

Our Daily Homily

By
F.B. Meyer
VOLUME One
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.

Matthew 1:21

*“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name
JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”*

THIS is the mission of Immanuel. He came, not as the Jews expected, to break the yoke of Caesar and re-establish the kingdom of David; but to break the yoke of sin, and set up the sinless kingdom of God. The Church has too often misunderstood the object of His advent, as though He meant simply to save from the consequences and results of sin. This were too limited a programme for the Son of God. To cancel the results and leave the bitter cause; to deliver from the penalty, but not from the power; to rescue His people from the grasp of a broken law, but confess Himself unable to deal with the bad virus of the blood—this were to fail. No; dare to take this announcement in its full and glorious meaning, written as it is on the portico of our Saviour’s life.

What an admixture of blood flowed through His veins! Let your eyes glance through the list of His genealogy. Men and women, notorious for their evil character, lie in the direct line of His descent. This was permitted, that He might fully represent our fallen race; that no sinner, however bad, should be abashed to claim His help; and that it should be clearly shown how powerless sin was to tarnish or taint the holiness of His sinless nature. Made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He knew no sin. The germs of corruption could find no welcome in His heart.

Art thou one of His people? Hast thou accepted His rule, and allied thyself with Him? For if so, He shall save thee. Though possessed with seven devils, He will drive them out.

Matthew 2:11

“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

G**O****L****D** is for the king. It is meet that Matthew should tell this story: for his is pre-eminently the royal Gospel. Long before the Lord was born, these Eastern sages must have been started on their way, whither and to worship whom they knew not: but an ancient prophecy had foretold that to this babe should be offered of the gold of Sheba, and that kings should bring Him the riches of the Gentiles.

How useful this gold was to Joseph in the following months! It helped him to defray the cost of the journey into Egypt and back, and to maintain his precious charges there. The Heavenly Father knew what those needs would be, and met them by anticipation. If you concern yourself in the affairs of His kingdom, and will obey the warnings and directions He gives; if you dare to step out on the path of literal obedience—you will find that God will become responsible and defray all costs. Gold is naught to Him. He can make it out of common dust by a word.

It is sweet to think of all the gold presented to Jesus in after ages. The wealth of the rich, the golden ornaments taken from the person, the tiny pieces of gold which represent the patient savings of the poor—all these have made up the flowing river of which those golden gifts of the Magi were the first trickling drops. Have you given gold to Him, you who know Him, not as the babe only, but as the Man of the Cross; not as man merely, but as the Son of the Highest? You may have given Him copper in abundance, and silver in handfuls; but let your future gifts to Him be of the best. Or, if poverty restrains you, let the philosopher's stone of Love turn the meaner metals to gold.

Matthew 3:1

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,”

THE Evangelist is fond of the present tense, “cometh.” Yes, these records are true for all time. You tell me that they happened nineteen centuries ago. Certainly; but they happened yesterday, and are happening today. Remember that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He was, and is, and is to come. Christ was born into the world, but He is always being born into the hearts of men in Regeneration. John preceded and announced His advent in the wilderness of Judaea; and He is always preparing His way into the hearts and lives of men. It is doubtful whether Jesus ever comes into the heart of mature manhood without the previous work of a John the Baptist. Of days of conviction of sin, of remorse, of repentance, we may truly say, “In those days cometh John the Baptist.”

John the Baptist is sadly needed today. Much of what we call Christianity is but Christianized heathenism. It glozes over covetousness, luxurious self-indulgence, compliance with fashion and worldliness; it admits into its high places men who thrive on the oppression of the poor; it condones the oppression of the native races, the sale of opium and spirits, the shameless traffic in impurity; it rears the ideals of the world in the place of the changeless cross of the slain Christ with its divine sorrow and blood. Ah, we need that John the Baptist should come with his stern words about the axe, the winnowing-fan, and the fire. Nothing less will avail to prepare the way for a new coming of Christ.

Each age has had its John the Baptist. Now St. Bernard; now Savonarola; now John Knox. With sonorous, ringing voice the herald has prepared the way of the King: “He cometh to judge the world!”

Matthew 4:1

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”

YESTERDAY, the open heavens; today, the burning cinders of the wilderness of temptation. Then the voice of the Father owning Him as the Well-beloved; now the hiss of the tempter. Then the teeming crowds; now the desert solitude and silence, broken only by the cry of the wild beast. Then the Spirit as a nesting dove, but now as a compelling force. Wherever there is the Christ-life, it passes through these same experiences. The Holy Spirit often anticipates coming trial by granting some great revelation of God; but He who gives the one leads into the other, that the precious bestowments of God’s grace may be rendered permanent.

Would you give the bread of life to thousands? You must refuse to use your opportunity to make bread for your own gratification. You cannot use your power for others and for yourself. If you elect to use it for them, you must be content to wait till the Father sends His angels to minister to you. In the meanwhile live by faith on His words.

Would you teach the magnificence of a faith that can trust God to preserve it, though it steps from the mountain brow on to thin air? You must refuse to use it for purposes of ostentation; and wait till God, not Satan, calls.

Would you win the kingdoms of the world? You must obtain them, not by methods which commend themselves to human prudence, but through the death on the cross and the falling into the ground to die. There are two mountains in the Gospel: this, as it opens; that of the Ascension at its close. The valley of death lies between. But the traversing of this valley was necessary, ere Christ could say, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.”

Matthew 5:45

“That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

WE are made sons by regeneration, through faith in the Son; but we are called to make our calling and election sure—to approve and vindicate our right to that sacred name. We can only do this by showing in word and act that the Divine life and principles animate us.

Jesus teaches that the life of God in the hearts of His children will show itself in pure and unaffected love. He says in effect, “God is good: God forgives: God bears with wrong and sin: God loves those who hate Him, blesses those who curse, bestows His favours on the false and unjust, suffers long and is kind; believes, hopes, bears all things. Therefore, if you are His children, do as He does, as I do: follow Me: live as I live: become as a bird, a lily, a little child: be pure, merciful, lowly, gentle, strong in righteousness—and you will be called the sons of God; yours will be the kingdom of heaven.”

There were several things the Lord could not say fully in this opening statement. That obedience to His precepts would inevitably conduct them to a cross; that the strength for such a life could only be secured through the coming of the Comforter; that the progress of the Kingdom would be slow and arduous—these things were for the time veiled and hidden. But His main object was to teach that Christianity must be a life after the model of God’s. Christian disciple, art thou living this life? Not by a creed, a ritual, a profession; but by living the life, is thy true nature discerned, whether thou art wheat or tare, child or hypocrite. Sometimes we are called to be as the sun, ripening souls by our genial love; at other times we refresh them as rain watering the grass.

Matthew 6:18

“That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

HOW fondly Jesus repeats these words (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18). Though compelled to live so much in the public gaze of men, His heart was always sighing for the secret place of fellowship with His Father, who waited for Him there.

Of course, the main object of these paragraphs was to withdraw His disciples from the excessive outwardness of the age in which He spoke, and which necessarily detracted from the singleness, directness, and simplicity of the religious life. It is impossible to perform our religious duties before men, without insensibly considering what impression we are producing, and how far their estimation of us is being enhanced. And in so far as we seek these things, the stream is contaminated with mud and silt, and becomes turbid. We have just as much religious life as we show to God in secret—just that, no less, no more. Whatever is not wrought between thee and God, with no record but His eye, is chaff which the wind driveth away.

Here is a test for our alms, our prayers, and our fasting from sin and self-indulgence. If we do any of these to maintain or increase the consideration that men have of us, they count for nothing in the eye of God. But whatever is done for Him alone will secure His inevitable notice and reward. Dwell on that very definite assurance: “Shall recompense thee.” There is no doubt about it. For every petition breathed into His ear; for every sigh and tear; for every abstinence from sin and self—there will be a certain recompense, after the Divine measure. Such seeds shall have a prolific harvest. Seek then the secret place; where prying eyes cannot follow, and curious ears cannot overhear.

Matthew 7:2

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

THIS is an invariable principle. Christ did not make it true by saying it; He said it because it was true. There are at least three policies of life—that of the churl, who never gives unless he is compelled; of the niggard, who metes out from the tiniest measure on which he can lay hands; of the bountiful man, who is ever meting out his stores with lavish hand. If he gives, it is to his uttermost; if he loves, it is with all his heart; if he forgives, he crowns the forgiven one with loving kindness; if he puts his hand to constructing aught, every part of it bears trace of the wealth of his taste, and gift, and self-sacrifice.

It might be supposed that such a policy would lead to bankruptcy of resources and speedy impoverishment; and for fear of this most refrain from adopting it. They either do not give, or give stintingly and fearfully. But the remarkable fact is, that when a man is using this large measure toward others, they catch it up and fill it with their bountifulness toward him. They mete out their love and gifts according to the measure of his giving. This is an invariable principle: begin serving men with a miser’s hand, and they will do the same to you; begin, on the contrary, by serving men without stint, and they will do the same to you.

Live a royal life, child of God, as becomes such a Father. Give, expecting nothing again, with full measure, pressed down, and running over. Give, not so much money, as love, and tenderness, and human sympathy: give as one who is always receiving from the boundless resources of God. And, provided always that thy motives are pure, it will come back to thee. God will see thee bountifully rewarded.

Matthew 8:9

“For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.”

THE centurion’s faith set Christ marvelling. First, because it was found in such an unlikely place. Here was a Gentile who had come from the West, and was sitting down with Abraham in the Kingdom of God. Secondly, because of its greatness: “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

This Roman officer applied to our Lord principles with which he was cognizant through his connection with the army. He knew that he had no power over other men in his individual capacity, or apart from his organic connection with the machinery of government. If he said to one man Come; to another Go; to his servant Do this, and his command was immediately obeyed—it was entirely due to his own obedience, in turn, to the authority which was over himself. So long as he obeyed that authority, he represented it; and it passed through him to compel obedience to his commands. This is the principle he applied to our Lord.

He recognized that Jesus of Nazareth was always acting under the authority of His Heavenly Father, and he inferred, therefore, that He could wield the power of God as he could that of Rome. As the authority of the Caesars flowed through his own yielded life, so the authority of God over diseases, demons, and all else, would flow through Christ’s.

What a profound principle is here! Learn to obey, and you shall rule. Yield yourself absolutely to God, and God’s power shall pass through your heart and life. Be under Divine authority, and you shall be able to say, Go, come, do this. All things serve the man who serves Jesus Christ. Absolute consecration to God, as a soldier is surrendered to his country, is the condition of power.

Matthew 9:22

“But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.”

WHOLENESS and holiness are identical: the one of the body; the other of the soul. They are closely related to the word Health, and all may be procured through faith. Holiness, wholeness of heart, health—and all by faith. There are three steps to this blessed state—of wholeness of soul.

First, we must believe that it is attainable. For we never feel morally bound to do, attempt, or choose, what we do not believe to be within our reach. But all questions on the matter are settled forevermore by such words as, “Be ye holy, for I am holy”; and “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

Second, we must consecrate ourselves to God. In other words, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we must determine and resolve that we will be wholly the Lord’s. We must come to a fixed resolve to break off from every known sin; to walk, so far as we know them, in the way of God’s commandments; to be and do and suffer all His righteous will. This must be our deliberate resolve for all coming time; and if we are unable to make the resolve, through the frailty of our nature and the strength of our old sins, we must at least tell God that we are willing for this to become our unvacillating attitude.

Third, we must believe, absolutely, that God does accept the consecration we have made, and will do all that He has promised, by infilling us with His Holy Spirit, and working in us that which is pleasing in His sight. Nay, we must not only believe that He will do it, we must ask and claim that He should do it; we must, like this woman, touch Christ and obtain His healing virtue.

Matthew 10:27

“What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.”

THESSE striking words are applicable to us all. Our Lord is constantly taking us into the dark, that He may tell us things. Into the dark of the shadowed home, where bereavement has drawn down the blinds; into the dark of the lonely, desolate life, where some infirmity closes us in from the light and stir of life; into the dark of some crushing sorrow and disappointment. Then He tells us His secrets, great and wonderful, eternal and infinite. The eye, which has become dazzled by the glare of earth, becomes able to behold the heavenly constellations; and the ear to detect the undertones of His voice, which is often drowned amid the tumult of earth's strident cries.

But such revelations always imply a corresponding responsibility—that speak ye in the light—that proclaim upon the house-tops. We are not meant to linger always in the dark, or stay in the closet; presently we shall be summoned to take our place in the rush and storm of life; and when that moment comes, we are to speak and proclaim what we have learned.

This gives a new meaning to suffering, the saddest element in which is often its apparent aimlessness. “How useless I am.” “What am I doing for the betterment of men?” “Wherefore this waste of the precious spikenard of my soul.” Such are the desperate laments of the sufferer. But God has a purpose in it all. He has withdrawn His child to the higher altitudes of fellowship, that he may hear God speaking face to face, and bear the message to his fellows at the mountain foot. Were the forty days wasted that Moses spent on the Mount, or the period spent at Horeb by Elijah, or the years spent in Arabia by Paul?

Matthew 11:6

“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

A FRIEND has turned these words into another beatitude—The blessedness of the unoffended. The Baptist was tempted to take offence with Christ, first, because of His long delay in asserting Himself as the promised Messiah; and second, because of His apparent indifference to His own welfare. “If He be all that I expected, why does He leave me in this sad plight, extending to me no word of comfort; making no attempt to free me from these dark, damp cells.”

Are there not such hours in our lives still? We say, If He really loves us and is entrusted with all power, why does He not deliver us from this difficult and irksome condition? Why does He not hurl these prison walls to the ground? Why does He not vindicate and bring me out to the light of life and joy?

But the Lord made no attempt to emancipate His servant; and He seems to be unmindful of our sore straits. All He did for John was to send him materials on which his faith should feed, and rise to a stronger, nobler growth. “Go back,” He said in effect to John, “tell him what I can do; he is not mistaken—I have all power, I am the expected King; and if I do not come to his help in the way he expects, it is not through lack of power and willingness, but because of reasons of Divine policy and government, to which I must be true. Tell him to trust Me, though I do not deliver him. Assure him of the blessedness which must accrue to those who are not offended at My apparent neglect. I will explain all to him some day.” Thus He speaks still. He does not attempt to apologize, or to explain—He only asks our trust; and promises blessedness to those who do not stumble at life’s mysteries.

Matthew 12:5-7

“Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.”

THE Pharisees were great sticklers for rites and ceremonies. Their religion consisted in little else than a perpetual round of outward observances. They believed that they were thus observing and maintaining the ancient Mosaic code. In their judgment, great human necessities, like hunger, must be subordinate to their minute exactions. Our Lord, on the other hand, claimed that the laws of God, as written in the nature of man, must have a priority over mere ceremonial enactments. And He showed that His contention was supported by those Scriptures on which they rested their case.

There are two ways of studying Scripture. The one deals with its letter; the other compares Scripture with Scripture, and seeks to fathom its profound and eternal meaning. Do not read as the scribe, but as the Son of Man. Do not rest in the outward rite, but in the spiritual attitude of which the rite was intended to be the expression. Everywhere there is One greater than the Temple; greater than the rigorous exactions of the Jewish Sabbath; greater than the code on which Pharisaism insisted.

All through the Old Testament you may detect the spirit of the New; the mercy in which God delights, the pitiful appreciation of the frailty and hunger of the nature He has made. The New Testament is in accord with the Old of Scripture, and the older Testament of man's nature, as God made it at first.

It is highly important to remember this. The God who redeems is He who created all things by His word, and for His pleasure. Is it likely that He will contradict His original design, and undo what cost Him thought and care? Surely not; He is pledged only to undo the evil which has marred His work.

Matthew 13:11

“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”

IN explanation of this statement, our Lord reiterates His favourite saying: “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance.” His disciples had already given heed to His words. On the thin soil of their hearts the precious seed had already begun to germinate: and as it throve, it prepared the way for more and more to follow.

In the case of the crowds that pressed around Him, however, there was no such earnest giving heed. They were content with the interest, the beauty and grace, of His nature-teaching, without a thought of its deeper aspects. Hearing, they did not understand; seeing, they did not perceive; face to face with Incarnate Truth, they thought only that He had a pleasant voice, and could play skilfully on the harp.

First, Understand what you hear. Do not be content to have a merely intellectual appreciation of its force or beauty; but open your heart to meditate and ponder it. It is only thus that truth really strikes its roots into the soul, and defies the birds.

Second, Beware of the response of mere emotion. Too many of these receive the word with joy. Their expressions of interest and pleasure are loud and emphatic. Tears course down their cheeks. You think them most hopeful. But it passes like the sunshine and cloud of an April day.

Third, Guard against cares and worldly success. The first, of the poor; the second, of the rich. There is not room in the heart, or nutrition in the soul, for the absorbing pursuit of both earth and heaven, of time and eternity.

Fourth, Practice what you hear. Remember that not the hearers of the Word, but the doers of the work, are blessed.

Matthew 14:19

“And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”

STONEWALL Jackson was once asked what he meant when he used the expression, “Instant in prayer.” “I will give you,” he said, “my idea of it for illustration, if you will allow it, and not think that I am setting myself up as a model for others.” On being assured that there would be no misjudgement, he went on to say: “I have so fixed the habit in my own mind, that I never raise a glass of water to my lips without a moment’s asking of God’s blessing. I never seal a letter without putting a word of prayer under the seal. I never take a letter from the post without a brief sending of my thoughts heavenward. I never change my classes in the section room without a minute’s petition on the cadets who go out and those who come in.” “And don’t you sometimes forget this?” “I think I can say that I scarcely do; the habit has become almost as fixed as breathing.”

And if this was the habit of the servant, how much more of the Master. Frequently, in the Gospels, we are told of His heavenward look. It was as though He were always looking up for His Father’s smile, direction, and benediction; so that He could be assured that what He was engaged in was in the line of His Father’s purpose, and that He might gain the needed power to act and wisdom to speak.

It is only thus that we shall be able to meet the hunger of our times. Our slender stores will not avail for so great a multitude. But if we bring them to Him, and place them in His hands, and look up to heaven for His enablement, we shall break and break again till all have sufficed and left. But this habit can only be maintained by those who go into the mountain of prolonged fellowship.

Matthew 15:28

“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

THIS was a remarkable permission. It is not often that Christ takes the key to His stores out of the bunch which hangs at His girdle, and entrusts it to a soul, saying in effect, Take what you will. “Of the work of My hands, command ye Me.”

1. We must intercede for others. This woman came for her child. We must always be on our guard when we ask much for self, lest somehow our requests be prompted by self-aggrandizement. If we do ask for power, wisdom, or likeness to Christ, let it be that we may help others better. The apostle says that Christ “washed us from our sins... and hath made us kings and priests” (Revelation 1:5, 6). We all need this washing, that we may become intercessors.

2. We must accord Christ His right place. The Canaanitish woman came to Him as the Son of David, and He answered her not a word. She had no claim on Him as such. That He was the Jews’ Messiah could not help her. She had given Him that title by courtesy and hearsay. It was necessary that by His silence she should be driven to find Him for herself. When she gave Him a universal title, and said, Lord, help me! worshipping at His feet, she was a step nearer the goal.

3. We must answer His affirmations with Yea. He told her what she was. She was an alien and outcast. She was not part of the chosen family; she must understand her true position, and take it. And she did. She said, Yea, Lord. If you can perfectly accept God’s will, so that it shall take the place of your own; if you will take your place among the clogs beneath the table, you are sure to obtain answers to your prayers—God can let you have your way, because it will be His.

Matthew 16:22

“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”

THROUGHOUT His life these words were perpetually flung at the heart of Christ. Spare Thyself this hunger, the devil said in the wilderness, on the threshold of His public ministry; spare Thyself this agonizing death, he said again in the garden, on the eve of the crucifixion.

It is noticeable that the cross was surrounded by voices that repeated the same words. They that passed by it wagged their heads, and said “Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself.” the chief priests mocked Him, with the scribes and elders, and said, “Can He not save Himself?” The soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, offering Him vinegar, and saying, “If Thou art the King of the Jews, save Thyself.” And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, “Art not Thou the Christ? save Thyself and us.” All these voices spoke after the methods of human wisdom.

This made our Lord turn so quickly on Peter, saying, “Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me.” How often are the same words addressed to us: “Pity thyself. Have mercy on your sensitive human nature; do not be too lavish with your money; give yourself a little more license.” But it cannot be. You cannot save others and yourself as well. Those that would follow Jesus in His steps of redemptive help to mankind must deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Him into rejection, shame, spitting, and the grave. They who have mercy on themselves will never show much to others, or receive much; but the merciful are blessed, because they obtain mercy. Thus mercy is “twice blessed; it blesses him that gives, and him that takes.”

Matthew 17:3

“And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.”

LUKE tells us that they “spoke of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” Moses, as representing the Law, would remind Him that if as God’s Lamb He must die, yet as God’s Lamb He would redeem countless myriads. Elijah, as representative of the prophets, would dwell on the glory that would accrue to the Father. These thoughts were familiar enough to the mind of our blessed Master; yet they must have gladdened and strengthened Him, as they fell from other lips: the more so when they conversed together on the certain splendour of the resurrection morning that should follow His decease.

And where could there have been found greater subjects than this wondrous death, and His glorious resurrection? Here the attributes of God find their most complete and most harmonious exemplification. Here the problems of human sin and salvation are met and solved. Here the travail of Creation meets with its answer and key. Here are sown the seeds of the new heavens and earth, in which shall dwell righteousness and peace. Here is the point of unity between all ages, all dispensations, all beings, all worlds. Here blend men and angels; departed spirits and the denizens of other spheres; Peter, James and John, with Moses and Elijah, and all with the great God Himself, whose voice is heard falling in benediction from the opened heaven.

We, too, must often climb the mount of transfiguration in holy reverie; for the nearer we get to the Cross, and the more we meditate upon the decease accomplished at Jerusalem, the closer we shall come into the centre of things; the deeper will be our harmony with ourselves and all other noble spirits and with God Himself.

Matthew 18:15

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

“WHERE is thy brother, child?”

“I do not know, Lord; I have not seen or spoken to him these many days; and, as far as I am concerned, I would not mind if I never saw him again; he is as good as lost to me.”

“Hast thou wronged him, that this gulf has yawned between you? Remember that I said, if on coming to the altar, thou shouldst remember that thy brother hath some complaint against thee, thou wert to leave thy gift, and seek to be reconciled; then return to offer thy gift.”

“Yes, Lord, I remember well. But that is not the case now; my brother has nothing against me; he is in the wrong, not I; he has trespassed against me, not I against him. It is therefore for him to come to me, not for me to go to him.”

“Is it likely that he will come to thee?”

“I do not think it is, Lord. He is not one of Thy disciples; and it is most unlikely that he will ever cross my threshold to apologize and ask forgiveness.”

“Then thou must go to him, and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, and do thy best to win him back.”

“But I think he is most likely to put the wrong construction on my going, and to account that I feel myself in the wrong.”

“Thou art thy brother’s keeper, and thou must win him out of his fault, and lovelessness, and wandering. He is drifting away—from thee only, but from Me. I know he was in the wrong at first; but thou art in the wrong now, and thou must go and tell him his fault, and try to wash his feet and win him back.”

Matthew 19:8

“He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.”

THIS is a very profound principle, which is of immense value in dealing with Scripture. There were certain precepts and commands given to Israel, which are not of lasting obligation, because they were stages in their moral discipline and education. It would have been impossible to lift them suddenly from the degradation into which they had sunk in Egypt, to the glorious levels of Isaiah or the Sermon on the Mount: so God’s dealings with them were graduated and progressive.

Such were the regulations about a plurality of wives, the keeping of bond-slaves, the treatment of captives, the destruction of their foes. With respect to these, our Lord says, Moses interposed a parenthesis of legislation, which was a stage higher than anything known among the surrounding nations, though it was not God’s normal or original code.

What was true of Israel is true of us. We do not realize, in the first stage of our redemption, all that is included in the word “sin.” We are like men enveloped in morning mist, which permits them to descry only the bolder outlines of the cliffs around them, but as yet veils the minuter eminences or depressions. As the mist clears, surrounding objects become ever more distinctly defined: so that we know more of God, we know ourselves better, and realize what sin is, and come to see it where we had never guessed its presence. Thus we condemn today what we permitted five years ago. It is interesting to find in these words of Christ the germ of an argument which His apostle used afterward in the Epistle to the Galatians with such marvellous force. He said the Mosaic dispensation was a parenthesis; but it cannot disannul God’s primal institution (Galatians 3:15-17).

Matthew 20:22

“But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.”

THIS the cry of youth—ardent, impulsive, self-confident. It does not wait to calculate the ridges and hummocks that lie between it and its goal, but supposes that it will be able to skate the entire distance over the glistening azure blue ice. Without hesitation it counts on being able to brave all difficulty, surmount all hardship, drink the cup, and be baptized with the baptism.

But these men slept in Gethsemane, forsook the Master when He was arrested, and one of them at least failed Him at the cross. Creature-might cannot carry us in the hour of our greatest peril. We can vaunt ourselves as we may; but we have to learn that we can only follow Christ in His cup and baptism, after we have been endued with the Spirit of Pentecost. I once knew two who said these words to God, when He presented them with the cup of suffering and death. They did not know all it involved; and they confessed afterward that they could never have stood to their choice, had they not been graciously and repeatedly enabled. But at the end they could not wish it to have been otherwise.

How different were the experiences of these two men! To one the cup and baptism came swiftly, when he fell beneath the beheading axe of Herod (Acts 12:2); to the other they came in long, long years of sharing in the patience of Jesus Christ. These are different aspects of the same fellowship of suffering—swift death, or long waiting; but in both nearness to Jesus. We have no right to cherish the assurance of sitting right and left of the throne, if that only means our own power, authority, glory. But if it means nearness to Jesus, we may count on it with the utmost assurance.

Matthew 21:22

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

THIS was a very remarkable answer; showing that the Lord, in His human life, was the Author and Finisher of the life of faith. He did not quote His Divine power and Godhead as the cause of the withering of the fig-tree; but proceeded to give a lesson on faith, as much as to say that He had wrought the miracle by faith in His Father, and that they could do as He had done, if only they had a similar faith.

Where we get wrong in prayer is that we are so self-willed. We set ourselves to pray for things; we vow to sit up all night to bring God round to our way of thinking; we use strong cryings, tears and protestations; we endeavour to work ourselves into a frame of faith; we think we believe; we shut the doors of our heart against the tiniest suggestion or suspicion that we do not believe. And then we are surprised if the fig-tree does not wither, or the mountain remove.

Where are we wrong? It is not hard to see. There is too much of self and the energy of the flesh in all this. We can only believe for a thing when we are in such union with God that His thought and purpose can freely flow into us, suggesting what we should pray for, and leading us to that point in which there is a perfect sympathy and understanding between us and the Divine mind. Faith is always the product of such a frame as this. Be sure that you are in alignment with God’s purpose. Wait for Him till the impulses of nature have subsided, and the soul is hushed and still. Then the Spirit will lead you to ask what is in the will of God to give, and you will know instantly that the Spirit intercedes within you according to the will of God.

Matthew 22:37

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

THIS was Adam’s blessed privilege in Eden; but he missed it. The love of self took the place of the love of God. It is the aim of our blessed Lord to bring us back to that position. Perfect love is the sunlit peak to which His whole redemption tends. And perfect love would be perfect holiness. If a man were to love God and his neighbour as his first and chief and all-absorbing passion, there would be no room for sin to establish itself in his heart.

But does not this command seem altogether impracticable? It does; and it is impracticable to our mortal flesh. It is high; we cannot attain to it. Yet the very sublimity of the demand is intended to drive us to the Holy Ghost. He sheds abroad the love of God in hearts which are fully yielded to Him. If you desire that this love should be your privilege, lie down low before the flow of the River of Life, and it will fill every gully and inlet of your nature.

But, perhaps you are not of an emotional nature; you cannot gleam and flash, and shed tears, and light up with smiles. You cannot love God with your heart. Then see, the Lord says that you can love Him with your mind, i.e., with your intellect, your choice, your will. Probably this is where you have to begin. Give your mind, your will, your power of choice to God. Make Him first. Ask Him to take the helm of your life, and to control, inspire, and direct its every movement. Crown Him King. And when the will, which is the high priest of your nature, has put its crown of life on the head of Christ, who is God Incarnate, all the emotions and affections and faculties of heart and life will come in to swell the court with their homage and acclaim.

Matthew 23:37

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

ONLY the greatest artists can make immortal pictures from simple domestic scenes. To detect the imperishable and the infinite in the common and ordinary, and to preserve it in such a form as to arrest the ages, this is the mark of consummate power. But how characteristic of Jesus—a broken bottle skin, a patched garment, a handful of girls shut out of a village feast—these are the subjects which He painted into never-to-be-forgotten pictures. Lord, give us childlike hearts that we may see the secrets that are hidden in common things!

But how this image arrests us! Who has not heard the cluck of the hen when danger was threatening her brood? She is quicker to detect its proximity than her callow young; and she must needs insert herself between it and them. Ah, how often does the rush of life drown the call of Jesus to come under His wing for rest and safety!

Bunyan says that the hen has a variety of calls, some six or eight. Jesus also calls us for different purposes—sometimes to nestle near His heart for fellowship; sometimes for rest. Sometimes He calls us to feast on some rich dainty, to which He has directed us in the Word; and sometimes to hide in the shadow of His wings till dreaded evils pass us by.

Oh that we more often heard and obeyed that warning note! Probably there is never a temptation nor trial which is not thus anticipated and preceded. When passion overcomes you by a sudden rush, you must not impute your failure to any lapse in your Saviour’s care. He called you, but you could not hear. “How often!” Who can enumerate the many, many times when we have been summoned by Jesus nearer to Himself, but would not?

Matthew 24:32

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:”

YOU say that it is rather overdue. The nipping winds and morning frosts have held back vegetation so long that it has seemed as if summer would never visit us, spreading her carpet on the earth, and giving her intense hues to stream and lake and sky. But summer is nigh in spite of all prognostications to the contrary, because He is nigh, who is the King of summer, whose presence makes summer. Be sure that He, and therefore it, is nigh, even at the doors.

He is always nigh, and those that love Him realize the perpetual summer of His presence; but His appearing, the *parousia*, (Second Coming) is nigh. Presently the swing doors will be flung wide, and His triumphal procession will sweep into our view. Then the millennial summer of the world will break, and her long winter will be gone forever. Then the bride will hear Him say: “The winter is over and gone; the time of the singing of birds is come: arise, my fair one, and come.”

The rumours of war that frighten the nations; the slackening faith and waning love; the dissemination of the Gospel to all lands; the great movement now in progress in the midst of the ancient people of God; the decrease of conversion work in favor of the preparation of the Bride for the Bridegroom—all these are like the tender shoots of the fig-tree which show that the Lord is at hand. Oh, lonely and sequestered ones, by His appearing, and by our gathering together unto Him, be of good courage, and do the King’s work.

Do you want perpetual summer in your soul? There is only one condition which needs to be fulfilled. You must leave the northern climes to dwell between the Tropics, where the sun is always on the throne of the sky. Thy sun shall no more go down.

Matthew 25:24

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

IT is remarkable that the man who had one talent should hide it. If we had been told that he who had five had hidden one we should not have been surprised; but for the man who had only one to hide it—this is startling; but it is true to life.

The people whose talents and opportunities are very slight and slender are they who are tempted to do nothing at all. “I can do so very little; it will not make much difference if I do nothing; I shall not be missed; my tiny push is not needed to turn the scale.” That is the way they talk. They forget that an ounce-weight may turn the scales where hundred-weights are balanced. They do not realize that the last flake of white snow just oversets the gathering avalanche, and sends it into the vales beneath.

Are you one of these slenderly-endowed ones? And are you doing all you can? Are you doing anything? Even though you cannot do much in your isolation, you might join with others and do much. You might invest your little all in the bank of the Church, and trade as part of that heavenly corporation. Oh, disinter your one talent! Be sure you have one; ask the Master where and what it is; place yourself at His disposal. If it is only to carry refreshment to the harvesters—do that. Be thou faithful in thy very little.

We need not wait for the great future, to obtain this multiplication or withdrawal of our talents. They are already waxing or waning in our hands. There are many among us who, as life has progressed, have come into the use of powers of which at first they were perfectly ignorant; whilst others are losing, through misuse, the little they had.

Matthew 26:28

“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

THE first covenant was not ratified without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses, he took the blood of the calves and goats, sprinkled the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant” (Hebrews 9:19-20). So the second covenant must be ratified by blood; not by that of calves and goats, but by the precious blood of Jesus Himself. He who made the covenant sealed it with His blood, that we might have strong assurance.

But Christ has put the cup which holds the emblem of His blood into our hands, and bids us drink it. What, then, do we mean when at the Supper we lift that sacred cup to our lips? Are we not saying by that significant act, Remember thy covenant? Are we not reminding Jesus that we are relying upon Him to do His part? Are we not pledging ourselves to Him as His own, bound to Him by indissoluble ties, and satisfied with His most blessed service?

Among the most precious promises of the new covenant is that in which God promises to remember our sins no more. Here is the ground which enables God to forgive so freely. The blood has been shed for many unto the remission of sins; the claims of infinite justice have been met; the righteous demands of a broken law satisfied; the barriers have been removed that might have restrained the manifestation of Divine love, though they could not obstruct the love. And now we may sit with Christ at His table in His kingdom, not rebels, but welcome guests.

Also among the promises of the new covenant is that in which God promises that we shall be His people, and He our God. This item also is presented by us in humble expectancy, whilst, in expectant faith, we say, “Do as Thou hast said.”

Matthew 27:32

“And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.”

IF we may judge from the familiar way in which Matthew speaks of the sons of this Cyrenian, who the soldiers brutally compelled to carry our Saviour’s cross, we should infer that from this hour he became a Christian. He had little suspected such a thing in the early morning, when he left his lodging to attend to his business; but, being constrained to go to Calvary, he lingered there of his own accord through those anxious hours, and was led to feel that such a sufferer, to whom even Nature paid such homage, was worthy henceforth to receive his loyalty.

But how many of us are carrying our cross because we are compelled! There seems no alternative but to carry the dead weight of our cross with us everywhere, only wishing a hundred times each day that we might have respite. Dear soul, that cross is yet going to be the greatest blessing of your life if it leads you to the Crucified, and you find in Him what will transform it into the ladder which links earth with heaven, swaying beneath angel tread.

If Simon became a Christian, with what rapture must he have reviewed that incident in his life! How easy it would have been to carry the cross had he known Jesus as he came to know Him afterward! He would have needed no compelling! So if you saw the will of Jesus in your cross, and that you were carrying it with Him, how much easier it would be! But that is so. He is in it. Bear it with Him; out of the cross will fall a shower of flowers.

There is no such thing as chance in our lives. It might have seemed such that Simon was coming into Jerusalem at that moment. It was shown, however, to be part of the Eternal counsel. Dare to believe in the Divine purpose which orders your cross.

Matthew 28:5

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.”

THE emphasis is on the pronoun “ye”. The angel meant, As for these sentinels that are quaking in dread and becoming as dead men, it is meet and natural that they should do so. They are strangers to Him whom ye seek, and are set here to do the work of His foes. But there is no need for those that seek Jesus to fear.

Are you seeking the forgiveness of your sins through His blood? Fear not ye! Do not fear that they are too many to be forgiven. Do not fear that you have not the right faith. Do not fear that you will find His door shut. Do not fear that He will always be reminding you of what you have cost Him. Do not fear that He will let you drift from Him again. Ye seek the Lord who was crucified. Fear not!

Are you seeking a closer identification with His death? Fear not! There is no possibility of realizing the life which is life indeed, except through identification with the death and grave of Jesus. We must sink deep down into reunion with Him who lay there as our representative. But as God takes us at our word, and begins to strip us of all we had taken pride in; as the fear of what may be involved crosses our hearts with its chill dread—again we may be assured as we hear the angel say, “Fear not, ye who seek Jesus that was crucified.”

And when at last you are seeking to follow Him through the valley of shadow—Fear not! You will never see Him as He is, till this mortal is surrendered, and the house not made with hands entered. But if the heart faints, and the flesh fails, fear not ye, who through that mysterious change seek Jesus that was crucified, but now liveth forevermore at the right hand of God.

Mark 1:13

“And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.”

IN what different circumstances is the last Adam to the first! He began in a garden which the Lord God had planted; but his great Antitype in a wilderness, the thorns of which spoke of that primal sin. But whereas the first Adam transformed the garden into a wilderness, the last will convert all desert places into gardens—whether they be in the heart, or the world around—so that they shall blossom as the rose.

To Adam the beasts came, that he might name them; but at the coming of the last Adam they were wild. “He was with the wild beasts.” Yet they were tame to his pure manhood. “He had dominion over the works of God’s hands.” On his brow the crown of royalty over the inferior races, which man had lost, was already placed. Is it not also true that holy men still have power over the lower creation? Certainly Francis of Assissi had. And in the ages, yet future, the children shall play, unhurt, amid the wild beasts of the forest.

Again it is true of thee, O son of man, that, like thy Lord, thou art between the wild beasts and the angels. On the one side thou touchest the lower, and on the other the higher. At every moment thou art called to choose between these twain. Thy body calls thee this way, and thy spirit that. Be sure to deny the lower appetites; rule them; be king and lord in the realm of thy soul. Make them crouch around thee, as the lions of Daniel’s den. Get thy Lord to master them for thee. Else thou wilt miss the angels of God, who come to encamp around thee, and minister to thee, as one of the heirs of salvation. Was it here that Christ learned to contrast His homelessness with the lairs of the beasts?

Mark 2:22

“And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.”

AH, our Lord! Thou hast been speaking of the bridegroom and His coming to the Feast. Thou remindest us of the olden comparison of Thy love as better than wine, and of Thy first miracle at Cana of Galilee. May Thy love be poured into our hearts as the fresh juice crushed from the grapes! We have no love of our own to offer Thee: but, oh, pour Thy love into hearts that yearn to love Thee with Thy love. And let it not be only the memory of the love that was, but the living, fresh enjoyment of the love that is ever new. The new wine of Thy love is what we long for, that it may sweep into our hearts as the spring tide along the golden sands, which it frees from their accumulation of debris and waste. Oh for the constraints of Thy love—new, fresh, living!

But the Master says, Children, if you have your request, the new wine may refuse to take on with the old shapes; it will make for itself new channels and forms of manifestations; when others fast, you will feast; when others feast, you will be sad. You will be counted eccentric and peculiar. Men will murmur at you, and find fault. They may even cast you out of their churches and social circles.

There is but one answer: Leave us not to ourselves. Permit us not to follow the promptings and suggestions of our undisciplined wills; but provide for us the new wine-skins also. Show us what Thou wouldst have us be and do; and let the methods in which our hearts' devotion shall express itself be so lovely, so befitting, so helpful to the world, and so full of God, that men may recognize Thy hand, and adore Thee. Let not Thy love be spilled, but stored for the refreshment of others through our lives. Oh, give us love!

Mark 3:14

“And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,”

THIS is the threefold work of the Church, and of each disciple. That we might be with Him: The Master dearly loves our company. Let us seek it more. Not necessarily praying, or praising, or learning—but just being quietly with Him. It was said of a holy man, Mons de Rentz, that his union and converse with God were so wonderful, that after he had spent several hours therein, he found himself in the end as if he had only then begun it, except only that he had then yet more desire to continue it. And at length he arrived to that height that it seemed as though he never ended it at all; being wholly and constantly in inward recollection and application to God. After whose example let us press, that we may enjoy like near approach to God, and our lives be suitably ordered for His glory.

That He might send them forth to preach: He cannot come forth from the secret chamber of eternity to preach, as once He was wont to do; and therefore He is ever raising up voices, witnesses, lips which He teaches how to speak, and touches with His live coal. Has He not sent you forth, if not by lip, yet by life to bear witness to His love? Like the seraphim, if you have two pair of wings for reverent modesty, you have at least one pair for flight. Oh, breathe the prayer, “Send me.”

That they might have authority over demons: The power of Satan is strong; it mastered Adam, but it met more than its match in the Christ-nature. If that nature is regnant in you, you, too, will have power over all the power of the enemy. Nothing shall by any means hurt you, and you will be able to deliver others who have long been held captive.

Mark 4:19

“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”

THERE is enough nutriment in the land for the thorns alone or for the wheat alone, but not for both; and so there is a brief struggle for mastery, in which the sturdy weed prevails against the slender wheat, and chokes it. Nourishment which should go to its support is drained away from it; and though it does not actually expire, it leads a struggling existence, and becomes unfruitful. What are these weeds?

For the poor man—Cares: The Greek word for care is *Division*. Cares divide our heart, and distract it in many different directions. What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? How shall we meet our rent and other expenses? It is almost impossible to settle to our prayer, or Bible-study, or Christian work, or to the culture of the soul-life, while questions like these intrude. What shall the poor man do to prevent the Word from becoming unfruitful? He must take his cares to his Father, and by one act deposit them in His safe-keeping. And thereafter, as a care tries to break in on the peace of his heart, he must treat it as a positive temptation, handing it over to God.

For the prosperous man—Riches: They will distract as much as anxiety does. How much they amount to! Oh, the endless figurings in the brain—how to keep, or invest, or increase. The case for him is to look on all he has as a stewardship for God, deducting only a moderate percentage for himself.

For us all—Lusts: Strong and inordinate desires for what may be right in itself, but which we follow with extravagant zest. What is right in itself may become wrong if we put it in God's place, and allow it to monopolize us unduly. Oh, Great Husbandman, root up the thorns by Thy Holy Spirit!

Mark 5:35

“While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?”

WHAT hopelessness! They had watched the sweet flower fade, till no color was left on the pale cheek, and the merry voice was still; and then they thought of the Galilean Teacher: “Why cost Him time and trouble? His visit will be useless now! It was very kind of Him to be willing to come! But it is now of no use! Very kind; but no use.”

We go to God in comparatively small trials, and think He can help us. But there are times when we say: It is no use troubling further, we must just bear our trial as well as we can; God Himself cannot help us. Can He give back that twin-soul? Can He restore the love that has died out? Can He undo this unhappy marriage? Can He deliver from that lifelong paralysis? Life is extinct; hope is dead; the light has dipped below the horizon. It is no use to trouble God or man. We have no alternative but to suffer till eternity explains the mysteries of time.

But Jesus knows the way out. He says in His sweet undertone, “Fear not! Only believe.” He has the keys of death. He never would have let things come to this awful pass by His delay unless He had known that, even if the worse came to the worst, all would end well. He has purposely delayed till this, that He might have the better opportunity of showing you what God can do. Fear not! The hand of the Almighty Saviour has yours within its grasp. He will not let you stumble as you go down this dark staircase by His side. Only believe: have faith in Him. All may seem very mysterious now, but you will come to see that it was the wisest and best after all. You shall yet clasp to your heart the lost one, arrayed in resurrection beauty.

Mark 6:30

“And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.”

TALKING things over with Jesus! It is a precious secret! When one has been out in the world, it is delightful to talk over what has happened in the seclusion of the home. We have read of a wife who reserved one room in the house, which no one was permitted to enter but her husband and herself; and there they interchanged their mutual confidences. So it is a blessed habit to talk over everything with Jesus, and to review the events of the past beneath the light of His loving eyes.

“We have had much success, Master,” we cry, “The cities were moved; the devils were subject; the crowds followed us everywhere.” Ah, children, He seems to say, Those who cry “Hosanna” today will cry “Crucify” tomorrow: the real work of God is not done amid congratulating crowds, but in the heart’s depths, and in the ante-chamber. See that ye dwell not on the excitement of the outward reception, lest you attribute your success to something in yourselves, and pride yourselves upon it, and become unsuitable for My use. All success comes from above.

“We have been greatly persecuted, and our mission seems to have been a failure, Master,” we cry at another time. “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” “Care not for it,” the same wise Counsellor replies, “I at least am satisfied; I will see to it that your reward is according to your faithfulness, if not to your success; and there shall be a remnant of good soil that shall repay one hundredfold.”

Thus His loving words extract the poison from success, and rally us from despondency. Oh, Christian workers, get into the secret of His presence, that He may correct, criticise, or encourage as He pleases.

Mark 7:19

“Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?”

THIS inaugurates an era in the history of the Levitical institutions. Before this hour arrived, men were clean if they ate certain kinds of food, and unclean if they ate others. But from this moment, the Evangelist tells us, these outward distinctions are abolished. Henceforth all meats are to be viewed by the followers of Jesus as equally clean. There is, however, need that we should remember two or three things in respect to food.

(1) That every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it can be received with thanksgiving. The act of thanksgiving is the test for the fitness and unfitness of food, as the ancient sign was supposed to be when made by the knight over a glass of wine offered by a stranger. Do not touch what you cannot thank God for.

(2) Take care to eat for the need of the body rather than for its pleasure. There are a great many dainties and luxuries heaped on our tables which we take simply for the pleasure of eating. It is here that we are assailed with temptation, and need to be on our guard. The fact of food being pleasant for eating is not in itself sufficient to justify our taking it. It may clog our digestion, and impair our power for thought and prayer and service.

(3) Be moderate in the amount you eat—quite as many over-eat as over-drink. We should always have the girded loin. The majority of the diseases of modern life have been traced to the habit of eating to excess. We are told by eminent authorities that we ought not to rise from table with the sense of having eaten to the full. Let your moderation in this also be known to all men.

Mark 8:12

“And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.”

THIS Evangelist twice over calls attention to the Lord’s sighs—in Mark 7:34, and here. A sigh is one of the most touching and significant tokens of excessive grief! When Nature is too deeply overwrought to remember her necessary inspirations, and has to compensate for their omission by one deep-drawn breath, we sigh, we sigh deeply in our spirit.

Looking up to heaven, He sighed. As the deaf mute stood before Him—an image of all the closed hearts around Him; of all the inarticulate unexpressed desires; of all the sin and sorrow of mankind—the sensitive heart of Jesus responded with a deep-drawn sigh. But there was simultaneously a heavenward look, which mingled infinite hope in it. If the sigh spoke of His tender sympathy, the look declared His close union with God, by virtue of which He was competent to meet the direst need. Whenever you sigh, look up to heaven. Heaven’s light turns tears into jewels!

He sighed deeply. The obdurate and impenetrable hardness of the Pharisees; their willful misinterpretation of His words and mission; their pride and bigotry—wrung the Lord’s heart with bitterness. He turned sorrowfully away. There was no possibility of furnishing help, since on their side there was no desire for it, or belief in Him. Perhaps such sighs still break from His heart, as He views mankind; but through them He is doing His best to bring about the time when all sorrow and sighing shall flee away forever.

The Son of God, in doing good, would look to heaven and sigh; but His sighs were followed by the touch and word of power. Let us not be content with the sigh of sympathy and regret.

Mark 9:22-23

“And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

YES, there was an *if* in this sad case. But the father put it in the wrong place. He put it against Christ’s power, “If Thou canst do anything.” But it was really on the side of his own ability to believe. If only he believed, all else would easily be possible. Even though his faith were small, it would suffice; the tiniest seed can appropriate the chemical products of the soil, and transmute them into digestible products; the narrowest channel will suffice for the passage of the waters of the whole ocean if you give enough time. Let us not worry about the greatness or smallness of our faith; the main point is whether our faith is directed toward the living Saviour.

There are many issues to which these words may be applied. If Jesus can save me from the power of sin! No; if thou canst believe, He can. If Jesus can deliver out of a mesh of temptation and perplexity! No; if thou canst believe, He will. If Jesus can revive His work mightily to the upbuilding of His Church and the ingathering of the lost! No; if thou canst believe for it.

Dost thou want that faith? It may be had thus. Look away from difficulty and temptation to Jesus; consider Him; feed thy faith on its native food of promise; familiarize thyself with fellowship with the promises; study what He has done for others: thus thou wilt believe. For every thought of thy little faith take ten thoughts of His faithfulness.

“All things are possible to God,
To Christ the power of God in man;
To me, when I am all subdued,
When I in Christ am formed again,
And witness from my sins set free,
All things are possible to me.”

Mark 10:32

“And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,”

THE radiant vision of the Transfiguration was deliberately forsaken, as the Lord took the way of the cross, going to Jerusalem to die. The shadow of His awful exodus had already fallen upon the little group. Behold that resolute figure—the wan face lit up with the fire of an invincible resolve—going in front, climbing the difficult ascent. The apostles cannot keep step with His eager steps, and they fear as an instinctive dread of coming events casts its chilling mantle around them. There was something in their Master they could not understand.

Such moments come to all lives, when Jesus leads us to the cross. How often He asks for a deeper consecration; a more complete crossing of natural inclination for the sake of His Gospel; a more intense purpose. At His bidding we must tear ourselves away from ambitions which had fascinated, and dreams which had allured. We must no longer live on the lower level, however pleasant to flesh and blood, but gird ourselves to go up to Jerusalem.

At such moments He always goes before us. We may not see Him until we begin to follow in the direction of His voice; but so soon as we set ourselves to obey, we become aware of His prevenient grace. He is just in front. He never puts forth His own sheep without going before them. He never asks us to tread a path which has not been trodden by His footsteps. Happy are they who follow Him!

In the first effort to follow Jesus, there may be amazement and not a little fear. The unaccustomed path, the strange look on His face, the shadow of the cross—all dissuade us. But as He dilates on the joy set before Him and us, we learn to think lightly of the difficulties in comparison with the goal.

Mark 11:22

“And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.”

THIS command might be rendered, “Have *the* faith of God.” As long as I live, I shall remember this text in connection with my first meeting with Hudson Taylor. He was to preach for me on a Sunday morning, now years ago, and gave out this as his text. But he said that he had always interpreted it as dealing rather with God’s faith to us than ours to Him; so that it ran thus: *Reckon on God’s faithfulness.*

1. We must be sure that we are on God’s plan. There is a prepared path for us, along which God has stored up all necessary supplies. But if we want those supplies, we must find the path and follow it. Along the track which He has marked out between this world and Home, our Father has erected cairns full of provisions; but we must let His route prevail over our own notions and wishes, if we are to enjoy His preparations.

2. We must be prepared to wait on Him. For these things He will be inquired of. Though He knows what we need, He expects our humble request, that we may be perpetually reminded of our entire dependence on Him. He sometimes appears to tarry to draw out our faith and prayer. But He will never utterly fail.

3. We must walk worthily of Him. God shows Himself strong only on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him. By His enabling grace we must put away the old manner of life, and be renewed in the spirit of our mind, that we may be such whom the great God shall delight to honour. Let such trust Him to the hilt; they will find Him faithful. He will never put us into positions of peril and responsibility, and leave us to take our chance.

Mark 12:27

“He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.”

SINCE God spoke of Himself as the God of the patriarchs, centuries after they had been borne to their graves, it stood to reason that they were yet living; and on this ground our Lord met the allegation that there is no life beyond death.

Death is not a state or condition, but an act. We speak of the dead; but in point of fact there are none such. We should speak of those who have died. They were living up to the moment of death; but they were living quite as much afterward. Death is like birth, an act, a transition, a passage into a freer life. Never think of a death as a state, but as resembling a bridge which, for a moment, casts its shadow on the express train, which flashes beneath, but does not stay.

All our dear ones are living. As vividly, as keenly, as intensely as ever: with all the love and faith and intelligence with which we were wont to associate their beloved personality. It may be that they think of us as only half alive, compared with their own intense and vivid experience of the life which draws its breath from the manifested presence of God. Oh, do not fear that they will cease to recognize, know, or love you! Always it remains true, “Without us they cannot be made perfect.”

Those who live on either side of death may meet in God. Those who are present in the body, and those who are absent from it, meet in proportion as they approach God. When we come near Him in thought, and prayer, and love, we are come to the spirits of the just made perfect. God is the glorious centre of all the lines that radiate into all worlds. “Ye are come to God, the Judge of all . . . and to the spirits of the just made perfect.”

Mark 13:35

“Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:”

NO, we know not. It is better that we should not know. But He must be very near. Even has passed; the beams of His presence had just died off the world, and the after-glow was still lingering in the ministry of the apostles in the early Church. Midnight has passed; it reached its deepest darkness in the middle ages, when only a few holy souls shone like stars in the surrounding gloom. Cock-crow has passed; Wycliffe and Luther, and others, heralded the morning. And now the morning is upon us; nay, it is shining more and more unto the perfect day. He must be near, even at the doors. Be ready, O virgin souls, to go forth to meet Him!

But may not these words be interpreted in yet another way? Jesus comes to us in the evening twilight, when the joy of our life seems slowly waning. He comes to us in the deep night of depression, bereavement, and anguish. He comes to us in the hope and expectancy of each new dawn, when we gird ourselves to fresh toils and endeavours. He comes to us in the morning, and satisfies us with His mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all the day. Only let us watch for His coming, with ears attentive to His lightest footfall, His softest whisper. Then, when He shows Himself through the lattice, or softly whispers, “Come away,” we shall arise and go forth with Him to the beds of lilies and the gardens of myrrh.

Are we quite sure that we belong to His house? “Whose house are we,” says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But there are conditions: we must be born into it by regeneration; we must walk as becometh saints; we must hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. Christ is Lord over this house, and His will is law (Hebrews 3:1-9).

Mark 14:6

“And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.”

THE lovers of Jesus are often misunderstood. Those who judge only by a utilitarian standard refuse to acknowledge the worth of their deeds. You might as well despise the electric light because it makes no register on a gas-meter. But when the voices of criticism and jealousy are highest, Jesus steps in and casts the shield of His love around the trembling, disconcerted soul, saying, Let him alone. So He speaks still:

To Satan: The adversary stands near to resist and tempt. As Judas criticised Mary, so the Evil One seems at times to pour a perpetual stream of chilling criticism on all we say and do, or he meets us at every turn with some evil suggestion. But Jesus is on the watch, and He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear; but when heart and flesh fail, He will step in and say, Let him (or her) alone.

To sorrow: We must pass through the fire, and be subjected to the lapidary's wheel; we must drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism; we must bear our cross after Him. But He is always on the alert. And whenever the feeble flesh is at an end of its power of endurance, He will step in and say, Let be—it is enough.

To human unkindness: Some of us are called to suffer most from our fellows; our foes belong to our own household; our brother Cain hates us. It is hard to bear. To have one's motives misunderstood and maligned; to lose one's good name; to be an outcast—all this is hard. But God has planted a hedge about us, and none may pass through it, except He permit. Even Satan recognizes this, as we learn from the Book of Job.

Mark 15:34

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

THIS was the darkest hour of the Saviour’s human life. Lover and friend stood away from Him, and those for whom His blood was being shed covered Him with contumely and abuse. Let us consider:

His quotation of Scripture: He is quoting the first verse of Psalm 22, which is truly known as the Psalm of the Cross. It may be that He recited to Himself that wonderful elegy, in which David was to anticipate so minutely the sufferings of his Lord. What meaning there was for those dying lips in Psalm 22:7 : “All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn”; in verse 13 : “They gape upon Me”; in verse 14 : “All My bones are out of joint”; in verse 17 : “I may tell all My bones”; or in verse 18 : “They part My garments and cast lots.” What sacred feet trod those well-worn steps!

His vicarious sufferings: There is no possible way of understanding, or interpreting, these words, except by believing that He was suffering for sins not His own; that He was being made sin for us; that He was bearing away the sin of the world. It is not for a moment conceivable that the Father could have ever seemed to forsake His well-beloved Son, unless He had stood as the Representative of a guilty race, and during those hours of midday, had become the propitiation for the sins of the world.

His perfect example of the way of Faith: In doing the Father’s will, He yielded up His life even to the death of the cross. But amid it all He said, “My God, My God.” He still held to the Father with His two hands. And His faith conquered. The clouds broke; the clear heaven appeared; He died with a serene faith. “My God” was exchanged for “Father, into Thy hands.”

Mark 16:20

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”

THIS was the secret of the successes of the early Church. Theirs was the simple commission to preach; but wherever they did so, the Lord confirmed their word with signs following. In Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Rome and to the uttermost end of the world, wherever these simple men stood up and made their proclamation, their invisible Lord was present, and His Spirit bore witness.

Nothing less than this will account for the marvellous successes of those early preachers. He who sat at the right hand of God in the attitude of majestic rest was always beside them in the intensity of the most untiring work. What was done by them on earth was wrought by Himself. His right hand and His holy arm got Him the victory.

This blessed partnership has never been repealed. Jesus has never withdrawn from the compact; and if we could only dare to count and reckon on Him, we would find that He was cooperating in church, and Sunday-school, and mission-station. There are a few rules to be observed, however, before we can count upon Him thus:

(1) We must be clean in heart and life. He cannot identify Himself with those who are consciously delinquent.

(2) We must not seek our own glory, but God's, and the pure blessing of men.

(3) We must use the Word of God as our sword, our lever, our balm, our cordial, our charm.

(4) We must be in loving harmony with those who name His name, as He cannot countenance seclusion or uncharitable feeling.

(5) We must by faith claim and reckon upon Him—speaking to Him as to the message before it is delivered, relying on Him during its delivery, and conferring with Him about its effect. Not anxious or elated, but at rest.

Luke 1:38

“And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”

THE angel’s message meant, for this young, pure-hearted girl, a great deal of misunderstanding and reproach. It was inevitable that clouds would gather around her character, which would sorely perplex the good man to whom she was betrothed. But as soon as she realized that this lot was ordained for her by God she humbly acquiesced, with these model words of patient faith. Let us often say them:

Firstly: To His commands. God’s voice often speaks within our hearts, and no word of His is devoid of power. We must test what seems to be His voice by these three corroborations: First, His Word; second, by the trend of outward circumstances; third, by the advice of Christian people not immediately interested. When these concur, we may take it that God has spoken to us, and whatever the burden of His words we must respond—Be it unto me according to Thy word.

Secondly: To the responsibilities thrust on us. It may be a trusteeship for some dying friend; a charge of orphan children; a babe cast on our parentage; an invalid; a difficult and trying piece of Christian enterprise. But whenever it comes on us, imposed by the evident appointment of our Father, notwithstanding the shrinking of our flesh and the fearfulness of our soul, we must say: Be it unto me according to Thy word.

Thirdly: To any burden of pain and suffering. Are you one whom God has set apart to manifest the power of His grace in suffering and pain? Are you sleepless by night, and helpless by day? Are you likely to spend years in one position, as paralyzed or rheumatic? Well, still dare to look up and say: Be it unto me according to Thy word.

Luke 2:14

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

THESSE twain are joined together, and none can sunder them. Do you want peace? Your highest aim must be the glory of God. Do you seek God’s glory as your highest aim? Then, the inevitable result will be the peace that passeth understanding.

Glory to God in the highest: It was said of the soldiers of the first Napoleon that they were content to die in the ditch if only he rode over them to victory. With their last breath they cried, “Long live the Emperor!” It seemed as though they had lost all thought and care of their own interests so long as glory accrued to his name. So should it be of us. Higher than our own comfort, or success, or popularity, should be the one thought of the glory of our God. Let Christ be honored, loved, exalted, at whatever cost to us.

On earth, peace: It will come, because when the heart has only one aim to follow, it is delivered from dividing and distracting cares. It will come, because the glory of God is so lofty an aim that it lifts the soul into the atmosphere of the heavenly and eternal world, where peace reigns unbroken. It will come, because we are not greatly troubled by the reverses and alternations of fortune that are incident to all work in this world, since the main object is always secure and beyond fear of failure. What though there be the ebb and flow of the wave, yet the tide is certainly coming up the shore, and will presently stand at high-water mark.

Luke 3:16

“John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:”

THEY had received the negative, water; they were to receive the positive, fire. Water is not sufficient for natures such as ours. The Baptist pointed to a greater Baptist than himself. Jesus plunges the soul into a baptism of fire.

Fire cleanses: Ore may be mingled with earthly ingredients from which it is imperative to free it. A chisel or pickaxe could not extricate it. But when it is plunged into the furnace, the metal runs out in a molten stream. So our characters are full of impurities and earthly ingredients; but as they are brought into contact with the power of the Holy Spirit, these are eliminated and dropped away, and we attain degrees of purity and love which otherwise had made us unserviceable to our dear Lord. Do not seek to rid yourself of these things as a condition of His gracious cleansing, but seek the baptism of the Spirit, and He will free thee; for He is like a consuming fire.

Fire illuminates: As the express-train hurries the traveller by night through a district where the smelting furnaces are in full blast, his eyes are arrested by their glow, and the very heavens are lurid with the light, reflected for miles. So when the Spirit comes in power to the soul, He teaches us to know God, and truth, and things hidden from the wise and prudent. The fires that sanctify, illuminate us.

Fire kindles: It is contagious. It will spread over an immense area, where inflammable material attracts it. A match may light up a bonfire that will burn for hours. So when the Spirit of God touches a soul, like an unlit candle, it begins to glow; and from it the blessed spark may pass from heart to heart, and church to church, till an entire continent may blaze with heavenly fire.

Luke 4:18

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,”

AS the Lord emerged from the waters of baptism, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit in a bodily shape descended upon Him and abode. Then His mouth was opened, and His public ministry commenced. Now He stepped forth into the world, saying:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor:
He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

The Spirit was given Him without measure, as the power in which He was to cast out devils, preach the Gospel, and glorify His Father by His human life and ministry.

What that scene was in the life of the Lord, Pentecost was for the Church. Then she was anointed for her Divine mission among men; the unction of the Holy One rested upon her, to be continued and renewed as the centuries slowly passed. What happened for the Church should take place in the history of each member of it. This anointing is for all, is to be received by faith, and is especially intended to equip us for work. Hast thou had thy share? If not, art thou not making a mistake in attempting God’s work without it? If Jesus did not put His hand to this work till He was conscious of His anointing, though He was one with the Holy Spirit in an especial sense, how much less should we! Hast thou known it? Seek it on the threshold of each new enterprise. Be satisfied with nothing less than to be anointed with fresh oil.

Luke 5:13

“And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.”

THIS leper, as the physician-evangelist remarks, was full of leprosy. It was a very aggravated case. He lay in the dust before Jesus. What a contrast! Loathsomeness and Divine beauty; disease and health; humanity at its worst and best; sinner and Saviour; one of Satan’s most miserable victims, and the Almighty Deliverer. So, my reader, if thou art conscious of a heart and life which are full of sin, I would have thee meet thy Saviour now. There is no *if* about His power—even the leper recognized that. The only doubt was about the Saviour’s will: there is, however, no doubt on this score now, since He has healed myriads, and promises healing to all who would come. Throw thyself, then, at His feet, and ask for cleansing.

“He stretched forth His hand, and touched him.” No one else would have dared to do as much. To touch that flesh, according to the Levitical code, would induce uncleanness. But Jesus shrank not. On the one hand, He knew that the ceremonial restrictions were abolished in Himself: on the other, He desired to teach that sin cannot defile the Divine holiness of the Saviour. Whatever be the stories of sin that are breathed into His ear; whatever the open bruises and putrefying sores which are opened to His touch; whatever the sights and scenes with which He has to cope—none of these can leave a taint of evil in His sinless heart. It would be as impossible for sin to soil Christ as for a plague to contaminate flame. And He will heal thee. Dare to claim it.

“Break up the heavens, O Lord, and far
Through all yon starlight keen;
Draw me, thy bride—a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.”

Luke 6:40

“The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.”

WE are not perfected yet. There is a great chasm between our highest and our Master's lowest; between where we stop and He begins; between our light, which is twilight at best, and His meridian glory. When we compare ourselves with ourselves, or with our neighbours, our standard is altogether too low; we should compare ourselves with Him, the beloved Master. Job, who was reputed perfect, abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes when he had seen God, of whom he had formerly only heard.

But we shall be perfected one day. That when has a hopeful ring. But to what period does the Master point? Not till sorrow, sanctified by God's grace, has done its work; not till the snow and frost, the light shower and the bitter wind, the earth and sun, have contributed their shares to the desired quota. Not till the perfect image of Jesus has emerged from the sculptured stone; not till the molten metal reflects each lineament of the glorified Lord.

When we are perfected we shall be as our Master. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” It seems altogether too much to expect! To think that we shall be changed into His image; that we shall bear His impress; that we shall be as like Him as Gideon's brethren to Gideon, of whom the princes of Midian testified that they were like the children of a king. Yet it shall be so. The Lord Jesus became like unto us in our low estate, that we should become like Him in His glory. There must ever be the limitations of the creature as compared with Him by whom all things were made. But in our measure there shall be the same perfect beauty—His beauty upon us—for a mountain lake may as perfectly reflect the wide blue heaven as an ocean.

Luke 7:13

“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.”

NO widow stands by the bier of her only son, no mother by the empty cot of her babe, no lover beside the fading beauty of his beloved—but the Son of Man, unseen but glorious, is at hand, seeing, understanding, touched with compassion, and saying, in His tenderest tones, Weep not!

Weep not: Love is eternal. Hast thou forgotten that there are three things which abide forevermore, the greatest of which is love? Is it likely that those blessed ties which have woven us to others can be snapped by death, which can only touch the body, but is not able to reach the soul? Is not love of God—and can God’s love change, and pass away? No; though severed from your sight, the dear ones that are gone are thine today, and have not forgotten, but love thee still. Without us they cannot be made perfect.

Weep not: Recognition of the beloved dead is certain. Did not Mary and the women, Peter and five hundred more, recognize Jesus after His resurrection? Is He not the same Man? Are we not to be like Him? Recognition went so far, in His case, that the Magdalene recognized the very tones of His voice, when He said Mary, and she answered Rabboni. Yes, though refined and purified, the face thou hast loved shall smile, and the tones that have made thy heart-music shall speak again. Weep not!

Weep not: They shall rise again, nevermore to be separated. The Lord raised this youth to life; but there had to be another parting, when his mother or he died. But when thy dear ones are reunited to thee, there will be no more partings. There shall be no more sea. Thy heart shall find its mate. Thou and he shall go no more out.

Luke 8:46

“And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.”

AMID the pressure of the crowd that crushed on Him from all sides, Jesus detected the light touch of one thin hand, which drew from Him healing virtue. We may be very near Christ, and throned Him, without touching; but no one can touch Him, however lightly, without deriving the very grace needed.

We think of Jesus today amid the thronging crowds of angels and spirits of the just made perfect. Amid their voices will ours be heard? Amid the pressure of their attendance on His sacred person will He stay to recognize our poor trembling touch? Amid the vast interests that depend on Him, the government of the universe, the holding together and consistence of all things, is there any likelihood of our need asserting itself successfully? See, He is hastening on to raise the dead; there is the daughter of many a Jairus waiting for His summons, in the cemeteries and sleeping places of the dead. Will He stay for me? Yes, always.

There is the touch of prayer and faith. Thou canst never exercise it, however simply, without eliciting an immediate response. The conductor can detect the tiny note of a piccolo in an orchestra; and Christ is moved by a whisper, a sigh, a tear, a touch. There may be a good deal of mistake and superstition, as there was in this woman, who seemed to have thought that virtue clung to His robes; but He will distinguish the soul of holy trust amid many false ingredients. There is also the touch of affection. He knew when the woman crept to kiss His feet. He did not instantly speak of it, but said afterward, “From the time I came in she hath not ceased to kiss My feet.” Not one loving expression from thy heart to His is lost on Him!

Luke 9:30

“And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:”

WHAT a spectacle this was, on the slopes of Lebanon, with light transcending that of the moonlight shining in the upper heights! And what converse! Possibly that transfiguration was an example of the way in which Adam and all his race might have passed into heaven, had not death come on us all through sin; and therefore it was the greater proof of the love of our dear Lord, when He deliberately turned from all the radiant light and took the way of the cross. His death is here called an exodus: such is the Greek word rendered decease. How much these two great souls, Moses and Elijah, had to say about it: the one representing the law, the other the prophets.

Moses would remind Him of the lamb that would be slain before the children of Israel could escape from Egypt, of the rock that must be smitten, before the water could flow forth for the thirsty crowds; of the serpent that must be fixed on the pole, before the dying Israelites could look and live.

Elijah would remind the Lord of Psalm 22, beginning with a wail and ending with praise; of Isaiah 53:1-12, finishing with a burst of triumph; and many other sacred and familiar passages.

And after all it was only an exodus, the going forth of His spirit from the Time-sphere to the Eternal; from contact with a very weary world to victory and joy-mending. Lighted by the Shekinah glory; following through the Red Sea of Blood; hastening to the morning, with its vision of enemies strewn dead on the seashore. The memory of this talk so far robbed death of its terror, in the heart of one of the disciples at least, that afterward he described his own death as an exodus (2 Peter 1:15).

Luke 10:18

“And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”

THIS was Christ’s vision of the effect of His work in man’s nature, and on man’s behalf. For ages Satan had vaunted his power over man; but now and henceforward the demon-nature was to be vanquished by the name and nature of Jesus Christ. “The demons are subject to us in Thy name.” Whenever you are tempted by the demon of alcohol, of passion, of jealousy, or any other, claim instantly the protection of the Name which is above every name; make the Name and Nature of Jesus your strong tower into which you shall run and be safe; realize all that He stands for and you will find that the demons will be subject to you. In your life also, Satan will fall from heaven, and be trodden under your feet.

And what is true in your own life is true also of your influence over others. If you dare to live in the risen Christ, you share His empire and all the fruits of His victory over Satan. He gives you authority over serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. The Christ nature within you becomes the dominant, triumphant power to which all power must ultimately yield. Dare to use it. In conflict with the demon spirits that haunt so many lives; in antagonizing the giant forces that are so strongly entrenched in our natural life, the ravages of vice—be sure to rely, not on numbers or organization, but on the name of Jesus, used not as a charm, but as representing His living and ascended might.

And let it be carefully noted that as the success of these disciples over a few demons in the villages and towns of Israel reacted on the balance of power in the heavenlies, so there is no victory won anywhere by any lonely disciple, or handful of disciples, that does not react on the entire battlefield.

Luke 11:1

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

IT was a wise and good request, prompted by the Saviour’s own practice. He did not, in the first instance, command His disciples to pray; but He gave Himself to the blessed practice of prayer, and this made them eager to learn and practice the holy art. This is the best way of inculcating new and holy habits on those who surround us. Do not begin by exhorting them; but by living before them a life so holy, so unselfish, so consecrated and devout, that they shall spontaneously approach you, saying, “Give us your secret; tell us how we may do and become as you.” It is a holy life which constitutes our best pulpit.

We should daily ask the Master to teach us to pray. Each time we kneel in prayer we may well preface our petitions with the sentence: “We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but by Thy Holy Spirit, Lord, teach us to pray.” And probably the Lord’s answer will fall into suggestions, borrowed from the form and model of prayer which He gave His disciples. It has been called the Lord’s Prayer; it should be called the Disciples’.

Address prayer to the Father, through the Son. Do not be selfish in prayer; but look out on the needs of others, incorporating them in every petition—us, we, our. Remember, you are speaking to your Father, and that His honor and glory should have a paramount and foremost place. If you desire first the hallowing of His name, and the coming of His kingdom, all your personal needs and desires will fall easily and naturally into their place, which will be a comparatively subordinate one. You will need forgiveness as often and as regularly as your daily bread. Be also direct and definite in prayer.

Luke 12:11

“And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:”

So often through this discourse the Lord refers to anxiety: “Take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer” (Luke 12:11). “Which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?” (Luke 12:25). “Why take ye thought?” (Luke 12:26). There must have been a great strain on the crowds who listened to Him; and there was every likelihood of the strain becoming even greater for His disciples as the years passed on. So, also, the characteristic of our age is anxious strain.

But the heart of Jesus was always at peace. His life was calm amid the storms of life; as the coral-island, with its fronded palms and lagoons of still water, is peaceful amid the storm-tossed ocean, because of the protection of its reef. The surf breaks there, but does not intrude further. The secrets of Jesus were the perpetual presence of God in His soul, and His never-faltering faith in the loving, careful providence of God in all the experiences of His chequered life.

Can we not have this? We may if we are willing to pay the price. If we will resign or surrender our will utterly to Him; if we will tear down every veil that might hide His face, and throw open our whole being to His indwelling and use; if we will cease scheming, planning, devising, and fall back on the absolute care and arrangements of God; if we will learn to reckon on God as absolutely as on any resourceful human friend; if we will dare to believe that God holds Himself responsible for the sustenance and equipment for duty of all who absolutely seek His glory—then,

“Our lives shall be full of sunshine,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold up their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.”

Luke 13:24

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

THE question which the disciples asked was for their gratification and curiosity. Man has always been curious to know what will be the numerical result of the Redeemer's work. But to such questions the Lord had no reply. He was only eager that none of those whom He loved should miss the full measure of blessedness that was within His reach; therefore He bade each be sure of entering the narrow door, so narrow that there is no room to carry through it the love of self, the greed of gain and the thirst for the applause and rewards of the world.

We may be saved from the penalty of sin by one single glance at the Saviour, who lived, and died, and lives forevermore; but we cannot be saved in the deepest meaning of the word, in the sense of being delivered from the love and power of sin, unless we are willing to enter through the door, so constructed and straight, that it seems impossible to effect an entrance. Art thou willing for this, to leave behind thy amassed and hardly-gained treasures, thy luggage and impedimenta, thy jewels and gew-gaws, thy certificate of merit and credentials, thy notions of self-importance, the weights which thou hast carried so long, the pillows with which thou art always sparing thyself from the stern realities and efforts of a noble life? If thou art willing for this, and prepared to strive, even to the rending of thyself asunder, then thou shalt be saved from the love and tyranny of that wild, dark power, which, hitherto, has always dragged thee downward.

It is not enough to eat and drink of the blessed memorial supper, nor to listen to the voice of Jesus teaching in His Church. Many may do all this, and yet never be included in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Luke 14:26,27,33

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ... So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

THREE times Christ repeats these solemn words; and it may be that earnest men have done injury to His cause, which they desired to serve, by omitting these stringent conditions in their Gospel invitations. It is quite true that whosoever will may come and take; that whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish; that the door of mercy stands open wide. But it is equally true that the faith that saves must pass such tests as these; and if it does not, it is not of the quality which can bear the soul through the swelling billows of the river of death. These three tests may be classified thus:

Separation: It sometimes happens in the disciple's life that Christ's work lies in one direction, whilst the blessed ties of home lie in another. Tender voices call; loving hands reach out to hold him. Here the plough is waiting in its furrow; there the hearth with its tender memory and association. At such times, for the true man, there can be but one choice.

Crucifixion: Everyone has his own cross—some one thing in which the will of God crosses his will. Jesus made that cross, and bids us take it up and bear it after Himself. Yet how many evade it, flee from it, postpone it. They think they can follow Him apart from it; but it is impossible. We can only follow the Crucified when we bear each his own cross. And to shrink from it shows that we are not disciples.

Renunciation: All we have must be gladly yielded when Christ asks for it. If the accumulation of a life be on one scale and Christ in the other, we must choose Christ, come what may to the rest, or we must abandon our title to discipleship.

Luke 15:28

“And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.”

THE elder brother is the dark contrast which heightens the glowing picture of the repentant prodigal; as the gargoyle does the beauty of the angel faces on the cathedral front.

When we look at sin, not in its theological aspects, but in its everyday clothes, we find that it divides itself into two kinds. We find that there are sins of the body and sins of the disposition; or, more narrowly, sins of the passions, including all forms of lust and selfishness, and sins of the temper. The prodigal is the instance in the New Testament of sins of passion—the elder brother of sins of temper. Now we might be disposed to think that the prodigal is the worse sinner of these two; but it is at least worthy of remark that as the story ends, we see him found, forgiven, restored; whilst the elder brother is still outside the house, and an absentee from the feast. Does Christ mean that the ill-tempered murmuring of the Pharisee is more hopeless than the passion of the publican and sinner? We must not press the thought too far; but we may at least ask whether we are harbouring, beneath a very respectable, moral exterior, the spirit of the elder brother, who plods daily to work, and is accounted a paragon of filial dutifulness, but is left without the door.

One has made a careful analysis of the ingredients that went to make up that one spiteful speech; they come out thus: jealousy, anger, pride, uncharity, cruelty, self-righteousness, sulkiness, touchiness, doggedness. “His speech, like the bubble escaping to the surface of the pool, betrays the rottenness beneath.” Let us carefully read our hearts, lest there be any trace of this spirit in ourselves, when others are pressing into the kingdom with joy.

Luke 16:12

“And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?”

OUR Lord is speaking of money and its use.

1. He describes money: It is so associated with unrighteousness that He speaks of it as the unrighteous mammon. It was as though the inveterate money-maker, who will get money at all costs, was an idolater, prostrating himself daily in the temple of the heathen deity who bore that name. In His judgment, also, it is a very little thing (Luke 16:10). We only know how little when we compare it with the immortal qualities of a lowly character. At least, it is not the true riches (Luke 16:11). Moreover, it is not our own—it is clearly another’s—God’s (Luke 16:12). We have nothing that we have not received.

2. He indicates the main use of money: It is God’s; but He puts it into our hands to watch the use we will make of it, before He entrusts to us the true riches of eternity— just as you will test a child with a toy watch before you dare to place in his hands a real one. If he is destructive of the one, you hesitate to hand him the other; whilst if he is careful, you feel able to consign to his care some family heirloom. So God is testing men by giving them money that He may know how far to trust them in the mart of the New Jerusalem.

3. He arouses us to fidelity: Care for God’s interests as much as the wasteful and unfaithful steward cared for his own. He used his master’s money to secure a welcome to the debtor’s houses when he lost his situation. But God has so arranged it, that if you use His money aright, you shall not only win His approbation, but His interests will be so coincident with yours, that when the world fades from view, those whom you have helped for God’s sake shall welcome you to heaven.

Luke 17:20

“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:”

THE Kingdom is “in mystery” just now. It is hidden from mortal eye, because the King Himself is withdrawn from the visible sphere. The creation groans and travails for its manifestation. He must be manifested before we can be manifested with Him in glory. In the meanwhile, it is not without, but within; not compelling human attention, but pervading human hearts. Let us remember this when we are lamenting the slow progress of Christianity in the world. It appears to recede almost as quickly as it advances; what it gains in one place it loses in another. If heathen lands are receiving Christ, are not the populations of Christian lands departing from Him? Stay; you cannot tell! It is useless to argue! There may be much more good working than you know. For every bold confessor there are probably seven thousand who have not bowed to Baal.

When we are tempted to estimate our success by numerical results, when our church is crowded; our roll of communicants constantly augmented; and the money revenue large—we are disposed to think that the cause of Christ is really advancing in our midst. It may be so. But sometimes, where numbers are scant and difficulties many, a yet deeper and more lasting result is being achieved.

When we are lamenting the apparent slowness of our growth in grace, when you do not feel as you would; nay, to judge by your emotional life, when you fear lest you are positively receding in the divine life; when you think that the quality and quantity of your fruit unto God is decreasing—Stay; the deepest work is not always the most obvious. Before the mole appears above the wave, years of work have been expended where no eye can see; but every stone tells in the result.

Luke 18:6

“And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.”

THE force of this parable lies in its succession of vivid contrasts, which rise to an irresistible climax. The judge is unjust. He neither fears God nor regards man. His one idea is to extort as much money as he can from the prisoners who desire to get out of jail, and from those that want to keep them in, or put others to share their fate. But God is our Father, unimpeachable in His integrity, and only eager to promote our welfare.

The judge had no personal interest in the claimant. She had no personal attraction for him. Had she been possessed of property, he might have cared more. But now he looked on her as a pest that plagued and worried him. But we are God's elect, over whom His tender heart yearns. Did He not choose us before all the worlds unto His glory?

The judge answered the widow's cry just to save himself trouble. Whenever he went to his seat, there she was. Though he had refused to hear her a score of times, there was her voice again, as clear and penetrating as ever. She had been forcibly hurried from his presence by his officials, and she had been borne screaming and remonstrating into the rear; but she never knew herself defeated. At last he could bear it no longer, and gave orders that her patrimony should be restored.

And will not God do as much, as, generation after generation, He sees His Church, like a widowed soul, oppressed by the great enemy and avenger? As He hears the cries of martyrs and saints; the perpetual prayer, Come, Lord Jesus; the insolent boast of the foe—will He not arise and avenge? Yes, verily, speedily! But it may seem long to us, because one thousand years with Him are as one day.

Luke 19:34

“And they said, The Lord hath need of him.”

OH, could I hear Thee say as much of me, my blessed Lord! Here, where two ways meet, I have been standing long, waiting for a purpose worthy to fill my soul, and task the powers that are, as yet, only in the first burst of young life.

Thou needest much and many in Thy great redemptive work. The boat to cross the lake; the line to catch the fish; the bread and fish to feed the crowds; the baskets to gather up the fragments; the chalice to hold the wine; the dish to hold the sop; the little child to be the text for Thy sermon; the clay for the blind man’s eyes; the tender women to minister of their substance; the apostles to preach Thy Gospel. Canst Thou not find a niche for me also?

Thou requirest undivided loyalty. Born of the Virgin’s womb, laid in death where man’s dust had never come, Thou must have a colt on which none had ever sat. I cannot give Thee a heart which has never known another; but I profess to Thee that there is no rival now. Thou mayest have all. Thine is the Kingdom.

Thou requirest patience and humility. But these, also, Thou hast taught. I have waited patiently till this glad hour, and am quieted and humbled like a weaned child. No longer do I seek great things for myself. It is enough for me to be and do anything, if only Thou shalt be glorified.

Thou requirest, perhaps, but one brief service. To serve Thee always with increasing fervor would be my choice; but if Thou needest only one brief, glad hour of ministry, like that the good Ananias did to Thy Church when he ministered to Saul, then be it so. To prepare for it, and revert to it, would be my satisfaction in having lived.

Luke 20:24

*“Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it?
They answered and said, Caesar’s.”*

OUR Lord more than once compared men to coins. He spoke of the woman who lost one piece of silver, and searched till she had found it. The analogy might be carried out in many particulars; for as the ore passes through the crucible, and many another process, before it is stamped with the image of the sovereign, so do souls experience many fiery trials ere they can receive and keep the impression of heaven’s mint, which is the face of Jesus.

Whose image dost thou bear?—Is there a clear-cut outline of the features of Christ, so manifest that those who touch and handle you are irresistibly reminded of Him; or have the features of your King, which were once clear-cut, become effaced?

Whose is thy superscription? Is A. D. there?—the year in which you were born into the kingdom of God, the year of our Lord, the year of your eternal life? Is “*Dei gratia*” there? (By the grace of God). So that all the while those who know you magnify the exceeding riches of His love as manifested in you. Is “*Christus Rex*” there? (Christ the King). Are you absolutely Christ’s—to serve and to obey? Is “*Fid. Def.*” there? (Defender of the Faith). Do you keep the deposit of Christ’s holy Gospel, as you look to Him to keep the deposit which you have committed to Him? Is the lion on the quarterings?—speaking of the strength of the Lion of Judah imparted to your soul. Is the harp amongst them?—indicating the subjection of every string of your life to His finger. Is the crown there?—indicating how absolutely you have placed the empire of your nature upon the brow of your Lord. Then weave together the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley as the symbol of His reign.

Luke 21:36

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

LET us never release the girdle from around our loins, nor throw ourselves listlessly upon the bank to drink, whilst the enemy may be stealing up against the wind. It is the art of our great enemy to fill the air with the heavy breath of the poppy; that, like the lotus-eaters of the old legend, we may be indisposed for the perils and toils of our onward journey.

Watch ye in the season of festivity. When merry voices fill the chamber with mirth, and jokes pass; old stories are retold; quaint anecdotes circulated—remember to look frequently up into the Master’s face, to discover if aught has covered it with shame, or filled it with regret. Let not your heart be overcharged with surfeiting drunkenness.

Watch ye in hours of stress and anxiety. These will come between the soul and Christ, oppressing us with anxious care, leading us to think too much of the things which are seen and transient, and filling our hearts with dismay, as though the future would find us orphans and homeless, because the storm had swept away some few gatherings of the earth’s perishable stores. When stocks are falling, business declining, competition increasing—Watch! Make supplication! Stand before the Son of Man as those whom He cannot forget or forsake.

Watch ye in seasons of tender love. We wear armor abroad, but when we come within the closed door of the home, and our hearts expand beneath the genial warmth of kindred natures, how apt we are to cry, Now, surely, we may unbend, ungird, and let nature have free course. But the Master says, *Watch ye at every season*; and He reminds us that we never cease to stand before the Son of Man.

Luke 22:31

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:”

THE Master apparently did not pray that temptation should be withheld. The quick eye of His affection had discerned the tempter's approach. His quick ear had detected Satan's request of the Father; as though he said, “Let me have the chance for one brief hour, and I will show that these men, so far from being gold, silver, and precious stones, are only wood, hay, and stubble.” But though He knew all this, the Master did not request that the winnowing wind should be withheld. Why? Because temptation is part of the present order of the world. Why it is so we cannot tell; that it is so we know assuredly. Why the Almighty permitted the evil one to intrude into paradise, and to assail every single soul of woman born, that has passed to years of consciousness, we shall probably never understand until mystery drops from our eyes in the meridian light of heaven. We only are sure that the permission of temptation is not inconsistent with His almightiness or beneficence.

Temptation tests character and reveals us to ourselves and to one another. Was it not well that Peter should know how weak he was; that he might become truly penitent and converted? Was it not befitting that Judas should be exposed before the day of Pentecost? Was it not best that the foundation stones of the Church should be well tested? It is better to learn our weakness now and here than at the Judgment seat.

But if Satan tempts, our Advocate pleads. He anticipates the advent of temptation by storing up His prayers. He warns the soul when the hawk begins to hover. If He may not arrest temptation, He will at least ask that our faith may not fail; and will seek us out as He did Peter.

Luke 23:43

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

TODAY!—Dost thou ask Me to remember thee at some distant moment, when the kingdom of which I am now laying the foundations shall have become the all-conquering kingdom of the world? Thou needest not wait so long. I say unto thee that this very day, when yonder sun now scorching above our heads is sinking in the west, and the shadows lie long from our crosses, and the people have gone to their homes, thou shalt be with Me, where the sun shall no more be thy light by day, nor the moon by night, but the Lord shall be thy everlasting light.

Thou shalt be with Me. Dost thou ask only to be remembered; that I should give thee the glance of a thought; that I shall recall thy voice and face for a brief moment? Thou shalt be with Me, for I will await thee on the confines of My home. The throngs which escort Me shall behold thee by My side, and when I sit upon My sapphire throne I will give thee to sit beside Me, the one who, in My mortal anguish, trod the vale of the shadow, and who, with Me, shall tread the paths of light and glory.

In Paradise. I am here regaining Paradise. All that was lost is being recovered. Within a few hours it will be Mine to give; within a few hours its key will be in My hand; within a few hours thou shalt walk with Me there in the cool of the day, and the angel that drove out Adam shall keep watch lest the Serpent enter to molest.

Verily, I say unto thee. All this is fixed and certain. I say “verily” to thee because the Father hath said “verily” to Me. Oh, trembling soul, who hast fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before thee, thou mayest have strong encouragement from My Word and death.

Luke 24:7

“Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”

THESE are the two poles of Christian life—Death and Resurrection. That which was true in the history of our Lord must have its counterpart in our own experiences. That Jesus died and rose again is not only the dual basis of justification, but it is the dual basis of sanctification. Did He die? Then we must arm ourselves with the same mind. The crucifixion was not finished on Calvary; it has continued through all ages, and will continue unto the end; not in its mediatorial and atoning aspect, but with the view of each man denying himself and taking up his cross to follow daily. So also we are perpetually leaving the things of time and sense where Christ left His grave-clothes, and are pressing up and on in the wake of His resurrection and ascension.

It is a solemn question, how far we are participating in this daily dying and daily rising. “Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed. Mortify your members which are upon the earth; seek those things which are above. If one died for all, then all died; that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.”

It is not that the old nature dies, but that we die to it. As a matter of experience and walk, the results will be very similar from either of these ways of stating the fact. But it is true to Scripture and experience also to speak of reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin—that is, the root-principle which so often fruits in sins. Reckon that the grave of Christ lies between thee and the solicitations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Deem thyself dead to thyself. All this, however, is only possible through the Holy Spirit.

John 1:50

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.”

GOD’S dealings with us are always on an ascending scale. If we see clearly the lowest rung in the heavenly ladder, whilst we behold, the veil of mist will part, and we shall see the next above it, and then the next, and, in due order, the next; and so the steps that slope away through darkness up to God will always be beckoning to greater and yet greater things.

Have you known Christ as the Word? He is more; both Spirit and Life.

Has He become flesh? You shall behold Him glorified with the glory He had before the worlds.

Have you known Him as Alpha, before all? He is also Omega.

Have you met John? You shall meet One so much greater, that the latchet of His shoes the Baptist shall deem himself unworthy to unloose.

Do you know the baptism by water? You shall be baptized by fire.

Have you beheld the Lamb on the Cross? You shall behold Him in the midst of the throne.

Have you seen the Spirit descend as a dove on one head? You shall see Him come as a fire upon an unnumbered multitude.

Have you followed the Christ to the slight booth in the Jordan Valley? You shall enter with Him into mansions of eternal glory.

Do you acknowledge Him as King of Israel? You shall hear the acclamations that salute Him as King of the worlds.

Live up to all you know, and you shall know more. Be all you can, and you shall become more. Do all that your two talents permit, and you will find yourself ruler over four cities.

John 2:10

“And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”

THE world gives its best first. As youth and beauty are ushered into the banqueting-room of life, the world spreads the table with its best. The zest of enjoyment is keen in those young days, but it is soon satiated; the delicacies with which the table is spread pall, and the appetite, unduly stimulated at the first, demands coarser and more passionate delights to stimulate. At last the table is served with provision, from which, in the first days, the banqueters would have turned away disgusted.

But if you let the King lead you into His banqueting house, beneath His banner of love you will find yourself feeding on dainties which never satiate nor pall—which whet the appetite and give the taste a more delicate appreciation of the vintages of heaven.

You may say this of the Word of God. At the beginning of Christian life it is full of meaning and inspiration; but as the years pass, and we realize ever more of its helpfulness, we repeat the refrain, “Thou hast kept the best until now!”

You may say this of Christian love. Let two love in Christ, and instead of their affection waning, as so often happens in the world, they will discover that the fellowship, which began in comradeship, will end in a sacramental meal; truest, purest, deepest enjoyment being kept for Paradise.

You may say it of heaven. Neither hath eye seen nor heart conceived the things, even now and here, that God has prepared for those that love Him. But so soon as the redeemed spirit shall awaken in the uncreated glory of God’s presence, it will exclaim, “The half was never told; Thou hast kept the best until now.” At every moment and always God is giving His best.

John 3:27

“John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.”

AFTER six months of marvellous ministry, in which the Baptist had seen the whole land at his feet, had gathered a band of disciples, and introduced the Messiah to the Jewish people, he found the crowds dwindling. His disciples viewed with feelings of chagrin the transference of popular interest from their master to Him of whom he had borne witness.

What John the Baptist meant by it: He realized that the crowds, the hushed attention, the swift response, the power of speech, the message, the deep repentance, the office of morning star heralding the Dayspring from on high, had been the gift of God. He had nothing which he had not received; he would have received nothing, except God had given it to him. Whether these things went or came was a matter altogether beyond his control. His part was to receive and use what God gave; and then return to Him, at His bidding, the saved talent. This forbade alike pride and despondency.

What we may learn by it: Humility and peace. Humility. Is this the time of your prosperity? Crowds wait on your words; mighty movements circle around you; glorious results follow on your plans! Do not be puffed up. Boast not yourself. “Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” Peace. If it is not due to your lethargy or sloth that the crowds have ebbed away, and that the tide of conversions has dropped below its former level, be at peace. These are things which the Holy Spirit worketh, dividing to each one severally even as He will.

John 4:10

“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

THERE are wonderful contrasts here! He who gives rest sits weary on the well-head; He who was the Jews’ Messiah utters His deepest lessons to a woman of Samaria; He that gives living water asks for water from the dark, cool depths that lay beneath them.

God’s best things are gifts. Light, air, natural beauty, elasticity of the spirits, the sense of vigorous health, human love, and, above all, His only begotten and beloved Son. Among all other gifts is there one to be compared to this? The living spring of eternal life, which Jesus opens up in our hearts, and which so greatly differs from the pit of outward ordinance, is an altogether unspeakable bestowment. Nothing can purchase it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for it, it would be utterly contemned. It must be received as a gift, or not at all.

God’s gifts must be asked for. “Thou wouldest have asked, and He would have given.” This is the law of heaven. Prayer is a necessary link between the Divine hand that gives and the human heart that receives. We have not, because we ask not. There is nothing in our Lord’s words of the dreamy and languid pietism which refuses to ask because it will not dictate to the perfect wisdom of God.

If we had fuller knowledge we should pray more. “If thou knewest ... thou wouldest ask.” If thou knewest who He is that stands beside thee, in thy hours of private prayer—if thou knewest all the possibilities of the life of prayer—if thou knewest what gains would accrue to thee on thy knees, thou wouldest give thyself to prayer, as though it were the main object of thy life.

John 5:20

“For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.”

HEAVEN stands open to me, my Lord, in these deep and holy words. Through the open door I see the source of the golden light that shone around Thy earthly life, and detect the secret of the music that ever sounded around Thy path, as the music of the golden bells when Aaron passed to and fro.

The Father loved Thee, not only because Thou were His Son, dwelling in His bosom, but because Thou were His obedient Servant. And I would inherit a similar love; not only the love of my adoption, but of service; for Thou saidst, “If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him.”

The Father was ever showing Thee what He was doing in the unseen and eternal depths. Indeed, it seemed that Thou were+ more occupied in beholding the things which were unseen than those which were seen. Thine eye was ever on the dial-plate of eternity, and Thine ear attent to the note of the tide on its shore. Thou didst nothing that was not in the pattern shown Thee on the mount of fellowship; but whatever was wrought there Thou didst here. Teach me to live like this.

Thy Father led Thee to ever greater works. First the daughter of Jairus, then Lazarus; first the Sermon on the Mount, then the prophecies of the closing days; first the Mountain of Transfiguration, then of Ascension. So would I be led forward, from Cana to Calvary; from Bethlehem to Bethany; from Jerusalem to the uttermost part of the world. Ever greater things, because with profounder humility and deeper insight into the meaning of Thy death. Deeper and therefore higher; nearer Thy cross, and therefore reaching further.

John 6:27

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”

THE seal is the mark of authentication. The Book of Esther often refers to the importance of the royal seal as giving validity and authenticity to documents to which it was appended. So at the waters of Jordan God authenticated our Lord; firstly by the voice that spoke from heaven, and secondly by the holy anointing that came upon His head, setting Him apart for holy service. What the Father did for His Son, He does for His sons. “He that stablisheth us with you into Christ, and anointed us, is God, who also sealed us.” In other words, God waits to authenticate us to ourselves and to the world, as His beloved children, in whom He is well pleased.

The conditions of sealing: In the case of our Lord there was entire subjection to the Father’s will, although it involved His leaving the blessed home of Nazareth and identifying Himself with the sins and sorrows of men, by baptism in waters where they had confessed their sins. We, too, must be prepared to obey utterly, even to death.

The agent of sealing: The Spirit descended and abode upon Him; He was filled with the Spirit, and returned in His power to Galilee. We, too, are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise; who stamps us with the die of our Saviour’s image and superscription. Simultaneously with His gracious work upon us, we may detect His loving voice within us, witnessing with our spirits that we are children of God.

The effect of sealing: Secrecy, safety, and assurance. Secrecy, Song 4:12. Safety, Mat 27:65-66. Assurance, Rom 8:15, Rom 8:16, Rom 8:17. There is also a daily assimilation, though we know it not, to the glorious likeness of our Lord; so that those who see us bear witness that His name is on us.

John 7:39

“(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”

CALVARY must precede the Ascension, and both must come before Pentecost. The glorified Lord was the text on which the Spirit was to discourse, and the text must be complete before the sermon can commence. Moreover, it was only when our Lord had ascended to the right hand of the Father, that He could receive or transmit the Divine Comforter. It was needful for Him to be by the right hand of God exalted, before He could ask for and receive, and shed forth the Holy Spirit of promise. The one Paraclete must finish His work, and be withdrawn, ere the other could come to take up and finish His work on earth. The Son must sit down on the throne, or the Spirit could not descend to sit on each of the disciples.

But there is a deep inner lesson for us all in these words. We sometimes wonder why we have not received the Spirit, and why our lives are not channels through which He pours in mighty rivers to make desert hearts and lives blossom and sing. How gladly would we part with all beside, if we might be conscious that not tiny streamlets, not one river of holy influence merely, but that rivers were issuing from us as the waters from the temple threshold!

Is not the reason to be sought in our neglect to glorify Christ? We have never yet abandoned ourselves to Him, content to live the branch-life, with no other aim than to realize the one purpose of His most blessed life, the glorifying of the Father. We have never seriously made it our life-purpose to glorify the Lord Jesus. There has been no triumphal entry into our hearts, no enthronization, no challenge to the gates of our soul that they should lift themselves up to admit the King of Glory.

John 8:31

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;”

1. WE shall be approved as Christ’s disciples. “Then are ye truly My disciples.” Of some the Master asks, “Why call ye Me, Lord, lord, and do not the things which I say?” And He drives these from Him, saying, “I never knew you.” His words are the supreme test—the fire which detects the ore; the winnowing-fan that finds out the wheat. Our treatment of our Lord’s words discriminates us: He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, is he that loveth Me.

2. We shall know the truth. God teaches us differently from men. They deal in peradventures and surmises; He with certainties—“Ye shall know the truth.” They talk about the truth; He gives us the thing itself, and we know because we possess. They deal with circumstances and externals; He with the heart and root of matters. They give to the mind and soul; He to the spirit. We know the truth, because the Truth is in us, and we are in the Truth. “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true.”

3. We shall be free. “The truth shall make you free.” Just as we are free from the terrors which belief in witchcraft and ghosts was wont to breed, because we know that the spirits of the dead do not haunt dark and dangerous places; just as we no longer fear the fatuous light over the marsh, or the death-tick, because science has attributed these to natural causes; so, as Jesus teaches us the truth about God, and the future, and the forgiveness of sins, and the broken power of Satan, and the impotence of death, we are delivered from the bondage of fear, and walk with God in perfect peace.

John 9:4

“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”

IS not this exceedingly tender and beautiful? The Lord does not hesitate to describe Himself as specially designated to do a certain work. In every part of this Gospel He speaks of Himself as the sent One; but He graciously conjoins His disciples and friends in it, saying, We must work. It is as though He said, “I have a designated work which must needs be done; but I cannot do it alone. We must do it, you and I, together.”

Fellowship with God the Father is the law of all industry. Every crop that goldens in the summer wind is due to the summons of the God of Nature to the husbandman, “Come and let us work together, thou and I.” Every achievement in factory or mill of textile fabrics is due to the combination of the Divine laws and the human agency. We must work, is God’s constant appeal.

Fellowship with the Son is the law of the Kingdom. We have been called into the fellowship or partnership of the Son of God. He does not say, Go, but come; not, Do this, but, Let us do it. He has set His heart on the glory of the Father, and He calls us to cooperate with Him in bringing back men to God. In some way we must contribute to the final result on which Christ has set His heart.

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit is the law of all successful service. The closing words of the benediction that refer to the communion of the Holy Spirit are specially significant. “We are witnesses, and so is also the Holy Ghost.” The Spirit and the Bride say Come. As Peter began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell. Oh for pure hands and a clean heart, that we may be worthy of this Divine confederacy!

John 10:41

“And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.”

THIS is full of rare interest and beauty. John the Baptist had been dead some two years at least, and the memory of good men is apt quickly to pass from the mind of their contemporaries, especially when they are eclipsed by some greater successor. Who thinks of the morning star when the sun has risen! But as the crowds came back again on the spot so closely identified with Christ's forerunner, he was recalled to mind; and they used of him the words ascribed to them in our text.

Your life may be without miracle. It may pass on with nothing to distinguish it above the lives of myriads around. There is no sensation-making note in your voice; no extraordinary intellectual calibre in your mind; no aptitude for wielding vast influence over the crowds. The years pass on with even monotony. Life is one dead level.

But mind you, speak true words of Jesus Christ. Point to Him and say, *Behold the Lamb of God!* Say of Him, *This is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.* Announce Him as the Bridegroom, and be content to be the Bridegroom's friend. Say that He has His winnowing-fan and axe in hand. Be careless what men think of your accent, your gestures, your way of stating the truth; but go on bearing witness to what you have known, tasted, and handled of the Word of Life.

After your death, your words may come to mind again, and be the means of bringing souls to the Lamb of God. As corn-seeds, buried in mummy-cases, now bloom on English soil, so may words be carried in the memory through long years, and bear fruit after the speaker's death. What an epitaph for the grave of a Christian minister or teacher!

John 11:40

“Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?”

YES, we shall see the glory of God. We shall see the graves give up their dead—not only at the last day, but now. Thousands around us are dead in trespasses and sins, in which they walk according to the course of this world. Alas! more than this, they stink in the putridity of their lives and speech. Around their graves gather their friends and relatives, bathed in tears, but unable to arrest the progress of decay. But, if we will believe, we shall see the glory of God.

But how shall we believe in this? It seems easy for some to believe. The Marys who sit at the Lord’s feet, feeding on His words, find the life and light of faith in His beloved presence. But others, like Martha, are distracted with so many things, that faith seems impossible. And this is the very point where this story is so abundantly helpful. Jesus must have the cooperation and sympathy of someone’s faith before this miracle could be wrought—and these He found, not in Mary, as we might have expected, but in Martha, the harassed housewife.

In educating Martha to this stupendous act of faith,

(1) The Lord gave her a distinct promise: “Thy brother shall rise again.”

(2) He drew her attention from Lazrus to Himself, who lay beneath and behind them: “I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

(3) He forced her to confess her faith. To express it would confirm and increase it: “Believest thou this?”

(4) He compelled her to act on the faith He had created, by allowing the bystanders to remove the stone. All her soul woke up as she remarked these preparations for her brother’s resurrection. She believed; and in her faith gave the Lord the pivot on which His leverage might rest.

John 12:24

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

THE East came to the cradle; the West to the Cross. Sunrise becomes the Orient; sunset the Occident wave. These were not Hellenist Jews, but pure-blooded Greeks, whose life and philosophy were in the present, in as much joy as nature, art, and amusement could yield. It was startling to be met with the grave announcement of death. But how wise to send them to read that earliest divine book of nature. Hear the parable of the corn of wheat.

Its loneliness: Before sowing, it is by itself alone. It lies on the barn floor, beside myriads more, but there is no vital contact between it and them. They are just so many isolated units: as foreign to each other as the stars, between which millions of dividing miles intervene. So if you save your life, nursing it in selfishness, dreading and avoiding all that savors of self-denial and self-giving, you will be utterly and drearily lonely.

The falling into the ground to die: If we compare ourselves to a corn of wheat, we may say that the seed-germ cannot bury itself; but it can choose burial. It can be willing to be cast forth. It is not a pleasant experience for the little seed. As soon as it finds itself entombed, it is seized upon by chemical agents, which pierce and tear its delicate waterproof sheath, and eat their way to its vitals. Death is no child's play.

The fruit-bearing: Presently the rootlet shoots downward, the tiny frond upward, and, almost without knowing it, the stalk begins to blossom and bear fruit, which, with every sowing, reduplicates itself. Such may your life become, if you will let God have His way. *Via Crucis, via lucis*. The Way of the Cross is the Way of Light.

John 13:36

“Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.”

HEAVEN desired: We often say it. When the pressure of life seems unbearable; when the door opens just wide enough to admit our dearest, and shuts before we can follow; when we want to see Him whom we love—we find ourselves using Peter’s words again: “Why not now?”

Heaven delayed: “Thou canst not follow Me now.” The emphasis is on the *cannot*. It is as though the Master said, “The hindrance is not in some arbitrary edict of Divine power, but in the infinite knowledge and wisdom that cannot err.” Peter was not fit to go. There were lessons of the utmost importance waiting for him to acquire in the near future. He must learn to know himself, and Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit. When he proudly vaunted that he would lay down his life for Jesus, he gave incontestable evidence that he did not know himself; and there was every reason to think that he was similarly deceived when he supposed that he was fit to quit earth’s discipline, and enter on heaven’s blessed enjoyment. He must exchange his own strivings and resolvings for the gracious indwelling of the Spirit of Pentecost; he must learn the glorious energy of the indwelling Saviour; he must be girded by another, and carried whither he would not; and only then would the time of his putting off of the tabernacle of the body arrive.

Heaven guaranteed: “Thou shalt follow afterward.” There could be no doubt about it, since Jesus had said it; and often, in after days, these words must have been as a cordial, “Thou shalt follow afterward.” But what the Master said to Peter He says to each who believes, Thou shalt follow Me afterward, “unto fountains of waters of life.”

John 14:1

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

WERE we less familiar with these words, we should be more startled by their immeasurable meaning. One who seems a man asks all men to give Him precisely the same faith and confidence that they give to God. He would not abate His claims, though He was the humblest and meekest of men. And the irresistible conclusion is forced on us, that He was and knew Himself to be “God manifest in the flesh.”

1. Faith in Jesus is the cure of heart trouble. It is of little use to say, “Let not your heart be troubled,” unless you can add “Trust Christ.” Only if we can trust can we be still. Only if we can shift the responsibility of our life on the care of our never-failing Redeemer can weeping be exchanged for radiant and unspeakable joy.

2. Faith in Jesus conducts to the knowledge of God. “Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.” Philip said, “Show us the Father.” Jesus answered, “Believe, and thou dost behold.” The world says, *Seeing is believing*; Jesus says, *Believing is seeing*. The true way to know God is, not by arguing about or seeking to verify His existence by intellectual processes, but by obeying the precepts of Jesus; following the footsteps of Jesus; holding fellowship with Jesus.

3. Faith in Jesus will make our lives the channel through which He can work. “He that believeth on Me, the works,” etc. (John 14:12-14). The Gospels are included in the one clause; the Acts and all the marvels of the following ages in the other. Jesus is always the worker; and the man who yields himself most utterly to Him in obedience and faith, will become the channel through which He will work most mightily.

John 15:4

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”

THE unity between the Lord and His members is beautifully set forth in this exquisite parable; which was perhaps suggested by the swaying of a vine in the evening air, as they essayed to go from the upper room toward Gethsemane. In certain conservatories the plant branches are trained along roof or wall for vast distances; yet one life pervades the whole plant, from the rugged root to the furthest twig and leaf and cluster. Thus there is one holy life pervading all who have belonged, or shall belong, to Jesus. They live because He lives. His life is theirs.

We are in Christ by grace; but we need to realize and accentuate the union by meditation and prayer. We need to

- wait more absolutely for His impulses in intercession and action.
- be silent for Him to speak.
- draw on Him by the constant appeal of faith, which becomes as natural as breathing.
 - look away to Him for His commendation.
 - seek only His verdict on what may have been said and done.
 - be so closely joined to Him, that He may produce in and through us whatever fruit He will for the refreshment of men and the glory of God.

We are in Christ forever, so far as our standing is concerned; but we may be “taken away,” so far as our opportunities of ministry are concerned. How many of us have failed to be what He desired, so that He has had to bestow elsewhere the luxury of ministering to Him!

We are in Christ, not because we hold Him, but because He holds us; therefore we must expect the Father’s pruning. Yet do not dread the knife. It is His Word, wielded by a Father’s hand; and if we will yield to the golden pruning knife of the Word, we shall escape the iron one of sorrow.

John 16:23-26

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:”

THURICE in these closing words the Master refers to that day (see John 14:20). Without doubt He refers to the Day of Pentecost, and the era it would introduce.

The Holy Spirit reveals the relation between the Father and the Son (John 14:20). And this not as a matter of speculation merely, but for our holy living. The model of our union with Jesus is His union with the Father. As He is in His Father in perpetual and most blessed union, so are we to be in Him.

The Holy Spirit’s presence answers our questions. “Ye shall ask Me nothing” (John 16:23). Whilst the Lord was with them, they were constantly breaking in on Him with their questions: “Lord, are there few that be saved?” “Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom?” “When shall these things be?” This is always the symptom of the earliest stage of the religious life—perpetual questioning and worrying. But when the Spirit comes, His presence is the sufficient answer. He does not teach our intellects to know the truth, but gives the truth to our hearts. We need not question, because we see; we possess; we can taste and handle for ourselves.

The Holy Spirit’s indwelling teaches us how to pray. “In that day, ye shall ask in My name” (John 16:26). To pray in Christ’s name is to let His nature pray in and through our lips. Of course such prayer prevails. The one condition of successful prayer is to bring yourself into a line with the thoughts of God, to breathe His spirit, to be swayed by His impulses; this is only possible through the gracious operation of the Spirit of God. Has the blessed Day of Pentecost broken upon you? Do you live in its light? Have you received all it was meant to bring you?

John 17:1

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:”

IN one form or another we are constantly asking the Father to glorify us. Glorify me, O Father, we cry, by giving me the largest congregation in the town; by commencing a great revival in my mission, by increasing my spiritual power, so that I shall be greatly sought after. Of course, we do not state our reasons quite so concisely; but this is really what we mean. And then we wonder why the answer tarries. Is it not because our Father dare not trust us with glory? He knows that we would become proud and self-conscious; that we would ascribe our success to the strength of our arm and the swiftness of our foot. Nothing would be more harmful to our Christian growth. But when we desire glory only that we may be able better to glorify Jesus, then there will be no stint in what He will confer on us. Glory, like a golden river, will pour into our hearts and lives.

Oh for this absorbing passion for the glory of Jesus! To be able to pray “Thy kingdom come,” without reference to our share in securing its advent. To be as glad when another scores a great success, as though it had been ourselves who had won the laurels. To pray as eagerly for the success of others as of ourselves. Here is an ideal which seems inaccessible, as it ridicules all our natural attempts to win it. To be pleased to suffer, to fail, to be counted nothing and nobody, if only our dear Lord is extolled, exalted, and made very high—is this possible?

Do you choose it? Then be of good cheer. This is the hunger which God has promised to satisfy. He never shows you your lack of a grace without pledging Himself thereby to realize it for you. Yes, this blessed experience shall come even to you. You shall be taught the blessed lesson of perfect love.

John 18:36

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

WELL might Pilate ask if Jesus was a king. Thou poor, weary, rejected Nazarene, art Thou a king? A strange contrast, surely, to the Herod that built those halls of judgment! Thy people, at least, fail to recognize Thy royalty! But Jesus did not abate His claims. “Thou sayest that I am,” He answered, “a king.” And as the ages have passed they have substantiated His claim.

The origin of His kingdom—“My kingdom is not of this world.” The Lord did not mean, as His words have been too often interpreted, that His kingdom had nothing to do with this world; but that it did not originate here. The “of” means *out of*. Jesus is King, not by earthly descent, or human right, but by the purpose and counsel of the Father, who said, “Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee: yet will I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.”

The method of its promulgation—It is not spread by armed force. His servants do not fight. They are priests clad in the white robes of immaculate purity, and bearing aloft their banner with the inscription, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Like their Master, they bear witness to the truth; and as they do so those who are of the truth are attracted to the Lord as steel filings to the magnet.

There is true royalty in bearing witness to the Truth. Humbly we may appropriate our Master’s words: to this end were we born, and of this cause are we left in the world, that in every act and word we might bear witness to the Truth. As we do so, we manifest a royalty which is not of human gift or descent, but which has been communicated by the reception of the Christ-nature, through the regenerating grace of the Holy Ghost.

John 19:30

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”

COMPARING the Gospels, we discover that these words were said “with a loud voice.” It was the shout of a conqueror, who has fought through a long and terrible day, but greets victory as evening closes in.

Finished, the long line of sacrificial rite: From the gates of Eden the blood of sacrifice had begun to flow, augmented by the confluent streams of the years. From that moment, however, not another drop need be shed. The types were finished now that the Antitype had been realized.

Finished, His fulfilment of prophecy: How contradictory some had seemed! Ancient of Days, yet a babe; the Mighty God, yet marred of visage, and led to the slaughter; Son of Man, yet scion of David’s stock; ruling in the midst of enemies, yet a bruised and broken Sufferer. But all of them, even to the last pathetic intimation of His dying thirst, fulfilled.

Finished, His mortal life: Never again to be weary, hungered, tempted, buffeted, or to bear the contradiction of sinners. Never again to sweat the bloody sweat, or bear the accumulated faults of men. Nevermore to die.

Finished, a world’s redemption: He had wrought out and brought in a perfect salvation. The world, so far as God could make it so, was already reconciled. Sin was put away.

Finished, the perfect obedience: He alone of all born of woman was able to say that there was nothing which the Father had asked that He had not given; nothing that the Father had imposed that He had not gladly borne. He had finished the work given Him to do.

John 20:16

“Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”

MANY had called her by that name. She had been wont to hear it many times a day from many lips; but only One had spoken it with that intonation. In His mouth its familiar syllables had a sweetness and tenderness which lingered in her heart; as the fragrance of the Roumanian rose valley clings for many a day to the clothes of those who have entered it.

Her eyes had deceived her. Startled by the sudden glad expression which had passed over the features of the angels, who sat sentry in the sepulchre, she had turned herself back to see the source from which the radiance had gleamed; but even with that hint to help her, she had failed to recognize her Lord. But her ear could not mistake; the voice carried immediate recognition.

We sigh sometimes for “the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still”; but we shall hear those voices again. Our mortal body is to be fashioned according to the body of Christ’s resurrection; and evidently in that body there were the old familiar tones. May we not, therefore, certainly infer that the voices which welcome us on the other side will be those that hushed us with their lullabies when we were babes: asked us for our love and assured us of theirs when we attained maturity; whispered their dying messages in our ears, and sent us their Godspeed as we went down into the river?

The Master knows our names, and calls His own followers by them. There is one response, which He waits to elicit, one which alone will satisfy Him; one in which the love and devotion of a life may be summed up. Like Mary, let us turn and say to Him: *Rabboni!* that is, *Master!*

John 21:7

“Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.”

THIS miracle was also a parable. When we go fishing apart from Jesus, we may indeed toil all the night and take nothing. But when through the darkness Jesus comes, and speaks to us across the wave, and tells us where to let down the nets; when we are in blessed partnership with Himself; when, though we see Him not, we obey His slightest promptings—then the nets are filled to their uttermost.

Those who are loved, love: It was the consciousness that Jesus loved him which made John the Apostle of Love. Love casts such a wondrous spell over its objects, that they begin to shine in its rays and reflect them. Nothing will make a coal glow with heat but to plunge it into the heart of the fire. Do you want to love the Lord Jesus?—dwell on His love to you.

Those who love Christ see Him: Not Peter, the man of eager action, but John, the man of devoted love, saw the Master amid the haze that lay on the lake shore. Love will penetrate every disguise; will detect Him by the slightest sign; will strip from our eyes the film that sense and sin draw over them. If you loved Him more, you would see His hand in that disappointment, that crushing sorrow.

Those who seek Christ cannot keep it to themselves: They must tell it out to their next companion, with beating heart and thrilling speech. John said unto Peter, *It is the Lord*. How often has the affirmation of a pensive, quiet heart been the torch to ignite all the soul of another, who was more fitted to execute than plan? Is not this what we may all experience as we draw near to eternity? Shall we not see Jesus standing on the shore, with preparations beyond all thought, to welcome us as we arrive from the night cruise?

Acts 1:8

“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.”

HOW different this function, entrusted to the apostles, to that assumed by the self-styled priests of our time, who claim the power to repeat the sacrifice of Calvary, and to absolve the penitent from his sins! The Master did not say that His followers were to become sacrificing priests, but witnesses to what He had done and would do.

Looking to Jesus is the condition of witness bearing. How else can we bear witness of Him? As we behold Him we shall reflect Him; and as we reflect Him we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18). It will not involve strenuous effort to witness to Jesus, if we are living in fellowship with Him. Light is self-revealing. In infinitesimal touches and expressions the light we are catching from Him will gleam forth, and men will unconsciously be led to believe in Him who has made us what we are.

Witness-bearing must spread through successive circles of influence—like the circling wavelets from a stone flung into the midst of a calm mountain lake. Some think they could witness in the uttermost ends of the earth, but they neglect the Jerusalem of the home. Those who begin here will be led almost unconsciously forward to the Judaea of their relatives, and the Samaria of their near neighbourhood, and so to further boundary.

For witnessing we have supreme power. If ever your testimony is demanded, claim the power for the emergency. It is certainly at hand, and within reach. The hand of faith, the opened heart, may surely receive not a power, an attribute merely, but the Spirit, whose attribute of power certainly accompanies Him. Not It, but He.

Acts 2:33

“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

WHAT a sublime commencement! As Jacob’s heart revived, and he was assured that Joseph lived when he saw the wagons that his sons had sent, so the heart of the Church revived when the Spirit came. It was the promised sign that the Master had reached the Father’s throne, and was fulfilling the unforgotten promise that He would ask the Father for another Paraclete to fill his place, and abide until He should come again in glory.

It was as though, when the Son ascended on high, leading captivity captive, He passed through all heavens, till He came where no creature had ever come, or could come. There He prayed to the Father, as He had said. It was as though He spoke thus: “Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.”

And the Father answered: “Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Ask of Me, . . . and I will give Thee.”

It was as if He said: “Father, I ask nothing for Myself; for all Thine are Mine, and Mine are Thine. But for others I ask that I may have the power of giving to My own the same anointing and power which Thou gavest Me when I stood on the threshold of My work. I was then filled with the Spirit; grant unto Me the power to fill the hearts of all who believe with that same Spirit. It was in the power of that Spirit that I wrought, died, and rose; let My Church be quickened and endued with the same sacred power.”

And it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness of the Godhead should dwell, bodily. And the glorified body of Jesus became the reservoir of the Divine fullness, from which we all might receive.

ABOUT THE FOUR GOSPELS

Outline of Events

1. The Pre-Existence of Christ (John 1:1-4)
2. The Presentation of Christ
 - a. Birth in Bethlehem (6 BC)
 - b. Childhood in Nazareth (8 AD)
3. The Proclamation of Christ
 - a. Baptism at Jordan (26 AD)
 - b. First Miracle at Cana (27 AD)
 - c. First Cleansing of the Temple at Jerusalem
 - d. Great Galilean Ministry (about 17 months)
 - e. Choice of the Twelve Disciples (28 AD)
 - f. Sending forth of the Twelve Disciples (29 AD)
 - g. Miracle of Feeding 5,000 people
 - h. Ministry in Tyre, Sidon and Decapolis (about 6 months)
 - i. Transfiguration at Mount Hermon
 - j. Ministry at Jerusalem (about 3 months)
 - k. Ministry in Perea (30 AD - about 3 ½ months)
 - l. Miracle of Raising Lazarus from the Dead at Bethany
4. The Passion of Christ (April, 30 AD)
 - a. Triumphal Entry – (Sunday)
 - b. Second Cleansing of the Temple (Monday)
 - c. Olivet Discourse (Tuesday)
 - d. Last Supper with the Disciples (Thursday)
 - e. Arrest, Trials, Crucifixion and Burial (Friday)
 - f. Resurrection from the Tomb (Sunday)
5. The Promotion of Christ (40 days)
 - a. Ten Post-resurrection Appearances
 - b. Ascension from the Mount of Olives

Summary of Matthew's Gospel

- It is the longest of the Four Gospels.
- Key verse: Matthew 1:1
- The Purposes:
 1. To present Jesus to the Jews as their Messiah and King.
 2. To provide the church with a comprehensive record of the Life of Jesus.
 3. To provide the teachings of Jesus that would help the church deal with various ethical questions.

Summary of Mark's Gospel

- It is the shortest of the Four Gospels and was probably the first to be written.
It is based on the eyewitness testimony of the apostle Peter (see 1 Peter 5:13).
- Key Verse: Mark 10:45
- The Purpose: To provide the Gentile world with a complete and yet concise statement of the Life and works of Jesus.

Summary of Luke's Gospel

- It is the only Gospel that was written by a Gentile.
- Luke was a close associate of the apostles, and especially of Paul.
- Key Verse: Luke 19:10
- The Purpose: To provide a carefully detailed account of the life of Christ that highlights his humanity (Luke 1:1-4).

Summary of John's Gospel

- It was the last of the Four Gospels to be written (AD 86).
- It is regarded to be the most theological or spiritual of them all.
- The word *believe* is found 98 times altogether in this book.
- Key Verse: John 20:31
- Purposes:
 1. To provide convincing evidences for the identity of Jesus in order to bring readers to faith in Christ.
 2. To refute false teachers in the church who denied the deity of Jesus Christ.

Scripture Memory Programme 2008 - The Growing Christian

When a sinner turns to Christ for salvation he has become a new born babe who needs to grow into full spiritual maturity. Such growth will be manifested in at least four areas: Witness for Christ, Obedience to God's will, Personal holiness, and the Knowledge of God. One means of grace that God has given to facilitate growth is His Word. The 28 passages of Scripture found below have been carefully chosen to help you to grow spiritually. May you grow in the likeness of Christ as you memorise and meditate on them.

January 6 & 13 – The Word of God

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

January 20 & 27 – Witnessing

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

February 3 & 10 – Giving to God

Proverbs 3:9-10 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

February 17 & 24 – God's Harvest

Matthew 9:37-38 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

March 2 & 9 – Witnessing

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

March 16 & 23 – Salvation

Romans 8:32 - He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

March 30 – Gospel

Ecclesiastes 7:20 - For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

April 6 & 13 – Consecrated Living

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

April 20 & 27 – Stewardship

1 Peter 4:10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

May 4 & 11 – The Godly Woman

Proverbs 31:30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

May 18 & 25 – Consecrated Living

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

June 1 & 8 – The Word of God

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

June 15 & 22 – Parenting

Ephesians 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

June 29 – Gospel

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

July 6 & 13 – God’s Holiness

1 John 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

July 20 & 27 – God’s Holiness

Hebrews 12:28-29 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.

August 3 & 10 – God’s Judgment

Proverbs 14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

August 17 & 24 – Witnessing

Acts 1:8 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.

August 31 – Gospel

John 11:25-26 - Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

September 7 & 14 – God’s Judgment

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

September 21 & 28 – God’s Judgment

Matthew 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

October 5 & 12 – God’s Power

Jeremiah 32:27 Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

October 19 & 26 – God’s Faithfulness

Lamentations 3:22-23 It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

November 2 & 9 – God’s Unchangeability

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

November 16 & 23 – The Word of God

Isaiah 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

November 30 – Gospel

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

December 7 & 14 – God’s Love

1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

December 21 & 28 – Christ’s Birth

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.