

Our Daily Homily

By
F.B. Meyer
VOLUME Two
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.

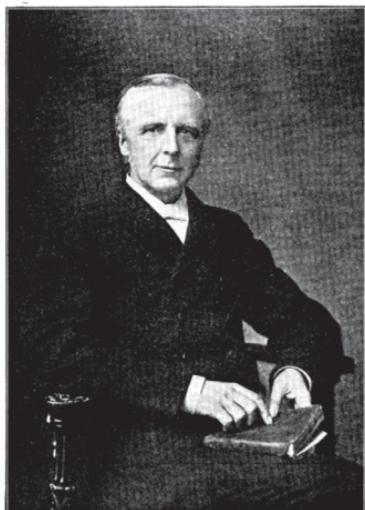
It has been impossible altogether to exclude the personal element from these pages, because the sheets have been printed from the types of my own daily experience, set up by the many altering circumstances of joy and grief, conflict and peace, which befall each of us. But the one refrain has been the 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.

Acts 3:2

“And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;”

IS not this thyself? Thou art of the Israel of God. There is no doubt of thy name being enrolled in the pedigree of elect and regenerate souls; but thou art lame, needing to be carried by the strong support of a minister and friend; never able to leap, and walk, and praise God; and at the best only able to reach the outer side of the Beautiful Gate that conducts to the richest and gladdest life. Through that gate of entire consecration there come snatches of holy melody; glimpses of white-vestured souls; visions of ideals of life which thou hast not attained: but thou art excluded, condemned to live on the alms of those that enter. How great the pity! Why shouldest thou not have the very best that God can give?

But look up! Expect to receive something; open thine ears to hear and thine heart to receive immediate strength, just where thou lackest it most sorely. The feet and ankle-bones of this helpless cripple only needed strength; they were perfectly formed, but paralyzed. Similarly thine ideals of Christian living are true and accurate, but thou art deficient in power. Thou must receive strength.

But this strength can only be obtained by union with the risen Lord. His name (that is, His nature) alone can make thee strong, and give thee perfect soundness in the presence of those who have hitherto only pitied thy weakness. Believe in Him! All that have ever risen up to obey His lead have had perfect health and strength. Open thine heart to receive them. Claim and appropriate the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Life which is in Christ Jesus shall make thee free from the law of sin and death, from weakness and failure.

Acts 4:31

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

THEY had been filled on the Day of Pentecost, and Peter had been suddenly and mightily infilled for his encounter with the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8); but here again they were all privileged, whilst in the attitude of prayer and praise, to be once more most blessedly infilled. From this we gather that we may claim repeated fillings of the Holy Spirit.

But let us remember that it is not necessary for the place to be shaken, or for the air to be filled with the outward phenomena of Pentecost as the necessary condition of this heavenly gift. Mr. Fletcher reminds us that the Lord may be pleased to come softly to our help. He may make an end of our corruption by helping us to sink gently to unknown depths of meekness. Like Naaman, we are full of prejudices. We expect that the Pentecostal gift will come to us with as much ado, pomp and bustle, as the Syrian general looked for. But the blessed Paraclete often disconcerts all these preconceived notions. When we are looking for the hurricane, He comes as the zephyr. When we are expecting the torrent to pour into and fill the well, He fills it by single drops.

But the results will always be the same—great boldness in witness-bearing, much liberty in prayer and praise; great grace and beauty of character; self-denying love for those in need; great power through union with the risen Lord. If the second chapter of this book had been lost from the first MS (*manuscript*), we must still have inferred something like the Pentecost. In no other way could we have accounted for the marvellous change which passed over the followers of Jesus, delivering them from the cowardice, wrangling, and prejudices of former days. Oh for a similar transforming experience for us all!

Acts 5:4

“Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

ACHAN, Belshazzar and Ananias, met the same fate, because of their persistent use of devoted things. When once we have devoted aught to God, He counts it as His own, and strikes down the hand that would abase it to common and profane use. The Lord our God is a jealous God; He will brook no perversion of His rights. Beware that you take back nothing which you have laid on God’s altar, least of all yourself.

Each gathering of believers is endowed with mystic and extraordinary importance, because the Lord, through the Eternal Spirit, is literally present. The true President is not the minister, however distinguished by His gift or grace, but the Divine Spirit Himself; and any sin against the Church is really against Him. It is this Divine presence that invests a gathering of the simplest, humblest believers with such unique importance. It is this which gives them the mysterious binding and loosing power, which is recognized and ratified in heaven. Behind Peter was the real Head of the Church; and so with every faithful minister. Honour the Personality, the Presidency, and Deity of the Holy Spirit, as set forth in this narrative.

Dr. Gordon told me on one occasion that he had in his church a man who, like a very crooked stick, obstructed all its work. He spoke to him alone, and before his brethren; but to no purpose. Then he bethought himself; and remembered that not himself, nor his church officials, was the true Head of the Church, but Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. He therefore handed the whole matter over to the Divine Spirit, as the Executive of the Godhead. In a fortnight this man had left the city, and necessarily ceased the obstruction in which he had persisted.

Acts 6:4

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

IF ever there was a sacred work, it was that of caring for these poor widows; and yet the apostles felt that even such duties might interfere with the continual ministry of intercession. No doubt they always lived in the atmosphere and spirit of prayer, but they rightly felt that this was not enough either for them or their work. So they sought a division of labor, that while some specially served tables and ministered the alms of the church, others might be set free for steadfast continuance in prayer. This would keep the communication with the King on the throne clear and fresh, would draw down the power and blessing of the heavenly world, and be the means of procuring wisdom and strength for their great responsibilities.

There are many courses of usefulness open to each of us in this world, and we must choose the one, not only most suited to our idiosyncrasies, but in which we can best serve our day and generation. It may be that in our incessant activities we are neglecting the one method by which we may contribute most largely to the coming of our Father’s kingdom. Notice that word *give*. It is as though the Spirit of prayer were seeking natures so pure, so devoted, that without hindrance He might form Himself into them. Give yourself to Him for this!

“In that day,” said our Lord, speaking of the Day of Pentecost, “ye shall ask in My name.” It is only when we are full of the Holy Spirit that we can experience the true power to plead with God, and use the name of Christ so effectively as to receive the richest blessings for ourselves and others. Much prayer, much blessing; little prayer, little blessing; no prayer, no blessing. “The Word of God increased.”

Acts 7:55

“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,”

THE blessed characteristic of Stephen lay in his being perpetually full of the Holy Ghost. It is said of others, even Peter, that they were filled, as though they needed some special and overmastering inducement for special service. But Stephen is more than once described as full (Acts 7:6), as though he was always kept brimming, like a lake from the hills.

Those who are full of the Holy Spirit are always looking steadfastly upwards. They look not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen. Across the valleys, they catch sight of the Delectable Mountains, rising like the Himalayas above the plains of India. Whilst others look around for help, they lift up their eyes unto the hills from whence cometh their help; and to them heaven stands always open.

Those who are full of the Holy Spirit see and are transfigured by the glory of God. What wonder that those who sat in the Council beheld Stephen's face, as it had been the face of an angel. The light that shone there was not as when Jesus was transfigured—in that case, the light of the Shekinah broke out from within—but here the glory of God shone from the open door of Heaven. So the sunrise smites the highest peaks.

Those who are full of the Holy Ghost see the Lord Jesus, in His glory, as their Priest. It is the special work of the Holy Spirit to direct the gaze to Jesus. Those who are full of the Spirit may hardly be aware of His gracious presence, but they are keenly alive to their Lord's. The Spirit takes the things of Jesus, and reveals them to the loving and obedient; specially those that concern His priestly work on the cross and in heaven.

Acts 8:26

“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.”

DESERT means uninhabited. It seemed a strange providence that took Philip thither. He had been chosen to the honorable office of deacon, and there was probably plenty of work to do in connection with the scattered Church. Moreover, he had just completed a most successful mission in Samaria, where the multitude had given heed with one accord to the things he had spoken; but now he was suddenly landed in these lonely solitudes, where only chance travellers could be encountered. Did he not count it strange, and wish to get home to his four little daughters (Acts 21:9)?

There are many deserts in life! The solitude of a new country, in which you do not know the language. The solitude of a sick-chamber, in which the earnest worker suddenly discovers the limitations of physical weakness. The solitude of suspicion and dislike, which contrast strangely with some large and devoted circle. Thither God brings us not infrequently. No flower can thrive in unbroken light.

But in every solitude, if we wait patiently on the Lord, there are opportunities of service. There is always some inquiring soul in need of the precise help we can give. There is an old story of some monks to whom the Book of Revelation was being read. At the end each was asked to choose the promise he loved best. One said “I will take this, ‘God shall wipe away all tears.’” Another chose, “To him that overcometh I will give to sit on My throne.” The third replied, “I would choose, ‘His servants shall serve Him.’” This latter was Thomas a Kempis, who afterward wrote “The Imitation.”

“Not caring how to serve Thee much,
But to please Thee perfectly.”

Acts 9:31

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”

THE church grew not simply by addition, but by multiplication. Three added to three make six; three multiplied by three, nine. That is the Pentecostal ratio of increase. These are the conditions of Church growth:—

First, there must be peace: Let us endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. As far as it lies in our power, let each of us live peaceably with all men. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away out of our hearts, with all malice, and let us be kind one to another, tender-hearted, and imitating God the great Peacemaker.

Next, the Church must be edified: We must build ourselves up on our most holy faith. And, indeed, such growth in grace and the knowledge of God is almost inevitable where the Holy Ghost breaks up the reign of apathy and stagnation. When its foundations are deeply laid in righteousness and peace, the City of God arises into the pure air.

Moreover, the members of such a Christian community must walk in the fear of the Lord: To walk means the daily plodding, routine life—full of commonplaces, somewhat prosaic—but always ruled by the fear of grieving the heart that was pierced on Calvary. Lastly, we must walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, or, as the words might be rendered, in the paracletism of the Paraclete. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate, Teacher, Guide; and we should habitually dwell in His radiant and helpful environment. What a difference there is between sea weeds and sea flowers expanding in their rock-surrounded aquariums, and the same when taken into common air! Such is the contrast wrought by the Spirit.

Acts 10:6

“He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”

THIS lodging must have been somewhat distasteful to the apostle; not only because of its insalubrious odours, but because of the association with death that rendered him liable to the ceremonial pollution which a religious Jew, as Peter was, peculiarly dreaded. Probably he was only driven to it by the sternest necessity. But was it not remarkable that he who had been the chief apostle of the Church, and who had but recently come from a most successful tour, should suddenly be isolated from all his happy and holy associations, and be stranded for many days in the tanner's house (Acts 9:43)?

Yet such dealings on the part of the Lord with His servant are easy of explanation. We are all apt to substitute work for God instead of communion with Him. We become strong in our own strength; elated with success; puffed up by the adulation of our friends. It is needful, therefore, that we be withdrawn from the madding crowd and the career of unbroken prosperity; that the glare of the sun should be tempered, and confidence in ourselves be brought low. There is only one resort. To be hidden in the quiver; to become dependent on the widow-woman of Zarephath; to spend forty years in the desert, till the passionate impulses of our own life subside; to go apart into Arabia; to spend the slowly-moving weeks in the tanner's house.

Whilst Peter waited, he maintained his habits of prayer; left his heart open to the impressions and teachings of the Holy Spirit; awaited the next movements of the cloudy pillar; set himself to acquire lessons which, though subversive of his past experience, reacted on his whole after-life; and from his retirement went forth to unlock a new era.

Acts 11:24

*“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith:
and much people was added unto the Lord.”*

THIS is the Holy Spirit’s verdict on the character and life of Barnabas. Very different from the magniloquent inscriptions on the tombs of warriors and statesmen; but it was better to deserve this from the lips of the Master than to have the longest list of titles ever appended to a mortal’s name. For a good man like this some would even dare to die. The characteristics of this good man were these:

He could see the good in movements outside his own church-order. The Church at Antioch originated, as this paragraph proves, from the preaching of a number of unknown, unordained refugees, who were fleeing from the iron hand of persecution. All we know of them is that they were men of Cyprus and Cyrene. They had broken through the barrier of the ages by preaching to the Gentiles, great numbers of whom had been saved. The Church in Jerusalem was somewhat suspicious of this new departure, and sent Barnabas to report; but when he came he was forthwith convinced of its genuineness, saw the evidence of the hand of the Lord, and was glad. No jealousy, nor narrow bigotry, nor suspicion, warped his judgment.

He was willing that another should share with himself the joys of harvest. He went off to Tarsus to seek his old acquaintance, and perhaps fellow-student, Paul, and for a whole year the two wrought side by side in loving fellowship, and taught much people.

He was eager that people should be added to the Lord. Too often good men seek a following for themselves, and rejoice in those who are added to their church or organization. This is not the noblest style of work. It is far better to imitate the Baptist, who was content to be the Bridegroom’s friend.

Acts 12:10

“When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.”

THERE are iron gates before most of us. We are not especially anxious about the first or second ward, but ah, that iron gate! The iron gate of supreme difficulty; of a parent’s prohibition against entering the mission-field; of some obstinate circumstance which seems to forbid the execution of our plans; of some barred and locked prohibition; of death at the end of all. It may be that in his strange bewilderment, between waking and sleeping, Peter anticipated this iron gate with a good deal of dread. That at least would bar his progress; but lo, it opened on its own accord! So shall it be with many of the evils that we anticipate.

Not before we come to them, but at the moment of reaching them; when heart and flesh threaten to fail—in the dim light we shall find them standing open, set back for us to pass. The tram-line is not cleared from end to end before the tram starts. Were the driver to wait for this, he would never start at all. But as he comes to each van, or drag, or carriage, it moves, and allows him a free course; or, if it seems dilatory, his whistle hastens it. Thus, when we arise to follow the angel of God’s purpose, who has suddenly entered the dark cell of our life, we shall discover that apparently insuperable difficulties, which we have long dreaded, shall open to us, and allow us to pass, when we come to the object we have dreaded most, we shall find it gone.

Let there be plenty of prayer, “prayer without ceasing.” Let there be prompt obedience to the angel’s touch and summons; the willingness to gird the relaxed loins, and follow; and as you go through life, you will find yourself escorted by an invisible Companion, who holds the key to all doors.

Acts 13:2

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”

THE Holy Spirit, as the representative of the ascended Lord, is supreme in the Church. It is His sovereign voice that summons His chosen workers to undertake missionary or home enterprise. Dr. Ryland, who at first opposed Carey’s idea of going to India, said afterward, “I believe God Himself infused into the mind of Carey that solicitude for the salvation of the heathen which cannot be fairly traced to any other source.” And the same is true of all missionaries. The true call is always of the Divine Spirit. Whom He wills to call, He calls. Whom He calls, He separates. Whom He separates, He endows and sends forth.

But, Divine and absolute though the selection is, the Spirit seeks the concurrence of the Church. It was in answer to the Church’s prayer for direction that the Spirit designated Barnabas and Paul for the great work of world-evangelization; and it was when the Church had fasted and prayed, and had offered these two to God as their wave offering, that they were sent forth by the Holy Ghost. Thus the Spirit and the Bride cooperate.

In determining whether you have been called by the Holy Spirit to be a missionary, you must certainly call on the advice of Christian friends, and specially of the church with which you worship. If the Spirit of God is in you and them, they will ratify the movements of your heart. It is right, too, to consider whether you have been specially gifted and qualified for the work. In this also, the advice of the Church is most valuable. Of course, the Church herself must fast, i.e., be separate from known evil and indulgence, that she may hear God’s voice, and be able to advise her children.

Acts 14:3

“Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”

THERE is no source of encouragement more fruitful of help than the co-witness and co-working of the Holy Spirit. Those who are filled with the Spirit are called into communion, i.e., partnership, with Him in His work. Whilst they work from the outside, He works from within; whilst they sow the seed, He waters it abundantly. We must be very careful to be such in character and teaching that He may cooperate with us. Our hands must be very clean, if He, with an infinite condescension, is to grant signs and wonders to be wrought by them. But when we work with Him, and He with us, the results are beyond measure astonishing, and His alone.

“We are now seven years in this land,” wrote one of Gossner’s missionaries from the land of the Kohls in India; “but through these long years it was but trial of our patience and endurance Everything seemed to be in vain, and many said the mission was useless. Then the Lord Himself kindled a fire before our eyes; and it seized not only single souls, but spread from village to village; and from every side the question was borne to us, What shall we do? How shall we be saved? And I thought it was no more a heathen land I was in, but a Christian, and at home.”

Deus habet horas et moras, says the old proverb. God has His seasons and delays. We do not at once see the result of our sowings, toils, and tears; but we are conscious that our work is with our God—we know that we have our petitions, and we rejoice in hope. We must go on uttering “the word of His grace”—the grace that chooses such rebels to be His children; that cleanses them from sin; that restores and keeps and sanctifies.

Acts 15:4-12

“And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. ... And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; ... ”

THERE is a difference between these two assertions. They are in exquisite harmony, but each contributes a different note. In the first we have the cooperation of the Holy Spirit with every faithful worker whom He sends forth; so that, while the servant speaks to the outward ear, the Lord simultaneously addresses the heart. In the second, we have the work of the Holy Spirit wrought through a yielded life which has become His pure channel and mouth-piece. This is His two-fold ministry.

His witness with us: As we speak of Jesus crucified, risen, ascended, the blessed Spirit convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. To every faithful word of testimony there is a deep resonant affirmation from this hidden but mighty Cooperant. If we say, “Behold the Lamb of God!” He adds, “He takes away the sin of the world.” If we say, “He died in weakness,” the Spirit adds, “He was raised in power.” If we say, “Repent and believe the Gospel,” He adds, “Now is the accepted time. The Holy Ghost saith Today.” If the Bride says *Come*, the Spirit joins His voice to hers.

His witness through us: “The word which ye hear,” said our Lord, “is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.” And that which was His glory may be ours also. We speak not of ourselves. This is the secret of a fruitful life—to be the yielded channel; the cleansed vessel; the bugle at the castle gate on which the King may sound His summons; the lute on whose strings the Divine hand may play. Oh, be sure that the most lasting work in this world is only possible when we can say with Paul that we will not boast of anything save what Christ has wrought through us to make men obedient to the Gospel.

Acts 16:14-27

“And a certain woman named Lydia, ... which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. ... And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: ... And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.”

THERE are typical cases, put here in juxtaposition for the teaching and comfort of believers in every age. Each of them needed Christ, and each was brought into His true light; but each came in a different way. Lydia’s heart opened as a flower beneath the touch of the sun, so gradually and imperceptibly that it was impossible to say the precise moment of her new life. The jailer came to Christ suddenly, startlingly, amid the crash of an earthquake. The one was drawn by love; the other driven by fear. A distinguished missionary says, “The Lord awakened me with a kiss”—it was so that Lydia’s heart was won. Another tells us that the Lord sprang on him like a lion—it was thus with the jailer.

Lydia: Do not always be looking out for signs and manifestations; for marked experiences. We do not notice the lines of longitude and latitude as we cross the ocean of life. Without knowing it, your character may be in the process of transfiguration. By insensible gradations the work of God may be proceeding in your heart. The tide is rising daily by tiny wavelets that appear to recede as fast as they advance. Do not measure progress by experience; only be yielded to God, and let Him do His will.

The Jailer: Do not undervalue the influence of fear. There are some natures that never will be awakened unless they are startled by being brought face to face with the consequences of sin. If men will not come by the highest motives, be thankful that they come by any. Remember it is not belief about Christ, about His death or resurrection, but trust in Him as a living Person, that saves from the power and penalty of sin. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” He is a living Person. Trust Him now.

Acts 17:3

“Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.”

THIS is what our Lord was constantly insisting upon during the closing days of His earthly ministry. “Behoved it not,” He asked, “the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?” The Jewish nation rejected Him because His conception of Messianic power was so foreign to theirs; but in doing so, doomed themselves to rejection from the purposes of God, at least during the present dispensation.

It behoved Him, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest. How could He have sympathized with the anguish of human hearts, if He had not drunk deeply of the cup of sorrow? How could He have led His flock through the thorny brake, if He had not gone to and fro with His bare feet? In that He hath suffered, He is able to succour.

It behoved Him, that He might be the sacrifice for sin. The conscience demands that forgiveness should be consistent with righteousness. It was necessary, therefore, if Jesus was to bring us forgiveness, that He should be prepared to make reparation and atonement for sin. He must shed His blood, that He may cleanse His people from their sins: He must be willing to be their scapegoat; He must offer Himself without spot to God, that He may cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.

It behoved Him, that He might reign forevermore. It is a fundamental principle in God’s universe, that suffering, humbly and resignedly borne, leads to royalty and reigning. He who can stoop most profoundly can rise to reign most gloriously. As is the descent, so is the ascent. In proportion to the submission to take the form of a servant is the exaltation to the right hand of power.

Acts 18:2

“And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.”

IT is a striking spectacle to see Paul, on his entrance to Corinth, with which his name was to be so remarkably associated, looking around, probably in the Jewish quarter, for manual employment, that he might be sure of his bread. Similarity of craft introduced him to Aquila and his wife Priscilla, who had been recently expelled from Rome by the imperial edict. At this time they were in unbelief, but were apparently converted by the words the apostle addressed to them as they sat together over their daily toil.

How eager Paul was, not only to preach the Gospel to the crowds that thronged the gay and sunny streets of Corinth, but to win individual souls for his Master's kingdom. Some are eager enough in this holy quest, when they occupy the pulpit, and are conscious of many eyes being fixed upon them; but they are careless of the individual souls cast in their way. Not so was it with the Master, who went out of His way to find one Samaritan woman, and stopped beneath the tree to call down one publican. Not so was it with Philip, who spoke to the eunuch as eagerly as to Samaria. Not so was it with the apostle, who was as intense in his endeavours for a jailer, a Lydia, a Timothy, as for the crowds that were going to destruction.

Is not this God's secret test? If we are not careful about the ones and twos, He will not use us to the crowds. Indeed, it is the experience we obtain in dealing with individuals that equips us for multitudes. The way in which the kingdom of God comes ordinarily is, "One by one." How much might be done if each Christian workman would seek to win his neighbour!

Acts 19:2

“He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.”

THIS was Paul’s first question to these twelve disciples. He knew perfectly well that they could not have believed without the special grace of the Holy Spirit; but now he asked if at the moment of regeneration and conversion they received Him. Obviously, his question implied his belief that there was a special endowment of the Spirit of God for a consecrated and useful life over and above His initial work on the soul.

It is a question which is in these words addressed to every Christian reader. You have believed in Christ through the ministry of the Spirit; but did you at that or any subsequent moment receive the infilling and unction of the Pentecostal Spirit? You may not be able to point to some marked manifestation; but are you conscious of those fruits which are the invariable accompaniments of that supreme gift? If not, learn to receive, and receive them now.

In how many instances might this inquiry be met by the reply which the apostle received: “Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given.” John the Baptist clearly foretold that Christ would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire; but in his days Pentecost was still more than three years away, and these, His disciples, had never heard that the last days foretold by God had already been inaugurated. Alas that it should be possible after these centuries for many Christian people to be in ignorance of the special glory and characteristic of this age, and be content to live without seeking for themselves all that Pentecost means! Ephesus was moved in every avenue of her corporate life, and the worship of Diana imperilled—and all because twelve men received the fullness of the Spirit.

Acts 20:28

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

THERE are many lessons in this verse.

(1) The Christian worker must not neglect his own soul. He must take heed to himself, as well as to the flock. Our temptation is to neglect our close walk with God in our eagerness to save others.

(2) The overseer, elder, or bishop, is not set over the flock, but is in it. Note the force of the Greek: the flock in the which they are made bishops. So to the end of life the most eminent of God’s servants must remember that he is but a saved sinner, needing the blood and righteousness of Christ as much as the weakest of his flock; and he also must lie down in green pastures, and be led beside still waters.

(3) The office of the minister is given by the Holy Ghost. It is He who lays on him the burden of souls, and equips him for his work. He, too, is willing to direct and use. How awful and solemn the responsibility! Woe be to us if we exercise our ministry only for the eye and ear of our fellow-men!

(4) Notice that the Church is distinctly asserted to be God’s. “Feed the Church of God.” We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. His by choice, by purchase, by the drawing of the Holy Ghost. We must get a right understanding of this doctrine of the Church, that she had been taken out of the world to be God’s peculiar possession and delight.

(5) The purchase money of the Church is here said to be God’s own blood. It is a remarkable expression. It stands alone in the Word of God, but brings out very distinctly the thought that the entire Godhead achieved man’s redemption in the offering of the Cross. We are dear to God, and must give Him the benefit of His great expenditure!

Acts 21:5

“And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.”

IT is thus that Christians say farewell. On their knees, within sound of the breaking wavelets, men, women, and children, gathered in a weeping circle around the servant of God, who had been to so many of them the apostle of a new life. There is no attitude more befitting than this, at times when the heart-strings are strained to cracking, and it seems as though the sacrifice were too great for trembling hands to place on the altar of God.

But it is thus that Christians never say farewell. The relationship which is founded in the love of God cannot be broken. Of such friendship there is no past or future, but always a blessed present tense. What has been, is, and will be. And as severed hearts meet in prayer, though the bodies may be divided by hundreds of miles of sea and land, there is no separation. They are one in the Father's presence, eternally, indissolubly, and blessedly one.

When we are called to part from those whom we love better than ourselves, let us kneel down and pray; let us abide alike in the attitude and exercise of unceasing intercession; let us realize that space and time are mere accidents of being, and not essential; let us be sure that they who are near the King must be near to all who, in heaven or on earth, are nearest Him also. For such there is “no more sea.”

It is easier, for the most part, to go on board ship, than to turn home again. There are the interest and excitement of new scenes and people to divert the traveller. But how grey is the common landscape from which the light of the dear presence is withdrawn! God alone can comfort the bereaved.

Acts 22:14

“And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.”

THE will of God is general and particular. We may know it generally from the book of creation, the Ten Commandments, the beatitudes, and the conscience. But, in addition to this, God has a particular will for each of His children. The moon shines on the sea, but there is a special path of moonbeams to the spot where you stand, where you should be born, live, and die; what you should accomplish by your life; with what souls you should be brought into contact.

God comes still, as He did to Paul, with a great summons, calling His own from the midst of their fellows, and entrusting to them the sacred prerogative of knowing, seeing, and hearing. Happy are they who are prepared to arise at once, leave all, and follow. To them it will be given, as to Paul, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, so as to unfold them to others.

You have been appointed to know His will—be sure of this; and if as yet it is not clearly made known, adopt these precautions:

(1) Carefully remove all your preconceptions and prejudices, so that your mind and heart can be a tablet for God to write on.

(2) Set aside much time for waiting on God, in the study of His Holy Word.

(3) Let the glory of Jesus be the supreme consideration with you.

(4) Do not run to and fro, asking your friends and companions what they would recommend.

(5) Wait for the Lord’s timing, do not dare to act unless you are sure that you are in the line of His purpose.

(6) Mark the trend of His providence, for it will certainly corroborate His inner voice.

(7) When you have once made up your mind in faith and prayer, dare to act, and never look back. He will not let you be ashamed.

Acts 23:1

“And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”

CONSCIENCE is what one knows with oneself. That at least is an exact translation of this Latin word. It is a man coming to himself, facing himself, looking deep into his own eyes as he stands before the mirror of God’s truth. There are varieties of conscience—the weak conscience, which is ever questioning; the defiled conscience, which has a consciousness of neglected duty or unforgiven sin; the morbid conscience, which is perpetually discussing infinitesimal niceties, and splitting hairs. In contrast with these is the good conscience, of which the apostle speaks.

We have to live with our conscience, and if it is disquieted and restless, we find that it will make life almost unbearable. Like the restless sea, it frets and foams through the dark hours; and is always casting up the bitter memories and sad regrets of bygone days. As it was with King Ahab, so it is with all who have sinned against conscience, they get the vineyard of Naboth; but with it they get Elijah, standing like an incarnate conscience at the door, and taking pleasure and enjoyment from their possession.

Paul could not have made this statement unless he had been very accurate and careful in his daily walk and conversation; but he tells us that he perpetually exercised himself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man. Let us subject ourselves to a similar discipline, and often expose ourselves to the searching scrutiny of the Holy Spirit, so that we may say with the apostle, “My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost” (Acts 24:16; Rom 9:1).

It is a marvellous experience to stand before God; but how much more so to live before Him!

Acts 24:14

“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:”

FOR want of a better term by which to set forth Christianity—whether by friend or foe is immaterial—the new principle which it represented was called *the Way*.

Saul “desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.” (9:2). At Ephesus some were “hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that Way before the multitude,” (19:9). “And the same time there arose no small stir about that Way” (19:23). “Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that Way” (24:22). “And I persecuted this Way unto the death” (22:4).

It is a beautiful and significant phrase. Christ is Himself the Way. He has opened the way to God. Through the heavens He passed in His ascension, leaving behind Him at every step a way by which we may travel till every one of us appears in Zion before God. In Christ we have found the way to the Father, and have learned a rule of life. The word *Methodist* is closely akin to this. The followers of Wesley have been obeying on a new method which their illustrious founder opened.

“Men of the Way”; such is the designation by which Christians should be known. They are pilgrims and strangers, wayfarers, having no abiding city, but always passing on. We may say of them as the psalmist did of the pilgrim hosts that went up yearly to worship at the feast, “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the Ways of them.” (Psalm 84:5). And is not this the Way that Isaiah spoke of when he said, “an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness” (Isaiah 35:8-10)?

Acts 25:19

“But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.”

FESTUS talked lightly enough about Jesus. It was only a question in his mind of some Jewish superstition hardly worth debating. What did it matter to him or his imperial master whether Jesus were alive or dead? And was it not a fact that He was dead, crucified under Pontius Pilate? How little Festus realized the importance of that death, not to the Jews alone, but to himself! How little he understood that his own continued life was due to that death of which he spoke so lightly! Generations of luxury and years of self-indulgence had blunted his perception: as for all religious questions—they were mere superstition! And with respect to religious enthusiasm, as it appeared in Paul, he could find in his own history nothing that could account for or explain it.

Contrast with this sated worldling—a flatterer, an office-seeker, prepared to sell his soul for gold, the noble apostle whose character stands out in unsullied light. Though Christ had died, according to the Scriptures, he knew that He had risen, and was alive forevermore. His faith did not go back to the cross, but rose perpetually to the throne. He who was dead, was living forevermore; sharing His servant’s sorrows, and supplying hourly grace for his every need.

He affirmed that He was alive. On the abundant testimony of those who had spoken with Him after His resurrection; on the strength of his own vision when Jesus had laid an arrest on him by Damascus; because of the mighty works that emanated from his hand; because of the daily fellowship which brought him into the presence of his Lord, in spite of clanking chain and iron bar—he affirmed that Jesus was alive.

Acts 26:19

“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:”

TO us, also, the heavenly visions come. On our summer holidays, rising between us and some soaring Alp, or meeting us in our walk beside the gently-breaking sea; on beds of pain and in chambers of watching; visions of the risen Lord; visions of His infinite grief and pain which we have caused; visions of the possibilities of our life as a minister and witness of the things which we have seen; visions of results far down the vista wherein dark souls should become light, slaves emancipated, the defiled saintly. Ah, visions of God! ye leave an indelible impression that moulds and ennobles all after-years! Pitiably the soul to which visions of a holier, sweeter life never come, or, if they come, are never seen.

The one important matter is our treatment of them. We may indolently refuse to follow the beckoning hand and obey the voice that calls. We may return to our evil courses and follow the devices and desires of our own hearts. We may cling to the prison cell, instead of following the angel that strikes us on our side, and bids us go forth into freedom. And if so, like Balaam, we shall become spiritually blind, and fail to see visions that the dumb creatures recognize, and that would fain arrest us in our perilous career.

On the other hand, if we will obey the vision, we shall not only retain the impression, and feel its prolonged and enthralling power, but shall receive still further manifestations of the will of God. “A witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen Me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee.” To those who love and obey Him, He is ever drawing near with fresh and deeper thoughts of the Father.

Acts 27:23-24

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

YES, the angels of God can find their way through the murkiest air, and alight on the most weather-beaten vessel that ever ploughed its difficult way through the stormy seas. Wheresoever thou art, O child of God, God’s angels have their eyes fixed lovingly on thee; and in a moment, if it were God’s will to give thee eyes, thou wouldest behold them.

“How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us that succour want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant!
And all for love, and nothing for reward:
Oh, why should Heavenly God to men have such regard?”

But if, like Paul, we would have the angel ministry, with their assurances against fear, like him we must be able to comply with two conditions—of being owned and being loyal.

Whose I am: We are His by creation, by purchase, by consecration. That sentiment of being owned, which in the case of slaves is inimical to the highest development, is the elementary condition of our truest growth and well-being. We belong to One who is infinitely worthy. We cannot do as we would with ourselves. We may not take our own course.

Whom I serve: The word rendered *serve* is the deepest and most expressive term that Paul could employ of the prostration of the soul at the feet of God. It is employed of the glorified, who serve Him day and night in His temple, and of whom it is said that His servants shall do Him service. The heavenly life begins here; and following its course, angels minister to us, and the stars in their courses fight for us.

Acts 28:30

“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,”

THUS, abruptly, does this fifth Gospel close. It has been well said that a close so abrupt suggests a continuance and a sequel. The curtain of silence falls when Paul's life is not brought to a close, and his work at Rome is still in process; and does not this indicate the design of the Holy Spirit that we should believe that the book of the Acts of the Apostles is never complete, but is really conterminous with the present age? Thus, every generation of every life adds its own gold link to the chain, which reaches from the upper chamber in the earthly Jerusalem to the bridal chamber of the New Jerusalem, uniting in one glorious succession all in whom Jesus continues by the Spirit to speak and work.

When the late Bishop of Ripon read of the labours and sufferings of John Williams in the South Seas, he laid down the narrative, exclaiming, “This is the twenty-ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.” May we not rather say the five hundredth or five thousandth? Between the stories of Paul and of John Williams, you must insert thousands which have been recorded of God's remembering angels alone, as well as those which are filling our shelves with missionary romance and biography, more interesting than novels, more wonderful than dreams.

“The book is left incomplete, as it always will be while one believer is left to teach and preach those things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in His own flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church.” And the question arises, *Have you wrought or suffered for Jesus in such ways as to add some verses to those chapters, which are now being written by angel scribes?*

Romans 1:17

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

IT is important to understand this verse, because it is the key to the Epistle. In the deepest sense, righteousness stands for two things—first, our standing before God; and next, our personal character—our position and our condition—what we are in Jesus, and what we are in ourselves by the Holy Spirit. Hooker, therefore, well expresses the truth when he says, “The righteousness with which we shall be clothed in the world to come, is both perfect and inherent; that wherewith we are justified is perfect, but not inherent; that by which we are sanctified is inherent, but not perfect.” The term *righteousness*, therefore, covers justification and sanctification, whereof the former is treated in the first five chapters of this Epistle; and to this we confine ourselves.

There is a difference between forgiveness and justification. By forgiveness the sinner may be reinstated in the confidence of Him whom he has wronged; by justification he is declared righteous according to the law, and thereby commended to the confidence and respect of all men.

Justification is our position through the wonderful grace of God, and by virtue of the finished work of Christ, which is imputed to all who believe. All that He is, is reckoned to us who are in Him. We are not merely forgiven, great and wonderful as that act of love and grace would be; but we are dealt with as though we had never sinned. Instead, therefore, of the law being against us, as we deserve, it is on our side, defending and protecting us. Our salvation actually rests on the law. We may claim it as an absolute right. And all this because of God’s infinite grace: because, in the person of Jesus, He has perfectly met, and satisfied, the claims of His holy but broken law.

Romans 2:15

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

THIS is a great announcement, and shows how God can judge men who have never heard of the Bible or the Decalogue. The latter is engraved on their hearts, and is witnessed to by conscience.

Conscience is an original faculty. We are no more called upon to investigate its origin than the mathematician to inquire how the mind can add, or multiply, or divide; or than the artist to ask why we can appreciate the beautiful. It is part of the make-up and constitution of our moral nature. The word ought lies behind conscience, investing it with the certainty and irresistibility of the throne of God.

Conscience is the judgment-seat of God set up within our nature. You may always know when conscience speaks. She never hesitates, or questions, or pronounces on the expediency of a course; but, as any case is presented to her, she pronounces absolutely and directly upon it as right or wrong. And as she speaks, she anticipates the verdict of the great white throne.

Doubtless conscience may be impaired in its action by long neglect, or by the determined preference of human maxims as our rule of action; but it is always liable to resurrection when the voice of God is sounding. The office of the minister, like “Old Mortality” in the story, is to go through the world, chisel in hand, clearing the inscriptions of the law from the grit of growth which has rendered them almost illegible in too many cases. The Prince, in the old fairy story, sounded a blast at the gate of the Sleeping Palace, and broke the spell, so that all its inmates sprang up into alert vitality; and similarly the Spirit of God, through the Truth, appeals to the human conscience, which is His ally in the heart of man.

Romans 3:26

“To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

THIS verse is often quoted as though the word *yet* must be inserted to bring out its meaning: “Just, and yet the Justifier.” The marvel of a just God justifying sinful men is thus strongly accentuated. Of course, this is a true and marvellous thought. But it is not the precise idea of the apostle, when he says that the just God is the Justifier of those that have faith in Jesus. He means that the very justice of God has come on our side, and that His love may have its unhindered way, not only consistently with His justice, but because of it.

This is the heart of the Gospel. Jesus has stood as our representative. He has borne our sin, in its curse and penalty; has met the claims of a broken law, and satisfied the demands of infinite righteousness. To have done this in our name and on our behalf not only makes us free from any penalty which might otherwise have accrued, but gives us a claim—the claim of the righteous—on all those blessings which the righteous government of God has to bestow.

Directly we become one with Jesus by a living faith, we stand possessed of all that He has done and is. In Him we have already suffered all that the holy law of God could demand as the just penalty of our sins. In Him we have laid in the grave, paying the uttermost farthing that could be exacted. In Him we have been liberated from the prison-house, and have passed into the presence and welcome of God. We may claim, therefore, that the law of God should make for us, as once it made against us. We are saved not only by the grace, but by the justice of God. He is faithful to His Son and just to the law, when He forgives us our sins.

Romans 4:20

“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;”

IT was a marvellous promise that this childless pair should have a child, and become progenitors of a great nation, so that the stars of the heavenly vault and the sand-grains on the ocean-shore should not be more numerous. And it was enough to stagger any man to be told of it. But Abraham staggered not. How was this?

It did not arise from ignoring the difficulties that obstructed its realization—He might have done so. Whenever the natural obstacles arose in his mind, he might have ignored them. But this was not Abraham’s policy. He quietly and deliberately considered the enormous difficulties that lay in the path of the Divine purpose, and in spite of them “he staggered not.”

But his unstaggering faith arose from his great thoughts of Him who had promised—He kept saying to himself, He is able, He is able. He knew that God would not have said what He could not perform. He knew that the God of nature was Lord of the nature He had made. He knew that no word of the Almighty could be destitute of power. He fed his faith by cherishing lofty and profound thoughts of God’s infinite resources. There rang in his heart the assurance, *I am El Shaddai*.

It is remarkable that, throughout Abraham’s life, God was continually giving new glimpses into His own glorious nature. With every temptation, call to obedience, or demand for sacrifice, a new and deeper revelation was entwined. This fed his faith, and gave it unstaggering strength. Child of God, feed thy faith on Promise. For every look at your difficulties, take ten at what thy God is.

Romans 5:17

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

ALL God’s dealings with us are on the same principle. As we received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we must walk in Him. Whether it be justification or sanctification; whether reconciliation or reigning in life that is under consideration—the same mighty principles underlie and control the Divine gifts and our participation in them. We receive reconciliation as a gift at the beginning of our Christian life, and we have to receive all else by the same medium to the end. Forever and forever we have just to wait till God fills us, as the flower-cups that are now filled with sunshine and now with dew or rain.

You have already received the reconciliation (Romans 5:11)—Unable to earn it by your own endeavours, you were at last content to receive it as a free gift placed into your open hand; now you have to maintain the same position with respect to all the spiritual gifts that you need for the maintenance of a godly life, and to enable you to reign. Faith—simple, open-handed, heaven-regarding faith—is the one unchanging law of the holy life.

“Trusting Jesus, that is all.”

This reigning in life is not to be relegated to the unseen and future—It is meant to be our present experience. He hath made us kings to God, even the Father. We are called to the royalty of men, the abundance, the freedom, the consciousness of power and victory, which we are wont to associate with those who reign. To reign in the ordinary life of the home, the shop, the counting-house—such is our high calling in Christ Jesus. And it may be ours if we receive “abundance of grace” of the one Man, Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:13

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

WE must choose. On the one hand stands sin, filling the market-place with its appeals, and bidding for us; on the other hand, God in the person of His Son. For it is well known that to whomsoever we yield ourselves to obey, his servants we shall be. Sin wants us, not only to work its fell results by us, but to curse and ruin us; whilst God wants to bless us with eternal life.

We may not be able to forecast or to arrange many things in our lives, which are difficult and perplexing; and at first it is not wise to discuss our attitude or action with respect to them. The first and most momentous question which presses for immediate solution is, whether we are prepared to present our members—brain, voice, hand, heart—to God; that through them He may fulfil His good purpose.

The argument is a very cogent one. The apostle tells us that we have been delivered from death; that in Jesus Christ we have been brought back to stand on the resurrection side of the grave. For such a wondrous deliverance, he exclaims, there is only one adequate return. Present yourselves to be the slaves of your Redeemer. Surely none of us would resemble the rich man, who was saved from drowning by a brave sailor, and offered him half-a-crown in recompense!

In this way also we shall be delivered from sin. Merely to resist and refuse it, is not enough; we shall not get perfect freedom so. But if we turn to God with a full purpose of heart, and give Him possession, we shall be delivered from the dominion of evil, because the responsibility of our emancipation and perfecting will rest on Him to whom we have yielded spirit, soul and body.

Romans 7:24

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

THIS chapter is very full of the personal pronoun. *Me* and *I* are the pivot around which its argument revolves. The strenuous efforts which the soul makes, not so much to justify as to sanctify itself, to realize its ideal, to walk worthy of the Lord, are well-pleasing, and are described by a master hand.

Is there one of us who has not read these words repeatedly, and in desperation? They have been so exactly true. We have longed with passionate sincerity that a new man might arise in us to free us from our old man, and make us the men we fain would be. We have been conscious of a subtle force mastering our struggles, like the serpents overcoming Laocoon and his sons; we have realized that a corrupting carcass was bound to our backs, as to the Roman criminals of old, filling the air with miasma, and poisoning our life. We have cried bitterly, *O wretched man ... , who shall deliver?*

The key to the plaintive moan of this chapter consists in this. It is the result of the endeavour to live a holy life apart from the power of the indwelling Saviour, and independently of the grace of the Holy Spirit. All such efforts are sure to end in wretchedness. We can no more sanctify ourselves than we can justify. Deliverance from the power of sin is the gift of God's grace, as forgiveness is. And it is only when we have come to the very end of all our strivings and resolvings, and have abandoned ourselves to the Saviour, that He should do in us and for us what we cannot do for ourselves, that we are led to cry, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

“All things are possible to God;
To Christ, the power of God in men,
To me, when I am all subdued,
When I, in Christ, am born again.”

Romans 8:26

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

THERE is a threefold groaning here.

CREATION groans (Romans 8:22): The sufferings of the dumb animals, under the brutal tyranny of man; in hard service; in the torture chambers of vivisectionists; to yield pleasure; to give food; or to provide dress—must fill the ear of Heaven with groans. The sighs of myriads of acres, condemned to bear the poisonous poppy or the barley for the manufacture of spirit, must be heard across the broad expanse of space. There is a discord, an oppression, a vanity in the universe around us, which constantly betrays the secret oppression of evil. Goethe said that Nature seemed to him to be like a captive maiden crying aloud for release.

The saints groan (Romans 8:23): We wait for our adoption, for the manifestation of our sonship, for the redemption of our bodies from the last remnants of the fall; and as we wait, we groan beneath the pressure of the present, the weight of mortality, and with eager desire for the blessed advent of the Lord.

The Spirit groans (Romans 8:26): The pressure of sin and sorrow in our world is heavy for Him to bear, and He sighs bitterly, as Jesus did when He stood face to face with the grave of His dead friend.

But these groans portend life, not death. They are full of hope, not despair. They are the pangs of birth, not the throes of death. Out of the agony of the present the new heavens and earth are being born.

“Unto you is given
 To watch for the coming of His feet
 Who is the glory of our blessed Heaven.
 The work and watching will be very sweet,
 Even in an earthly home;
 And in such an hour as you think not He will come.”

Romans 9:13

“As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

THE apostle is dealing here, not with individuals as such, but with peoples and nations. For instance, Isaac stands for the entire Jewish race—Abraham’s seed (Romans 9:7). He is dealing with the question, why it was that God chose Israel and rejected Edom; chose Jacob and rejected Esau: and he shows that the ultimate decision of their destinies lay in the purpose of God, according to election. The one was elect to be a channel of immense blessing to the world; whilst the other was rejected.

But we must always associate the Divine foreknowledge with the Divine choice. “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate.” We must regard Jacob and Esau, not as individual personalities merely, but as the founders of nations. For God’s purpose in the building-up of the chosen people, Jacob the methodical and farseeing, was more suited than Esau the free-lance, the rover, the child of impulse and passion. And, besides, there were religious aptitudes and capacities within him, of which Esau gave no sign or trace. This does not solve the entire mystery, perhaps; but only casts it a degree or two further back. Still, it ought to be considered. Like a candle, it casts a slender ray on to the black abyss. In any case, is it not certain that God’s choice did alight on him who was most suited to serve the Divine purpose?

It may be that God is wanting to execute His purpose through you. Take heed. Still the savoury dish steams on the desert air, and appeals to the appetite of our natures; and we are strongly tempted to forego the unseen and eternal for a moment’s gratification. See to it that for one morsel of meat you do not sell your birthright.

Romans 10:9

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

SALVATION here is evidently to be taken in its most extended meaning. It stands even more for the deliverance of the soul from the love and dominion of sin than for the removal of its justly incurred penalty. That we should be pure in heart, holy in thought, consecrated in life, with all the range of our nature controlled by His indwelling Spirit—such is the Divine intention with respect to us, as suggested by this deep, great word *Salvation*. But there are two conditions, on our compliance with which this saving power is realized.

We must confess Jesus as Lord: Throughout Scripture there is a close connection between Christ’s Royalty and His Saviourship. “Behold, thy King cometh to thee... having salvation;” “Him hath God set forth to be a Prince and a Saviour.” “Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High... made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.” We shall never know Christ as a Saviour from inbred sin until we have definitely and absolutely enthroned Him in our hearts. A physician is not content with healing outbreaks of disease and fever when they occur; but claims leave to examine all the arrangements of the house, so as to deal with the sources of the mischief.

We must also steadfastly believe in the Resurrection: The risen Lord, sitting at the right hand of God, in all the vigour of an indissoluble life: still working in the world, and energizing the hearts of His own: entering to indwell, to fill, to unite with His own eternal life—such is the vision offered to our faith. Let us look away to Him with a persistent, unwavering gaze, until sin ceases to attract us, and Satan finds a Stronger in possession.

Romans 11:36

“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

THIS verse reminds us of those lagoons of perfectly still clear water, of which travellers tell. So clear, that it is easily possible to look into their translucent depths to where the submarine foliage waves! So deep, that the ordinary measuring line fails to plumb them! All these words are monosyllables. A child just learning to read could easily spell them out. But who shall exhaust their meaning?

Of Him: The entire scheme of redemption; the marvellous history of the chosen people, with which this chapter is occupied; the universe of matter, all are included in the all things that have emanated out of God. No one has been His counsellor, or given aught to Him. From all created things, which are as the stream, let us climb to Him, who is their fountain, source, and origin; and in Him let us learn to fill our own souls to the very brim.

Through Him: Through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, God has poured the entire grace and wealth of His nature to bless and help us. There is no good thing that does not come to us through the mediation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Through Him He made the worlds. Through Him we have received the reconciliation. Through Him, also, all grace is made to abound toward us. Never forget to magnify the Lord Jesus as the source of all your supply.

To Him: Creation, Providence, Redemption, are all tending back to God. The tide is setting in toward the throne. A revenue of glory shall yet accrue from all that has happened within the parenthesis of time. Every whit in the great temple shall one day say “Glory!”

Romans 12:1

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

TO present carries us back to Romans 6. We might almost say that the intervening chapters, after the manner of the apostle, are one prolonged digression or parenthesis, and that he classes all the great things with which he has been treating as among the mercies of God, and as reasons for our entire consecration. Every disclosure of God’s grace toward us is an argument for our complete surrender to His will and power.

We are called on to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness, because all true regimen of the inner life immediately affects the body in all its members; and, conversely, the consecration of the body reacts upon and affects the temper of the soul. It would be well for you to take Miss Havergal’s hymn, with its enumeration of the various parts of the body, and offer and present yourself, to be from this day and forward, wholly for God. Only believe that He is more anxious for this than words can tell, because He loves you so, and that He accepts immediately what you offer.

Such consecration must be living; that is, it must enter into all our life, being holy, well pleasing to God, and rational. It is not only reasonable when we consider the relation we sustain to Him, but it should engage all our intelligence and reasoning faculties. And when it is made, and the soul is becoming duly transfigured in its exercise, we begin to prove that God’s will, which once we dreaded, is also good, well-pleasing, and perfect. When we look at God’s will from a distance, and before consecration, it seems impossible. It is only when we begin to obey, that we can say:

“Thou sweet beloved will of God.”

Romans 13:14

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

THIS verse is ever memorable from its association with the life of Augustine, who says: “Thus was I sick and tormented in mind, bitterly accusing myself, and rolling and turning about in my chain, till it might be wholly broken.”

At length, rushing into the garden, groaning in spirit, “all my bones were crying out, soul-sick was I and grievously tormented. I said to myself, ‘Be it done now; be it done now.’ And a voice said, ‘Why standest thou in thyself, and so standest not? Cast thyself upon Him. Fear not; He will not withdraw Himself, to let thee fall. He will receive, and will heal thee. Stop thine ears against those unclean members of thine, which are upon the earth, that they may be mortified.”

Then arose a mighty tempest, bringing a heavy downpour of tears. “I cast myself under a certain fig-tree, and gave rein to my tears, and the floods of mine eyes brake forth. Why not now? Why not this hour make an end of my uncleanness? And, lo! from the neighbouring house I heard a voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, singing and oft repeating, ‘Take and read; take and read!’ Checking the torrent of my tears, I arose, interpreting it to be a Divine command to open the Book and read the first chapter I could find. I seized; I opened, and in silence read the passage on which mine eyes fell: ‘Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.’ No further would I read; nor was there need, for instantly all my heart was flooded with a light of peace, all the sadness of doubt melted away!”

Romans 14:18

“For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.”

DEAN Howson renders this verse thus: “He who lives in these things as Christ’s bondsman is well-pleasing to God, and cannot be condemned by men.” There are two rules, therefore, to be observed by us when we consider our behaviour in that great border-land which lies between the dark and light, the clearly wrong and clearly right. We are all conscious of habits and tastes, of inclinations toward certain forms of amusement and recreation, of methods of life, which do not contravene any distinct law of God, but are certainly open to question. It is such things that fall within the scope of these two principles.

First, we must always remember that we are Christ’s bondservants: Let us look then, every day and hour, and as to the mental habit, every moment, upon Jesus Christ as our Master. Saintly George Herbert chose that to be, as it were, his best-beloved aspect of his Saviour; “My Master, Jesus.” “An oriental fragrance, my Master.” Let us do the same. Let us wear the word next to the heart, next to the will; nay, let it sink into the very springs of both, deeper every day. And as each fresh question arises in our life, let us stand close beside Him, noticing the expression of His face, asking Him what He would desire, and always reckoning that the least suggestion of His preference is law. “None of us liveth to himself: for, whether we live, we live unto the Lord.”

Second, we must always bear in mind the spiritual life of others: We are to put no stumbling-block, or occasion for falling, in another’s way. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor to do any other thing, whereby our brother is made to stumble. Let us each of us please his neighbour for good ends, to build him up; for Christ pleased not Himself.

Romans 15:18

“For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,”

ALL things that have not sprung from the indwelling and inworking power of Christ, are probably valueless in the sight of God. As the apostle dared not record them in this book, so probably they are not recorded in God’s book. They lack the one principle or germ of life. Our Lord said, Separate from Me ye can do nothing; and probably, therefore, whatever we do out of living union with Him amounts to nothing.

These words are a window into the apostle’s inner life. He was ever looking to the Lord to work through him, in the power of the Holy Ghost. He had nothing, therefore, to boast of, as he reviewed his labours; the impulse in which they originated, and the success with which they were crowned, were alike attributable to the Son of God, who had been revealed and formed within.

Let us so yield ourselves to Him, that the great Master may fulfil through us also all the good pleasure of His will.

Let us wait before Him in earnest expectancy, till the foundation of His purpose begins to arise within us; and let us receive from Him the gracious power of which to realize His plans. “I cannot,” one may say, “give that tract; speak to that fellow-traveller; witness for Christ on that ship or in that shop; stand up in that pulpit and preach.” No, perhaps not. But you can let Christ do these things through you.

“So others shall,

Take patience, labour, to their heart and land,
from thy land. and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
And God’s grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower with a brimming cup may stand
And share its dewdrop with another near.”

Romans 16:23

“Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.”

THAT is all we know about him. The others whose names are written here are more or less famous. Tertius wrote the Epistle; Gaius was evidently a man of influence; Erastus was the treasurer of the city, and so on. But Quartus was just a humble, simple Christian, who had no handle to his name, save his brotherliness and his desire to assure his Roman brethren, whom probably he had never seen, of his love to them. “So he begs a little corner in Paul’s letter, and gets it; and there, in his little niche, like some statue of a forgotten saint scarce seen amidst the glories of a great cathedral, ‘Quartus the brother’ stands to all time.”

What a lesson in humility! Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not. Be content to live and die unknown, except for the love that breathes through thy life, not to those of thine own circle merely, but for those across the sea, with whom thou wouldst fain strike hands. Thy one joy, that thou hast been born into the family of God. Thy creed, that all regenerate souls, of every name and sect, are members of the same family, children of the same Father, and therefore one in ties of peculiar tenderness and strength.

What a revelation this slight reference is to the new binding forces of the Gospel! At the Advent the world was split by great gulfs of national hatred; fierce enmities of race, language, and religion; wide separations far profounder than anything that we know. And then the Gospel came, which began to gather men of every race into one family, in Jesus Christ, the Divine Elder-brother; and from this, uniting influences of brotherhood began to permeate the world.

1 Corinthians 1:9

“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

THE word for *fellowship* is the same that is employed in Luke 5:10, of James and John being partners with Simon. We have been called into partnership with the Son of God, in His redemptive purposes, His love and tears for men, and ultimately in His triumph and glory. He has entered into partnership with man, and we are now summoned into partnership with Him through the communion of the Holy Ghost. in the words of the apostle, “our fellowship [or partnership] is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

How fruitful of comfort is the thought that Christ’s interests are ours, and that we are at liberty to draw upon His resources to the uttermost. Suppose a poor clerk were to be summoned from his desk into the counting-house of a Rothschild, and informed that from that moment he was taken into partnership with the firm: would it not be less of an honour than this which has fallen to our lot? Association with millionaires in money-making were infinitely less desirable than association with the Son of God in world-saving. And would that poor clerk feel any anxiety as to his share in meeting the immense liabilities of the concern? However great they might be, he would know that the resources of the firm were adequate, and he would be able to sleep easily at night, though millions were due on the morrow. Child of God, cannot thy Father meet all His Son’s engagements?

The call to this partnership is from the Father. It is He who has chosen us for this high honour of cooperating with His Son. Will He have led us into such an association, and leave us to be overwhelmed by the difficulties of the situation He has created? It cannot be! He will supply all our need.

1 Corinthians 2:10

“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

EYES of my soul, ye have no need to wait until the veil of the flesh that screens off the beatific vision has been rent in twain by the mighty hands of the Angel of Death, ere ye behold the land that floweth with milk and honey!

Ears of my heart, ye need not remain dull and listless till the peal of the archangel’s trumpet thrill you, and summon you to the music of the harpers harping on their harps or the chime of the glassy sea.

Heart of mine, be expectant! Awake! Lo, there shall come into thee, penetrating, pervading, filling thy every recess, all those blessed things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. They shall enter thee, as a retinue of knights might enter a beleaguered castle to make it strong against any possible combination of the foe.

Only I must love God. Through Isaiah I am taught that I must wait for Him (Isaiah 54:4); here I learn that I must love. For love is quick to know. He that loveth knoweth God. It was the apostle whom Jesus loved that beheld Him on the margin of the lake. It is to the warm, tender atmosphere of loving hearts that the unchecked, ungrieved Spirit unfolds His secrets. Let me, therefore, bathe myself in the gracious atmosphere of my Saviour’s presence, never going outside its genial glow, never falling behind His going forth, until I am entrusted, through the Spirit, with the deep things of God.

“God only knows the love of God;
 Oh that it now were shed abroad
 In this poor stony heart!
 For love I sigh, for love I pine,
 This only portion, Lord, be mine—
 Be mine this better part!”

1 Corinthians 3:10

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”

A FITTING illustration of the Christian life for the people of Corinth, famed for its architecture. We are all builders, whether we choose or not! We may be temple-builders! Each heart, each life, each character, may become a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Every act we do, every word we utter, the way in which we spend any moments of our time, is either a fragment of gold, silver and precious stones, or of wood, hay and stubble, built into the rising structure of the erection entrusted to our skill and pains. It does not so much matter what we do, but how we do it. Every time we perform any action with the best motives and spirit, we deposit a tiny grain of gold-dust; whenever, on the other hand, we do aught after a slovenly, superficial, and careless manner, we weave into the structure of character a material which will yield as inevitably in the hour of temptation as wood, hay and stubble before flame.

We sometimes, at the end of the day, reviewing the past hours, bitterly lament that we have done nothing in the way of character-building. “There is nothing to show for this day,” we say mentally to ourselves. Ah! but there is. Every moment has left its record on your heart. Every act has left you confirmed in a good habit or in a bad one. The soul-life has not halted for a second; one has been growing to moral health, or toward decrepitude, consumption, and decay. If not gold, then wood; if not silver, then hay; if not costly stones, then stubble.

We shall not be saved on account of our works. The only thing that can secure salvation is the being built into God’s foundation, the Rock Christ Jesus. But we shall be rewarded according to the manner in which we have built up the structure.

1 Corinthians 4:4

“For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”

THERE are four courts of trial.

First: Man’s judgment—It is significantly spoken of as man’s “day.” Our conduct is narrowly scrutinized and weighed by many eyes which we know not of, but which are fixed on every act and word—the eyes of our neighbours, associates, fellow-work people, servants. They are ever reasoning about us, comparing our lives with our professions, partly with the view of excusing themselves, if there is any gross inconsistency. But, after all, their verdict need not greatly move us. It is only for a day.

Second: The judgment of fellow-Christians—We are perpetually being summoned before the court of the church circle to which we belong; not always because we are inconsistent with our professions, but whenever we overstep the pace at which the majority is slowly moving. To be too zealous, too eager, too earnest, too particular, will, in some Christian communities, expose us to a great deal of adverse criticism. But we have not to look right and left to get the sentence of our fellow-believers when we are clearly prompted by the Spirit of God.

Third: The judgment of conscience—“I judge not mine own self.” We are all apt to arraign ourselves at our own bar, and pass verdicts which are altogether favourable, because we compare ourselves with characters and standards inferior to ourselves. It is a great mistake to judge yourself, for even if you score a favourable verdict—if you know nothing against yourself—it is liable to be reversed by the decisions of the Supreme Court.

Fourth: The Lord’s judgment—The Lord will come, bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, and making manifest the counsels of the heart.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

AT the time of the first Passover, outside, as the ominous midnight hour approached, Egypt gave herself up to her usual life. “They ate and drank; they married and gave in marriage.” But within their homes, the children of Israel stood around their tables, their loins girt, their staves in their hands, with unleavened bread packed up with their kneading-troughs in their clothes, waiting for the signal to depart. The Passover Lamb had been sacrificed; its blood was on the door; whilst its flesh, roast with fire, was being eaten. For seven days, all leavened bread had been put away out of the houses of the chosen people, because leaven, in the Bible, is the symbol of the working of the corrupt principle.

The believer should look back: The Paschal Lamb was sacrificed for us on the cross. Though He had done no sin, and was without blemish, yet He was slain for us without the gates of the city. He made there a sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction, oblation, for the sins of the whole world.

The believer should look around: With lighted candle, search the heart of your house, that there may be no speck or mote of leaven. Let us keep the perpetual feast of the Christian life, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The believer should look on: Soon we shall hear the midnight trumpet sound, “Arise and depart, for this is not your rest!” and we shall go forth from Egypt, where we have suffered, and toiled, and been misunderstood; where also our Lord was crucified. It is but a little while (how little, how little!) and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.

1 Corinthians 6:19

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”

THIS is a sentence which should be deeply pondered; every clause is significant. We evidently should know its deep and solemn meaning. Apparently it is one of the commonplaces of our holy religion. This knowledge, however, should not be merely that of the intellect, but born out of the deep musing of the heart.

The holy temple: Built up of the dust of the earth, our bodies are rarer than the most glorious structures that ever the sun shone on, because they are meant to be the shrine and home of God. Jesus spoke of the Temple of His Body; and if He was so zealous for His Father’s House that He drove out the unholy traffickers, and refused to allow a vessel to be carried through the courts, should we not be equally careful? We are the custodians of the Divine residence; let us be very careful that there be nothing to offend or trouble the celestial Inmate.

The Divine Inmate: Too often He is grieved, and driven to occupy the most secret shrine, concealed and hidden beneath the heavy veil of our inconsistency and unbelief. He is not driven out by our sins, but driven in. Whenever, on the contrary, we put away our sin, and walk in the light as He is in the light; whenever the veil is rent and the whole heart thrown open to Him—He comes in power to occupy every part of our being, so that there is no part dark, and the very body becomes transfigured.

The great Price: Bought as any slave standing in the marketplace for sale! Ransomed from the direst slave master to the dearest Lord! The price—not corruptible things, as silver and gold—but precious blood! Our life is henceforth not our own, but His.

1 Corinthians 7:24

“Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.”

STRONG temptations to restlessness beset the early Christians. The great change through which they had passed from heathenism to Christ threatened to dissolve all the ties by which they had been held, in the home, the business, and the State. Very necessary and wholesome, therefore, was the apostle’s advice. Stay as you are, until God clearly leads you into something else—only with this difference, whatever be the vocation of your life, therein abide with God. Paul was only careful that the thought of God should penetrate their entire existence; all else would come right in time; and he was only anxious that they should be laid hold of by that central, vivifying, transmuting influence.

Practice the presence of God: A godly brother used to say that we should establish ourselves in a sense of God’s presence by an act of the will, which put aside wandering, frivolous, and evil thoughts, and that we should be continually conversing with Him; that we ought to give ourselves up to God, making Him the end of all our actions, and seeking our only satisfaction in doing His will; and that even the set times of prayer should not greatly differ from other times, because all were equally filled with God.

Such a sense equalizes our lot: The slave realizes that he is God’s free man; the master that he is God’s slave. The poor are enriched, and the rich are convicted of their poverty. So this holy brother said that, in his business in the kitchen (to which naturally he had a great aversion), having accustomed himself to do everything there for the love of God and with prayer, he had found everything easy, and was very well pleased to continue in the same post so long as it was God’s will.

1 Corinthians 8:13

“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

THERE are two principles for our guidance in doubtful and debatable questions. First, the law of conscience: The apostle does not hesitate to say that the scruples of the weaker brethren were unquestionably needless. Idols have no real existence, and the presentation of food in their presence before it is eaten is a matter of complete indifference. “If we eat, we are not the better; if we eat not, we are not the worse.” At the same time, if a man were not able to reach this high standard, and still believed that an idol had a real existence, and that it was wrong for him to partake of food which had been offered to it, he must abide by that decision, and must on no account force himself to more liberal action. His conscience might be misinformed, and he should take every means of bringing it to a more healthy condition; but if it still remained stationary, he must accept its ruling.

Secondly, the law of charity: We must consider one another. No one liveth to himself. We are members of the body of Christ, and have no right to injure any who are so closely allied with us, and on whose healthy existence our own materially depends. If, then, we see that certain other souls are constantly being caused to stumble, because of what we do; not simply surprised and startled, but actually made to sin; trying to do as we do, but as often as they attempt it, falling short; unable to take our steep path without falling; always brought into condemnation when in our company; there is no alternative—for their sakes we must forego what is innocent and pleasant to ourselves. It may be a daily glass of wine, or attendance at some form of amusement, or some evil habit—but the love of Christ forbids.

1 Corinthians 9:27

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

IS it for one moment to be supposed that Paul really feared being cast away from the love and presence of God into the outer darkness with its weeping and gnashing of teeth? Surely not! Had he not said unmistakably that nothing could avail to separate him from the love of God which was in Jesus Christ! No, it is impossible to think such a thing. He knew too well that none of Christ’s members can be amputated; none of His sheep perish.

“The soul that to Jesus has fled for repose,
He will not, He cannot, desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to take,
He’ll never—no, never—no, never forsake.”

But when the apostle speaks of being a castaway, he means that he feared lest, after having proclaimed the rules of the contest to others, he should himself fail shamefully of the prize. And what was that prize? Certainly not forgiveness, nor eternal life; because these are not procured by any efforts of our own. These are not the prizes of agility or strength, but the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. What, then, is the prize? The context reveals it. It is surely the guerdon of winning souls; the blessed joy and crown of bringing to Jesus those who had otherwise never known Him.

But we may fall short of this. We may set others to do what we fail to do. We may appear before Christ with handfuls of withered leaves. We may yet be rejected. Esau missed the crown of his birthright; Moses the Promised Land; Saul the founding of a line of kings. We may miss utterly and irretrievably. God help us to watch and pray, and bring the body into subjection!

1 Corinthians 10:33

“Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.”

PROBABLY the world has never seen a more enthusiastic soul-winner than the great apostle. If he visits a strange town, he will cast out the demon from a possessed girl. If he takes up tent making, beside an unbelieving Jew and his wife, he will before long have won each for Christ. If he is cast into prison, he will have baptized the jailer before dawn. If he stands before a judge, he will almost persuade him to be a Christian. If he is a prisoner in a hired house, he will speak to all who come to him, and win a runaway slave like Onesimus to Christ, and make him profitable to Philemon. Always and everywhere, he sets himself to win souls.

Here, also, we see how this one passion ruled his behaviour in all things. He was willing to yield to men in matters where only his own comfort, but not his conscience, was concerned. He sought to please all men in all things; not seeking his own profit, but “the profit of the many, that they may be saved.”

Oh for more of this sacred passion!—such as inspired, for instance, the Moravians to expatriate themselves for the sake of the lepers of Table Bay!

A woman at the Presbyterian hospital at Canton, hearing of Christ, and loving Him, asked:

“How long can I live if I remain in the hospital?”

“Four months.”

“And how long if I go home?” “Two months,” replied the doctor. “I am going home,” she said.

“But,” urged the doctor, “you will lose half your life.”

“Do you not think I would be glad to give half my life for the sake of telling my people of Jesus?”

And she went home.

1 Corinthians 11:29

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”

HOW many humble and earnest souls has been kept from the blessed enjoyment of the Lord’s Table! They did not understand the nature of the sin which the apostle was describing; they were terrified by the word *damnation*, and they felt that it were better to forego the privilege than risk the peril.

The difficulties will, however, largely disappear, when we understand the disorders that disgraced the Corinthian Church, and which arose from the abuses of the love-feast which preceded the Lord’s Supper. At that repast each disciple was expected to put the provisions he had brought with him into a common stock, from which all shared alike. But at Corinth, the rich and their friends ate of their luxuries; whilst the poor were allowed to go without. After such an introduction, the Church could not approach the Lord’s Table with that appreciation of the solemnity and tenderness of the ordinance which could alone consist with the holy memories of the betrayal night.

The eating and drinking unworthily arose from not discerning the Body. This does not refer to the Lord’s Body which was broken for us; but to His Body the Church. “The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ, seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body?” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). We eat and drink unworthily when we fail to discern that the poor, and weak, and simple, who belong to Jesus, belong also to us; that they are members with us; and that we are bound to share our gifts and graces with them for the glory of our common Lord. The one thing which disqualifies us from joining in this feast of dying love is our refusal to feel and manifest love to all in the Body.

1 Corinthians 12:3

“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

JESUS is Saviour, but is He Lord? Hast thou yielded to Him the Lordship? Nothing short of this will give thee true peace and power. Thou must be brought to say with the psalmist, “Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over me; but by Thee only will I make mention of Thy name.”

Jesus must be Lord of thy heart; every affection must be brought under His most wise and loving control. He must be Lord of thy home, so that no conversation may be indulged, no recreation set afoot, no society entertained, which is inconsistent with His character and claims. He must be Lord of thy business and its returns, so that thou shalt live in perpetual communication with Him, along the lines of the Heavenly Telephone; and in the use of all its proceeds He must have the supreme voice. He must be Lord of thy plans. It is for Him to say *Go*, or *Come*, or *Do this*. That was a true message which Ahasuerus sent through the good Ezra to the Jewish people: “Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven.” I liked that word *exactly*.

But this perpetual recognition of the Lordship of Jesus is only possible to those who have yielded their entire nature to the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, who love to glorify Christ. Dost thou seek the attitude of consecration which thus honours thy Lord? Then let the Holy Spirit work it for thee! Wouldst thou have it maintained? Let Him maintain it! And if thou askest thyself, whether thou hast received the Pentecostal endowment, be sure that thou hast, if with all thine heart thou sayest that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This is the certain test.

1 Corinthians 13:13

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

WHAT a light must have shone on the apostle’s face as he broke into this exquisite idyll, this perfect poem of love! The change in tone and rhythm must have caused his amanuensis to look suddenly up into his master’s face, and lo! it was as the face of an angel. Why is love greatest?

Because it is the crown of the other two, and includes them: Faith is the root; hope is the stem; love the perfect flower. You may have faith without hope, and hope without love; but you cannot have love apart from faith and hope.

Because it is likest God: God’s nature is not specially characterized by faith, because there is no uncertainty with His perfect knowledge; nor by hope, because there is no future to His eternal existence. But God is love; and to love is to resemble Him.

Because it will immeasurably outlast the other two: Human knowledge, at best but the spellings of babes, will vanish in the perfect light of heaven. Eloquence will seem like the lispings of infancy. Prophecies will have no place, because all the landscape of the future will be revealed. Faith and hope will be lost in realization. Love only is forever.

Because love brings the purest rapture: “Where is heaven?” asked a wealthy Christian of his minister. “I will tell you where it is,” was the quick reply: “if you will go to the store, and buy £10 worth of provisions and necessaries, and take them to that poor widow on the hillside, who has three of her children sick. She is poor, and a member of the Church. Take a nurse, and some one to cook the food. When you get there, read the twenty-third Psalm, and kneel by her side and pray. Then you will find out where heaven is.”

1 Corinthians 14:10

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.”

THERE are the voices of nature: The deep bass of the ocean wave booming along the shore; the crash of the ice; the silver choirs of the stars; the song of bird, hum of bee, shrill trumpet of gnat, the rustle of the leaves, the patter of the rain, the chorus of the hailstones—how varied, and charming, and musical! No doubt if we could listen to all these from a distance we should detect perfect chords.

There are the voices of human life: First, the mother’s; then of the brothers and sisters of our home (and sad is the lot of the lonely child which has none); then of the teacher, the minister, the friend, the lover, not one could be spared; not one that has not a significance; not one to whose words we shall not do well to give heed.

There are the voices of our daily lot: Now we are called to experience joy, now sorrow, now gain, and now loss; now of the harsh reprimand of disaster; now of the tender assurances of sunny hours. Behind all these God is speaking. Listen, therefore, heedfully to all, and try to acquire the lesson He is longing to inculcate. What is He saying to you, by your circumstances, at this moment? Is it in tones of pleading, of remonstrance, of blame?

“Where is Thy favoured haunt, Eternal Voice,
The region of Thy choice,
Where, undisturbed by sin and earth, the soul
Owns Thy entire control?

“Tis then we hear the voice of God within,
Pleading with care and sin;
‘Child of My Love,
How have I wearied thee?’”

1 Corinthians 15:20

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

WORDS which are altogether transcendent! How they thrill us and inspire! What memories they recall! How impossible is it not to feel their majesty. Surely no brain nor lip of man had begotten them! They bear the mint-mark of heaven.

On the day that Jesus arose, the first-fruit sheaf of the barley harvest was being waved by the High Priest in the Temple, as the representative of the myriads that stood stacked amid the stubble of the fields. It was the specimen sheaf—representative, pattern, and pledge of all the rest. The risen Christ is the pattern and pledge of what His people will be when their bodies shall be fashioned anew in the likeness of His resurrection.

He is pattern: His body bore the same general outlines as before; so will theirs. It was recognizable by those who had known and loved Him, even to the tones of His voice; so will it be with theirs. It was the ethereal and pliant instrument of His spirit; so will theirs be. It could no more return to corruption; no more will theirs. It was invulnerable to disease and pain; such an experience awaits them too.

He is pledge: He does not stand alone. He is united to us by a myriad indissoluble ties. What the power of God did for Him it will do for us. Those that sleep in Jesus God will bring with Him, and we that are alive and remain shall be caught up. There shall not a hoof be left behind. Not one purchased body of a saint, however obscure or unworthy, shall be excepted from the effect of the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. Meanwhile, in the kindly embrace of Mother Earth, like the seed-germs of a vast harvest, the resurrection principle in the bodies of the saints awaits the resurrection signal.

1 Corinthians 16:22

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”

THIS sentence reminds us of the saintly Samuel Rutherford, of whose Letters the holy Richard Baxter said: “Hold off the Bible, such a book the world never saw.” And the late revered and beloved C. H. Spurgeon said of them: “When we are dead and gone, let the world know that Spurgeon held Rutherford’s Letters to be the nearest thing to inspiration which can be found in all the writings of mere men.”

Take this extract, because it indicates how you may come to love the Lord Jesus as he did:

“Strive to make prayer, and reading, and holy company, and holy conference, your delight; and when delight cometh in, you shall, by little and little, find the sweetness of Christ, till at length your soul be over head and ears in Christ’s sweetness. Then shall you be taken up to the top of the mountain with the Lord, to know the delights of spiritual love, and the glory and excellency of a seen, revealed, felt and embraced Christ; and then you shall not be able to loose yourself off from Christ, and to bind your soul to old lovers; then, and never till then, are all the paces, motions, and wheels of your soul in a right tune and in a spiritual temper.

“But if this world and the lusts thereof be your delight, I know not what Christ can make of you; you cannot be metal for a vessel of glory and mercy. My desire is that my Lord would give me broader and deeper thoughts to feed myself with wondering at His love. I would I could weigh it, but I have no balance for it. When I have worn my tongue to the stump in praising Christ, I have done nothing to Him. What remaineth then, but that my debt to the love of Christ lie unpaid for all eternity!”

2 Corinthians 1:4

“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

CHILD of God, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which tries thee, as though some strange thing had happened. Rejoice, inasmuch as it is a sure sign that thou art on the right track. All the saints have gone by this road, notably the writer of this Epistle.

Its keyword is *affliction*, because written amid afflictions so great that the apostle despaired of life. It is steeped in affliction, as a handkerchief with the flowing blood of a fresh wound. But in this passage the apostle has built himself a little chamber of comfort, the stones of which were quarried from the pit of his own sorrow. He blesses God, who had led him into affliction to teach him the art of comfort, that by observing how God comforted, he might become proficient in the art.

The world is full of comfortless hearts— orphan children crying in the night. Our God pities them, and would comfort them through thee. But ere thou undertake this lofty ministry thou must be trained, and thou must therefore pass through the very trials that they are exposed to. Now watch how God comforts thee. Keep a diary, if thou wilt, of His procedure. Ponder in thine heart the length of each splint, the folds of each bandage, the ministration of each opiate, cordial or drug. This will have a two-fold effect, in turning thy thoughts from thy miseries to thy mercies, and in taking away the sense of useless and aimless existence.

There is evidently scope for comfort even in heaven, for it is said that God will wipe away tears from all faces. Oh thou that art sorrowful even unto death, be sure that some day the Comforter will get the victory over thy sorest griefs.

2 Corinthians 2:15

“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:”

THE idea is borrowed from an ancient Roman triumph, which to the eyes of the world of that day was the most glorious spectacle which the imagination could conceive. The apostle compares himself first to one of the prisoners led in long chains behind the conqueror’s chariot; then to a servant bearing incense; and lastly to the incense itself that rose all along the line of the procession.

Nothing touches the sense more quickly than sweet odours, unless it be noxious ones; and they almost instantly recall some scene of the past with which they were indissolubly associated. For instance, the scent of new-mown hay will carry us off to merry scenes in the far away days of childhood. Thus the apostle wished that his life might be a sweet perfume, floating on the air, reminding men, and above all reminding God, of Christ. It was as though he said, “I desire so to live that I may perpetually remind God of the obedience, sacrifice, and devotion of the Lord Jesus, so that my words and deeds may recall to His heart similar ones in the earthly life of Jesus.”

A sweet savour of Christ! It does not consist so much in what we do, but in our manner of doing it; not so much in our words or deeds, as in an indefinable sweetness, tenderness, courtesy, unselfishness, and desire to please others to their edification. It is the breath and fragrance of a life hidden with Christ in God, and deriving its aroma from fellowship with Him. Wrap the habits of your soul in the sweet lavender of your Lord’s character.

The secret of abounding joy in self-sacrifice is the happy consciousness, such as Enoch had, that we have pleased God. To have this is to secure deliverance from self-consciousness.

2 Corinthians 3:18

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

MOSES veiled his face, and the veiled lawgiver was characteristic of the dispensation he inaugurated. It was a partial revelation, gleaming through a veil, expressing truths in rites and types and symbols. But Christ has torn away the veil, removed the fences of the mount of vision, and revealed to babes the deepest secrets of God’s heart. The apostle’s phrase is characteristic of Christianity, “Behold, I show you (i.e., unveil) a mystery.”

The object of visions: “The glory of the Lord.” Concerning which we may accept the statement of a trustworthy commentator, that the reference is not to the incomprehensible, incommunicable lustre of the absolute Divine perfectness; but to that glory which, as John says, tabernacled in the Lord Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth—the glory of loving, pitying words and lovely deeds; the glory of faultless and complete manhood; the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The nature of the vision: “We behold.” It is true that we cannot see. “Whom, not having seen, ye love.” But it is also true that the heart has eyes, by which it looks away unto Jesus. “Seeing is believing,” is a familiar proverb among men; but “believing is seeing” is a true aphorism of the spirit which clings to the Lord by its faith and love.

The effect of the vision: First, we reflect. The beauty of His face glancing on ours will be mirrored, as a man’s eye will contain a tiny miniature picture of what he is beholding. Then we shall be changed. If you try to represent Jesus in your character and behaviour, you will become transfigured into His likeness. Love makes like. Imitation produces assimilation. Reflect and resemble.

2 Corinthians 4:18

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

WE are here bidden to look through the things which are seen; to consider them as the glass window through which we pass to that which is behind and beyond. You do not waste your time by admiring the frame or casket of some rare jewel, but penetrate to the jewel itself; so, day by day, look through the material and transient to the eternal purpose, the Divine idea, the deep that lieth under.

“All visible things,” said Carlyle, “are emblems. What thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly speaking, is not there at all. Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea and body it puts forth.” This is an exaggerated way of stating the old saying, “Everything that is, is double.” Both, however, illustrate the affirmation of the text.

Look for God’s thought in all the incidents, circumstances and objects of your daily life. Do not stop at the outward; penetrate to the inward and eternal. Beneath that bitter physical suffering there are stores of Divine fortitude and grace. Beneath that trying dispensation there are celestial compensations. Beneath those sweet family ties there are suggestions of love and friendship, which can never grow old or pass away. Beneath the letter of Scripture is the spirit; beneath the ordinance, oneness with the loving Saviour; beneath the world of nature, the processes of the eternal husbandry.

When such is the attitude of the soul, afflictions, that might otherwise have weighed as heavy, become light; and those that drag through long and tedious years, seem but for a moment. And without exception, they all go to produce that receptivity of character that can contain the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

2 Corinthians 5:18

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;”

OF here is equivalent to *out of*. All the precious contents of the Gospel have emanated from the heart of God; so that we may say with the psalmist, “All my springs are in Thee.” (Psa 87:7)

That we have a building, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, to which to go when the earthly house of this tabernacle is broken up; that it is possible for the mortal to be swallowed up in the descending glory of the Second Advent; that we have received the Spirit as earnest of our future glory; that we shall be one day at home with the Lord; that One died for all that the dominion of the self-life should be destroyed, and that they should henceforth live, not to themselves, but to Him; that it is possible to become a new creation in Christ; that God is already reconciled to the world of men, and is only waiting for them to be reconciled to Him; that He hath committed to men the ministry of reconciliation, and commissioned them to be His ambassadors; that it is possible for us to be the righteousness of God in Jesus—all these things have issued from His heart of love.

Oh for a soul as wide as the utmost circle of the highest heaven that containeth all, to contain His love! Oh, world’s wonder! Oh, what a sight to be up in heaven, in “the fair orchard of Paradise!” But the very greatness of His provisions will make our doom the greater, if we refuse or ignore them. The men who made light of the king’s invitation had their city burned. This is the terror of the Lord; and our duty is to beseech men not to put away the reconciliation which God offers. Let the “all things” of your life be of God’s direction, impulse and inspiration.

2 Corinthians 6:8

“By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;”

THIS is the first clause in one of the most wonderful series of paradoxes in all literature. Let us class together these different conceptions of the apostle, as held by those who judged him by his outward and inward life respectively.

Judged from the view-point of this age he was a deceiver, intent on some purpose of his own, misleading and hoodwinking his converts. In the annals of this world he was utterly unknown, and there was no attempt to chronicle his doings or record his words. His life seemed to the gay and worldly a prolonged death, whilst to his close associates and friends it was a perpetual chastening. Very sorrowful, very poor, very destitute—such was his appearance as seen from the outside. And many must have turned from it and felt thankful that the lines had fallen to them in pleasanter places.

Judged from the viewpoint of eternity he was known to be true, and building the temple of truth. By every new dying to the world around, his inner life was being recruited, deepened, and purified. His sufferings were chastening and pruning him, that he might bear more fruit. Amid his outward griefs he was ever drinking at the wells of purest joy; amid his poverty he was enriching the world with the most precious wealth; amid his utter destitution he was handling the imperishable riches of eternity.

The monks of Chartreux, when they first erected their monastery, made all their windows look in on the small inner court, but had none commanding the sublime mountains and glaciers around. So, too, many lives are always contemplating the trifles of earth's courtyard! Oh that such would take into their view the unseen and eternal!

2 Corinthians 7:1

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

THE closing paragraph of the previous chapter tells us what this defilement stands for; and in the enumeration note the increasing bonds of approximation which each word indicates. An unequal yoke in ill-matched intercourse with unbelievers leads to fellowship, and this to communion, and this again to concord, and this to partnership; whilst the culmination of the entire series is agreement, and the yielding up of the body for the possession and indwelling of idols, let us beware of the beginning of this awful approximation. It is impossible to stand still; and they who think lightly of marrying an unbeliever may in the end hear words like those which watchers heard spoken in the doomed temple on the night before it fell into the hands of Titus. “There was, as it were, the rushing of wings, and voices were heard saying, Let us depart.”

There is not only defilement of the flesh, but of the spirit. It is not enough to avoid the gross sins of the outward life. Those of the inner temple and disposition are equally abhorrent to the holiness of God. We must come out and be separate from the latter as well as the former, or we shall never realize what God means when He promises to receive us, and to be a Father to us.

The word *cleanse* is very decisive in the Greek. It calls for sudden, decisive action; and if you answer, that sin is too closely interwoven with your nature to be thus summarily disposed of, remember that God demands our will only. Directly we are perfectly willing and eager, He steps in and does all the rest. At unknown depths the Spirit of God is at work within us; let us work out what He works in, that we may be welcomed to God’s heart.

2 Corinthians 8:7

“Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.”

THE grace of liberality is as much a gift of God as faith, or utterance, or knowledge or love. This is implied in our text, and distinctly stated in the first verse, where the apostle says that he desires to make known the grace of God, which had been given to the churches of Macedonia, so that they were able in their deep poverty to abound in riches of liberality. In the ninth verse we learn that this grace first dwelt in our blessed Lord, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. If yours is a grudging, niggard nature, be sure to appropriate the royal nature of the Lord Jesus, that it may fill and possess you.

Probably there is no greater test of our true religion than our behaviour in giving. How few, comparatively, give in proportion to their income! How few give systematically! How few have learned the joy and luxury of giving, so that they abound therein! This arises partly because they do not realize that they are stewards of God's property, and that He expects them to devote all they own to Him, keeping back only a necessary percentage for themselves and their families, as a steward might who was farming an estate for his absent master. And partly it arises from mistrust of God, and the fear that some day there may be a sudden falling off of supplies. Oh that each reader would consider that all is God's, and begin by always giving a certain proportion of every pound, so as to be sure of not robbing God of His own. Pray day and night that you may abound in this grace also; and then, in faith that God is answering your prayer, begin to do violence to your churlish, niggard nature. What though it protest—Give.

2 Corinthians 9:10

“Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;”

IN every harvest there is a twofold object. First, the supply of seed for the next autumn’s sowing, and then of food for those that sow or reap; so in the spiritual sphere God will not fail either sowers or reapers.

All sowers must eat: However much wheat has passed through the sower’s hands, he is not fed thereby. At night he returns hungry to his home. So we, who are engaged in the work of God, cannot live on what we do for the world around. After the most fruitful day of service, we need to take our Bibles and feed our famished souls by meditation and prayer. We must not mistake the glow and exhilaration of the sanctuary for nourishment. They are rather a stimulant. Therefore we may expect God to increase the fruits of our righteousness. Shall Boaz cause handfuls on purpose to fall for Ruth, and shall not God supply our need? Will the Father not provide bread to those who are engaged in tilling His fields?

All eaters should sow: It would never do for the farmer to live on all the produce of his fields. He must sow a certain proportion of his grain. And nothing is more foreign to the genius of true religion than to be always nursing and ministering to oneself; eating the fine wheat of the Gospel, but not sowing it in other hearts; consuming the consolations of the Divine Spirit, but not endeavouring to pass them on to others. Oh ye who have eaten bountifully, sow bountifully; else ye shall suffer the results of spiritual repletion and indigestion. And note this precious assurance, that God will supply seed for daily and weekly sowing for the congregation and the class; and that He will multiply it when sown.

2 Corinthians 10:5

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

THE apostle is planning a campaign; his words glow with the fire of military enthusiasm: but, as one has eloquently said, the weapons of his warfare are not carnal; the standard under which he fights is a more sacred sign than that of Caesar; the territory he invades is more difficult of conquest than any which kept the conquerors of the world at bay. He sees rising before him the lofty fortresses of hostile error; they must be reduced or razed. Every mountain fastness to which the enemy can retreat must be scaled and destroyed; and every thought of the soul, which is hostile to the authority of the Divine Truth, must become a prisoner in the camp of Christ.

Be sure to distinguish between the proper use of the intellect by the man who recognizes its necessary limitations and uses it in the humble and reverent inquiry after truth, and that undue exaltation of the intellect, which sets itself on high as the ultimate judge of truth, or which roams wildly, unheeding the Divine control. There are vain thoughts, sensual thoughts, cynical and self-reliant thoughts, sceptical thoughts, proud thoughts, wandering and wayward thoughts; but the apostle says that, however strongly they fortify themselves against Christ, they should and must be brought into captivity. Paul once thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus, but became His humble disciple.

The intellect has its province, but faith has hers; and while the intellect tends to exalt man, faith humbles him and leads him captive in the chains of love. We must come with absolute obedience to Christ, that every veil may be torn away, and whatever blurs the clear surface of the mirroring intellect may be removed.

2 Corinthians 11:20

“For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.”

THIS enumeration was made before the imprisonment at Caesarea and the voyage to Rome. How little do we know of Paul’s life, after all! Every victory was hardly fought for and dearly won.

These sufferings attest the truth of Christianity. Whenever a doubt crosses your mind with respect to the Resurrection, or any other Gospel fact, say to yourself, Paul knew everything that could be said against it. He was in the secrets of the Sanhedrim; and if he believed it, we certainly may. And he had nothing to gain by his witness. It was to his great loss, and the shattering of his position in Israel, that he became a Christian.

These sufferings approve the genuineness of Paul’s character: This age is athirst for biography; it loves to read the story of its great men; but sometimes we ask whether they are just as real and good and pure as we have been led to hope. There is one life at least about which no such inquiry can be raised. The severest tests may be applied to this diamond, but it shines only the brighter—a very *Koh-i-noor*, “A mountain of light.”

These sufferings approve the power of the Holy Spirit: Such love had He inspired toward the Blessed Lord in the heart of the apostle, that he counted the loss of all things gain, and the uncounted sorrows of his lot as light and but for a moment, if only he might win Christ, and know Him, and be found in Him. You cannot explain a life like this apart from the mighty power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. What a puzzle the Christian presents to the world! I remember how a poor child of fashion and sin kept asking me once, “What do you Christians get?” It was quite impossible to explain.

2 Corinthians 12:10

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

WE need not discuss the nature of Paul’s thorn in the flesh. It is enough that he calls it “a stake,” as though he had been impaled. It must have, therefore, been very painful. It must also have been physical, because he could not have prayed thrice for the removal of a moral taint, and been refused. It came from Satan, permitted by God, as in the case of Job, to buffet his servant. It is not unlikely that he suffered from weak eyes, or some distressing form of ophthalmia; hence the eagerness of the Galatian converts to give him their eyes (see Gal 4:15).

God does not take away our thorns, but He communicates sufficient grace. He always answers prayer, though not as we expect. Let the music of these tender words soar unto thee, poor sufferer! “My grace is sufficient even for thee.” Sufficient when friends forsake, and foes pursue; sufficient to make thee strong against an infuriated crowd and a tyrannical judge; sufficient for excessive physical exertion and spiritual conflict; sufficient to enable thee to do as much work, and even more, than if health and vigour were not impaired, because the very weakness of our nature is the chosen condition under which God will manifest the strength of His.

Do not sit down before that mistaken marriage, that uncongenial business, that physical weakness, as though thy life must be a failure; but take in large reinforcements of that Divine grace which is given to the weak and to those who have no might. It is clear that Paul had reached such a condition, that it was a matter of deep congratulation to him to be deficient in much that men hold dear, and to have what most men dread. He rejoiced in all that diminished creature-might and strengthened his hold on God.

2 Corinthians 13:14

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

HOW often these words are uttered without any real appreciation of their depth of meaning! The word *communion* signifies having in common. It is used of our fellowship with one another (1 Corinthians 10:16) and with God (1 John 1:3). The bond of such fellowship is always through the Holy Spirit. As the ocean unites all lands, and is the medium through which they are able to exchange commodities, so does the blessed Spirit unite the Persons of the Blessed Trinity to each other, and us to them, and secures that oneness for which our Saviour prayed.

How wonderful it is to have the privilege of this Divine fellowship! That we need never be alone again; that we can at any moment turn to Him for advice and direction; that we may draw on His resources for the supply of every need; that it is impossible to exhaust or even tax His willingness to counsel and succour; that there is no kind of service or suffering into which He is not prepared to enter with us! Surely, if we would but give ourselves time to realize this marvellous fact, there would be no room for the despondency which at times threatens to deprive us of heart and hope.

Of course, we must be very careful of the tender sensibilities and holy disposition of our divine Confederate. We cannot ruthlessly grieve Him by our harshness or impurity at one moment, and turn to Him for His succour and direction at the next. Such divine union as lies within our reach certainly demands on our part watchfulness, a tender conscience, a yielded and pliant will, a heart which has no other love, no affection nor idol inconsistent with the Spirit's fellowship.

Galatians 1:15-16

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:”

IF you have truly believed in the Son of God, it is certain that He, by the Spirit, has taken up His abode in your heart. But perhaps He is hidden in the deeps of your nature, as the young Joash in the heart of the Temple. He is, therefore, unable to exert that influence on your inner thought and outward life that He should. Is it not befitting that you should ask the Father to reveal His Son *in* you? He has been revealed *to* you as the Divine Substitute, but not *in* you as the source and spring of holiness.

Beneath the body with its physical existence, and the mind with the play of intellect, lies the spirit of man, like the most holy place in the Temple of old. That is the shrine in which the Shekinah of Christ’s presence shines, and in which we can hold fellowship with Him face to face. Alas, that so heavy a veil of unbelief, of absorption in the world around us, of inattention, hangs between Him and us! Would that the strong hands which rent the veil in twain when our Saviour died would rend in twain all that deprives us of this inspiring and most helpful vision of the Son, so that we might anticipate the eternal years!

But such revelations are only given that we may better help others. Not for selfish enjoyment, but for ministering help. Hence the apostle says, “that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.” Be pleased, O Father, to give us that revelation, that we may speak as those who have seen the great sight, and need no further conference with flesh and blood! Then, like the apostles of old, we shall go forth among men, saying, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Galatians 2:20

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

CLEARLY Paul intends us to understand that the life of which he was the centre had been nailed to the Saviour’s cross, and that Christ’s life had been substituted for it. Some have spoken of this real life of Christ in the soul as being mystical and untrue; but there can be no kind of doubt that it is the constant affirmation of the New Testament.

Death, the gate of life: It is obviously so in nature. Once each year nature lies down in its grave, sleeps in unbroken repose, and steps forth again with the glory of a freshly-renewed beauty. Often the over clouding of one faculty has been the signal of the quickening of all the rest. The blind Milton becomes the author of the “Paradise Lost.” Death of a twin-soul will often give to the survivor a new impulse toward a spiritual and transfigured affection. We cannot be possessed by the self-life and the Christ-life at the same moment. And wherever, by God’s grace, we erect the cross and assign our own life to its nails, the Spirit of Christ will breathe life and power.

In the flesh, but not after the flesh: We live our life in the flesh, as aforetime, doing the duties of our ordinary existence with careful precision; but we are no longer controlled by the selfish principle which too long dominated us. The attraction of earth is overborne by the mighty drawing of the eternal and unseen. The rush of the whirlpool is unable to prevail over the throb of the steam-propeller within.

Not I: Yet loved and ransomed by the Son of God, each of us is distinct to His loving eye. He does not bulk us all together as a mass, but singles each out for the gift of Himself, His prayers, His blood, His ceaseless thought.

Galatians 3:14

“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

“THE promise of the Spirit” is the invariable term for the special Pentecostal gift; and this is to be equally received by faith as the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. To me this text once came as a perfect revelation. It was the clue to unravel perplexity, the point around which truth held long in solution suddenly crystallized. Before this verse spoke to my heart it had been my constant endeavour to feel the Spirit’s presence as the sign of my having received; but now it became clear that one might receive by simple faith God’s very richest communications, even though the emotion tarried long.

The stages have been thus specified:

There is such a blessing: Yes; there can be no doubt of this; for it pleased the Father that the fullness of the Holy Spirit should dwell in Jesus, that He might communicate Him to each member of His Church.

It is for me: At Pentecost Peter said, This promise is for as many as the Lord our God shall call.

I have not received: It is very important to realize what your standing is. Paul’s first inquiry of the Ephesians was to ascertain this.

I would give anything if it might be mine: Because of the life, and love, and power it would bring into your life, and the immense increase of power over others, there is no sacrifice you should be unwilling to make.

I do now in humble faith receive: There may be no coronet of flame, nor rush of wind, nor flash of joy; but if we have put ourselves in the right attitude toward God, and opened our hearts to receive—He who taught us to hunger and thirst must have bestowed.

Galatians 4:19

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,”

CHRI**S**T is in us, if we truly believe in Him, as the sap in the vine, the air in the lung, the steam in the engine; but He may not be formed in us.

Is it not possible that the indefinable sensation of joy and pain, of yearning and unfulfilled desire, are all attributable to this deep-seated process? Christ is being formed within our hearts, dispossessing the old evil self-life, and taking its place.

“O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,
And all things else recede;
My heart be daily nearer Thee,
From sin be daily freed.

“Make this poor self grow less and less,
Be Thou my life and aim;
Oh, make me daily through Thy grace
More meet to bear Thy name.”

The mention of *travail* in this connection suggests that this informing of Christ does not take place apart from suffering. And probably it is at times when we are in a furnace of pain that the Christ in us grows most quickly. “When my pain became unbearable,” says one, “I became conscious that there is a part of our being which no physical pain, and no mental anguish, can disturb. And there came to me such a sense of God—so enfolding, so assuring, so satisfying—that I could as well doubt the shining of the sun.” The Comforter had come—Christ was being formed within.

In the egg, when first laid, there is a tiny point of life amid the thick, viscous fluid; but this gradually increases, while the other diminishes, and at last there is hardly a trace of this left, and the chick is formed, the egg-shell is broken, and the tiny feathered thing steps forth. The chick is formed in the shell.

Galatians 5:17

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

ONE notable rendering of this verse which throws a flood of light on the entire passage is, “Ye *may* not do the things that ye would.” It is always possible to go back and to fall under the tyrannous power of the evil self-principle, the flesh, either in its more debased or refined form; but as long as we are led by the Spirit, live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, He energizes against the flesh, keeping it in the place of death, and allowing the life of Christ to work freely.

In Christian ethics there must be, first, a definite willingness to surrender ourselves to His death. Secondly, there must be a perpetual yielding to the indwelling grace and power of the Holy Spirit. He will deal with the self-life in the deep abysses of your nature. When the antiseptic influence of carbolic acid is in the atmosphere it counteracts the microbes of disease, so that they cannot do as otherwise they would in infecting healthy bodies with disease. An eminent surgeon told me the other day that he was accustomed to boil his operating instruments in antiseptic mixture, that they might not carry microbes to the open wounds. Oh that those of us who are used as instruments by God would take heed!

When the baleful effect of the self-life is arrested, the fruits of the Spirit appear naturally and easily. Note the distinction between work, in which there is effort, and fruit, which swells so imperceptibly and silently on the branch—pressed out from within. Each of these fruits is a variation of the first, which is love. Joy is love on wings; peace, with the wings folded; longsuffering, love in the sick-room; goodness, in business; meekness, in society; self-control, in the regimen of habit for the sake of others.

Galatians 6:17

“From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

AS a slave was branded with the initials of his owner, so was Paul. It was his pride to count himself the slave of Jesus, and to regard the scars which had eaten into his flesh as the brand marks of his Master. Why should men try to deflect him from his course, when he was so absolutely implicated in the service of the one great Master, Christ?

The Service of Jesus: It is founded in His blood, by which He purchased us to be His own; but it must be accepted by the glad consent of the will. We must awake each morning as His property, take His commands for the day, and lie down at night, only satisfied when He has said, Well done! We must own to ourselves that we have no personal rights, no locked rooms, no kind of reserve.

The Brand of Jesus: The dislike which our religion engenders; the losses to which principle compels; the averted look, the distant manner on the part of those who could not make enough of us when we lived the life of the world—these are as much His brand, the brand of His Cross, as the weals of recent scourgings on the apostle’s flesh.

The Peace of Jesus: “Let no man trouble me.” My heart has cast her anchor; my soul her foundation; my life her aim. If He is satisfied, I am content, though the world is in arms. If He is with me, I have good company, though all forsake. The Master said, “Trouble her not.”

“Lord, as Thy temple’s portals close
Behind the outward-parting throng,
So shut my spirit in repose;
So bind it here, Thy flock among:
The fickle wanderer else will stray
Back to the world’s wide-parted way.”
- W E Gladstone.

Ephesians 1:13

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

POSSESSED: The saints have been purchased at great cost by the precious blood of the Son of God. Not only their spirits, but their bodies, have been bought with an infinite expenditure. Is it not a wonderful thought that God should have thought it worth His while to expend so much on us! But, since He has done it, we cannot suppose that He will not make all He can of us! He will bring His estate under cultivation; there will be no corner of it that will not yield Him produce.

To be redeemed: Our bodies are owned by God, but they are not yet entirely redeemed. And if we should die before the Lord's advent, they will return to their mother earth, possessed but not redeemed. Hence the apostle says that we are waiting for our adoption—to wit, the redemption of our body (Romans 8:23). We are under the sentence of corruption for Adam's sin; but we are to be redeemed.

Sealed: In Ezekiel's day a mark was set on the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for sin (Ezekiel 9:4); and in the Apocalypse we read of the sealing of God's servants (Revelation 7:2-3). For sealing there are needed the softened wax; the imprint of the beloved face; the steady pressure. Would that the Spirit might impress the face of our dear Lord on our softened hearts, that they may keep it forevermore!

This sealing is an earnest of our inheritance. The eternal future is all unknown, yet we may guess at it, because the work of the Spirit within us is the first-fruits—the grapes of Eshcol, showing what the vintage will be; the earnest penny, which is the pledge as well as part of the entire payment; the first streak of the coming day.

Ephesians 2:10

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

THE Greek word might be literally rendered *His poem*. As the metre varies in the poems of a laureate, so does the course of one life differ from another; but God has a thought, a plan, a purpose for each. This lyric, that heroic, another dramatic.

Created for good works: How carefully the apostle defines the true position of works in the divine life. In the foregoing verses he insists that we are not saved by our works, that none should boast; but, as though to meet the objection that his system was inconsistent with holy living, he affirms that the whole intention of God was that we should manifest our new life in Christ by the holy life in which it fruits. We were created in Him unto good works. Whatever good works may be demanded of you, dare to believe that you were created in Christ Jesus to do them. There is a perfect adjustment between the two.

The good works prepared: Our new creation in Christ Jesus and the preparation of our lifework are due to the same mind. God who made us has prepared our path for us. It may lie up hill or down dale; may be lined with grassy sward or be full of jagged stones; may be short with the years of childhood or long with those of old age; may consist in lying on a couch to suffer or in strenuous activity—but every yard has been prepared.

Our daily walk: We have not to cut or make our path but simply to follow it, one step at a time. And when the heart or flesh fails, when the way seems too difficult, or the door too strait—we must look always unto Jesus, who has gone along the same track, asking that His righteousness may go before us, and set us in the way of His steps (Psalm 85:13).

Ephesians 3:9

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:”

THIS chapter is parallel with Colossians 2. To the stewardship of the apostle Paul two mysteries were entrusted, with the intention that he should unravel and explain them to our race.

The mystery: A mystery is a hidden secret. The word does not imply that there is no solution, but that the solution has not yet been communicated. God has many secrets, which unfold as the ages are ripe for them, but not before. This secret, which was hid in the Divine heart from all ages, was that the Gentiles are on an equality with the Jews in the Church. Under the old covenant they were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; but under the new they are fellow heirs, fellow-members, and fellow-partakers of the blessings of the Gospel.

The stewardship of the mystery: The apostle felt that whatever had been communicated to him was not for himself alone, but for all his fellow disciples. Hence he was ever accounting himself a steward of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1). This is the clue, also, to his assertion that he was a debtor to all men for Christ's sake. What was given him was on deposit for others. See to it that you count nothing you possess or know as your own; look on all as a sacred trust.

The exercise of His stewardship: “To preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men know.” It is not enough to proclaim, as a herald might; we must stay with the dull of wit and slow of thought, elaborating, explaining, and insisting, till we have made them see what a Saviour Jesus is, and how rich the soul may be that uses His unsearchable wealth.

Ephesians 4:9

“Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?”

WE fill a cup or bucket from the bottom upward. And Jesus obeyed a universal law when, in His desire to fill all things, He first descended into the place of a servant, the death of the cross, the lowly bed of a borrowed grave, and thence into the abyss of Hades. “He descended into hell,” by which we mean, of course, Hades, the place of disembodied spirits. If we would sit with Him in the heavenlies, we too must be subordinated to the same law. We must also descend.

There is the low place of contrition for sin: We must go thither; lying in the dust before God; placing the leper’s covering on our lips; smiting on our breasts. Be willing that the Spirit of God should reveal all the selfishness, the subtlety, the impurity, of your heart. Let your cry ever be that God would not spare your eyes and heart from the pain of knowing what you are in His sight. From this low place you shall ascend to the bosom of God. “Blessed are they that mourn.”

There is the low place of humility: Be willing to take the lowest place with no mock modesty, but because you have learned to esteem others better than yourself. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Be willing to perform lowly deeds of service to your brethren and sisters in Christ. Reckon that you have not attained. Ascribe all that is good in you to the grace of God. God giveth peace to the humble; He raiseth up the poor out of the dust.

There is the low place of death: The more we are delivered to the death of Jesus the more will His life be manifested in our mortal flesh. Life through death, ascent after descent, the glory after the cross of shame. “If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

Ephesians 5:1

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;”

CHILDREN mostly resemble their father. There is often an unmistakable family likeness, which compels the most casual observer to exclaim, “The very image of his father.” Oh that in each of us there might be that which would make men think of God!

Put away your former manner of life (Ephesians 4:22): The old man stands for the collection of habits, sayings, and doings which characterized our unregenerate days. The apostle says that they are to be put away suddenly, instantly. Evidently this is possible, or such a command would not be issued. Men speak of a gradual reformation, and advise the piecemeal discontinuance of evil. God, on the contrary, bids us treat the evil past as a company of soldiers would bandits and outlaws. There is the greater reason for this, as the old man waxeth corrupt. Even Martha could not bear the opening of her brother’s vault.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind (Ephesians 4:23): We are reminded of Romans 12:2. The mind needs to be brought into daily, hourly contact with God’s thoughts, as contained in Scripture, that it may be renewed; else our constant association with the men and women of the world, their maxims and practices, will inevitably and sorrowfully deteriorate it. The only source of daily renewal is fellowship with God.

Put on the new man: Of this the apostle affirms that it is according to God, and has been created. Our Lord created this beautiful dress when He rose from the dead. The day of resurrection was one of creation. All the habits and dispositions of a holy, godlike life have been prepared for us in Him, and await our appropriation; and as they are according to God, so soon as we put them on we shall become imitators of God as dear children.

Ephesians 6:18

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”

THE dying Monod regretted he had not prayed more. We should pray at all seasons. Prayer is never out of place. There is no conceivable circumstance in life where it would be inappropriate to pray. At the wedding or the funeral; as we engage in work or finish it; whether the wind blow from the cold north or the balmy south—it is wise and right to pray. “Prayer and provender,” the old proverb says, “hinder no man.”

We should pray in the Spirit. Reversing the order of the words, but bringing in their true meaning, we might say, “Let the Spirit pray in the soul.” It is well in prayer to wait until the scum of our own choice and desire has passed off, that the yearnings of the Holy Spirit may arise and manifest themselves. We need to be in the Spirit, not only on the Lord’s Day, but always, that He may be mightily in us, teaching us the will of God.

We should pray unselfishly. “For all saints,” said the apostle, “and for me.”

We should watch. Do not give runaway knocks. Stand at God’s door till it opens. Be on the alert. Wait on the watch-tower. Many of God’s ships pass in the night, and many of His gifts arrive at the wharf when those to whom they were consigned are asleep or gone.

We should persevere. God keeps us waiting that He may test and humble us, and know what is in our heart. Delays are His winnowing fan, discriminating between the chaff and the wheat. What we asked so vehemently we did not ask wisely. When we pray according to His heart, He graciously sustains us. Persevere; you do not know how near you are to the blessing you have sought for years.

Philippians 1:29

“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;”

THE child of God is often called to suffer, because nothing will convince on-lookers of the reality and power of true religion as suffering will do, when it is borne with Christian resignation and fortitude. And how great the compensations are!

He can keep in such perfect peace. He can make lonely times, when no one is near the couch, to be so full of sweet fellowship and communion. He can put such strong, soft hands under the tired limbs, resting them. He can give refreshment to the spirit when the body is deprived of sleep.

Every one cannot be trusted with suffering. All could not stand the fiery ordeal. They would speak rashly and complainingly. So the Master has to select with careful scrutiny the branches which can stand the knife; the jewels which can bear the wheel. It is given to some to preach, to others to work, but to others to suffer. Accept it as a gift from His hand. Look up and take each throb of pain, each hour of agony, as His gift. Dare to thank Him for it. Look inside the envelope of pain for the message it enfolds. It is a rough packing-case, but there is treasure in it.

And can you not minister to other sufferers? Can you not dictate letters of comfort, or pray for them, or devise little alleviations and surprises for those who have not what you have? Suffering is on Christ's behalf; it must, then, be intended as part of that great ministry for the world in which He, with His saints, is engaged. There is a sense in which all suffering, borne in the spirit of Calvary, helps men, not in the way of atonement or propitiation, of course, but by the exhibition of the power of God's grace in the sufferer.

Philippians 2:26

“For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.”

SOME have identified Epaphroditus here with Epaphras in the Epistle to the Colossians. Here he is represented as sorrowful, even to agony, because his friends had heard of his illness, and he would have wished that no one should be burdened on his account. But in the other epistle he is represented as always striving for the saints in prayer.

It is very beautiful to discover his unwillingness to have his sickness published. When we are in trouble it is best not to speak much of it, save to God. “Only inexperienced sufferers are voluble; those familiar with the secrets of anguish are silent.” Let us anoint the head, and wash the face, that we may not appear unto men to fast, but to the Father who is in secret; and our Father who seeth in secret will Himself reward openly. The Comforter will draw near, will whisper His own consolations, and amid much sorrow we shall be calm and strong.

But with Epaphras there was probably another thought. He knew that the Philippians were bearing a very heavy load of sorrow. It was a hard and difficult fight for them, as for him. And with much generosity he was most unwilling that the news of his illness should add a feather-weight to their grief.

This eagerness to conceal pain, lest it should add sorrow to those who already have almost as much as they can bear, is very characteristic of noble souls. And we may quote here Robert Hall’s words, on recovering from a keen paroxysm of anguish: “I have not complained, have I, sir? No, and I will not complain.” How much of God’s strength and comfort we miss in our incessant endeavour to secure the support which notoriety for pain and privation may bring from our fellows!

Philippians 3:21

“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

WHAT cannot He do? From the dust of mother Earth He was able to build up man in the image of God, in the first creation; and from the dust to which death shall again reduce us He will build up again our bodies in the likeness of His resurrection body. The formless clay shall be obliged to yield to His voice, His touch; and if He can do this, what can He not do?

There may be sins within your heart that have long resisted control. Do with them as you will, they still defy you. So long have they been entrenched within the citadel of your soul that, like the Jebusites in the days of David, they laugh you to scorn. But if you will hand over the conflict to Jesus, He will subdue them; He will bring them under His strong, subjecting hand. Be of good cheer. What you cannot do, He can. Whenever the old temptation arises, directly you are aware of it, lift your heart instantly to Jesus, and reckon on Him to cope with it in your behalf. The Lord will fight for you, whilst you shall hold your peace.

So with other difficulties in your life. The raising of a noble nature and character within you; the calling of souls, by your voice, from the death of sin to a life of righteousness; the bringing forth of a fair and well-ordered work from one which seems mere chaos and ruin—all such things are within the scope of this wonderful text. They must be easy to Him who from the dust of death can raise a body ethereal enough to be the home and vehicle of the new celestial life, which shall unfold into perfect beauty in His presence. Repeat the words until the rhythm charms away your doubts, “He is able to subject all things unto Himself.”

Philippians 4:6

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

BLACK care! It has always been among men, and perhaps more so today than ever, when the pressure of life is heavier and the constraint of circumstances more imperious. Are there not hours in which the clouds gather densely over the Ark of God, and the stoutest hearts tremble? Is it easy for even the Christian soul to look on a family of little ones, sleeping soundly, and know that they will certainly awake hungry for food, of which the cupboard is bare, and have no tinge of anxiety?

It is at such times that the apostle bids us pray. “Make your requests known unto God.” We have not to agonize before Him, as though, like the priests of Baal, who cried and cut themselves, we shall move Him by our anguish. Calmly, quietly, simply, make your requests known. Take your burden into His presence and lay it down there. He is your Father. He who made the body, and gave it you, will see to the supply of its needs. Your health, your children, the condition of His Church, are dear to Him who notices a falling sparrow, and by whom the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

We shall not escape life’s discipline. We may expect to abound here, and to be abased there. But amid all, Peace, God’s white winged sentinel-angel, shall come down to keep the heart with its affections, the mind with its thoughts. Worry, unrest, anxiety, will stand without, as the noise of the street breaks in vain on the double windows of the city counting house, whilst the child of God learns humbly and patiently the lesson of his Father’s love. Careful for nothing; prayerful and thankful in everything.

Colossians 1:27

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”

THE only son of a widow runs off to sea when quite a lad. She must needs work for her living, and takes lodgers in her little home. After years have passed, a bronzed and bearded sailor comes to her door for accommodation, which she gladly affords at an agreed price. She has no idea who has come to dwell beneath her roof—it is a secret, a mystery.

By and by, one day as they are sitting at the midday meal, a remark, a gesture, startles her; she looks hard into the stranger’s face, recognizes him, and, with a cry, rushes into his arms and weeps out on his bosom her joy: “My son, my son, what deceived my old eyes, that I didn’t know thee!” That is the glory of the mystery, which breaks in smiles and kisses.

Then he says, “Mother, how hard life has gone with you; your hands are hard with toil. But see, I have plenty of money, and you shall go shares in all. I will take a nice little home, and you shall live there, to keep it as long as you live, and never have to do a stroke of hard toil.” That is the riches of the glory of the mystery.

So at your conversion Jesus came into your heart to abide. Too long He has been unrecognized; but of late you have been made aware of the nature and worth of your Heavenly Friend. The mystery has broken in light. Henceforth, realize that all His riches are yours, to be shared and enjoyed; that all your needs may be fully met, even to the abundance of His unsearchable riches; and that there may be an end forever to all the weary sense of inability and incompetence to meet the inevitable demands of daily living. Christ is in you; let His life within reach out its hands to the life of glory above.

Colossians 2:6

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:”

WHEN we were first brought to Jesus, we received Him into our hearts by faith. Throwing open the door, we bade Him be welcome; and He came in never to depart again. Though He was viewless as the wind, and silent as light, He came. And there was a perfume as of myrrh, aloes and cassia; like that which fills the ivory palaces of eternity.

Now the apostle says that all our after Christian life is to be lived on the same principle. The holy life is not an attainment, but an attitude. Holiness is not an acquirement of which we may make a boast, but an openness of soul toward the Lord Jesus, as of a window unshuttered and uncurtained to the light. The believer is never independent of Jesus; but at every moment he is receiving out of His fullness, and grace upon grace. He does not receive his qualities and attributes as things apart from the Lord Jesus; but receiving Him, he obtains them. The holy man is he who has learned the art of receiving Jesus; the holier, who has a greater capacity, through humility and faith; the holiest, he who can receive most of the life of the Son of God.

Our daily life is here compared to a walk. We cannot choose it. There is no alternative but to take what God has marked out for you; though you may choose your atmosphere, or, to use a modern word, your environment. Every step may be taken in Christ; rooted in Him as a tree in rich soil; builded up as a house on a rock; inhaling His very breath as the life of life. And whatever the need may be which the exigencies of the path suggest, there is always an abundant supply in the Lord Jesus, in whom all treasures are hid. He teaches us that we may know; He indwells that we may be.

Colossians 3:15

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

THE peace of God is the peace of the Divine nature—the very tranquillity which prevails in the heart of the God of Peace. It was of this that Jesus spoke when He said, “My peace I give unto you”; for His own being was filled and blessed with it during His earthly career. In each of us may be a sea of glass, reflecting on its pellucid and tranquil bosom the untroubled calm and rest, which are unspeakable because eternal and Divine. “The Lord of peace Himself give you peace always.”

There are three things against which we must ever be on our guard, lest they rob us of our peace. First, unconfessed sin; second, worry; third, the permission of an unrebuked selfish principle. As on the Sabbath the good Nehemiah carefully excluded the Tyrian fishwives from Jerusalem, lest they should mar its spirit of rest by their cries and traffic, so we must preserve an unbroken Sabbath-keeping within. “There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”

The apostle says, *Let it rule*. The Greek word means *arbitrate*. Whenever there is a doubtful issue to be decided, and by one course your peace may be disturbed, whilst by another it may be maintained, choose those things that make for peace, whether for yourselves or others. Let God’s peace act as umpire.

At the same time, this does not mean peace at any price. When the cause of truth is assailed, or the rights of others invaded, we must stand up boldly and strongly for Righteousness. Then the effect of Righteousness will be Peace. Melchizedek was first King of Righteousness, and after that King of Peace.

Colossians 4:12-13

“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.”

THIS is a very beautiful epitaph on a good man's life. He had come from Colosse with tidings for the apostle; but amid all the crowding interests of his visit to Rome his heart was with his friends, and he sought to help them, as we may all help dear ones far away.

He strove for them in prayer. It was no runaway knock that he gave; no light breathing of desire; no formal mention of their names: but it seemed as though he were a wrestler, whose muscles stood out like whipcord as he agonized for the prize. He laboured. We shall never know, till we stand in the clear light of heaven, how much has been wrought in the world by prayer. Here, at least, there is mention of a man's labours. Probably the work on the results of which we are wont to pride ourselves is due less to us than we suppose, and more to unrecognized fellow labourers.

There is a pretty legend which tells of the dream of a great preacher who was marvellously used of God, and inclined to magnify himself and his gifts; but who was instructed by an angel of God that his success was entirely attributable to a poor widow, who sat regularly in the free seats at the foot of his pulpit, and who never ceased to pray for him. May the writer ask of any who receive benefit from these words to labour and strive for him in prayer to God.

Let us be careful to mingle much intercession with all our prayers, especially on the behalf of missionaries and lonely workers in foreign lands, that they may realize that we are actually working and labouring beside them, though many thousands of miles intervene.

INFORMATION ON THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS USED IN THIS DEVOTIONAL

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Writer: *Luke, the Beloved Physician* Key Verse: *Acts 1:8*

Key Word: *Holy Spirit*

Outline:

1. Power for Witnessing (ch. 1-2)
2. Propagation and Persecution in Jerusalem (ch. 3-7)
3. Propagation and Persecution in Judea and Samaria (ch. 8-12)
4. Paul's Missionary Journeys to the Gentile World (ch. 13-28)

ROMANS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle* Key Verses: *Romans 1:16,17*

Key Word: *Righteousness*

Outline:

1. Righteousness Needed (ch. 1-3)
2. Righteousness Imputed (ch. 4-5)
3. Righteousness Imparted (ch. 6-8)
4. Righteousness Vindicated (ch. 9-11)
5. Righteousness Practiced (ch. 12-16)

1 CORINTHIANS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle* Key Verse: *1 Corinthians 3:16-17*

Outline:

1. Divisions (ch. 1-4)
2. Disorders (ch. 5-6)
3. Difficulties (ch. 7-10)
4. Disrespect (ch. 11-14)
5. Deviation (ch. 15-16)

2 CORINTHIANS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle* Key Verse: *2 Corinthians 1:1*

Outline:

1. The Apostle's Comfort (ch. 1-2)
2. The Apostle's Ministry (ch. 3-5)
3. The Apostle's Exhortations (ch. 6-7)
4. The Apostle's Teaching on Giving (ch. 8-9)
5. The Apostle's Authority (ch. 10-13)

GALATIANS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *Galatians 5:1*

Key Word: *Law*

Outline:

1. The Personal Defence (ch. 1-2)
2. The Polemical Explanation (ch. 3-4)
3. The Practical Application (ch. 5-6)

EPHESIANS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verses: *Ephesians 2:19-21*

Key Words: *Holy, Righteousness, Light*

Outline:

1. Eternal plan of God for us and all creation (ch. 1)
2. Favour of God upon undeserving sinners (ch. 2)
3. Exploration of the mystery of God (ch. 3)
4. Spiritual unity and spiritual gifts for transformed living (ch. 4)
5. Undeified living for everyone in the church and the family (5:1-6:9)
6. Standing firm and strong in spiritual conflict (6:10-24)

PHILIPPIANS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *Philippians 4:4*

Key Words: *Joy, Rejoice*

Outline:

1. Joy from Christ (ch. 1)
2. Joy in Serving Others (ch. 2)
3. Joy in Pursuing One's Goal (ch. 3)
4. Joy in Spiritual Blessings (ch. 4)

COLOSSIANS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *Colossians 1:27,28*

Outline:

1. Christ's Person and Work (ch. 1)
2. The Church's Warning and Responsibility (ch. 2)
3. The Christian's Principles and Precepts for Living (ch. 3)
4. Concern for Reaching the Lost (ch. 4)

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.