soul; the habit of churchgoing, which so many practise, not because they love God, but because they think that it will in some way secure His alliance in life's battle — all these are forms in which we still fetch the Ark of the covenant, whilst our hearts are wrong with the God of the covenant.

It should never be forgotten that nothing can afford to us protection and succour but vital union with Christ. We must hide in His secret place if we would abide under His shadow. We must dwell in the most holy place if we would be shadowed by the wings of the Shekinah. There must be nothing between us and God, if we are to walk together, and enjoy fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

1 Samuel 5:3

“And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.”

THE idols of the heathen represent demons who are their accepted gods, just as the Ark was the symbol of the presence of Jehovah. In the one case there was a material representation of the demon; but in the case of the Ark there was only a throne, the Mercy Seat; and no attempt was made to represent the appearance of the God of Israel. When placed in the Holy of Holies, the Shekinah shone between the cherubim; this alone spoke of the Divine Spirit who filled the apparently vacant throne. When the effigy of the fish god was confronted by the Sacred Ark, it was as though the demon spirit and the Divine Spirit had come into contact, with the inevitable result that the inferiority of the one ensured the crash of its effigy to the ground.

What a lesson this must have been to the Philistines — similar to that given Pharaoh in the plagues of Egypt, and with the same object of leading them to see the superior greatness of Jehovah! How great the encouragement to Israel to know that God could defend His superiority! And how striking the prognostication for the future, when all the Dagon of the world shall be broken before the symbol of Divine power and love!

Bring the Ark of God into your life. Set it down in your heart, and forthwith the Dagon which have held sway for so long will one after another succumb. “The idols He will utterly abolish.” Let Christ in — that is the one need of the soul; and let Him take full possession of you. Then He will do His own work. Darkness cannot abide light.

1 Samuel 6:12

“And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh.”

THAT two milch kine which had never borne the yoke should move quietly along the high road, turning neither to the right nor to the left, and lowing for the calves they had left behind, clearly indicated that they were possessed and guided by some mysterious power, which we know to have been God's. And if He were able thus to overpower the instincts of their nature, and to compel them to do His will, may we not infer that all circumstances, and all men, however unwittingly, and against their natural instinct, are subserving the purposes of His will, and bearing on the Ark? The fish yields the tribute money (see Matthew 17:27); the colt of the ass waits where two ways meet to bear the Redeemer (see Matthew 21:2); the man with the waterpot leads to the upper room (see Luke 22:10); the Roman soldiers enable Paul to fulfil the mission of his life, in preaching the Gospel without hindrance in the very heart of Rome.

As we go forth into the world, let us believe that the movement of all things is towards the accomplishment of God's purpose. Herein is a fulfilment of the Psalmist's prediction about man, which can only be perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the second Adam — that all things are under His feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field. Everything serves Christ, and those who serve Christ. In a true sense all things are ours; they minister to us, even as Christ to God.

And against our natural inclinations let us always regard the claims of God as paramount; and dare to go His way, though our heart pines for those we leave behind. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:37)

1 Samuel 7:8

“And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.”

SAMUEL was famous for his prayers. They are repeatedly referred to in the brief record of his life. In the Psalms he is spoken of as the one who called upon God’s name. (see Psalm 99:6) Indeed, he fought and won Israel’s battles by his strong intercessions. Mary of Scots said that she dreaded the prayers of John Knox more than the battalions of the King of France. So his people were accustomed to think that if the prophet’s hands were held out in importunate prayer, their foes must be restrained.

In the Life of Mr. Reginald Radcliffe, one who contributes a reminiscence interjects a remark which deserves to be carefully pondered: — “The great secret of the blessing which came from God to the awakening of whole districts, the quickening of Christians, and the salvation of multitudes, was prayer, continued, fervent, believing, expectant. There was never anything striking in the addresses; but through communion with the living Christ, the word came forth with living and life giving power. Often would the forenoon be spent in continuous prayer.” This may well convict some of us of the cause of our failure. We have expected the Lord to thunder and discomfort our Philistines, and with a great deliverance; but we have ceased to cry unto the Lord.

Ye that are the Lord’s remembrancers, cease not to cry unto Him. If the judge avenged the unfortunate widow, shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night? It is recorded of our Lord that He prayed early and late, and all night. He prayed when He was about to be transfigured; for His disciples; in the Garden of Gethsemane; and for His murderers. How much more do we need to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)!

1 Samuel 8:6

“But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.”

A LITTLE further down in the chapter we learn that Samuel rehearsed the words of the people unto the Lord. His prayer, to a large extent, was a rehearsal of all the strong and unkind things that the people had said to him; and in this way he passed them off his mind, and found relief. There is a suggestion of close communion with God in the expression, “... .. he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.” (1 Samuel 8:21) It had been the habit of his life to be on intimate terms with his God.

Things do not always turn out as we had hoped, and we get displeased for our own sakes and God’s. We had planned in one direction, but events have issued in another; and the results have threatened to become disastrous. There is but one resource. If we allow vexations to eat into our heart, they will corrode and injure it. We must rehearse them to God — spreading the letter before Him, as Hezekiah did; making request like Paul; crying like Samuel.

Surely it is the mistake of our life, that we carry our burdens instead of handing them over; that we worry instead of trusting; that we pray so little. The grass grows thick on the pathway to our oratory; the cobwebs hang across the doorway. The time we spend in prayer is perhaps better spent than in any other way. It was whilst Samuel prayed thus, that he saw the Divine programme for Israel:

“And he who at the sixth hour sought
 The lone house top to pray,
 There gained a sight beyond his thought —
 The dawn of Gentile day.
 Then reckon not, when perils lour,
 The time of prayer misspent;
 Nor meanest chance, nor place, nor hour,
 Without its heavenward bent.”

1 Samuel 9:6

“And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.”

THERE is a street in London, near St. Paul’s, which I never traverse without very peculiar feelings. It is Godliman Street. Evidently the name is a corruption of *godly man*. Did some saint of God once live here, whose life was so holy as to give a sweet savour to the very street in which he dwelt? Were the neighbours who knew him best, the most sure of his godliness? Would that our piety might leave its mark on our neighbourhoods, and the memory linger long after we have passed away!

A generation or two ago in the Highlands, there were earnest and holy men who were known by the significant title of *the men*. No great religious gathering was deemed complete without them. Their prayers and exhortations were accompanied by an especial unction.

In such manner Samuel’s godliness was recognised far and wide. The fragrance of his character could not be concealed. And this gave men confidence in him. They said, “... .. he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass:” (1 Samuel 9:6) How much credit redounds to godliness, when it is combined with trustworthiness and high credit amongst our fellows!

Let us seek to be God’s men and women. Let us live not only soberly and righteously, but *godly*, in this present world. Let us remember that God hath set apart the godly for Himself. The godly are the godlike. They become so by cultivating the fellowship and friendship of God. Their faces become enlightened with His beauty; their words are weighty with His truth. After being for a little in their company, you detect the gravity, serenity, gentleness, beauty of holiness, which are the court manners of heaven.

1 Samuel 10:7

“And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee.”

THIS an example of how God demands of us the use of our sanctified common sense. Samuel sketches to Saul the course of events during the next few days; showing how clearly our lives lie naked and open to the eyes of God, and how easily He can reveal them when necessary. But whilst the various incidents are told, the prophet does not feel it incumbent to tell this goodly young man how he should behave in any given instance. “When these signs are come upon thee, thou shalt do as occasion serve thee.”

We are reminded of a parallel in the life of Peter. The angel of God unbarred the prison doors, and led him forth, because nothing short of Divine power would avail. He led the dazed Apostle through one street, because he was too bewildered to realize what had happened. But, as soon as the night air had brought him to his senses, the angel left him to consider the matter (see Acts 12:12) — to use his own judgment. The result of which was, that he went to the house of Mary.

One of the divinest of our faculties is the judgment, before which the reasons for and against a certain course of action must be adduced, but with which the ultimate decision lies. It is a tendency with some to depreciate the use of this wonderful power, by looking for signs and visions to point their path. This is a profound mistake. God will give these when there are complications in which the exercise of judgment might be at fault; but not where it is sufficient. Where no sign is given, carefully divest yourself of selfish considerations, weigh the pros and cons, ask for guidance, dare to act; and having acted in faith, never look back or doubt.

1 Samuel 11:14

“Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.”

IT is good to have days and occasions for renewing the kingdom. Already Saul had been anointed king. It was a recognised matter that he should inaugurate the days of the kings, as distinguished from those of the judges. But his great victory at Jabesh Gilead seems to have wrought the enthusiasm of the people to the highest pitch, and to have presented a great opportunity for renewing the kingdom. They went to Gilgal to do this, because there, on the first entrance into Canaan, Israel had rolled away the reproach of uncircumcision, which symbolised their lack of separation.

Jesus is our King. The Father hath anointed Him, and set Him on His holy hill; and we have gladly assented to the appointment, and made Him King. But sometimes our sense of loyalty and devotion wanes. Insensibly we drift from our strenuous endeavour to act always as His devoted subjects. Therefore we need, from time to time, to renew the kingdom, and reverently make Him King before the Lord.

Go over the old solemn form of dedication; turn to the yellow leaves of the diary; bring under His sceptre any new provinces of influence that have been acquired; tell Him how glad and thankful you are to live only for Him. Let this be done at Gilgal, the place of circumcision and separation, with the Jordan of death flowing behind, and the Land of Promise beckoning in front. There is a sense in which we can consecrate ourselves only once; but we can renew our vows often.

“Blessings abound where’er He reigns;
The prisoner leaps to burst his chains;
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest”

1 Samuel 12:22

“For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.”

THE certainty of our salvation rests on the character of God. Moses, years before, had pleaded that God could not afford to destroy or forsake Israel, lest the Egyptians and others should have some ground for saying that He was not able to carry out His purpose, or that He was fickle and changeable. “What wilt Thou do for thy great Name?” Samuel uses the same argument. We also may avail ourselves of it for our great comfort.

God knew what we should be — how weak and frail and changeful before He arrested us and brought us to Himself. Speaking after the manner of men, we might say He counted the cost. He computed whether His resources were sufficient to secure us from our foes, keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. He foreknew how much forbearance, pity, consolation, and tenderness, we should require. And yet it pleased Him to make us His people. He cannot, therefore, now run back from His purpose; otherwise it would seem that difficulties had arisen which either He had not anticipated, or was not so well able to combat as He had thought. What an absurd suggestion! In the former case there would be a slur on His omniscience; on the other, upon His omnipotence.

“What if God should cast you into hell?” was asked of an old Scotchwoman.

“Well,” she answered, “If He do, all I can say is, He will lose more than I will.”

The gracious promise given to Joshua may be appropriated by every trembling saint of God: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” To the poor and needy He says, “I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

1 Samuel 13:12

“Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.”

THIS was wholly outside Saul’s province. Samuel had engaged to arrive within the seven days: they had nearly expired, and still there were no signs of the prophet; and Saul, yielding to the promptings of his impetuous nature, took the matter into his own hand, and rashly assumed an office to which he had no right. He protested that he had been very unwilling to add the function of priest to that of king. But this was notoriously contrary to the truth. For some time he had chafed against Samuel’s prerogative, and now sought to supersede the Divine order.

It seemed but a small act, and, to superficial judgment, not enough to warrant the loss of his kingdom; but it was symptomatic of a great moral deficiency. He had not learned to obey the commandment of the Lord: how could he rule? He could not control the hasty suggestions of his own nature, in favour of the deliberate movement of the Divine order: how could he be God’s chosen agent? He acted on the showings of expediency, rather than of faith: how could he be a man after God’s own heart? The restlessness and haste which characterize the present age must not be allowed to affect our service for God; for thereby the progress of the Gospel will be hindered rather than helped.

We must learn to wait for God. He may not come till the allotted time has almost passed; but He will come. He waits for the exact moment in which He can best succour you. Not till patience has been exercised, but before it has given out. In the meanwhile, be sure that your safety is secured; He will see to it that the Philistines shall not come down to overwhelm you.

1 Samuel 14: 27

“But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.”

THE Philistines were in full flight. The Israelites followed hard at their heels through the wood. It was there that the honey dropped in rich abundance on the ground, and there Jonathan tasted a little, dipping the end of his rod into it. It made all the difference to him, warding off the excessive exhaustion which paralysed the rest of the army.

The Word of God is sweeter than the honeycomb. — Luscious to the sanctified taste; enlightening to the dimming eyes; strength giving to the weary. It drops in abundance to the ground, as though inviting the hand of the Christian warrior or wayfarer to take it freely. If there is no taste for the *written* Word, it may be assumed that the *living* Word has not been enthroned in the heart; for where He reigns supreme, there is a longing for the food which alone can fit us for the Christian life.

Where we cannot take much, let us take some. — There was no time for Jonathan to sit down and take his fill. He could only catch up some as he hastily passed through the forest glade; but that little made all the difference to him. So, in the early morning, or at mid day, if we cannot fill our hearts with Scripture, we may catch up a morsel, which will minister untold refreshment, and clear our spiritual vision.

We specially need to do this when flushed with success. — Too often, when we have had success in the battles of the Lord — a good time in preaching or teaching — we are apt to congratulate ourselves, and suppose that we can live on the emotions excited. But, probably, there is no time when we need more absolutely to turn to the Word of God. In victory, as in defeat, we must be fed and nourished.

1 Samuel 15:22

“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

THIS is a great principle, which is repeatedly enforced throughout the Bible. Men have always been apt to divorce religion and morality, and to suppose that a certain tribute of sacrifice to God will be sufficient compensation for notorious evil doing. But in every age God’s servants have protested against the notion, and have insisted, as Samuel did with Saul, that it were better to obey, although there should be no spoil from which to select victims for sacrifice. This was Christ’s perpetual protest against the Pharisees.

Let the Ritualist beware. — There is a grave fear lest extreme attention to the outward rite may be accompanied by carelessness to the inward temper. Where the outward observance is the expression of the attitude of the soul, it is to be respected even by those of us who feel that excessive symbolism is hostile to the devout life; but where the rite takes the place of the soul’s devotion, or condones a lax morality, it cannot be too sternly deprecated. Though all the Levitical rites should be observed without flaw, they could not compensate for the persistent neglect of the least item of the Decalogue. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)

Let us all beware. — We are apt to make sacrifices of time and money and energy for God, and to comfort ourselves with the reflection that such as we are may be excused if in small lapses of temper, or disposition, we come short of the Divine standard. No; it cannot pass muster. One sin mastered, one temptation resisted, one duty performed, is dearer to God than the most costly sacrifices that were ever piled upon the altar.

1 Samuel 16:13

“Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.”

WHAT may not a day bring forth! Here was a shepherd lad, summoned hastily from his sheep, and anointed king. But an even greater blessing came into his life that day, for he was mightily endued with the Holy Spirit. Without doubt, during his early years the Spirit of God had dwelt within him, moulding his character, inditing his songs; but, henceforth, the Spirit was to abide on him, as a Divine unction.

Why should not this day witness a similar transformation for you; not in the change of earthly position, but in your reception of the “power from on high” through a renewed enduement (see Luke 24:49)? Why should not the Spirit of the Lord come mightily upon you from this holy hour, even as your eyes glance down this page? Though it is quite possible that you have been empowered once, there is no finality in God’s bestowals; the apostles were filled and filled again (Acts 2 and 4).

The age of Pentecost in which we live is distinctly one of Divine anointing. It awaits all who will separate themselves to God, and receive it for His glory. The characteristic preposition of this age is on. If you have not received power, seek it; he that seeketh findeth; nay, receive it — to ask is to get. If the Master, though begotten of the Holy Spirit, forebore to preach the Gospel, and bind up broken hearts, till He had been anointed as the Christ by the Spirit, who descended on Him at His baptism; how foolish it is for us, who were born in sin, to attempt similar work, apart from similar enduement! The promise to each child of God is: “But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8).

1 Samuel 17:26, 36

“And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

... Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.”

THIS made all the difference between David and the rest of the camp. To Saul and his soldiers God was an absentee — a name, but little else. They believed that He had done great things for His people in the past, and that at some future time, in the days of the Messiah, He might be expected to do great things again; but no one thought of Him as present. Keenly sensitive to the defiance of the Philistine, and grieved by the apathy of his people, David, on the other hand, felt that God was alive. He had lived alone with Him in the solitude of the hills, till God had become one of the greatest and most real facts of his young existence; and as the lad went to and fro among the armed warriors, he was sublimely conscious of the presence of the living God amid the clang of the camp.

This is what we need. To live so much with God, that when we come amongst men, whether in the bazaars of India or the market place of an English town, we may be more aware of His overshadowing presence than of the presence or absence of any one. Lo, God is here! This place is hallowed ground! But none can realize this by the act of the will. We can only find God everywhere when we carry Him everywhere. The miner sees by the candle he carries on his forehead.

Each of us is opposed by difficulties, privations, and trials of different sorts. But the one answer to them all is faith's vision of the Living God. We can face the mightiest foe in His name. If our faith can but make Him a passage, along which He shall come, there is no Goliath He will not quell; no question He will not answer; no need He will not meet.

1 Samuel 18: 5, 14, 15, 30

“And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul’s servants. ... And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. ... Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.”

THERE must be some strong reason for the four-fold repetition of this phrase in so short a space. It is as though the Holy Ghost would lay very distinct stress on the Divine prudence and circumspection, which must characterise the man whose life is hid in God. Let us walk with God, abiding in Him, subjecting our thoughts and plans to His, communing about all things with Him, talking over our lives with Him, before we go out to live them in the presence of our fellows. Then we too shall have this gracious wisdom, which is more moral than intellectual — the product of the grace of God rather than of human culture.

Our life shall commend itself to men (v5): — David’s was good in the sight of all the people, and more wonderful still, in the sight of Saul’s servants, who might have been jealous. A life lived in God disarms jealousy and envy. He who, as a boy, did his Father’s business increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and men.

Our life shall rebuke and awe our foes (v15): — Saul stood in awe of Him. When traps and snares are laid for us we shall be enabled to thread our way through them all, as Jesus did when they tried to entangle Him in His talk. We shall have a wisdom which all our foes together shall not be able to gainsay or resist.

Our name will be precious (v30): — People loved to dwell on the name of David; it was much set by; they noticed and were impressed with the beauty and nobility of his character. We must always view our lives, amusements, and undertakings, in the light of the result which will accrue to Him whose name it is our privilege to bear.

1 Samuel 19:6

“And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul swore, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.”

IT was a noble act of Jonathan. He might have withdrawn from his friendship with David when it threatened his relations with his father; but, instead, he stepped into the breach, and pleaded for his friend, endeavouring to eradicate the false and ungenerous conceptions of which Saul had become possessed. It is an example we do well to study and copy. For his love's sake, as well as for his father's, he was extremely eager to effect a reconciliation between him to whom he owed allegiance of son and subject, and this fair shepherd-minstrel-warrior, who had so recently cast a sunny gleam upon his life.

Men often misconceive of one another. Jealousy and envy distort behaviour and actions which are in themselves as beautiful as possible. Misrepresentation will blind us to the true excellences of one another's characters. Wrong constructions are often put on the most innocent incidents. We cannot help these things, they are part of the sad heritage of the Fall; but we may often take up the cause of a misunderstood man, and at the risk of losing our own reputation, and diverting to ourselves some of the odium which attaches to him, we may stand as his sponsors.

Even if we dislike another, as Saul did David, let us give scope to the good Spirit to plead his cause at the bar of our hearts, as Jonathan did for his friend. Let us consider all the kind and loving things that may be said of him; let us put ourselves in his position; let us be willing to believe and hope all things. Let us plead for others, since this is a work in which Christ's followers most closely approximate to Him who ever liveth to intercede.

1 Samuel 20:18

“Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.”

JONATHAN and David had entered into a covenant, each loving the other as his own soul. Anxious to shield his friend from the wrath of his father, Jonathan discloses to David the plan by which he shall know how matters fared in the royal palace. David's vacant seat suggests a lesson for us.

There are a good many empty seats in our houses. Those that occupied them can never do so again; they have gone never to return again, and we miss them sorely.

Let us see to it that we do not leave our seats in the home circle needlessly vacant. Let not the mother be away at the dance, or even at the religious meeting, when she should be at home, joining in her children's evening prayers. Let the father be very sure that God has called him elsewhere, before he habitually vacates his place in the evening family circle. Let each of us avoid giving needless pain to those we love by leaving empty seats. But if God calls us away to His service, then for those who miss us, another Form shall glide in, and sit in the vacant chair; and they will become conscious that the Master is filling the gap, and beguiling the weary moments.

Above all, let not your seat be empty in the house of God, at the ordinary service, or at the Lord's Table. We are too prone to allow a trifle to deter us from joining in the sacred feasts. At such times we are missed, our empty seat witnesses against us; there is a lack in the song and prayer, which cries out against us; there is a distinct loss to the power of the service, which is in proportion to the number of earnest souls present. Oh that there may be no empty seats at the marriage supper, vacated through our unfaithfulness!

1 Samuel 21:9

“And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.”

WHAT David said of the sword of Goliath we may say of Holy Scripture — the sword of the Spirit — “There is none like that.”

There is no book like the Bible for those convinced of sin. — The Word of God assures the sinner of God’s love in Christ, whilst it refuses to condone a single sin, or excuse one shortcoming. The Bible is as stern as conscience herself against sin, but as pitiful as the heart of God to the sinner. It, moreover, discloses the method by which the just God becomes the justifier of those who believe.

There is no book like the Bible for the sorrowful. — It tells of the Comforter; it reminds us that in all our sorrow God also is sad; it points to the perfect plan according to which God is working out our blessedness; it insists that all things are working together for good; it opens the vision of the blessed future, where all the griefs and tears of men shall be put away for ever.

There is no book like the Bible for the dying. — “Read to me,” said Sir Walter Scott, on his dying bed, to his friend. “What shall I read?” “There is only one book for a dying man,” was the answer; “read to me from the Bible.” The Book which tells of the Lord, who died and rose again; of the mansions which He has gone to prepare; of the reunion of the saints; of the fountains of water of life — is the only pillow on which the dying head can rest softly.

In these days of debate and doubt there is no such evidence for the Divine authority of the Bible as that which accrues from its perpetual use, whether in our own life, or in the conviction of the ungodly.

1 Samuel 22:3

“And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me.”

WE shall never get to the end of all that God will do for us, if only we perfectly give ourselves up to Him. David had a very imperfect vision of all that was in God’s plan for him; he had an inkling, but that was all. And we have still less. Yet let us recapitulate some of the things which God will do for us.

He waits to *give us the spirit of Sonship*: so that we may ever be conscious of his Fatherhood, and look up into His face in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the Mount of Transfiguration alike, calling Him Abba, Father.

He longs to *lead us to full consecration*; to lead us into such close association with Jesus in His redeeming purpose, that we may become His willing bond servants, with no other purpose and aim in life than His service and glory.

He desires to *deliver us from all known sin*: that we may be blameless and harmless, His children without rebuke in this sinful world, who walk before Him in holiness and righteousness all our days.

He wants to *anoint us with the Holy Spirit*: so that our ministry to men may have more of the savour of Christ; may plough deeper furrows in human hearts; may have more abiding results.

He desires us to *come into partnership* with His Son — here in His redemptive purpose, yonder in His throne. To this indeed He calls us.

Who can know all that God waits to do, not here only, but yonder, when life has entered upon its eternal stage! “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2).

1 Samuel 23:9

“And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.”

DAVID was passing through one of the most awful experiences of his life, when his men spoke of stoning him instead of taking up his cause. How many times in this chapter we are informed that David inquired of the Lord! Some three or four times the appeal for direction was renewed, as though he were fearful to stir one step by the light of his own unaided wisdom. In that changeful life of his, it must have been extremely difficult to set the Lord always before him, and await Divine direction. Many a time his circumstances might seem to demand immediate action rather than prayer; and the rude soldiery must have insisted on their voice being heard rather than a priest's; but David was not deterred by one or the other, and still held to his practice of consulting the Urim and Thummim stone, set in the ephod; which was probably a splendid diamond, flashing with God's distinct “Yes,” or growing cloudy and dark with his definite “No.”

Let us inquire of the Lord. The answer will surely come, if we wait for it. If we are not sure of it, let us still wait, for it will come — not so early as to save us from using our faith, not so late as to permit us to be overwhelmed. Direction will come in the growing conviction of duty, in the drift of circumstances, in the advice of friends, in the perceptions of a sanctified judgment. None that wait on God can be ashamed. Whether our duty be to arise and pursue, to sit still, or to escape — “the meek He will guide in judgment; the meek He will teach his way.” He gives us a white stone in which a name is written, which only they know who receive.

1 Samuel 24:5

“And it came to pass afterward, that David’s heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul’s skirt.”

IT is well to have a tender conscience, and to obey its least monitions, even when men and things militate against it. Here was an opportunity for David and his band to end their wanderings and hardships by one thrust of the spear; but though it was a very small thing that he had done, David was struck with remorse for having taken advantage of Saul’s retirement in the precincts of the cave, where his men and he were hiding, and cut off a piece of his robe.

It was a trifling matter, and yet it seemed dishonouring to God’s anointed king; and as such it hurt David to have done it. We sometimes in conversation and criticism cut off a piece of a man’s character, or influence for good, or standing in the esteem of others. Ought not our heart to smite us for such thoughtless conduct? Ought we not to make confession or reparation?

Circumstances seemed to favour it. — Of all the scores of caves in the neighbourhood, the king had happened to choose the very one, in the dark recesses of which David and his men were sheltering. What more natural than to obtain some token to convince the king how absolutely he had been in his young rival’s power? But favouring circumstances do not justify an act which is not perfectly healthy and right. Opportunity does not make a wrong thing right.

His men unanimously approved the act, nay, they wanted him to go further. Their standard was a very low one, not only in this case, but in others. How wonderful that David kept such a high ideal amid such comrades! We shall not be judged hereafter by the standard obtained among our comrades.

1 Samuel 25:31

“That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.”

THERE was an inimitable blending of woman’s wit with worldly prudence in the words of the beautiful Abigail. Poor woman, she had had a sorry life, mated to such a man as Nabal! An ill assorted pair certainly, though probably she had had no hand in bringing about the alliance. Like so many Eastern women, she was the creature of another’s act and choice. But she succeeded in averting the blow which David was hasting to inflict, by asserting her belief that the time was not far distant when he would no longer be a fugitive from his foes, and by suggesting that when that happy time came it would be a relief to feel that he had not allowed himself to be carried to all lengths by his hot passion.

It was very salutary advice. Let us always look at things from the view point of the future, when our passion shall have subsided, when time shall have cooled us, and especially when we review the present from the verge of the other world — how then?

We can well afford to do this since God is with us, and our life is bound up with Him in the bundle of life. Abigail reminded David that God would do to him all the good of which He had spoken, and would sling out his enemies as from a sling. So God will do for us; not one good thing will fail of all that He hath promised; no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper. Within a little, Nabal was dead, and David’s wrong righted. So shall the evil that now molests us pass away. God will deal with it. Let us leave it to Him: before Him mountains shall melt like wax; and we shall have nothing to regret.

1 Samuel 26:21

“Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.”

THE Apostle makes a great distinction, and rightly, between the sorrow of the world and the sorrow of a godly repentance which needeth not to be repented of. Certainly Saul’s confession of sin belonged to the former; whilst the cry of the latter comes out in Psalm 51, extorted from David by the crimes of after years.

The difference between the two may be briefly summarized in this, that the one counts sin a folly and regrets its consequences; whilst the other regards sin as a crime done against the most Holy God, and regrets the pain given to Him. “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.”

Obviously Saul’s confession was of the former description, “I have played the fool.” He recognised the unkingliness of his behaviour, and the futility of his efforts against David. But he stayed there, stopping short of a faithful recognition of his position in the sight of God, as weighed in the balances of eternal justice.

Many a time in Scripture do we meet with this confession. The prodigal son, Judas, Pharaoh, David, and Saul, uttered it; but in what differing tones, and with what differing motives! We need to winnow our words before God; not content with using the expressions of penitence, unless we are very sure that they bear the mint mark of heaven, and deserve the master’s Beatitude, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

When sin is humbly confessed, the Saviour assures us: “Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee, go in peace.” “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

1 Samuel 27:1

“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.”

WHAT a fit of despondency and unbelief was here! We can hardly believe that this is he who in so many psalms had boasted of the shepherd care of God, who had so often insisted on the safety of God’s pavilion. It was a fainting fit, brought on by the bad air he had breathed amid the evil associations of Adullam’s cave. Had not God promised to take care of him? Was not his future already guaranteed by the promises that he should succeed the kingdom? But nothing availed to check his precipitate flight into the land of the Philistines.

Bitterly he rued this mistake. The prevarication and deceit to which he was driven; the anguish of having to march with Achish against his own people; the sack and burning of Ziklag: these were the price he had to pay for his mistrust. Unbelief always brings many other bitter sorrows in its train, and leads the soul to cry,

“How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou forget me for ever?

How long wilt Thou hide thy face from me?”

Let us beware of losing heart, as David did. Look not at Saul, but at God, who is omnipotent; not at the winds and waves, but at Him who walks across the water; not at what may come, but at that which is — for the glorious Lord is round about thee to deliver thee. He shall deliver thy soul from death, thine eyes from tears, and thy feet from falling. He that has helped will help. What He has done, He will do. God always works from less to more, never from more to less. Dost thou not hear — hast thou not heard — his voice saying, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee? What, then, can man do unto thee? Every weapon used against thee shall go blunt on an invisible shield!

1 Samuel 28:18

“Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.”

THUS unforgiven sin comes back to a man. We cannot explain the mysteries that lie around this incident; but it is clear that in that supreme hour of Saul’s fate, that early sin, which had never been confessed and put away, came surging back on the mind and heart of the terror stricken monarch. “Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.” But Saul did not realize that even then the gates of God’s love stood open to him, if only he would pass through them by humble penitence and faith. If instead of applying to the witch, he had sought God’s mercy, light would have burst on his darkened path, and he had never perished by his own hand on Mount Gilboa.

In strong contrast with this, let us put the assurance of the new covenant: “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” When God forgives, He blots out from the book of His remembrance. The sin is gone as a pebble in the ocean; as a cloud in the blue of a summer’s sky.

Saul’s was a sin of omission. The question was not what evil he had done, but the good he had failed to do. Let us remember that we need pardon for the sad lapses and failures of our lives, equally as for the positive transgressions. And if such things are not forgiven, they will lie heavy on our consciences when the shadows of death begin to gather around us. The New Testament especially judges those who knew and did not do — the slothful servant, the virgin without the oil, the priest that passed by on the other side.

1 Samuel 29:3

“Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?”

IT was a very natural remark. The Philistines were going into battle with the Hebrew king and his troops, and it was very anomalous that a strong body of Hebrews should be forming part of the Philistine array. They had no business to be there. The annoyance of the chief captains and lords that surrounded Achish was natural enough. For long, probably, it had been smouldering; now it broke out into flame.

It is very terrible when the children of the world have a higher sense of Christian propriety and fitness than Christians themselves, and say to one another, “What do these Hebrews here?” The word “Hebrew” means one that has passed over — a separatist. The death of our Lord Jesus was intended to make all His followers separatists. Through Him they have passed from death unto life; they have been delivered out of the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. The appeal of His cross to us all is, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate.” Too often, however, that call is unheeded; and, for fear of man, we mingle with the ranks of the enemies of our Lord.

If Christians attend the theatre; if Sunday school teachers, elders or deacons of a church, are found participating in the pleasures of the ungodly; if the young Christian man is found loosely consorting with the card players of the smoking room of an ocean steamer — may not the sneer go round, “What do these Hebrews here?” “What doest thou here, Elijah!” is the remonstrance of God. “What do these Hebrews here?” that of the world, which not unfrequently has a truer sense of propriety than God’s professing followers.

1 Samuel 30:6

“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.”

HIS God! Doubtless the chronicler heard him say repeatedly, as he was so fond of saying, “My God, my God.” “I will say unto God, my rock, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Though he had seriously compromised God’s cause, by the failure of his faith, by consorting with Achish and the Philistines, by a tortuous and treacherous policy, yet God was still his God; and, in the supreme crisis which had overtaken him, he naturally betook himself to the covert of those loving wings.

He encouraged himself. — He would go back on promises of forgiveness and succour, which had so often cheered him in similar straits. He would recall his songs in former nights as black as this, and therefore would have hope. He would remember that he had been brought through worse trials; and surely He who had helped him against Goliath and Saul would not fail him against the Amalekites. Besides, he had probably left his dear ones in the protection of the encamping angel; and though his faith might be tried, it could not be entirely disappointed. In this way he encouraged himself. All around was tumult and fear; but in God peace and rest brooded, as swans on a tranquil lake. His men might speak of stoning him; his heart be greatly distressed for wives and children; his life be in jeopardy: but God was a very present help, “Why art thou cast down, and disquieted, O my soul? Hope thou in God.”

In similar circumstances, let us have resort to similar sources of comfort; hide in God, and encourage ourselves in Him. It was in this spirit that John Knox, when about to face death, said to his wife, “Read to me where I first cast anchor.”

1 Samuel 31:11–12

“And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.”

THIS was a noble and generous act. At the beginning of his reign, in the early dawn of youthful promise and prowess, when he was the darling of the nation, Saul had interposed to deliver their beleaguered city. And now, as the awful tidings of his defeat and suicide spread like fire through the country, the men whom he had succoured remembered his first kingly act, and showed their appreciation for his kindness by doing a strong and chivalrous deed in rescuing his remains from dishonour. They could not help him, but they could save his honour. When David heard of this act, he sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, thanking them for their chivalrous devotion to the memory of the fallen king, and promising to requite the kindness as one done to the entire nation, and to himself.

Are we careful enough of the honour and name of our dear Lord? He has done for us spiritually all that Saul did for Jabesh Gilead, and more. He has delivered our soul from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Let us be swift to maintain the honour of his name among those who are so apt at making it their scorn.

It was well that these men did not wait for others to act. Had they done so, the body of Saul might have rotted piecemeal on the walls of the temple at Bethshan. If they had left this act of reparation for Abner, or Ishbosheth, it would never have been done. There is no order of precedence, when a wrong has to be righted, or a friend vindicated. The man who is next must act. Let us strike into the fray, and count that our opportunity is warrant enough. He who can, may.

2 Samuel 1:23

“Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.”

IT was very lovely and pleasant of David to say so. He had no hesitation, of course, in saying this of his beloved Jonathan, every memory of whom was very pleasant, like a sweet strain of music, or the scent of the spring breeze; but he might have been excused for omitting Saul from the graceful and generous epithets he heaped on the kindred soul of his friend. But death had obliterated the sad, dark memories of recent days, and had transported the Psalmist across the dream of years to Saul as he was when he was first introduced to him. All that could be said in praise of the first Hebrew king was crowded into these glowing lines — the courage, martial prowess, swiftness to aid those who required help, his pleasantness and courtesy in address.

This is the love of God, which He breathes into the hearts of his children. They become perfect in love, as He is. “God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” It is Godlike for his children to love their enemies, bless those who curse them, and pray for all who despitefully use and persecute them. Is such love ours? Do we forbear from thinking evil? Do we look on the virtues more often than the failures of our friends? Do we cast the mantle of forgiveness over the injuries done to us, and dwell tenderly on the excellences of our foes? Such is the love which never fails, but endures when faith has turned to fruition, and hope has realized its dreams.

We need most of all a baptism of love. A piece of clay will become fragrant if placed in contiguity to attar of roses. Let us lie where John did, on the bosom of incarnate love, till we begin to love as he.

2 Samuel 2:4

“And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabeshgilead were they that buried Saul.”

THUS was David anointed a second time. Hitherto he had been the leader of a troop; now he became king of his own tribe: and his kingdom clustered around the ancient city of Hebron.

Typically, we learn that our blessed Lord will be acknowledged King of his own people, the Jews, before He is accepted by the world at large. Now, his kingdom is in mystery — it is in the Adullam stage. Men are gathering to Him from all quarters; but as yet the world does not recognise it in their political calculations. But ere long the Jews will recognise Him as King, and then we may begin to expect his enthronement over the populations of the globe. When they repent and are converted, times of repenting will come to all the world.

Experimentally we are taught, that as each new department of our life unfolds, we should give Christ a fresh coronation. The attitude which we took up years ago, of complete consecration, must be applied perpetually to each fresh development of experience. Each new step should be characterised by a definite waiting on God, that there may be a fresh enduement of power, a recharging of the spirit with his might. Was He King in the cave, then be sure to acknowledge Him as such, now that you are called from obscurity into the glare of noon. Whenever God says, by the circumstances of your life, Go up; always kneel at the feet of Jesus, saying, “Lord, in the very little I found my joy and strength in serving Thee only; and now, amid the greater responsibility and publicity of my life, I desire to be thy earnest, simple minded, whole hearted follower.”

Have you anointed Jesus as your King? Do not fail. Remember how near of kin He is.

2 Samuel 3:1

“Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.”

THE war between the flesh and the Spirit is long, but the end is sure. As the Baptist said of Jesus, so must the flesh say of the Spirit, He must increase; I must decrease. Sometimes, in the long strain of the war, our spirit dies down. Will the bugle never cease to ring out its alarm? Will the assaults never come, to an end? When shall we be able to lay aside sword and breastplate, and to enter the land of rest? Oh to be able to say with the Apostle, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”!

Yet take heart. The assaults diminish in frequency and strength in proportion as they are faithfully resisted. Each time you resist successfully you will find it easier to resist. The strength of the vanquished foe enters the vanquisher.

Moreover, ultimate victory is secured. “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4,5). It makes a great difference to the soldier, when he belongs to an All Victorious Legion, and serves under a Captain that never lost a fight. And there can be no doubt as to the issue in your heart or mine. “He must reign till He has put all enemies under his feet.”

At any moment we may look for the sudden collapse of a great portion of the confederacy of evil, which has so long menaced us; as when Abner suddenly came to Hebron to give in his adhesion to David. What a huge piece of cliff fell that day into the sea! Expect the sudden collapse of evils which have long troubled you.

2 Samuel 4:9

“And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,”

IT was the mid-day of David’s life, and, looking back, he saw how good the Lord had been to him. Step by step God had brought him up out of a horrible pit, and from the miry clay, setting him upon a rock, and establishing his goings. What need was there, then, that men should interfere to hasten the unfolding of the Divine purposes? It had been his lifelong habit to wait. Whatever he needed he looked to God to supply. Whatever difficulties blocked his path, he looked to God to remove. Whatever men stood in his way, he looked to God to deal with them. Twice in the wilderness he refused to take Saul’s life. He had executed the Amalekite because he claimed to have slain Saul on Gilboa. And, in pursuance of the same policy, he could have no complicity in the act of the murderers of Ishbosheth, even though they made his way clear to the throne of Israel.

Let God redeem thee out of all thine adversities. Do not lose heart or hope. Do not put forth thy hand to snatch at any position or deliverance by an act which might afterwards cause thee shame or sorrow. “Trust in the LORD, and do good; ... Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (Psalm 37:3-7). He who turns glaciers to rivers that pass away, will remove all thy difficulties and perplexities. He shall cause thee to inherit the land. He will promote thee in due time, and give thee to see thy desire upon thine enemies. He who redeemed thy soul by his most precious blood cannot fail thee, however long He may tarry. Remember that He ever liveth, and loveth, and reigneth.

2 Samuel 5:13

“And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.”

THIS is terribly disappointing! According to the ideas of the surrounding nations, the greatness of a monarch was gauged by the extent of his harem. But the law of Moses put severe restraint on the multiplication of wives, “that his heart turn not away” (Deuteronomy 17:17). It seems as though the soul of David sank into sensual indulgence and luxuriance. It lost much of its early hardihood and strength in consequence; and at this period of his life those seeds were sown, which after years brought forth such a plentiful and terrible harvest of anguish, murder, and impurity to his family.

Few of us realize how much our character owes to the stern discipline to which God subjects us. The only way to keep us healthy and vigorous is to send us many a nipping frost, many a keen northern blast. The bleak hillside breeds stronger natures than the warm sheltered valley. The difference between Anglo Saxon and Negro is largely wrought by temperature and soil. The campaign, with its strain on every power of endurance, trains better soldiers than the barracks. As David was a stronger, better man, when hunted like a coney in the rocks of Engedi, so are we braced to a nobler life, when all things seem against us.

Few of us can be trusted with unbroken happiness. God is compelled to withhold what the flesh craves. But where prosperity has shone on your path, be very careful not to abuse it. Consider it as indicating God’s loving trust in you. He would rather convey his lesson in sunshine than in storm. But walk carefully and humbly, looking to Him constantly for daily grace, and never relaxing the girdle about the loin.

2 Samuel 6:3

“And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.”

THIS was their mistake. The Divine directions were explicit that the Ark of the living God must be carried on the shoulders of living men. There would have been no stumbling of oxen, no swaying of the Ark to falling, no need for Uzzah to reach out his hand, if only this simple direction had been obeyed. This breaking forth of God was to recall men to simple absolute obedience to the rules and regulations that had been so explicitly laid down in the Levitical code. It could not fall into disuse without grave loss to the entire people. Better that one life should be sacrificed for disobedience than that the whole nation should be impoverished for the relaxation of that ancient law.

We are fond of bringing new carts to God. At every birthday we build the new cart of good resolution, and place thereon the Ark of God. We will be different, and on our fresh endeavours the Lord of Hosts shall ride; but we must drive, and if needs be, steady the Ark. It is not long before the oxen stumble, and Uzzah who drives is smitten to the dust of death.

God wants, not new carts, but the living shoulders of consecrated men. We must live for Him, surrendering ourselves to His service; not driving, but being driven; not conducting, but being impelled; not imposing our thoughts on Him, but being willing to submit ourselves absolutely to Him. There is no need to fear God, if only we will obey Him, and in obedience discover the laws by which we may approach and serve Him. Then the power which otherwise flames forth to destroy will become the useful servant of our faith, and we shall be able to undertake great things for God.

2 Samuel 7:25

“And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.”

THIS is the voice of a childlike faith.

Note what led to these words. — Nathan had just unfolded to the king all the purposes of God’s heart towards him. That He would establish his throne, deliver him from his enemies, and set up his dynasty to succeed him — this and much else. David’s heart was full of joy and gladness — he knew that God would not run back from His word; but he felt none the less the duty of claiming the fulfilments of these guarantees. So it is with all the promises of God; though they are Yea and Amen in Christ, it is requisite for us to put our hand on them; plead them before God; and claim their fulfilment with appropriating faith.

Notice the attitude in which David uttered these words. — “He sat before the Lord.” Was not this the position of rest and trust? On another occasion, he lay all night upon the earth (12:16), in an agony of prayer, because he was not sure of God’s purpose, and hoping to turn God by the extremity of his anguish. But there is a marvellous alteration in the tone of our prayer, so soon as we can base it on the declared purposes of God. We enter into His rest; we put ourselves in the current of His purposes; *we sit before the Lord.*

Mark the blessedness of communion with God. — It is as a man talking with his friend. We are not retired always to kneel when we pray, or to con over a certain form of words; we can sit and talk with God, catching up His words as they fall on our hearts, and reflecting them back on Him in praise, and prayer, and happy converse. All true prayer originates in the declarations of God’s love, to each of which we answer, *Do as Thou hast said.*

2 Samuel 8:11

“Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued;”

DAVID might not build the temple, but he was bent on making provision for it. Indeed, Solomon had never been able to do as he did, unless his father had gathered these stores of gold and silver. Thus other men labour, and we enter into their labours; but the accomplished building is credited by God to each. He does not forget David when Solomon’s temple stands complete. The reward is proportioned to each man’s service, according to his share.

It is a glorious thing when we not only defeat our foes, but get spoils out of their overthrow which we can use for the service of God and man. It is as possible for us as for David. Out of our failures, temptations, mistakes, let us get the power of helping and directing others. In death Jesus won the keys of death and Hades, and the power to become a merciful and faithful High Priest; and now He ever liveth to make intercession for his people (Hebrews 7:25).

But the main lesson of this chapter is the foreshadowing of God’s purpose, that Gentiles should contribute to the building of his Temple. What was literally true in the case of the temple of Solomon, is spiritually true of the heavenly Temple, the Church. From every nation, and kindred, people and tongue, souls are being gathered, who form a spiritual house, a holy Temple in the Lord. The whole world is destined to contribute to that structure, which is being prepared secretly and mystically, but shall ere long be manifested in its full glory. It is very interesting to get this suggestion from the chronicles of a nation so exclusive and haughty as the Jews. “They shall come from the East and West...”

2 Samuel 9:7

“And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.”

FOUR times in this chapter we are told of the lame man eating bread at the royal table. But what are these facts recorded and repeated for, save to accentuate the infinite blessings which come to us through the Divine love!

Mephibosheth had done nothing to merit the royal favour. Not a word is said of his being well favoured and attractive. So far from that, he was lame on both his feet, and probably a sickly invalid. In his own judgment he was worthless as a dead dog. His state was impoverished; no deed of prowess could win David’s notice; he was almost entirely at the mercy of his servant, Ziba. In these respects there are many analogies to our own condition in the sight of God. We are lame indeed; and, so far as we are concerned, it is quite impossible that we should ever win the Divine regard, or sit at His table among His sons.

But between David and Jonathan a covenant had been struck, which had provided for the children of the ill fated Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:14, 16). It was because of this sacred obligation that Mephibosheth fared as he did. Look away, child of God, to the covenant struck between God and thy representative, the Son of His love. It is idle of thee to seek to propitiate the Divine favour, or earn a seat at His table; but if thou art willing to identify thyself with thy Lord, and to shelter thyself in Him by the living union of faith; if thou canst base thy plea on the Blood of the everlasting covenant — then the provisions of that covenant between Father and Son shall be extended to thee: and because of God’s love to Jesus thou shalt sit at the Divine table, and be regarded as one of the heirs of the great King.

2 Samuel 10:12

“Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.”

ISRAEL was arrayed against overwhelming odds. To human sight it must have appeared very improbable that Joab would be able to hold his own. However, he made the best arrangements he could; exhorted his men to be of good courage and do their utmost; and then piously left the issue to the God of battles.

There are times in all lives when the case seems desperate. How can we meet with ten thousand men who cometh against us with twenty thousand? Heart and flesh fail. What resource is there, then, save in *the flight of the lonely man to the only God*? It is for God to act, since the help of man is vain.

In your personal straits. — When patience is exhausted; when the last handful is taken from the barrel; when complicated trials meet and hem you in; when the iron gate and the keepers before the door appear to render escape impossible — then look up, God is marching with reinforcements to your aid.

In your work and in the world. — We too often act and speak as if success were to be won by the forces that we may be able to bring into the field, whereas God asks us for nothing more than fidelity and the right disposition of such forces as we can command; He will do all the rest.

In your outlook on the conflict between good and evil. — It is quite true that there appears to be an infinite disparity between the one and the other. But there are other forces in the field than appear. There is another host of which God Himself is captain. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up the standard. “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven to thy help.” (Deuteronomy 33:26)

2 Samuel 11:1

“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.”

AH! fatal dalliance in the arms of sensual ease! It led to David's undoing. It was the time of the year when kings generally went forth to the fight; and in earlier days David would never have thought of leaving to Joab or others the strain and stress of conflict when there were hard knocks to give and take. Indeed, on more than one occasion his followers had remonstrated against his exposing the Light of Israel to the risks of the battlefield. But now he sends Joab and his mighty men to fight against Ammon, while he tarries securely at Jerusalem. In this fatal lethargy he betrays the deterioration of his soul. Already the walls were broken down, and entrance into the citadel was easy. We are not surprised to learn that as he sauntered lazily on his palace roof in the sultry afternoon he was swept away before the rush of sudden passion, and took the poor man's ewe lamb to satisfy the vagrant, hungry impulse which suddenly came to him.

Beware of hours of ease! Rest is necessary; times of recruiting and renewal must come to us all; nature positively demands recreation; but there must be no neglect of known duty, no handing over to others of what we might and could do ourselves, no tarrying behind the march of the troops when we should go forth with them to the battle. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Be most on guard when not actively engaged against the enemy. One unlocked gate may admit the foe to the citadel of the life, and rob you of peace for all after days. The luxury of the plains of Capua was more fatal to the soldiers of Hannibal than the passage of the Alps.

2 Samuel 12:29

“And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.”

VICTORY might seem to have been forever forfeited after so great a fall. We could not have been surprised had we been told that from this time onward the course of David's conquests had stayed. And yet this thought would be a misconception of God's dealings with the penitent. Where there is true contrition, confession, and faith, He not only forgives, but restores; He not only restores to the enjoyment of his favour, but reinstates opportunities of usefulness. So Jesus not only met the apostle who had denied Him, and put him back into the old position of happy fellowship, but gave him a commission to feed his sheep and lambs.

We have sometimes met backsliders who have doubted the possibility of their forgiveness; or, if they have realized this, they have never dared to hope that they could ever be what they had been. And so long as faith refuses to believe in the perfect work of God's love, it must inevitably take a back seat. Let us seek for such an entire faith in God's forgiving and restoring love as to dare to believe that we are put again into the old place, and allowed to anticipate the same victories as aforesaid. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Directly David said, “I have sinned,” in the dash of a moment Nathan said, “The Lord hath put away thy sin”; and when Joab sent tidings that Rabbah was about to fall, David was permitted the honour of its final capture, though it had been associated so closely with Uriah's death. Where sin abounds grace super abounds, and reigns through righteousness. Dare to believe this.

2 Samuel 13:31

“Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent.”

THROUGHOUT the incidents of this chapter, the soul of David touched the bottom of the sea of anguish and remorse. The circumstances narrated were in themselves sad enough; but there was a more bitter element in them for David, because he knew that they were the harvest of which his own sin was the seed. Here began to be fulfilled the sentence of God through Nathan, “The sword shall never depart from thine house.”

He had broken up the peace of another’s home, and peace had quitted his home, never to return. He had defiled the purity of Uriah’s wife, and the purity of his own daughter had been trampled under foot. He had smitten Uriah, and now Absalom had murdered Amnon. Through those awful hours when the entire fate of the whole of his family seemed trembling in the balance, he drank to the dregs the cup of bitterness. Oh, how true are the apostle’s words: “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

Sin resembles the Australian weed, which when once it is sown in the waters will spread with such rapidity as to spoil their beauty, and choke their flow. We must distinguish between the penal and natural results. The penal were borne by Christ for us all, and are remitted for evermore; but the natural remain even to forgiven penitents, as they did to David. Still, God’s grace may transmute them into blessings, and cause pearls to grow where before there had been gaping wounds. Ask God to take in hand the natural consequences of your sins, and make them means of grace and ennoblement.

2 Samuel 14:14

“For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.”

THE means that David devised were really inadequate. He allowed his heart to dictate to his royal sense of justice and rectitude, and permitted Absalom to return to his country and home without one word of confession, one symptom of penitence. The king was overmastered by the father; and the result was disastrous. It shook the respect of his people, undermined the foundations of just government, slackened the bands of every family in the land, and confirmed Absalom in his wilful and obstinate career. “What!” said he to himself, “does my father bid me come back without conditions? Does he demand no confession or reparation? Then he condones my sin.”

Let parents be warned. If your children disobey, and violate the rules of your home, you have no right to treat them as you did before, until they have owned their sin. You must insist on penitence, confession, and reparation, though it take hours or days or even weeks of suffering and pleading to bring it about.

Into what relief does David’s mistake throw God’s way of forgiveness and salvation! Had he acted as David, and as so many wish us to believe, He would have reinstated the human family in the Paradise of his love without waiting for the work of the Mediator, or the confession of the prodigal. By the arbitrary exercise of his sovereign will He might have wiped out the record of our sins without our concurrence. But it would have been to the irreparable undoing of man. Hence it behoved Christ to suffer, by his blood making an atonement for our sins, and by his Spirit bringing us to penitence and confession.

2 Samuel 15:26

“But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.”

THERE is the patience of hope. We love to gird ourselves in the vehemence of our self will, to go where we choose, to rule the lives of others; but as the years pass and our pride is humbled, the sinews of our strength slackened, and the radiance of early prospects overcast, we are willing to hand ourselves over to our Father, saying, “Behold, here am I; let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him.”

It was thus that Isaac was passive in the hands of Abraham. It was thus that Jesus spoke to His Father, “I come to do thy will, O my God.” It was thus that the maiden who was blessed above women, answered the angel’s message. It was thus that Paul, when urged not to go up to Jerusalem, avowed his willingness to live or die, as the Lord might choose.

God is ever working upon us through circumstances; and, as in the present case, sometimes He overrules the plottings of wicked men to fulfil His Divine purpose. His will is sometimes brought to us in a cup which a Judas holds to our lips. How blessed to be able to say, as we go forth to meet our Father’s will, Behold, here am I! And to look beyond the plottings and machinations of our enemies to One who loves us infinitely. Whatever He permits must be good. Good, if driven as an exile from our home; good, if exposed to the revilings of a Shimei; good, if the heart breaks in bitter tears. All must be good which the good Lord permits or appoints. Many were the afflictions of David, but out of them all he was delivered. When he had learnt the lesson, the rod was stayed. God did not take away His mercy from him. Thou too art in His hands, and He will certainly bring thee again, and show thee the city and His habitation.

2 Samuel 16:14

“And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.”

A GREAT weariness falls often on our souls. We are wearied because of the greatness of our way, and inclined to say there is no hope. Memory tires us, perpetually casting up the record of past unfaithfulness and transgression. The bitter way of the natural consequences of sin is toilsome and difficult to the feet. We faint before the averted eye of former friends and the pitiless criticism of foes. Longings for a vanished past, for life and love, for purity and peace, grind heavily in the soul. Our King has known something of human weariness, though not from all the sources that cause it in his subjects.

But amid the presence of our weariness the voice of God may be heard saying, “This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing.” There is rest for weary souls beneath the shadow of the cross, in the sight of which the burden rolls away. There is rest and refreshment as we sit in the banqueting house of Christ’s manifested and realized affection. There is refreshment as we eat of His flesh and drink of His blood; as we yield our will to His; as we sit with Him in heavenly places. We assuredly find Him to be “a 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” (Isaiah 32:2).

There is no hill without its arbour; no desert without its oasis; no sultry heat without its shadow of a great rock; no weariness without its pillow; no intolerable sorrow without its solace; no weariness without its refreshment; no failure of man without a very present help in God.

2 Samuel 17:21

“And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.”

THE water of Jordan may serve as an illustration for our position. Our David has passed over the waters of death and in doing so has taken us with Him. There is a sense in which in the morning light of Easter Day all who believed passed over with Him, so that “by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.”

We all hold the doctrine of *Substitution*. Do we sufficiently realize that of *Identification*? Not only did Jesus die for us, but we died with and in Him. In Him, as the true Noah’s Ark, the whole Church passed over the Jordan of death from the old world to the new. There are some who do not understand that in the purpose of God we are already standing on resurrection ground. Across the water we can hear the murmur of the world, and detect its corruption; but we are the inheritors of the world in which there is no death nor corruption nor the dominion of sin. When a man realizes this he no longer braces himself up to meet death, because he knows that in the person of Christ he has left it behind forever.

What is true, however, in God’s purpose should be the aim and goal of our daily striving. To us there comes the unceasing call, “Arise, and go over Jordan.” There is always a thither and a hither side for every experience and act. We may always do as the world does; this is to stay on the death side. We may always do as Christ does; this is to pass over to the risen and living side. Reckon that you have died, and mortify the deeds of your body. “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”

2 Samuel 18:22-23

“Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cush.”

MOAB did not love David, as Ahimaaz did, and could not understand what made the young man so eager to carry the tidings. Doubtless Ahimaaz and Cush entirely misinterpreted the heart of David, and thought that he would be glad to hear that the rebellion was stamped out, and Absalom was dead. And it was because of the pleasure which he thought to give his king that the swift footed son of Zadok pleaded for permission to run. What though there would be no reward, or that it would fall to the lot of Cush, who had already started at Joab’s command — that mattered not, the love of David constrained him.

How often that question of reward is thrown at the servants of God! It is one of the favourite taunts of the world; as Satan said of Job, that we do as we do because we are paid. “Doth Job serve God for nought?” And nothing so startles men as disinterested service. They cannot account for it; but it wins their respect. “Reward or no reward; recompense or none; smiles or tears, come what may, let me run.” That is the spirit that becomes a Christian, and convinces the world. “The love of Christ constraineth us.”

Ahimaaz outran Cush. The one was a volunteer for love’s dear sake; the other, a bond servant, doing as he was told. Love lent wings to his feet, and speeding past his fellow bore him first into David’s presence. So God’s will is done in heaven: “The cherubim ran and returned like a flash of lighting.” So God’s will is done on earth: “They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word. And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail!”

2 Samuel 19:42

“And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king’s cost? or hath he given us any gift?”

THERE are two derivations for the word king: one from the word *can* — the king is the man that can do things; the other from the word *kin* — the king is closely related to us, of our kith and kin. In either case, there is a beautiful meaning, as touching our Lord and Saviour. He is King, because He has overcome our enemies, and can overcome. He is King, because He has taken on Himself our flesh and blood, and has forever made us one with Himself. The King is our kinsman. Our kinsman is King.

It is very comforting to know how really our Lord has identified Himself with us. The Gospels are full of the wonderful story. His kinship was manifested in —

His Prayers. — He bade us speak to God as our Father; in that marvellous possessive pronoun, not only linking us all to one another, but including Himself in our petitions, save when we ask for forgiveness.

His Infirmities. — “We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” His hunger and thirst; His weariness and exhaustion; His suffering unto death all accentuate the closeness of the tie between us.

His Temptation. — “In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” The avenues through which the tempter could approach Him were those by which He assails us also. No temptation took Him, but such as is common to man. So to every lonely soldier of His He draws near, saying, “Be of good cheer; I have passed through it all. I am your brother in the fight; I feel for you with a quick sympathy; the glories of my throne do not alter my true hearted love.”

2 Samuel 20:2

“So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.”

WE are reminded of the exhortation of the good Barnabas, that with purpose of heart the converts of Antioch should cleave unto the Lord. This is the test of a true faith. We often come to the dividing of the paths. We stand on the watershed of the hills: that way leads back to Moab with its fascinations; this on to Canaan with its spiritual attractions. Orpah and Ruth must choose. Each is equally profuse in speeches and tears; but the ultimate test of love is whether they will stay or go. Which will cleave to the widowed Naomi? She is the truest lover; her fidelity will attest the fervour and strength of her affection. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, and returned to her people and her gods, while Ruth “clave unto her.”

We must cleave to Jesus, *in spite of the derision of the multitude*. We must be prepared to stand with Him when He stands alone, or goes forth alone to die. We must be willing to stem the mighty tide of the world which has left Him and pours past us. Though all forsake Him, yet we must cleave.

We must cleave to Jesus, *in spite of the rebellion of the flesh*. Our whole nature may sometimes rise in insurrection, demanding some forbidden fruit. It is no child’s play then for the lonely will to stand by itself in unshaken fidelity and loyalty; but it must.

We must cleave to Jesus *when He seems to rebuff us*. Only those who can stand so sharp an ordeal, are exposed to it. But sometimes we are called to pass through it as Job, that angels may learn how Christ’s lovers cling to Him, not for his gifts, but for Himself.

INFORMATION ON THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS USED IN THIS DEVOTIONAL

JOSHUA: Book of Conquest

Writer: Joshua

Key Passage: “Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.” (Joshua 1:6)

Remarks: It describes the conquest and division of the land of Canaan by the tribes of Israel under Joshua’s leadership.

Outline:

1. Entering the Land (ch. 1-5)
2. Conquering the Land (ch. 6-12)
3. Dividing the Land (ch. 13-24)

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JUDGES: Apostasy of God’s People

Writer: Probably Samuel

Key Passage: “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6)

Remarks: This book shows the repeated failure of Israel after Joshua, because “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (21:25) and the mercy and grace of God, who still helps and delivers His people despite their failures.

Outline:

1. Causes of Apostasy (ch. 1-2)
2. Cycles of Apostasy (ch. 3-16)
3. Consequences of Apostasy (ch. 17-21)

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RUTH: The Kinsman-Redeemer

Writer: Unknown

Key Passage: “Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that His name may be famous in Israel.” (Ruth 4:14)

Remarks: This book is about the circumstances by which a widow named Ruth finds rest by marrying Boaz, her deceased husband’s kinsman. It demonstrates that there were faithful believers among the Israelites even during the dark period of the Judges.

Outline:

1. Ruth’s Faithfulness (ch. 1)
2. Ruth’s Humility (ch. 2)
3. Ruth’s Request (ch. 3)
4. Ruth’s Blessing (ch. 4)

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1 SAMUEL: The First Kings of Israel

Writers: Probably Samuel, Nathan and Gad

Key Passage: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to

hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.” (I Samuel 15:22,23)

Remarks: It relates the history of the Israelites from the end of the book of Judges. Its main purpose is to show the transition they made into a theocratic monarchy.

Outline:

1. Samuel: God’s Useful Servant (ch. 1-7)
2. Saul: The People’s Rejected King (ch. 8-15)
3. David: God’s Chosen King (ch. 16-31)

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2 SAMUEL: David, the Greatest King of Israel

Writer: Probably Samuel, Nathan and Gad

Key Passage: “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.” (2 Samuel 7:16)

Remarks: It shows how the monarchy becomes effectively consolidated in Israel under its greatest king, David.

Outline:

1. King David’s Triumphs (ch. 1-10)
2. King David’s Transgression (ch. 11-12)
3. King David’s Troubles (ch. 13-20)
4. King David’s Testimonies (ch. 21-24)

Scripture Memory Programme 2009

The Fruit-Bearing Christian

One sure sign of spiritual health is fruitfulness. Just as a farmer rejoices at the appearance of good fruit on his plants, our heavenly Father rejoices when our lives bear fruits for His glory. The fruits we should bear include disciple-making, godly living, victorious living and our close walk with Him. May you experience the blessedness of bearing these fruits in your life as you memorise and meditate on the passages of Scripture found below.

April 5 & 12 – Our Mediator

1 Timothy 2:5-6 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

April 19 & 26 – Christian Living

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

May 3 & 10 – Honouring Parents

Ephesians 6:2-3 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth..

May 17 & 24 – Godliness & Contentment

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

May 31 – Gospel

Hebrews 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

June 7 & 14 – Bearing Reproach

1 Peter 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

June 21 & 28 – Parenting

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

July 5 & 12 – The Word of God

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

July 19 & 26 – The Spirit-Filled Life

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.

August 2 & 9 – Faith for Victory

1 John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

August 16 & 23 – Spiritual Renewal

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

August 30 – Gospel

Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

September 6 & 13 – Victorious Living

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

September 20 & 27 – Persevering in Faith

Hebrews 12:1 - Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

October 4 & 11 – Faith in God

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

October 18 & 25 – Guidance from God

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

November 1 & 8 – Wisdom from God

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

November 15 & 22 – Help for Prayer

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

November 29 – Gospel

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

December 6 & 13 – Hindrance to Prayer

Psalms 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

December 20 & 27 – Christ's Birth

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.