

# Our Daily Walk

*Daily Meditations and a Prayer for Each Day*

By  
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**VOLUME Three**

### **About the Author:**

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

### **About this Series:**

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

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

## THE CALL TO SERVICE

*Mark 1:17-18 "And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him."*

**A**S of old, Christ is still passing through the centres of busy, thronging life, calling men from their nets and boats, from the counting-house and the marketplace, or from the seclusion of the study, and saying, with His own inimitable and irresistible charm: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." It may be that He has already come to you, casting over you the mantle of service, as Elijah over the young ploughman whilst following his team.

*You may be startled at the suggestion*, but probably all the mighty band of men and women who have responded to His Call, were similarly startled when first the summons awoke them to action. Samuel was startled when the Divine voice rang out in the night; Gideon was startled, and replied: "Behold my family is poor ... , and I am the least in my father's house"; Jeremiah said, when the call came to him: "Ah, Lord God! Behold I cannot speak, for I am a child." Moses drew back, and said that he was unequal for the task to which God summoned him.

*Christ's Call comes specially to the young*—to Henry Martyn amid his books, to David Livingstone at his loom, to Carey at his cobbler's bench, to Mary Slessor in the Scottish factory, and to many another. Young people have a marvellous power of acquiring languages, and mastering any difficulties of country, race, or condition, and what other men and women are doing for fame, position, and wealth, surely we can do for Jesus. We are His blood-bought slaves, and surely He has the right to say to each of us, Come, Go, Do this, Follow Me!

*Listen to the appeal of Christ* on behalf of the millions of souls for whom He died, and to some of whom He wants to send you. Yield yourself to Him, and let Him infuse into you His mighty passion for their salvation. Do not look at your circumstances, or count your five loaves and two small fishes, wondering if they will suffice; or at the waves, questioning if they will bear you up. Keep your eyes fixed on Him, and your ears open to His voice, and when once you are sure of His leading, go forward in His Name. Jordan will divide before you, and the walls of Jericho will fall flat.

**PRAYER**—*Lord, here am I, send me wheresoever thou wilt. Only make me to know Thy will beyond possibility of mistake, and work through me to accomplish all Thy good pleasure. AMEN.*

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## THE JOY OF SERVICE

*John 15:11 "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."*

*Isaiah 65:14 "Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."*

**O**N the eve of Gethsemane and the night before His crucifixion "these things" were said by our Lord: how could He have even a thought of Joy? Note how confidently He speaks of it—abiding, remaining, persistent joy! Like a hot geyser-spring, rising from unknown depths on an ice-bound world. How could He think of joy at such a moment? One answer alone seems possible. He knew that by His supreme sacrifice He was creating a well-spring of joy for all future generations. The spring of *His* joy was perennial because of the joy He was about to create for myriads.

This joy was characteristic of His whole ministry. It seems to have been an unfailing fountain. How could it be otherwise when He was always ministering to others, when He was for ever fulfilling His Father's loving Will for men? It is in harmony with His oft-repeated "Be of good courage," whether He was about to heal pain and disease, or proclaim the forgiveness of sin. The New Testament rings with this call to rejoice, and to rejoice greatly!

*Life of Self-giving.* Our joy, like Christ's, consists in self-giving. We pass on to others the joy and love with which He fills our hearts, and in doing so, we are made infinitely happy. Let us today fix these thoughts in our mind. God is Love, and that Love cannot be self-contained.

Day by day let us abide in Him, with our heart-gate open to the incoming of His love, that He may be able to speak a word to those that are weary, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. We are not to create, but to pass on! Not to inaugurate, but to transmit! The love and grace of Christ were always expressed in acts of ministry. He was not content with speaking the word of cheer, but ministered in such a way that joy and gladness were the immediate result. We must not be well-wishers only, but well-doers, if it be only to help to lift a burden, or to guide the perplexed, or to give a caress to some lonely despairing soul. In all such acts of ministry we are giving our Saviour the opportunity of expressing Himself through us, and of fulfilling our joy.

**PRAYER**—*O Blessed Lord, give me to know the joy that is unspeakable, the love that passeth knowledge, and the peace that passeth understanding. AMEN.*

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## SERVICE FOR OTHERS

*1 Timothy 4:14-15* “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.”

*2 Timothy 1:6* “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”

**M**OST young people are fond of athletics, and the Roman and Greek youth were specially addicted to them. The Divine Spirit does not under-value any of these means for keeping our physical health vigorous. But if we pay such earnest attention to these things we ought, all the more, to give attention to godliness, which disciplines the soul for Eternal Life. We all know what it is to discover and bring into play certain muscles of the body which we had not previously used. Are we equally keen to discover the hidden properties and resources of the soul and spirit?

Timothy was gifted in various ways, but specially for public ministry; and in this Epistle and the next, the Apostle bids him stir it up, i.e. stir into *flame*. The fire may be well provided with coal, the heat and light may be present, but the poker needs to be used to let in the air. We may have gifts, but we must carefully practise the duties in which they can be used for the benefit of others. It becomes us all *to give ourselves* to the duties which lie immediately to our hands, not shirking or scamping them. We must not give part of our thought and care to our appointed tasks, but give our *whole* selves. What our hands find to do must be done with our might. Just as men build arches of brick over slight structures of wood, and when these are taken away the substantial material remains, so on the passing duties of an hour we are building up habits and character which will live for ever. *What we* do is comparatively unimportant, but *how* we do what we do is all-important. We must always be on guard, always on the alert, for we have in our hands the interests of others as well as our own (1Tim 4:16).

The grace of God can so reveal itself in a young man or girl, that he or she will become an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (1Tim 4:12).

**PRAYER**—*Prosper us, O God, we pray Thee, in all that we put our hands unto. May our hearts be filled with Thy love, our lips with gentle, helpful words, and our hands with kind, unselfish deeds. May Thy Holy Spirit in all things direct and rule our hearts. AMEN.*

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## SERVING CHRIST AND SERVING MEN

*John 6:5 "When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"*

**N**OTICE that little pronoun *We!* As our Lord stood face to face with the vast crowd of hungry people, He might have said to His disciples, "What are you going to do?" He might have bidden them devise some way of meeting their hunger and weariness. Instead of that, He identified Himself with them, saying, How shall *we* do it? Is not that His way still? He knows the needs of the world of men, but He calls us into fellowship with Himself with respect to them, saying, This is a matter not for Me alone, not for you, but for *us* together. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches."

Whilst our Lord talked about *buying* bread, "He knew what He would do." Before His eye was the entire plan of the meal, of which He would be the Host, but He spoke of buying, that He might see what they would suggest, whether they would turn to Him in simple faith, or begin to meet the need according to their own ideas. They took the latter course. It is almost always the case, that when we are face to face with some emergency, we begin to calculate our ways and means. When we are tested, we take out pencils and paper, and begin to count up our resources, as the disciples did when they said: Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not enough, that every one may take a little!

Then it was that Andrew bethought himself of the little lad, whom he had seen in the course of the day. How proud and pleased the boy would be when they told him that Jesus wanted his little store. He gladly gave it up at the call of that Voice which had thrilled him with its accent.

How can we serve Christ, and what have we to give Him? Five tiny loaves and two small fishes do not look much in themselves, but He will take the poorest and simplest things, and make wonderful use of them for His glory and the blessing of men. It is wonderful how much Jesus will do with our lives, if we will only put them into His dear hands. If you have no great gift to offer Him, you can bring the special power of doing one thing best, which every one possesses, and He will use you to arrange the people in orderly ranks, and to carry round the bread and wine of the Gospel message, offering it without money and without price.

**PRAYER**—*Take my life, and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.*  
**AMEN.**

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## GOD'S BOUNTIFUL PROVISION

*Matthew 14:20 "And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full."*

**W**HEN God is Host, there is enough for all! Probably the disciples at first doled out the supplies with great care, but as they discovered that group after group were provided for, their faith increased, and they became lavish in their distribution. Every appetite could enjoy bread and fish, and there was plenty of it. God's supplies are as great as the demand; nay, greater, for He is able to make all grace abound toward each soul of man.

But though there was prolific provision, there was wise administration, and prudent husbanding of what was left. "Gather up the fragments," said the Master (John 6:12). It is marvellous to notice in the world of nature, how careful the Creator is that what might seem to be refuse should be wrought into new texture. Even the body, when it has fulfilled its functions, returns to mother earth, so that its particles may pass into the harvests of coming years. There is no waste in God's great world. Let there be no waste in our lives!

There are other lessons to be learned from this wonderful story. *All things are to be done decently and in order.* The multitude was made to sit down in companies of fifty. There was to be no crowding or pushing; the strong must wait for the weak.

*Each meal should begin with the giving of thanks.* "Looking up to Heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave to the disciples." The holy custom of giving thanks appears to be fading away, from even Christian homes, to our great loss, for "their eyes were opened, and they knew him;" (Luke 24:30-31).

*We may expect more than the bare necessities of life at the hands of our gracious God,* who "giveth us richly all things to enjoy." He gives not bread only, but fish; luxuries, as well as necessities. How much there is in life which we enjoy, but which is not absolutely necessary—music and art, flowers and fruit, sunrise and sunset, as well as ordinary daylight. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

**PRAYER**—*Teach us, O Lord, the art of so living in fellowship with Thyself that every act may be a Psalm, every meal a sacrament, every room a sanctuary, every thought a prayer. AMEN.*

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## TRUE BENEFICENCE

*Galatians 6:10* "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

**W**E all have a mission in the world, though we may never be called to cross the sea, or to visit distant lands to preach the gospel.

Christ's command to each of us, is begun with the person next to you. Do not wait to be neighboured, but neighbour somebody who is in need. The best way to bring in the Kingdom of God is to bring the person whom you can most easily influence to the Saviour. All great work in the world has commenced, not by committees, but by the consecration, self-sacrifice, and devotion of single individuals.

The Apostle indicates three methods of helping people. *The restoration of the fallen* (Gal 6:1). How often in daily life a Christian man or woman is suddenly overtaken by some temptation, to which they yield, and which leaves a deep stain on character. Thus was David overtaken and also Peter! What an agony of remorse ensues! The Psalms are full of bitter repentance for such transgression. The sinful soul has to bear a heavy burden indeed; and too often his fellow-Christians pass him by with averted faces and frowns. No one visits him, or cares to be seen in his company, or tries to help him regain his former footing.

"Christ's law," which we are called to fulfil, is to seek out the erring one, to go after that which is lost, to restore the wanderer, to help carry his burden, considering lest we be tempted, and lapse into the same sin.

*The care of Pastors and Ministers* (Gal 6:6). If all who are being taught in Church and Sunday School would set themselves to minister to those that teach them, how many a weary servant of Christ would pluck up new courage and hope. Communicate helpfulness, sympathy, prayer, the grip of the hand, the expression of thankfulness for blessing received.

*The ministry of all men* (Gal 6:9-10). These opportunities of doing good are always recurring, and at every turn there are those who need a helping hand. "The poor," said our Lord, "ye have always with you." Let us bear a little of the burden of each, and specially do it for those who belong to the household of faith.

**PRAYER**—*Give us grace to be encouragers of others, never discouragers; always making life easier, never harder, for those who come within our influence. AMEN.*

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

*James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

**I**T is the experiences of life that reveal us to ourselves. They cannot put into us qualities that are not there, but can develop them. The whole of this wonderful chapter is filled with the diverse discipline of life. "*Divers temptations*" (James 1:2), which probably refer to the persecutions and losses of the early Christians. "*Temptations*" (James 1:12) which refer to the solicitation of evil from without and within. The *burning heat* of the fire of prosperity (James 1:11). The "*good gifts*" which are strewn around our pathway by the Father of lights—home, parents, friendship, love!

The greatest training-ground for us all is the Word of God (James 1:21-25). It is here compared to a mirror which reflects us to ourselves, but alas, too often we go our way and forget what manner of men we are. The human soul has a wonderful habit of forgetting any statements that seem to reflect on itself, and to contradict its own notions of its pride and respectability. If, however, we avoid this mistake, and set ourselves to *doing*, and not hearing only, then we shall grow into strong, brave, and beautiful souls, and shall be blessed in our *deed*.

Do not stand gazing at the imperfections which the Word of God reveals but having learnt where you come short, dare to believe that Jesus Christ is the true counterpart of your need; that He is strong where you are weak, and full where you are empty.

"Keep himself unspotted from the world." We love the dimpled innocence and purity of a sweet child. But there is something nobler—the face of man or woman who has fought and suffered in the great battle against corruption that is in the world through lust. To keep oneself unspotted from the evil of the world, though perpetually accosted and surrounded by it, is a greater thing than to live in a glass-house, where the blight and dust cannot enter. What a training for character is this daily warfare!

To visit those in affliction. We are related to the world of pain and sorrow by the troubles which are constantly overtaking those with whom we come in contact in dally life. Where the conditions of life are hard, we obtain our best perfecting in Christian character.

**PRAYER**—*Make our life deeper, stronger, richer, more Christlike, more full of the spirit of heaven, more devoted to Thy service and glory. AMEN.*

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## RICH TOWARD GOD

*Luke 12:15 "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."*

*Philippians 4:18 "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God."*

**L**ET us never forget this wonderful assertion, that life consists not in what we possess, but in what we are; not in goods, but in goodness; not in things, but qualities. "How much was he worth?" we ask when a man dies, and we expect an answer in the amount that stood to his credit, and on which his estate must pay death duties. Yet surely a man is *worth* only the love, humility, generosity, and sweet reasonableness which characterize him. Take away some people's wealth, and, as in the case of the rich man of whom our Lord speaks in His parable, you have nothing left; but take away all things from St. John or St. Paul, from St. Francis or Augustine, or Wesley, and you have an abundance left which makes them the millionaires of all time! "Poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

The rich man in the parable made three foolish mistakes. First, *he treated his wealth as though it were absolutely his own*. There is no suggestion that he had made it wrongfully. His wealth had evidently accrued as the gift of prolific harvests, and was certainly due to the goodness of the Creator, on whose co-operation the results of husbandry evidently depend. But to lift up grateful eyes in thankful acknowledgment to God seems never to have occurred to him! Are we not all too prone to magnify our own shrewdness and aptitude, and to exclude God when we make up our accounts for the year?

Second, *he thought that the best receptacle for his over-surplus was in barns*, and forgot that there were multitudes of poor and needy souls around. When we begin to accumulate more than we need for our use, or the provision for our families, we should consider, not further investments, but the pressing need of others.

Third, *he thought that goods could stay the hunger of the soul*. How often has the heart of man or woman been surfeited with goods and remained unsatisfied? Let us give, expecting nothing again, with full measure, pressed down, and running over; give, not only money, but love and tenderness and human sympathy; give as one who is always receiving from the boundless resources of God.

**PRAYER**—*Help us, O God, to set our affections on things above, not on things on earth, for nothing beneath these skies can satisfy the hearts which Thou hast made for Thyself. AMEN.*

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## LIFE'S BALANCE SHEET

*Mark 8:36 "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"*

**S**IMON Peter had been urging our Lord to spare Himself the suffering to which He had referred, but He answered that this could not be for Himself, or for any other who would follow in His footsteps. Proceeding from His own deep experience, He went on to show that in the same measure every one must deny his own choice and will and pleasure, in order that he may reach the highest life for himself and others.

It is not necessary for any man to make a cross; it is our part simply to take up that which God has laid down for us. The cross is no exceptional piece of asceticism, but it is the constant refusal to gratify our self-life; the perpetual dying to pride and self-indulgence, in order to follow Christ in His redemptive mission for the salvation of men. And it is in proportion as men live like this that they realize the deepest and truest and highest meaning of life. When we live only to save ourselves, to build warm nests, to avoid every discomfort and annoyance, to make money entirely for our own use and enjoyment, to invent schemes for our own pleasure, we become the most discontented and miserable of mankind. How many there are who have given themselves up to a life of selfishness and pleasure-seeking, only to find their capacity for joy has shrivelled, and their lives plunged into gloom and despair. They have lost their souls!

If a fire is raging, and a millionaire saves his palace from destruction, but in so doing loses his own life, does it pay? And are there not many who are building for themselves palaces of wealth and pleasure, but are losing the power of enjoyment because they are destroying all the finest sensibilities of their nature? Our Lord asks, what does it profit to gain the whole world, and forfeit one's own soul?

But not to adopt the policy of the world is certain to bring upon us dislike and hatred, before which many have been daunted; and yet to refuse Christ's policy of life, and to be ashamed of acknowledging that we are His followers, will mean ultimately our rejection. For how can our Lord use us in any great schemes of the future, if we have failed Him in the limited sphere of our human life?

**PRAYER**—*O God, we have been disappointed because the cisterns that we have hewn out for ourselves have not given the water needed to quench our thirst. Fountain of Living Water, of Thee may we drink! Bread of Life, of Thee may we eat! Light of Life, shine upon our hearts, that we may walk in Thy light. AMEN.*

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## LOVE'S CONSTRAINT

*2 Corinthians 5:14-20 "For the love of Christ constraineth us; ... Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."*

**A**N ambassador may live in a foreign country, but he does not belong to it. He is there to represent his own country, and no opportunity of helping forward her interests is allowed to pass. We have to represent Christ to the world. The word "constraineth" suggests a constant pressure, an urge, as when water is forced down a certain channel. St. Paul says: "I act as I do because I am under the spell of a mighty constraint; I can do no other; I am not master of myself. Do not wonder at what may seem to be unusual and extravagant. Attribute my eccentricity to Christ—His love actuates me, and bears me along."

What is meant by "the love of Christ?" Is it His to us, or ours to Him? It is impossible to divide them thus, for they are one. As the sunlight strikes the moon, and is reflected from her to the earth, so the love we have to Christ, or to man, is the reflection of His love to us. All love in our cold and loveless hearts is the emanation and reflection of the Love which began in Him, was mediated to us in Calvary, and is reflected from us, as sunlight from a mirror.

The love of Christ does not constrain all Christian people, because they do not understand the profound significance of the Cross; but when the soul once appreciates that, and passes through the gate of death into the life of God, then it begins to feel the constraining love of Christ. The pivot of our life must be the Risen Christ: We no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Him who rose again. We sometimes hear people described as eccentric—*out of the centre*. A man is ex-centric to the world when he is concentric with Christ. It is thus that we become a new creation. When by faith we are united to Jesus Christ in His Cross and Grave, the transition is made. We pass over into the Easter life. He has reconciled us unto Himself, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation—therefore we are *ambassadors*. We have to proclaim forgiveness to the sinful, the loosening of their chains to those who sit in prison-houses, and the near approach of salvation to all (Isa 52:7-10).

### PRAYER—

*This empty cup for Thee to fill;  
This trembling heart for Thee to still;  
This yielded life to do Thy will,  
O Lord of Love, I bring Thee. AMEN.*

## SEEKING LOST SOULS

*Luke 15:6-7 "And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."*

**O**UR Lord sought the proximity of sinners, not because there was any affinity between His character and theirs, but because He desired to bring them back from the far country into which they had wandered. The straying sheep heedlessly nibbles at the grass which lies immediately in front, and so crops its way until it has wandered a great distance from the shepherd, and the rest of the flock.

Is this a picture of your life? Have you lived only for personal gratification, drifting in thoughtlessness and unconsciousness of the dangers which threaten to destroy you? Then remember, that though you care not for yourself, your condition is stirring the deepest solicitude in the heart of Christ. Probably you will never find your way back to Him, but Christ is on your track, and He will not relinquish his quest until He has come just where you are, and has extricated you from the rocks on which you have fallen, or from the thorns in which you are entangled.

The lost coin bears the image and superscription of the sovereign, once clear-cut by the mint, but it lies unused, tarnished and perhaps defaced, amidst the dust of the corner, or the chink of the floor. Its owner sweeps, ransacks, and explores every possible hiding-place until it is found. How aptly that lost coin represents the soul of man, made in the image of God, lying amid the dust of sin. The one hope for the sinner is the anxiety in the heart of God, who leaves no stone unturned that He may win us back. There is disturbance and removal, and the house of life is upset in every part, for no other reason than that we should be recovered.

**PRAYER—**

*Halts by me that footfall:  
Is my gloom, after all,  
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?  
He, fondest, blindest, weakest,  
I am He Whom thou seekest!  
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.  
Alack, thou knowest not  
How little worthy of any love thou art!  
Whom will thou find to love ignoble thee  
Save Me, save only Me?  
Rise, clap My hand, and come! AMEN.*

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## OUR BOUNDEN DUTY AND SERVICE

*Luke 17:10 "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."*

**I**N Christ's service there are no hours when we cease to be His bondservants, or pass from under His eye. We are always His, always at His disposal, always bound to ask, what He would have us do. In this there is no hardship, because He knows our frame, and understands the complex machinery of life needs time to cool and rest and recreate itself. We remember that our Lord bade His disciples leave the crowded lake-side, to come with Him apart and rest awhile. He knows that we need rest and change, but He would keep these hours of relaxation under His own command because they are often the most perilous to the soul's health. How often, when we have been engaged in earnest service to others for Christ's sake, we are inclined to say: "Now we may have a good time for ourselves; we may relax the girdle, we may sit down to meat." We are inclined to act at such times as if we were off duty, and as though our Lord had no jurisdiction over us.

But it is when we have done our Master's work that He sometimes says to us; "You have been so taken up with My work that you have neglected *Me*. You have thought more of the depth and straightness of the furrow; more of the wool and safety of the flock, than of the One for whom you work. Give Me a little of your thought and love! Make ready wherewith I sup; gird thyself and serve Me!"

Ah! our Lord Jesus wants our love, and He will not be satisfied if we give time, energy, and thought to His service, and forget *Him*.

When we have done all that Christ asks of us, we have nothing to be proud of. Our good works do not earn our salvation, nor merit anything at the hand of our Saviour. Our uttermost service is only our bounden duty and privilege. It is a blessed thing, when we are wholly yielded to obey Him, for His service is perfect freedom from envy, dissatisfaction with our lot, jealousy of others, and pride. The wonder is that He takes us into partnership with Himself (John 13:13-16).

**PRAYER**—*Lord, as we go to our daily work, help us to take pleasure therein. Show us clearly what our duty is; help us to be faithful in doing it. Give us strength to do, patience to bear; by our true love to Thee, make unlovely things shine in the light of Thy great love. AMEN.*

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## GOD'S CHALLENGE TO MAN

*Isaiah 6:8* “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

**F**ROM the midst of Heaven there comes to our earth this cry for help—an appeal from the Eternal Trinity: “Who will go for us?” It reminds us of the last commission of our Lord to His disciples, that they should go into all the world, and preach His Gospel to every creature. The Seraphim may minister to those who have become the heirs of salvation, but only those who have been redeemed from among men have the high privilege of being called to the supreme work of redemption.

Notice the preparation for responding to that appeal. *The vision of the Eternal*: “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne.” Suddenly the material temple, in which Isaiah was probably worshipping, gave place to the eternal, the altar and the laver to the Throne of God; the cloud of incense, to the skirts of glory that filled the air; the choir of Levites, to the bands of the Seraphim that engirdled the sapphire throne. And above all, he beheld the glory of Christ (John 12:41).

This led to *The vision of his own heart*: “Woe is me, for I am undone.” It is when a man reaches the snowline that he realizes the comparative impurity of the whitest white that earth can produce. Probably there was no one in all Jerusalem who lived nearer to God than Isaiah, but when he learned that, in the estimation of the Seraphim, God was thrice holy; when he saw them veil their faces in adoration; when he discovered that the whole universe was filled with God, then he remembered the hidden evil of his own heart, and cried out “I am unclean!” Not a moment intervened between his confession and the cleansing of his iniquity, and he was able to say: “Send me.”

Have you heard that cry for help from the heart of Christ? Are you seeking to enter into His yearning love for the souls of men? He says to each one of us: “Could ye not watch with Me one hour?” Give yourself to Him that you may be used in His service: “Here am I, send me, use me.”

**PRAYER**—*Lord, grant us ears to hear, eyes to see, wills to obey, hearts to love; then declare what Thou wilt, reveal what Thou wilt, command what Thou wilt, demand what Thou wilt. AMEN.*

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## ENTERING THE KING'S SERVICE

*Psalm 45:10-11 "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."*

**I**t is difficult to decide the occasion of this Psalm, which was written to celebrate a royal marriage. But there is much which goes far beyond the immediate circumstances out of which it sprang. We recognize its prophetic character, as well as its historic basis, and that it points onward to Christ the King. It is so quoted in Heb 1:8-9, and we may therefore certainly appropriate the Psalm as directly addressed to our Lord, who is our rightful King.

Christ's claim rests on these grounds: *The Righteousness of His Rule*. His sceptre is not a rod of iron, but of "uprightness." Our King loves righteousness and hates wickedness. Therefore His throne stands firm, and He claims the allegiance of all pure and upright souls. Would that all rulers and leaders realized that *right makes might!*

*The Gladness of His Reign*. The righteous heart is the joyful one; and our King teaches us that so far from holiness meaning gloom and depression, it is the root and fountain of true and abiding joy. Jesus was "the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief," but underneath was an abiding and eternal joy, like the spring flowers that nestle under the warm coverlet of snow. There is a blessed attractiveness in Christian joy and gladness, which is characteristic of our King, and should mark all His subjects.

*The Love of His Heart*. The bride is willing to forsake her own people and her father's house, and if we take the Lord Jesus to be our King and Husband, we shall be willing to count all things but loss for love of Him. Therefore He said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

"*He is thy Lord.*" We are reminded that however tender may be the sense of Christ's love to us, we must reverence Him as our King. Reverence is the best foundation for true affection. We shall never fully know His salvation until we recognize and own Him as King. "Thy King cometh unto thee, having salvation." "He is exalted as Prince and Saviour." Lift up your heads, O gates of Mansoul, and the King of Glory shall come in! (Rev 3:20).

**PRAYER**—*In all things attune our hearts to the holiness and harmony of Thy Kingdom. Hasten the time when Thy Kingdom shall come, and Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. AMEN.*

## THREE AMBITIONS

2 Corinthians 5:9 “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.”

**T**HERE is scope for ambition within the sphere of the Christian Faith, and to be without it is to miss an influential incentive to high and holy endeavour. Our Lord does not destroy any natural faculty, but directs it to a worthy object. Instead of living for material good, or the applause of the world, we must stir ourselves to seek those things which are the legitimate objects of holy ambition. In two other passages the Apostle Paul uses this same word. See 1 Thess 4:11; Rom 15:20.

There is *the ambition of daily toil*,—“Be ambitious to be quiet, to do your own business, to work with your own hands.” In the age in which the Apostles lived there was much unrest, and in the case of the Christian Church this was still further increased by the expectation of the approaching end of the world; many were inclined to surrender their ordinary occupations, and give themselves up to restlessness and excitement, all of which was prejudicial to the regular ordering of their homes and individual lives, But the injunction is that we are not to yield to the ferment of restlessness; we are not to be disturbed by the feverishness around us, whether of social upheavals or for pleasure or gain.

*The ambition to be well-pleasing to Christ.* At His judgment-seat He will weigh up the worth of our individual mortal life, and He is doing so day by day. Not only when we pass the threshold of death, but on this side, our Lord is judging our character and adjudicating our reward. Let us strive to be as well-pleasing to Him in this life, as we hope to be in the next.

*The ambition of Christian work*—“Being ambitious to preach the Gospel.” The great world lies open to us, many parts of it still unevangelized; and all around us in our own country are thousands, among the rich and poor, who have no knowledge of Christ. Let us make it our ambition to bring them to Him, always remembering that the things we do for Christ must be that which He works through us in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:18-19).

**PRAYER**—*Give us grace, O Lord, to work while it is day, fulfilling diligently and patiently whatever duty Thou appointest us; doing small things in the day of small things, and great labours if Thou summon us to any; rising and working, sitting still and suffering, according to Thy word. AMEN.*

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## GOD'S APPOINTMENT

*Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."*

**G**OD has a plan for each of his children. From the foot of the Cross, where we are cradled in our second birth, to the brink of the river, where we lay down our armour, there is a path which He has prepared for us to walk in. God also prepares us for the path He has chosen. We are His workmanship, created unto the good works which He has before prepared. There is no emergency in the path for which there has not been provision made in our nature. From the earliest inception of his being, God had a plan for Jeremiah's career, for which He prepared him.

Ask what your work in the world is, that for which you were born, to which you were appointed, and on account of which you were conceived in the creative thought of God. That there is a Divine purpose in thy being is indubitable. Seek that you may be permitted to realize it, and never doubt that you have been endowed with all the special aptitudes which that purpose may demand. God has formed you, and stored your mind with all that He knew to be requisite for your life-work. It is your part to elaborate and improve to the utmost the one or two talents entrusted to your care.

Do not be jealous or covetous; do not envy another his five talents, but answer the Divine intention in your creation, redemption, and call to service. It is enough for thee to be what God made thee to be, and to be always at thy best.

But in cases where the Divine purpose is not clearly disclosed, in which life is lived piecemeal, and the bits of marble for the tessellated floor are heaped together with no apparent plan, we must dare to believe that God has an intention for each of us; and that if we are true to our noblest ideals, we shall certainly work out the Divine pattern, and be permitted some day to see it in its unveiled symmetry and beauty. To go on occupying the position in which we have been placed by the Providence of God, and to hold it for God till He bids us do something else! Such are golden secrets of blessedness and usefulness.

**PRAYER**—*O Lord, may Thy all-powerful grace make us perfect as Thou hast commanded us to be; through Jesus Christ. AMEN.*

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## THE EAGER HOUSEHOLDER

*Matthew 20:1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard."*

**O**UR Lord, beneath the veil of this parable, tells us what God is like. The heart of God our Father yearns over the perishing souls of men. For some reason, at present withheld, He must have the co-operation of men to reach the hearts of men, and therefore at every stage of life He approaches us, saying, "Go work! During what remains of life's brief day, go work in My vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. I need you to help in the salvation of the myriads of souls, whose redemption I am seeking with blood and tears."

*He comes to you, dear children, in the dawn of your life.* The dew is still in the grass, the birds are only just awaking from their dreams, life is yet the spring, and God's voice comes to you, saying: "I want you to help Me in my great Vineyard. The ground needs weeding, the vines require watering and pruning, there is much to do and few to do it, and I have a tiny plot for you to cultivate. Make haste, and come."

*He comes to you, young men and women.* Three hours have passed, and is yet you are standing idle, and have not chosen your life-work. Are you going to be a Missionary, or Minister, a Doctor, or School-teacher; does Art, Music, or Commerce appeal to you? Whatever sphere you choose, yet it be subordinated to the one great purpose of helping God to save the world.

*He comes to you who are in the meridian or late afternoon of life.* Perhaps you have been fortunate enough to make a competence, and need not toil as formerly. To you the Master comes, saying, "Go, work in My vineyard. Administer your money, time, influence for Me." Even though it be but an hour before sunset, the same urgent appeal rings out; though you have been unemployed all the days, He seeks your help. Oh, that the urgency of God's compassions may touch and move us! Will you listen to the call of the great Husbandman, and now answer in your heart, "Here am I, send me"?

**PRAYER**—*O God, we have heard Thy call! Wilt Thou accept our hands to labour for Thee, and our lips to speak for Thee. Send us into Thy Vineyard, and use us in Thy holy service. AMEN.*

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## FROM DISCIPLE TO APOSTLE

*Luke 6:13 "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;"*

**A**T the basis of all things there is a Divine order. We hear it in the noblest music, we find traces of it in the highest art; we are in contact with it in our purest and simplest meditations. Our souls bear witness to its beauty and truth whenever it confronts us. Our Lord Jesus bears a true witness to this in His beatitudes, and the enunciation of other principles, which appeal to our conscience as right and good. As we travel in His company along the road, we find He explains mysteries and enigmas in a fashion which appeals to our heart; we know that He speaks true. Finally, we come to a point where He passes beyond the road of our knowledge to the upper reaches of the mountains which we have not trodden before. He speaks to us of the nature of God, He assures us of the forgiveness of sin, He draws aside the veil from the unseen and the eternal. He lifts us into a new and blessed vision of the working together of all things according to the eternal purpose. And we who trusted Him where our own conscience substantiated His statements, are able to trust God, and follow Him when He deals with questions which eye hath not seen, nor the heart of man conceived. Thus we become His disciples, or pupils in His School.

Out of the disciples, our Lord chose some to be Apostles. We begin by learning, and after a while, we are sent forth to teach. During the first years we serve our apprenticeship, and afterwards we are permitted to be master hands. The disciple becomes an Apostle, and the Apostle is chosen not for his own comfort and enjoyment, but that he may be the instrument through which Christ achieves His eternal purpose. Election is not primarily to salvation, but to service. We are not elect that we may be sheltered from destruction, but that we may go forth to *serve men*, to teach them the law and love of God, and to help bring the world into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

**PRAYER**—*Most Blessed Lord, we thank Thee that we may become Thy disciples. Give us teachable hearts and listening ears; may we sit at Thy feet and be moulded according to Thy mind. Oh, choose us, and send us forth, and trust us with Thy sacred ministry, fulfilling in us the good pleasure of Thy will. AMEN.*

## CHOSEN AND PLACED

*John 15:16 "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."*

**W**E did not choose Him—there we have the evil of the human heart, the film of blindness which sin casts on the sight, the deafness with which it dulls the ear. For to have missed Jesus, to pass Him by, is as though the pearl-hunter were unable to recognize the pearl of greatest price; or the mother to recognize her own babe; or the seeker after the holy grail to fail to discover its mystic sheen!

*"But I have chosen you."* He chose us probably because we were useless and helpless, and He wanted to show what supreme miracles His grace could achieve. The prophet says that the branches of the vine are more useless than any others (Eze 16:1-5). The principle of God's choice is to take what all others reject—the fire-brand plucked from the burning, the feebly-smoking tow, the bruised reed; the younger sons, the halt and lame, the last and least; the things that are foolish, despised, and weak—these are God's choice, that He may bring to nought things that are, that no flesh may glory in His presence.

There was no error in the foreknowledge which preceded our election. God knew all that we were, all that we should be. He foresaw our down-sittings, our hours of depression, our obstinacy, our wanderings into the far country, but He swerved not. Having chosen us, He is going to justify His choice, unless we definitely refuse to let Him have his way.

*"And ordained you."* Our Master has placed us just where we are, that He might have a suitable outlet for His abundant life, which He longs to pour forth upon the world. Do not repine or murmur at your lot in life, but remember that He has appointed and placed you there. As the branch is nailed to the wall that it may cover it with foliage and fruit, so Christ has placed you where you are. That inevitable circumstance is the rough piece of cloth, that sorrow is the nail, that pain the restraint such as He suffered on the Cross.

*"That ye should go."* "Whither, Master?" "Into all the world, as My disciples! I have chosen you out of it and now I send you back as My representatives, through whom I may pour out My life and love. Go and bear fruit!"

**PRAYER**—*O Heavenly Master, enable us by Thy grace to fill the opportunity, and do the work that Thou hast assigned. May we not murmur or complain because our place is obscure and the time long, but bear much fruit for Thy glory. AMEN.*

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## MINISTERING TO CHRIST

*Matthew 25:40* “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

**I**S it not wonderful that our Lord should identify Himself thus with the hungry and thirsty, the weary and homeless, the outcast and suffering? If any who read these words should be in one of these conditions, be greatly comforted, for Jesus suffered thus in His earthly career, and remembers what it is like. His sympathy and understanding are warm and inexhaustible, and He accepts any kindness as though it were done directly to Himself.

We must be on the outlook for those whom we can help, remembering that the outstretched hand or petition is His. But we must beware, on the other hand, and endeavour to help people wisely. In giving to every beggar that asks alms we may inflict injury on the moral nature by encouraging them to be lazy and careless. We are not to distribute money, food, and clothing alone, but to give *personal ministry* which may cost us more!

Christ speaks of those who give hand-help to others as *righteous*, because it is only as we are really right with God that we are merciful to men. Righteousness and mercifulness are one.

The sin of omission! Notice that those who were banished and exiled from the presence of the King were judged because of what *they did not do*. We may be condemned not simply for actual sins committed, but for what we neglect to do. Not to bind up and care for the wounded or ill-treated, but to pass by on the other side; not to have the oil ready for the lamp; not to make use of the talent or gift entrusted, this involves condemnation, and degrades the soul to the level of the devil and his angels.

Let us ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may follow in the steps of our Lord Jesus, who went about doing good, and healing all who were sick and in need. He has made over the great debt we owe to Him to the poor and needy, and says that whatever we do to others for His sake, He will accept as payment to Himself.

**PRAYER**—*O God, we have been too self-centred. We have forgotten that our best and happiest life must be lived in fellowship with the needs, and sorrows, and trials of others. Help us to cheer them with our love, to hearten them with our courage, and to bear their burdens so far as we may.*  
AMEN.

## VICTORIOUS OVER LIMITATIONS

*Colossians 4:18 "The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen."*

**A**T the close of his dictation, St. Paul took the stylus from the hand of his amanuensis, and appended his signature to the letter, which was awaiting that necessary endorsement. As he did so, he contrasted his irregular and clumsy writing with the flowing current-hand of his scribe, and in excuse, said pathetically, "Remember my bonds!" It was as though he said, "You cannot expect a man who for three years has had his wrist fettered by an iron chain to write as well as when he was a student at Gamaliel's feet!" He makes reference to the same subject in Gal 6:11, where he speaks of the "large letters" which he had written with his own hand; but in this case it was caused by his failing eyesight rather than the iron fetter.

There are other bonds than iron chains which impose on us their strains and limitations. Many of us, as we review our work at the close of the day, are overwhelmed with the sense of failure. As we kneel before our Lord, we are constrained to say, "Alas, we have inscribed Thy Name on the hearts which lay open to us, as paper the hand, in very clumsy and unworthy style. Forgive us, and remember our bonds."

*Let us accept our limitations as from the Will of God.* There is no way to peace or power, save in accepting the Will of God, making no distinction between what He appoints or permits, but believing that in either we are in contact with the Eternal purpose for us. Paul never forgot that he was the prisoner of Jesus Christ. He believed that for every limitation on the earthward side there would be enlargement on the other and spiritual side. Weakness here, added strength there; the being hourly delivered unto the cross, and from the ground the blossoming of endless life.

*Let us do all the good we can in spite of fetters.* St. Paul could not continue his travels over the world, but there were many avenues of service open to him. He could pray, and he did (Col 1:3; Col 2:1; Col 4:12). He could influence others (Phil 1:11-14). He employed his leisure in writing the epistles that have been the perennial solace of sorrowful hearts. There is a door, nearer to you than you think, opening out of your prison, through which God will enable you to render helpful service for Him.

**PRAYER**—*Our Father, we thank Thee Thou canst make no mistakes. We believe that all things are working together for our good, and we trust Thy guiding hand. AMEN.*

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## SURRENDER LEADING TO SONG

*2 Chronicles 29:27 “And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel.”*

**T**HE Hebrew Psalmody became famous throughout the world. Even their fierce conquerors recognized the sublime beauty of the Hebrew temple music. By the waters of Babylon they urged them to sing one of the Songs of Zion, not knowing how impossible it was for the captives to sing the Lord’s song in a strange land! For sixteen years no song had poured forth from the sacred shrine. Ahaz had shut the doors, dispersed the Levites, and allowed the holy fabric to remain unkempt, unlit, and unused. There were no sacrifices on the Altar, no sweet incense in the Holy Place, no blood on the Mercy-Seat, no Song of the Lord!

For too many Christians this, alas, is a picture of their life. The soul, intended to be a holy temple for God, shows signs of disorder and neglect. The lights are not lit, the sweet incense of prayer does not ascend, the doors of entrance to fellowship and exit to service are closed. Outwardly the ordinances of the religious life are preserved, but inwardly silence and darkness prevail, into which bat-like thoughts intrude. Thorns have come up in the court of the Holy Place, where the scorpion makes her nest. The Song of the Lord had died out of heart and life.

Why should not this miserable condition be ended today? Why should you not be cleansed from the traces of sin and neglect through the Blood of the Cross? Why should you not come back into fellowship with God, who waits to receive and forgive? Surrender yourself to Him now. Do not be general, but specific in your consecration. Weld yourself to some life or lives that sorely need help. Give not words only, but deeds and blood. Merge your little life in the life of Christ, as the streamlet in the wide ocean. And as you yield yourself to Christ first, and next to all who need you for His sake, you will find the Song of the Lord breaking forth again in your heart like a spring, which was formerly choked with *debris*.

**PRAYER**—*We pray Thee, Heavenly Father, to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

## CONFESSING CHRIST BEFORE MEN

*Matthew 10:32 "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."*

**C**HRIST'S ultimate aim is to secure peace for our sin-stricken race, and the proclamation of the tidings of peace is spreading throughout the world. We must not falter in our testimony, or hide in our heart the truth which has been committed to us, because it may bring us to contumely and suffering. Nothing is so like to promote our own earnestness and devotion as our constant testimony for Christ. The advancement of the Kingdom of God is determined much less by remarkable missions and sermons, as by each one saying to his neighbour: "Know the Lord!"

*We should begin with our next of kin.* Andrew's testimony and confession brought Peter to Jesus (Joh 1:40-42). And whatever blessing came to the Church, and to the world through the testimony and confession of Peter must be partly credited to his brother Andrew.

*We must confess Christ to our nearest friends.* Philip found Nathanael. Our friends expect that we should let them share our inner thoughts and experience. Sometimes we can only give our simple testimony: "We have found Christ," but as we bring those whom we love to Christ, we shall ever find Him sympathetic and willing to meet our endeavours with His mighty help and fellowship. How He welcomed Peter, and read the character of Nathanael.

*Our personal testimony is invaluable.* The woman of Samaria brought the entire city to the feet of Jesus by her confession. Many of the Samaritans believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, "He told me all that ever I did." That was the beginning of a great revival.

It was Mr. Moody's custom to speak each day, personally, to some one about the Lord Jesus. If any shall say that this habit is apt to become mechanical and formal, I can only answer that the days when I have lived like that have been the most radiant of my life. It is not necessary that one should be always interlarding phraseology with references to religion, but there must be no coveting of the light within us (Matt 5:14-16). How great an honour it will be to be confessed by Christ before all worlds, and to be presented by Him with exceeding joy before the Father (Jude 1:24). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us."

**PRAYER**—*May we so represent Christ our Lord in this world that men may love Him for what they see of His likeness in us. AMEN.*

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## GLORIFYING GOD IN OUR RECREATIONS

*1 Corinthians 10:23-31* “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. ... Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

**T**HE word *Recreation* is preferable to *Pastime*, for as one realizes the priceless moments, with all their opportunities, getting fewer, one is averse to hear people talk of “killing time.” But “recreation” is a good word, and we all need to find some way of re-creating the exhausted grey-matter of the brain which is being used up in long application to study or work.

We must not be the “dull boys” of the old adage, but as Christians our faces should shine like the morning sun; we should be quick, bright, intelligent, and in no danger of being reckoned among the “back-numbers,” of which the piles are generally shabby and dusty!

“All things edify not” is one of the first conditions of healthy recreation. There is really no limit but this to the recreations in which a Christian person can indulge. He may play at many games, row, skate, swim, drive a motor, sail the ocean, or scale the mountain snows! The more the better, so long as they are recreative; and are not the end, but the means to the end of a healthy manhood and womanhood. That is, they must *edify*, build up physique, muscle, brain, to be used afterwards in the main business of life. Nothing is a greater curse than when people neglect their real business in order to get to their sports and games. Then, so far from *edifying*, these in turn begin to pull down and destroy.

Probably the words “edify not” put in a plea on the behalf of others. We are not to do things which in themselves may be lawful and innocent enough, but which might have a prejudicial effect on those who are watching every movement of our life.

“Do all to the glory of God.” So many seem afraid of joy! They fear if they are too happy, God will send some trouble as make weight. How different is the command in Deu 26:11 and Phi 4:4. Even when things do not appear to be good, let us dare to be thankful in all things, and give praise for all. All our Father’s gifts are good, whatever be the wrappings or packing-cases in which they come to hand.

**PRAYER**—*May the Holy Spirit so fill us with Christ our Lord, that there may be no room in our life for anything inconsistent with His perfect purity and love. AMEN.*

## TIMELINESS

*Ecclesiastes 3:1 "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:"*

**D**O not be in too great a hurry. There is time for everything that has to be done. He who gave you your life-work has given you just enough time to do it in. The length of life's candle is measured out according to the length of your required task. You must take necessary time for meditation, for sleep, for food, for the enjoyment of human love and friendship; and even then there will be time enough left for your necessary duties. More haste, less speed! The feverish hand often gives itself additional toil. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

*Do not be impatient.* He who made you has prepared the successive steps along which you must travel to realize your full human development. God knows what you need and will bring you to its fulfilment, only you must wait His leisure with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. He can mature events with marvellous rapidity, and you will find that He will perfect that which concerneth you, so that no good thing will fail. He who feeds the wild things of the prairie and woodland, giving to each its appropriate portion, will not fail any one of us. He will supply us with food convenient for us. The Creator is faithful to the creature.

*Do not be cast down.* Sorrow and trial are only for a time. They have their seasons, and pass. It is not always winter, and God puts bright and beautiful things into our lives which we need not be afraid of enjoying, it being understood that we do not snatch at them, or use them for our personal pleasure alone. Everything is beautiful after its sort and in its season, and every day has some element of goodwill in it, but we sometimes so strain our eyes towards a distant spot on the horizon that we miss the flowers on which we are treading.

God is in all; find Him there! "Every good gift is from the Father of lights." They were created that they might be received with thanksgiving, and the altar sanctifies the gift. It is only when the gifts of God are severed from the Giver that they do us harm (Ecc 3:13).

God has set Eternity in our heart, and man's infinite capacity cannot be filled or satisfied with the things of time and sense (see Ecc 3:11).

**PRAYER**—*Cause Thy grace to abound toward us, that we may have all sufficiency in all things, and abound to every good work. Help us to fulfil all the duties and responsibilities that this day may bring. AMEN.*

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## SPIRITUAL GYMNASTICS

*1 Timothy 4:7-8 "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."*

**T**HE relation of the body to religion has always engaged the attention of thoughtful religious men. Human opinion has oscillated between two extremes. On the one hand, some have considered that the body was the seat of sin, and have set themselves to degrade and debase it with every indignity and torture. This conception has influenced devoutly-intentioned people in the East, and also in Western monasticism. But sin must be dealt with in the heart and soul, where it has its inception and spring. It is easy to macerate the body, whilst the pride of self-mortification is undetected. If we deal with bad thought and evil suggestion, we shall not have so much trouble with the body, which is only the dial-plate, registering the workings within. The other extreme was represented in the Greek religion. The temples that stand in ruins: the superb works of art which have survived the wreck of centuries; its poetry and literature, sustain and illustrate the supreme devotion of the Greek mind to beauty. The Christian position differs from both. To us the body is the temple, the instrument, the weapon of the soul. The Holy Spirit quickens our mortal body by His indwelling, and in the faces and lives of holy men and women we may trace the growing results of the inward power and beauty of pure and undefiled religion. It is good to care for the body, but only as we should care for a complex and fine piece of machinery which is to serve us. There are gifts in us, which we must not neglect, or it will go hard with us when we meet our Master, who entrusted them to our stewardship. Probably the trials and temptations of life are intended to give us that inward training which shall bring our spiritual muscles into play. In each of us there is much unused force; many moral and spiritual faculties, which would never be used, if it were not for the wrestling which we are compelled to take up with principalities and powers, with difficulty and sorrow. The Apostle bids us take heed to ourselves, and to live in the atmosphere of uplifting thought and of self-denying ministry (1Ti 4:13-15).

**PRAYER**—*Mould us, O God, into forms of beauty and usefulness by the wheel of Thy providence, and by the touch of Thy hand. Fulfil Thine ideal, and conform us to the image of Thy Son. AMEN.*

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## FIRST, RECONCILIATION

*Matthew 5:23-24* “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

**T**H**ERE** is a marked difference between memory and recollection. *Memory* resembles a great box or chest into which a man casts his letters, accounts, and MSS.; *recollection* is the readiness, be it less or more, with which he can lay his hand on what he requires. We know that it is somewhere in our possession, we remember to have seen and turned it over, but search as we may we cannot find or recall it.

But there is a moment of quickened recollection when we stand before God: “When thou bringest thy gift to the altar and *rememberest*.” As the Divine searchlight plays upon our past life it reveals many things which had passed from our mind. Conscience is a keen quickener of our powers of recollection.

*What has your brother against you? This*—that you flamed out against him in passion, with bitter, angry words, in hatred and contempt; or *this*—that you have been sullen and sulky, scarcely answering his advances, meeting his salutations with grudging courtesy. Perhaps you have done him a positive wrong, and have taken from him his only covering, or have forbore to help him when he stood in sore need (Exod 22:26-27; Exod 23:4-9).

*We are bidden to get right with man, as the first step to acceptance with God*—“*first be reconciled to thy brother*.” Humility is necessary in every approach to God, and nothing so humbles our pride as to confess our faults to our brethren. Truth is necessary to all right dealings with God, and nothing will so promote truth in our inward parts as to be transparent and simple in our dealings with our fellows. Sincerity in confession of sin is an essential beginning of peace with God, but how can we be sure that our confession is sincere unless it costs us something more than words. “*First, be reconciled with thy brother*”—not only with the brother of human flesh—but with our great Brother in the Glory (Gen 1:17-21; Heb 2:11). *Then come!* Offer thyself, as thy gift; He will accept thee, and thy gifts.

**PRAYER**—*Give unto us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, broken and contrite hearts. Help us to do all that ought to be done to make amends, and grant unto our brother the willingness to meet us with forgiveness and peace. So shall we have peace with Thee, our Elder Brother, against whom we have grievously sinned. AMEN.*

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## LOST OPPORTUNITIES

*Hebrews 12:17 "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."*

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

**T**HE Greeks represented Opportunity as bald, with no lock of hair by which she could be laid hold of as she turned away and fled. Every one has opportunity, but there is often no symptom of its approach, no sign of its departure; when once it is missed, it rarely comes again! It is said that Queen Victoria once gave a comparatively unknown painter the opportunity of a private sitting. She came at the exact time that was arranged, but *he* was five minutes late, and he lost his opportunity!

Esau bartered his birthright! What cared he for the spiritual prerogative of the first-born to act as the priest of the clan, and to stand in the possible lineal descent of the Messiah. He craved what would satisfy and please his senses. But when he had sold his birthright, he was held to the transaction. "He found no place of repentance" does not mean that he wished to and could not, but that the die was cast, the decision was deemed final. It is within the range of every one to do an act, to make a choice, to barter away the spiritual for the material so absolutely, that the decision is held irrevocable. Let us take care lest we be betrayed by passion into an act which may affect our entire destiny.

The outstretched wing of God's love would have sheltered Jerusalem from its impending fate, but she refused Him in His servants and His Son, and her day of opportunity passed!

Even so, salvation waits for us all, and there is hope and opportunity for us to repent as long as the day of grace is not closed, but let us not forget, as McCheyne said, that *Christ gives last knocks*. The present is your time of hope, of a fresh beginning, of a new opportunity. Open the door of your life to Christ and make Him King. He offers you your chance, rise to it; do your very best, find your niche of service in His Kingdom, and set yourself to follow Him with all your heart, and mind, and strength.

**PRAYER**—*O Lord, let us not serve Thee with the spirit of bondage as slaves, but with the cheerfulness and gladness of children, delighting ourselves in Thee and rejoicing in Thy work. AMEN.*

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## THE CHRISTIAN EXTRA

*Matthew 5:41 "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."*

**O**UR Lord refers here to the usage of the East in the transmission of royal messages, which were carried forward by relays of messengers, much in the fashion of the fiery cross in the Highlands, as described in "The Lady of the Lake." The messengers were "press-men"; each town or village was compelled to forward the message to the next, and the first man happened upon was bound to forward the courier with his horses or mules.

In some such way emergencies are continually happening to us all. We arise in the morning not expecting any special demand for help, or any other circumstance to interfere with the regular routine of the day's work, and then suddenly and unexpectedly a demand bursts upon us, and we are obliged to go in a direction which we never contemplated. We are compelled to go one mile! Then the question arises. Now you have done your duty, performed what you were bound to perform, given what any other person would have given, what are you going to do about the next mile? You had no option about the first; about the second you have an opportunity of choice. Your action in the matter which is optional determines whether or not you have entered into the spirit and ministry of Christ.

Let us not be stingy and niggardly in our dealings with men. There are certain things that must be done, but let us go beyond the *must*, and do our duty with a smile, and with generous kindness. It is not enough to pay our servants or employees, let us be thankful for their service; it is not enough to pay our debts, let us give the word also of appreciation; it is not enough to simply do the work for which our employer remunerates us, let us do it with alacrity and eagerness, willing to finish a piece of necessary service even at cost to ourselves. As the followers of Christ, we are to be stars bearing our light on the vault of night; flowers shedding fragrance on the world; fountains rising in the arid wastes; always giving love and helpful ministry to this thankless and needy world, and as we break and distribute our barley loaves and fishes, our hands will become filled again, and with the measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again (Luke 6:38).

**PRAYER**—*O God, may we be more gracious to those around us. May we fill up the measure of our possibilities, and so be perfect, as Thou, our Father, art perfect in love. AMEN.*

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## FRET NOT

*Psalm 37:7 "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."*

**I**T is a mistake to be always turning back to recover the past. The law for Christian living is not backward, but forward; not for experiences that lie behind, but for doing the will of God, which is always ahead and beckoning us to follow. Leave the things that are behind, and reach forward to those that are before, for on each new height to which we attain, there are the appropriate joys that befit the new experience. Don't fret because life's joys are fled. There are more in front. Look up, press forward, the best is yet to be!

*Fret not because your ideals appear to mock you.* Every ideal which we cherish is the herald and precursor of a reality which, in a better form than ever we dreamed, shall one day come to our possession. The ancient alchemists spent their lives in the pursuit of the Philosopher's Stone, which they thought would turn every substance it touched to gold. They never discovered it, but they laid the foundations of modern chemistry, which has been more fruitful in its blessing to our race than the famous magic-stone would have been. Who shall say that those old explorers were deceived? Was not God leading them on, by a way that they knew not, to better things than they dreamed?

*Fret not because the future seems dark.* After all, the troubles we anticipate may never really befall. It is a long lane without a turning, and the dreariest day has some glint of light. In any case, worrying will not help matters; it can alter neither the future nor the past, though it will materially affect our power in dealing with troubles. It will not rob tomorrow of its difficulties, but it will rob your brain of its clear-sightedness, and your heart of its courage. Let us turn to God with faith and prayer, looking out for the one or two patches of blue which are in every sky. And if you cannot discover any where you are, dare to anticipate the time when God shall make all things work together for good to them that love Him.

**PRAYER**—*Heavenly Father, we have been careful and troubled about many things. Forgive us, and breathe into our hearts a great faith in Thee, that doubts and fears may not be able to break in on our peace. Fence us around today as with a wall of fire; let us hear Thy voice saying: Fear not, I am with thee. AMEN.*

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## BELIEVING AND RECEIVING

*Mark 11:24 "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."*

**I**T is not enough to pray and ask; we must *believe that we have received*. We can only do this when we know that we have asked according to God's Will (1John 5:14-15). This can be determined by referring to His Word, which teems with great and precious promises, like so many banknotes or cheques waiting to be cashed.

In prayer, it is well to be deliberate, to consider what we are about to ask, to discover some promise under which we can make our request; and then, having asked, to wait while the soul, so to speak, takes or appropriates what it needs. It may be that the time is not ripe for it to be actually bestowed, but the request is granted, and the coveted gift is already set aside in God's storehouse, labelled with the name of the petitioner, just as we sometimes get our Christmas presents ready and put them aside, and at the right moment they shall be dispatched.

**PRAYER**—*We thank Thee, O God, for the daily gifts of Thy Providence, but above all for the gift of Thyself in Jesus our Lord, in whom all good and perfect gifts are contained. AMEN.*

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## THE WISE USE OF TIME

*Ephesians 5:15-16* “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

**G**OD desires to give each life its full development. Of course, there are exceptions; for instance, in some cases the lessons and discipline of life are crowded into a very brief space of time, and the soul is summoned to the Presence-chamber of eternity. But, on the whole, each human life is intended to touch all the notes of life’s organ. There is an appointed time when it shall be born or die, shall weep or laugh, shall get or lose, shall have halcyon peace or storm cast skies. These times have been fixed for us in God’s plan; do not try and anticipate them, or force the pace, but wait thou the Lord’s leisure. In due time all will work out for thy good and for His glory. Say to Him: “All my times are in Thy hand.”

Times and seasons succeed one another very quickly. Milton, in his glorious sonnet on the Flight of Time, bids her call on the leaden-stepping hours, referring to the swing of the pendulum; and, indeed, as we look back on our past life it will seem as though each experience was only for a moment, and then had vanished, never to return. We are reminded of the cobbler, who, as he sat in his kitchen, thought that the pendulum of his clock, when it swung to the left, said *For ever*; and to the right, *Where?* For ever—where? For ever—where? He got up and stopped it, but found that, although he had stopped the questioner, he had not answered the question. Nor could he find rest until, on his knees, he had been able to face the question of the Eternal, and reply to it.

We must be on the alert to meet the demands of every hour. “Mine hour is not yet come,” said our Lord. He waited patiently until He heard the hour strike in heaven, and then drawing the strength appropriate to its demand, He went forth to meet it. Each time and season is kept by the Father in His own hand. He opens and none shuts; He shuts and none opens. But in that same hand are the needed supplies of wisdom, grace, and power. As the time, so is the strength. No time of sighing, trial, temptation, or bereavement is without its special and adapted supplies. Take what is needed from His hand, and go forth to play the part for which the hour calls.

**PRAYER**—*Oh, that Thou wouldst bless us indeed and enlarge our coasts of useful service. Let Thine hand be with us, and keep us from all evil that would grieve Thee. AMEN.*

## THE WISE USE OF INFLUENCE

*Matthew 5:14-16 "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*

**I**NFLUENCE may be defined as the flowing in of our soul to enthuse and help, or to debase others. The law of action and recreation, of attraction and repulsion is always at work, in virtue of which it may be truly said that no one liveth or dieth to himself. The position of each atom of sand upon the seashore affects the position of all others, and the quality of our personal character is more pervasive than a good or ill odour. What we *are* affects others much more deeply than what we *say*. Probably waves of spiritual influence are continually going forth from our inmost nature, and it is the impact of these upon those around us which makes it easier or harder for them to realize their highest ideals.

The first circle of influence is that of our friends. Our counsel may be sweetness or bitterness, but whatever we do or say, we must see that we are absolutely true and faithful (Prov 27:6-9). Sincerity means to be without the wax which the cabinet-maker may put into the cracks of the wood to make it appear sound. It is the true and pure soul that most readily and forcibly helps another. Do not be selfish in your friendship, but always give out *more* than you expect to receive. Love is a tender plant, and needs culture. We must not suppose that it is able to thrive without light and truth.

The second circle of influence is that of our associates. The men of the world may not appreciate our reproduction of the Beatitudes of the Kingdom, but still reproach, persecute, and say all manner of evil falsely against us; nevertheless, we must continue to bless the world by the silent and gracious influence of holy living. Reviled, we must bless; persecuted, we must endure; defamed, we must entreat. We must be as salt to our persecutors and as light to our defamers. It is wonderful how love, and consistent, patient, prayerful influence will finally prevail.

We are to be as *salt*; i.e. our consistent holy living will act as antiseptic to arrest evil. We are to be the *light of the world*. Inconsistency and cowardice are like bushels which are put over the lamp. Let us put all these hindrances away, that the light which is within us may shine out on the dark world.

**PRAYER**—*Grant, we beseech Thee, O God, that our behaviour may be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. May the savour of Christ be in our influence, His light in our face, His love in our hearts. AMEN.*

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## THE WISE USE OF MONEY

*2 Corinthians 9:7-8* “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:”

**W**E must not look on money as our own, for on every coin you may discern the letters: DG, *By the Grace of God*. Therefore money is God’s gift to us. “Both riches and honour come of Thee. David was right when he said, after his people and he had made a noble gift to God’s work: “Of Thine own have we given Thee.”

But you may say: “I earn my money by the sweat of my brow.” Granted; but “thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is *He* that giveth thee power to get wealth.” It is God who enables us to keep our situations; who delivers us from paralysing disease, maintains the balance of reason, and renews our daily strength. Is it not our constant profession that we have devoted to Christ all that we are and have, and surely this consecration, if it means anything, means that concerning all that belongs to us we would say to our Lord: “What wouldst *Thou* have me to do?”

It is our duty to provide for our own (1Tim 5:8). It is also right to hold a certain amount as capital, for the increase of business and the employment of labour. When a man uses his capital uprightly, taking no more than a legitimate profit for his time, experience, and responsibility, and allowing his employees to share with him in the surplus, he is doing more real good in the world than if he gives away his property by distributing a pound each to a vast number of beggars. We are to be stewards of the Lord Jesus. This is His own comparison (Matt 25:14).

In order to guard against the love of money, we should be careful to give a stated proportion to the cause of Christ. It may seem needless to insert this caution for those who should use *all* for Christ. But our hearts are so fickle that we sometimes imagine that we are giving away a larger share of our income than is the case, unless we are accurate in adjusting the balance between Christ and ourselves. It is not possible for one to assign for another the proper proportion, but whatever we decide to return to God, it should be rigorously deducted when we receive our income or wages. In the first place, *give your own selves to Christ*, and then all else will fall into line (2Cor 8:5).

**PRAYER**—*Help me, dear Lord, to walk in the footsteps of Thy holy life. Teach me how to gain by giving, and to find by losing, according to Thy word. AMEN.*

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## UNDERSTANDING GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

*Psalm 107:43 "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD."*

**T**HERE are many ways of understanding the lovingkindness or mercy of the Lord. *We may know it as a matter of doctrine.* The best way of increasing our knowledge of God's infinite nature, is by the reverent study of His Word. It is a flimsy religion which discounts doctrine. What the bones are to the body, doctrine is to our moral and spiritual life. What law is to the material universe, doctrine is to the spiritual. The doctrines of grace are the jewelled foundations of a holy life. Seek the ministry that builds on them; read the books that acknowledge them! *We may know it by meditation.* Would that we yielded more silent hearts to the Holy Spirit, that He might fix our vagrant thoughts on the love of Christ that passeth knowledge! The love that loved us in Eternity, that has never let us go in Time, and that has shown its uttermost intensity by the wounds of Calvary! *We may also know it sympathetically.* Kepler, the great astronomer, exclaimed one day: "I have been thinking over again the earliest thoughts of God"; and surely every time we sacrifice ourselves for others, or carry another's cross, in the glow of a warm heart, we are feeling a tiny pulsation of His love.

*Do we sufficiently praise God for His lovingkindness and truth? We are keen to pray, to cry out for help, but do we stop to enumerate the mercies and to render praise for them? "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psa 107:8, Psa 107:15, Psa 107:21, Psa 107:31).* How often I have awoken tired and out-of-heart, the harp on the willows, the soul like a lark beaten down by an east wind; and when the usual Bible-study has failed to grip, or prayer has seemed cold and mechanical, the disconsolate heart has started to praise, to give thanks for mercies received, and to adore the majesty and glory of God. As one has thus continued, the soul has thawed, the spirit has found wings, the horizon has cleared, and the angel-song has broken in with its Hallelujah! We are thus transported into the Divine Presence-Chamber; we have obtained joy and gladness, our night is gone, and "sorrow and sighing have fled away."

**PRAYER**—*Father, Thou hast loved us; Thou dost love us; Thou wilt love us for evermore. Thy love passes knowledge. It is like a warm, sunlit ocean enwrapping the tiny islet of my life. I bathe in it, but can never reach its limits. I thank Thee for its depths and lengths. AMEN.*

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## NUMBERING OUR DAYS

*Psalm 90:12-14 "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."*

**T**HIS Psalm was evidently composed towards the end of the wilderness wanderings, and records some of the sadness which must have oppressed the heart of Moses, as he saw the companions of his earlier life being buried amid the sand-dunes.

He compares the centuries to the memory of yesterday, which fades so quickly from our mind; to a watch spent by the camp fires; to the short rush of the mountain flood; to the dream which flashes for a moment before the mental eye; to the short-lived grass, which flourishes in the morning and is cut down at night. Each emblem full of significant beauty, and evidently culled from the incidents of the long march through these vast solitudes. It was as though the heart of this mighty servant of God turned from the fleeting ages and the decay of human life, to God, whose Being is timeless, unchangeable, and eternal. Here is transition and change; there is the Rock of Ages, with its everlasting stability and glory.

Let us number our days against the eternal ages of God's Being; against the age of the mountain and the universe; against the rise and fall of great nations. It is when we realize how short life is that we set ourselves in good earnest to redeem the time, to buy up each golden opportunity.

The heart of wisdom will show itself in giving God a just proportion of our time. Every day it is wise to set apart time for the reading of His Word, for prayer and holy fellowship; in every week it is wise to reserve a seventh part for His holy service. We may learn deep lessons from the amount of time that the Hebrews gave to their religious institutions. "Prayer and provender hinder no man," says the old proverb. It is specially wise to make God to be our Guide, that He may show us how to use this precious thing called life. Apart from Him all our desire to use our time aright will be in vain, but when the soul walks in fellowship with God every action tells, every day adds something to the growing power and influence of existence. Nothing is little, nothing trivial, nothing unworthy, if your soul holds fellowship with God. Then will come satisfaction and gladness, and the work of our life will be established by the Divine Hand.

**PRAYER**—*O Faithful Lord, teach us to trust Thee for life and death, and to take Thee for our All in All. AMEN.*

## THE COMING KINGDOM

*Psalm 2:6-12 "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. ...  
... .. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."*

**T**HE basis of this magnificent Psalm is the Reign of Christ. No king of David's line realized its sublime ideal, but the mind of the singer is borne forward to the reign of the Messiah, to whom it is applied in the New Testament (Act 13:33; Heb 1:5).

There are four strophes of three verses each. In Psa 2:1-3, the nations are depicted as assembling and planning revolt. A widespread conspiracy has arisen against the authority of Jehovah, exercised through the Messiah.

In Psa 2:4-6, by a bold metaphor, the absurdity of man's rebellion is made clear; but the laughter of the Most High is not inconsistent with the tears and sorrow of Jesus, as He beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it. The strenuous resistance by man can never alter the Divine purpose. The hammer cannot break the anvil!

In Psa 2:7-9, the Anointed King discloses His relationship to the Almighty, and claims universal dominion. The Divine Sonship was an eternal fact, but it was openly certified by the Resurrection (Rom 1:3-4). As He left our earth to ascend to His Throne, our Saviour claimed that all power was given to Him in heaven and on earth. His rule is founded, not only on the glory of His essential Deity, but on His suffering and sacrifice. "He became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross ... therefore God also hath highly exalted Him."

In Psa 2:10-12, the Psalmist urges the rebellious to accept the findings of common sense. It is madness to dream of thwarting God's purpose. Kiss the hand of Jesus outstretched to you in love and forgiveness, and take shelter in Him from the wrath to come on the disobedient (Rev 6:16-17).

**PRAYER**—*Behold, Thou commandest that I should love Thee with all my heart and soul, with all my mind and strength: Grant Thou me what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt. AMEN.*

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## THE BIBLE AS A DICTAPHONE

*Psalm 27:8 "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee,  
Thy face, LORD, will I seek."*

**T**HE Bible reminds us of a dictaphone. God has spoken into it, and as we read its pages, they transfer His living words to us. There are many things in the Bible, which, at first, we may not be able to understand, because, as the heaven is higher than the earth, so are God's thoughts higher than ours. Mr. Spurgeon used to say that when he ate fish, he did not attempt to swallow the bones, but put them aside on his plate! So when there is something beyond your understanding, put it aside, and go on to enjoy that which is easy of spiritual mastication and digestion.

The Bible contains ten thousand promises. It is God's book of signed cheques. When you have found a promise which meets your need, do not ask God to keep His promise, as though He were unwilling to do so, and needed to be pressed and importuned. Present it humbly in the name of the Lord Jesus! Be sure that, so far as you know, you are fulfilling any conditions that may be attached; then look up into the face of your Heavenly Father, and tell Him that you are reckoning on Him to do as He has said. It is for Him to choose the time and manner of His answer; but wait quietly, be patient, and you will find that not a moment too soon, and not a moment too late, God's response will be given. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him" (Psa 62:5); "Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things that were told her from the Lord" (Luk 1:45).

Whether for the body, the soul, or spirit, there is no guide like Holy Scripture, but never read it without first looking up to its Author and Inspirer, asking that He will illuminate the page and make you wise unto salvation. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

**PRAYER**—*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I Thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies. AMEN.*

## LIFE IS WORTH WHILE

*Colossians 3:17* “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

**N**OTHING is more disastrous than aimless drift! God endows each soul for a distinct purpose. Probably in every life there is a lucid moment, when we take our bearings, and there flashes before us a glimpse of the life-work for which we were sent forth. We stand on the mount of vision, like Moses, and see the pattern of the tabernacle, which we are presently to erect. God has a purpose for the soul, as well as for the body, all the members of which were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them (Psa 139:16). Is it conceivable that He should spend thought and care on the body, and have no purpose for the soul? But if that be so, He will reveal His will; He will gradually unfold our life-purpose step by step. Let us go steadily forward reckoning on our Almighty Friend to supply the needed grace, wisdom, and strength.

When the captain of a cricket team leaves the pavilion for the wicket, the crowds watching his every movement, he is probably saying to himself: “I am going to score my hundred, to say the least!” As he faces the man yonder, who may be one of the swiftest and cleverest bowlers in the county, it is as though he says: “You may do your best, but I am going to win out!” It is in such a spirit that each of us should step out to face life: “I am going to win through, by God’s grace.”

Never forget that God is working with you. “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.” He will not desert the work of His own hands! In my long life of eighty-one years, I have experienced more fluctuations and difficulties than fall to many, but I unhesitatingly assert that where God gives the plan He stands Surety for the result! Dare to trust Him and keep in step with Him as He leads you onward.

**PRAYER**—*O God, the God of all Goodness and all Grace, Who art worthy of a greater love than we can either give or understand; fill my heart with such love towards Thee as may cast out all sloth and fear, that nothing may seem too hard for me to do or to suffer in obedience to Thee. AMEN.*

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## THE PILGRIM OF THE UNSEEN

*Genesis 12:1-2 "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."*

**T**HE clue to the beginning of this chapter is given in various parts of the Bible. From Act 7:2-5, we learn that the Call to Abram to go forth, which originally came in Ur of the Chaldees, was repeated in Haran, after his father's death. Probably Terah delayed his son's obedience. Let us help our children to realize God's call, even though we be left lonely on the other side of the river.

In Heb 11:8, we realize that this Pilgrim of the Eternal stepped out on the wide expanse of the desert, only learning his course day by day; he was like a Columbus, sailing month after month through unknown seas, never knowing at what moment the dim outline of the shore might appear.

In Rom. 4. we are told that these promises were vouchsafed to him while still a Gentile. Thirty years passed before he became the founder of the Hebrew nation. The Apostle therefore argues that these promises are guaranteed to *all* his children, not only to those under the Law, but also to us who have his faith. Turn back, my reader, to that ancient page, and realize that it includes thee in its amplitude of blessing! Gal 3:8, Gal 3:9, Gal 3:14, assures us that all these blessings are included in the one gift of the Holy Spirit. The blessing of Abraham is for all of us who are in Christ Jesus, as we walk in the steps of this great Pilgrimage.

A vast gulf of Time lies between us and the far-away days of Abraham's life; but recent discoveries have shown that Ur of the Chaldees enjoyed a high State of civilisation a thousand years before his exodus. His experiences and ours meet across the gulf of ages!

**PRAYER**—*O God, may the great cloud of witnesses, who have trodden the Pilgrim Way before us, be to us an example of a godly life, so that we may run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus. AMEN.*

## THE SUPREME CHOICE

*Genesis 13:10-11* “And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.”

**T**HE soul that has taken God as its portion can afford to be generous! As the older man, Abraham might well have claimed the priority of choice, leaving the rest to Lot; but he was quite content to waive his rights, since his Almighty Friend had fixed the place which he was destined to receive for his inheritance. Let Lot choose as he might, he could not obtain an inch of the land which God had included in His Divine purpose for His faithful and obedient servant. “Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land.”

It was, therefore, in quiet confidence that the Patriarch stood beside his kinsman and watched him, as he lifted up his eyes to take and claim the fullest advantage of his uncle’s unexpected offer. When Lot chose for himself the Plain of Sodom, which was well watered everywhere and lovely as Paradise itself, Abraham acquiesced in the choice with unperturbed equanimity. Looking into the face of God, he said in effect: “*Thou* art the portion of mine inheritance; *Thou* maintainest my lot; the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.”

Then—the separation having taken place—God called His servant back to the hill-top, and gave him *all* the land in a covenant for ever, and bade him pass whither he wished over the soil, for it was all his own (Gen 13:14-17).

Let God choose for you! Especially, at the beginning of life, as you stand on its threshold and view the land, dare to follow the promptings of His inner Voice. His Call still comes ringing down the ages: “Follow Me.” “Lo, I am with you alway!”

**PRAYER**—*O God, I believe that Thou knowest just what is best for me. I can ask nothing better than this, to be Thy care, not my own. Through Thy grace, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. AMEN.*

## GOD'S IN HIS HEAVEN

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

**G**OD in the Heavens (Psa 19:1-6). The Psalmist knew little or nothing of modern astronomical discovery, but his words can still be applied to the glorious march of sun and mighty planets toward their distant goal. Voices still speak to us from the vault of heaven, though no sound breaks on our listening ears.

The sun was not a god, but a creation. He can only pursue his destined path and retire at night to the tent of darkness. This is evidently metaphor, but is not the orb of natural day a true emblem of the Sun of Righteousness, the Bridegroom of human souls, who once tabernacled amongst men? Let us warm our cold hearts in the heat of His life-giving rays.

*God in the Scriptures* (Psa 19:7-11). In the first division of the Psalm He is known as *EL*; here as *Jehovah*. Nature may reveal His strength, but the Bible tells of His redeeming love. Notice that each sentence contains a name for Scripture, an attribute, and one of its effects. *Perfect*—no flaw; *sure*, reliable; *right*, a straight road; *pure*, as sunlight; *clean*, making impurity loathsome; *true*, as a reflection of God; *righteous*, revealing His demands, and the way in which we may become righteous. Ponder its effects! The Old Testament, as David knew it, was only a fragment of Divine revelation. What would he have said of our Bible! Alas, for those who instead of enjoying its fragrance are content with merely dissecting it.

*God in the heart* (Psa 19:12-14). He reads its innermost secrets, and His Blessed Spirit longs to cleanse us from secret faults, and to hold us back from presumptuous sin.

**PRAYER**—*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. AMEN.*

## GOD'S EVEN-HANDED GOODNESS

*Matthew 20:7 "They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive."*

*Matthew 20:15 "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"*

**Y**ES, God is good! Our eye may be evil; the thick atmosphere of this earth-sphere makes our vision oblique, but our warped judgment avails nothing against the verdict of the Universe. So good is God that He will give full wages to those who would have been glad to fill their lives with helpful service, if only they had had the opportunity. All day long they may have waited for their chance, but the sun slowly crept from horizon to horizon, and no opportunity was offered to them. Or, if finally their chance came, it lasted but for one brief hour! Nevertheless, their reward will be counted not only for the service of the hour, but for what they would have done if they had been called in the early dawn.

This is not after the manner of men, but it is God's way of dealing with men. He gives of "His own" to those labourers who have been faithful to their opportunity, whether the hours were longer or shorter. "His own!" His own Love! His own Joy! His completed Satisfaction!

But all who are admitted to that inner circle must be prepared to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with His baptism (Matt 20:23). Those who shall sit on the right and left of His throne in glory are the ones who have stooped lowest in bond-slave service. The followers of Jesus are not to be ministered to, but must be willing to follow their Lord even to the giving up of their lives. They must resemble their Master who, when He was on His way to redeem mankind, was willing to stand still and relieve the misery of two blind beggars (Matt 20:34).

**PRAYER**—*Oh, Son of God, pour Thy gentleness into our hearts, Thy compassionate touch into our fingers, Thy tender sensitiveness to human need and sorrow into our cold and callous human senses. AMEN.*

## THE DAY OF RECKONING

*Matthew 25:19 "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them."*

**T**HE three parables recorded in this chapter are of vast importance. Each contains a striking contrast, and in each there is the possibility of supreme joy or the inevitable sentence of deprivation and rejection. In each there is instruction and encouragement on the one side, and on the other we are solemnly warned.

*In the parable of the Virgins*, we learn the necessity of having adequate reserves; of possessing more than the lamp of profession, however chaste and rare; and of procuring without money or price the oil of the gracious indwelling and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That religion is entirely valueless which is not due to His kindling and maintenance.

*In the parable of the Talents*, we learn that the gravest peril in Christian experience attaches not to the highly, or even the moderately-gifted people, but to the poorest and humblest one-talented folk! Because they can do so little they often do nothing. The one talent, which it is death to hide, is lodged with them as utterly useless. But with God the smallest things count! He does not crush the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. He chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

*In the Judgment of the Nations*, we learn that the ultimate test of Christianity is not in profession or doctrine, but our care for those with whom our Lord has always identified Himself—the outcast and helpless, the sick and sorrowful, the stranger and prisoner. Love to God has for its reverse Love to man. Even now the nations are standing before His judgment-bar, and some are being cast on the rubbish heap before our eyes.

**PRAYER**—*Let me not be put to shame, O my Lord, but make me to love and fear Thee with all my heart. Help me to be faithful in the very little things, and to hear Thy well-done at the last. AMEN.*

## THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

*Matthew 16:19 "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

**A**LTHOUGH these words were spoken to the Apostle Peter, there is a profound sense in which every true disciple of Christ can exercise the power of locking and unlocking the door of Faith, Hope, or Love to another soul. You may be aware of some one who is carrying a heavy burden, is oppressed with some over-mastering dread, or is fighting some besetting sin. You try to gain that person's confidence, endeavour to find some way of escape, promise some much-needed assistance, speak words of cheer and encouragement, and in this way unlock the door of the dark cell in which he has been incarcerated. The manifestation of your ready sympathy and help have emancipated him. Is not this a true use of the power of the keys of the Kingdom?

Or it may be some one who is suspected of evil things which are untrue. You listen carefully to the story, and endeavour to put the matter right; you take steps to bring out the purity and sincerity of motives for those who have been misunderstood and misjudged.

Perhaps it is a boy or girl whose life is clouded by some entanglement from which it seems impossible to get free. By your friendly counsel and experience you are enabled to unlock the prison door and emancipate this young soul.

Look out for these opportunities of Christian service; for the life which is hidden with Christ in constant fellowship has an extraordinary power in setting free lives which are bound in fetters of iron. Above all, we can point the fettered soul to Christ our Lord.

### PRAYER—

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,*

*He sets the prisoner free;*

*His Blood can make the foulest clean,*

*His Blood avails for me. AMEN.*

## WHAT IS RELIGION?

*Matthew 15:16 “And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?”*

**I**N this chapter our Lord teaches that true Religion is certainly not a matter of eating and drinking or outward ceremony. It is the intention of the soul, the continual drawing from Christ the life-power needed for our work and ministry to others. It may be illustrated by the experience of the diver, who explores the ocean-bed, but draws upon the breeze that sweeps the ocean-surface.

Our Lord did not underestimate the outward observance of the forms of religion; He set us a definite example by His attendance at the Synagogue and the Temple services, by nights spent in prayer, by constant reference to Holy Scripture—but these were only the outward and natural expression of His unbroken fellowship with His Father. Human love does not consist merely in outward expression, but in the hidden purpose of the heart, and yet, if there be no outward expression the spring will dry up!

Perhaps the two greatest definitions of pure religion are these—the first from the Old Testament: “Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with thy God.” (Micah 6:8) And the second from the New Testament: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27) But to fulfil each of these we need the aid of the Holy Spirit.

To be truly religious is within the reach and scope of us all; but we must avail ourselves of what Jesus Christ has done to bring us to God. In Him there is absolute forgiveness for all the past, and infinite help and grace for the future. He is willing to be our Surety, Friend, and Helper. Through Him we may become partakers of the Divine Nature, and escape the corruption which is in the world through lust.

**PRAYER**—*Give unto me, gracious Lord, the pilgrim spirit that I may be in the world and not of it. Give me Thy grace to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. May I ever walk worthy of the heavenly calling. AMEN.*

## THE SOUL'S VENTURE

*Genesis 8:1 "And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged;"*

**I**t is very helpful to ponder these words, for it gives the assurance that not only will God take care of cattle, and birds, and every living thing, as we learn from Deut 25:4; Psa 104:11-22; Jonah 4:11; Matt 6:26; but that He will much more think of and care for us, His children! Like Noah and his family, you may be shut away from all human help. It may be as impossible for you, as it was for him, to extricate yourself. You may have the responsibility of providing for those in need. Your supplies may be continually decreasing before your eyes, but God remembers you amid the waste of waters, and beneath those dark cloud-covered skies. As a mother cannot forget her sucking child, so God cannot forget you.

The ark grounded on the lower slopes of Ararat on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, and the waters decreased so rapidly, that, as Noah had reaped the harvest before the Flood came, he left the ark in time to sow for the succeeding year. Dare to trust the times and seasons of your life to your Heavenly Father's care. He only waits to be trusted, and then life becomes woven into a beautiful mosaic of His loving forethought and care.

Be sure to guard against raven-like thoughts, which are restless and evil-feeding; seek to cultivate meek, gentle, pure, and dove-like thoughts that cull the olive-leaves of promise from the Word of God. Presently He who said "Come in," will say "Go forth!" Then build your altar of self-sacrifice and self-giving.

**PRAYER**—*Heavenly Father, strengthen me that I may look, not on the dark cloud, but for Thy rainbow; not on what Thou hast taken or withheld, but on what Thou hast left; not on the stormy waters, but on the face of Jesus. AMEN.*

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## THE PROVIDENCE OF THE TRIFLE

*Genesis 24:12-14 "And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master."*

**F**ROM this beautiful incident we can learn much of God's guidance of the soul. Evidently Eliezer, the faithful servant, had absorbed something of his master's faith and method; so that, as we read this artless narrative, we can realize some of the principles on which the entire camp was conducted. Four times he speaks of "the God of my master Abraham." When he had been taken into Abraham's confidence, he entered into the plan with as much zeal and interest as if it were his own private concern. Would that we are equally intent on our Heavenly Master's business, and that those who are our dependants and associates are equally impressed by the reverence and prayerfulness of our lives!

Each step was taken in fellowship with God; but that did not prevent him from exercising his own careful management of the successive steps for ascertaining the disposition of this young girl who was so suddenly summoned from the obscurity of Haran to become a link in the Messianic chain. Eliezer's faith in the Providence of a trifle is most interesting and instructive. He held his peace as the girl drew the water; then, in the assurance of faith that his prayer for guidance had been answered, without further hesitation he placed the bracelets on her arms. Be on the outlook to see God's hand in everything!

Count up the number of times in which this worthy man contrives to bring in the two words, "My master!" We may learn from him how to speak of our Saviour, whenever we get the opportunity—"Rabboni, which being interpreted, is, My Master!"

When asking for good speed to be sent to himself, he alleged as his plea that it would be showing kindness to his master Abraham. So when we ask great things from God, we can plead in the Name of Jesus and be sure that He will show kindness to us for His sake (John 15:16). This old-world story is a beautiful lesson for those who call Jesus Master and Lord.

**PRAYER**—*Send me, O Lord, I humbly ask, good speed this day. May I know when to speak and when to be silent; when to act or refrain from action. In all details of daily life may I faithfully serve Thee, my Master and Friend. AMEN.*

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## RELIGION AND RIDICULE

*Nehemiah 2:19-20 "But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.*

*Nehemiah 4:6 "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work."*

**T**HE building of the ruined walls of Jerusalem, as the record shows, was undertaken in troublous times. Some of the petty rulers in the neighbourhood, exulted in the low estate of the city, because it left room for the exercise of their authority, and they viewed these renewed activities with chagrin. They plotted for the overthrow of the work, and had to be met by incessant watchfulness.

If you are endeavouring to do God's work in the world, to clear away the rubbish of sin, to rebuild the walls that are broken down, and to seek the welfare of God's people, do not be surprised if your steps are beset with scorn and ridicule, by the secret or open malice of Sanballat and Tobiah. For some it is easier to face bitter opposition than to bear mockery and ridicule. If only these scornful and carping tongues were silenced, we could make more headway, but such persecution drives us back on God, makes Him a living fact in life, and opens the door to the manifestation of the saving health of His right hand (Neh 4:4, Neh 4:9, Neh 4:20). How good it is, at such times, to cease from man, and to remember the Lord who is the great and terrible One (Neh 1:5; Isa 51:12-13). Be quite sure that you are on His plan, doing His work in His way; then go forward in His Name, and he will make all the mountains a way.

The lesson for us all is the threefold aspect of the Christian life. There is our *up-look* into God's face—"I prayed to the God of Heaven." We must never forget to pray, for more things are wrought by prayer than we realize. Second, there is our *up-look* against our foes and the foes of God—"we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night." We must watch as well as pray. Lastly, there is our *down-look* towards the work entrusted to us, at which we must labour with unslacking devotion, in fellowship with our Lord (1Cor 3:9). Let each inquire: "Am I inside the city amongst its builders, or outside amongst its detractors and foes?"

**PRAYER**—*O God, teach us day by day what Thou wouldst have us to do, and give us grace and power to fulfil the same. May we never from love of ease, decline the path which Thou pointest out, nor, for fear of shame, turn way from it. AMEN.*

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## THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."*

**W**E cannot have many inner friends, but sad is the life that has not its other self. The friendship of David and Jonathan, of Damon and Pythias, has passed into the current talk of the world. It is especially good for the Christian disciple to travel to heaven with a comrade, Hopeful with Christian, and Mercy with Christiana.

A friend is invaluable if we stumble or fall on the path of life. "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth." "Brethren," says the Apostle, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." (Gal 6:1) Let us watch for each other's souls; if any is falling away from the truth, or into some insidious trap, let us lift him up. Let us exercise the brotherly solicitude that Barnabas did for Paul.

Friendship ought to make our spirits glow. "How can one be warm alone?" Of course, in a spiritual sense there are divine sources of caloric. The love of Christ kindleth to vehement heat. But it is certainly easier to keep up the temperature when we have a kindred heart beside us. Perhaps this was one reason why our Lord sent forth His disciples by two and two (Mark 6:7).

Without companionship material things cannot satisfy. The ties of nature, friendship, and religious communion give a zest to a poor man's life, which the miser with all his wealth forfeits. It is all-important, not only in ordinary life, but pre-eminently in the pilgrimage of the spirit, to have fellowship with some kindred soul.

In temptation a true friend makes us more able to withstand the devil. It is a real help in the hour of trial to have a friend who will appropriate the words of our Lord, saying: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." There is no fellowship like that of Jesus, our Faithful Friend, who lifts us when we fall, chafes us when chilled with cold, and succours us against the Tempter. Does He not make the *third* in the threefold cord—"Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20).

**PRAYER**—*We pray for our companions in life's pilgrimage. Help us to hearten them with our courage, cheer them with our love, and bear their burdens so far as we may. For ourselves may we find in Jesus the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. AMEN.*

## DIGGING WELLS

*Genesis 26:22 “And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.”*

**I**SAAC seems to be rather a disappointing character, and we sometimes wonder that he should be classed with Abraham, the father of all who believe; and Jacob, who prevailed with the Angel and became a Prince! He was passive, quiet, given to thoughtful meditation (Gen 24:63). God’s purpose includes all sorts and types of men, and Isaac dug wells of which men have drunk for thousands of years.

He was constantly pursued by enmity, jealousy, and strife, as the names of his wells attest. But each time he consistently retired from the conflict, and yielded his well to dig another. Finally, his enemies had to confess that he was mightier than they (Gen 26:16). Best of all, God appeared to him “the same night,” and promised that He would be with Him and bless him.

Let us learn to sublimate our resistance to evil, and lift it from the physical to the moral and spiritual level. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty” (Prov 16:32). Go on digging wells—the wells of Family Prayer, of love for the Bible, of holy exercises and habits! You will find spring water (Gen 26:19). That is God’s side of your life. You are called to dig wells, but God’s Holy Spirit will rise up in your soul, and in the souls of others, like the geyser-springs in Arctic regions (John 4:14). Let us present to Him ourselves—our souls and bodies, to be the wells and channels, along and through which His eternal God-Head and Power, arising from the fathomless depths of His own nature, may reach this thirsty and parched world!

God is Love: Love is Self-Giving: but God depends on the co-operation of us, the well-diggers, to make outlets for the outflow of His Love and Goodness.

**PRAYER**—*Most Merciful Father, give us grace that we may never be drawn to do anything that may dishonour Thy Name; but may persevere in all good purposes, and in Thy holy service, unto our lives” end. AMEN.*

## THE CLUE TO LIFE'S MAZE

*Job 1:1,9 "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. ... Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?"*

**T**HIS marvellous poem, one of the profoundest studies in the Bible, deals with the great problem of evil. At some time or other in our lives, we come back to study it, as a clue to life's maze, the expression of our heart's out-cry, and the solution of life's mystery in the Will and Love of God.

From first to last, the supreme questions in this wonderful piece of literature are: "Can God make man love Him for Himself alone and apart from His gifts?" and "Why is Evil permitted, and what part does it play in the nurture of the soul of man?" These questions are always with us. In fact, the Book of Job may be said to be a compendium of the existence and history of our race.

The first chapter teems with helpful lessons. The anxiety of parents for their children should expend itself in ceaseless intercession on their behalf. The great Adversary of souls is always on the watch, considering our conduct so as to accuse us before God, not only for overt sins, but for unworthy motives. We cannot forget our Lord's words to Peter: "Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:" (Luke 22:31,32). Christ never underestimated the power of Satan, the "prince of this world," but He is our great Intercessor (Heb 4:14-16; Heb 7:25).

In circumstances of prosperity and happiness, we must never forget that it is God who plants a hedge about us, blesses our work and increases our substance. It is good to realize that whatever be the malignity of our foes, there is always the Divine restraint, and we are not tempted beyond what we are able to bear. It is not enough to endure our griefs sullenly or stoically. It should be our aim not only to hold fast to our integrity, but to trust God. There is a clue to the mystery of human life, which comes to the man who differentiates between the Real and the Unreal; the Seen and the Unseen.

**PRAYER**—*My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. AMEN.*

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## GOD'S DELAYS ARE NOT DENIALS

*Isaiah 30:18 "And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him."*

**T**HERE are many illustrations of this Divine method in the Word of God. The Angel at the Jabbok-ford waited till Jacob could wrestle no more, being completely exhausted by his struggles; and then, as his helpless antagonist clung to Him for support, He whispered in his ear His mystic name and blessed him there.

Our Lord waited till the Syrophenician woman fell helpless at His feet, with the cry: "Lord, help me!" that He might grant to her the boon she craved for her child. From His throne in Heaven He pursued the same method, waiting to be gracious till the apostles and others in the upper room had reached such a condition of helplessness that He could give them their Pentecost; waiting till the little group of disciples had exhausted every other expedient, that He might release to them Peter from his prison; waiting till Paul had renounced all creative energy, that He might take him strong in His almighty power, while He whispered: "My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Too often we have misinterpreted God's dealings with us. When He has tarried beyond the Jordan, in spite of our entreaties that He should hasten to save Lazarus, we have concluded that He was strangely neglectful. But, in fact, He was waiting, at no small cost to His heart, till we had come to the end of ourselves, and the way was clear for Him to work a more astounding miracle than we had dared to hope.

God's delays are not denials; they are not neglectful nor unkind. He is waiting with watchful eye and intent for the precise moment to strike, when He can give a blessing which will be without alloy, and will flood all after life with blessings so royal, so plenteous, so divine, that eternity will be too short to utter all our praise.

**PRAYER**—*We ask from the treasures of Thy grace for a more childlike trust, a more faithful spirit, a more loyal will. May our obedience open to us all spiritual knowledge. AMEN.*

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## THE EQUILIBRIUM OF LIFE

*Acts 2:46-47 "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*

**I**N every life there should be the worship of the Temple and the service of the Home. Do we realize that God is directing and locating our life-plan? The Home is His arrangement for us equally with the Temple, and the daily meal may be an ordinance as the Lord's Supper. Do you take your food "with gladness and singleness of heart," or do you grumble over your meals? Do you perform common tasks gladly and gratefully? This is only possible when we come to understand that the greatness of life consists, not so much in doing so-called great things, but in doing small things greatly! "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, *do it with thy might.*"

We have been compared to the weavers of the Gobelin tapestry, who may have to work a number of apparently drab and sombre, uninteresting and common things into the pattern on the wrong side of the woof. It is only when the texture is completed that they can see and admire the design that is worthy of the palace of the king! So it is with your life and mine: "We work, we suffer, and see neither the end nor the fruit. But God sees it, and when He releases us from our task, He will disclose to our wondering gaze what He, the great Artist, has woven out of those toils that now seem so sterile."

There was great joy in the lives of these early Christians. They parted with their worldly possessions, but they were filled with gladness, and probably this gave them favour with the people. There was true helpfulness among them. Each one shares with the rest. The *give* and *take* of life is so important. We are all glad enough to take what we can get, but how about to *give*! We like to be waited on, but how about the serving? Yet true gladness and happiness depends, not on being ministered to, but in ministering. When we have learnt the secret of praising God in and for everything; when we refuse to shut ourselves up in our own griefs, but compel our dull spirits to enter into the joys of those around, then we shall have no difficulty in living joyfully and gladly.

**PRAYER**—*O Lord, renew our spirits and draw our hearts unto Thyself that our work may not be to us a burden, but a delight; and give us such a mighty love to Thee as may sweeten all our obedience. AMEN.*

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## GOD'S RESPONSE TO OUR CRY

*Isaiah 30:19 "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee."*

**T**HIS is one of the most exquisite chapters in Isaiah's prophecy. Notice its profound teaching. God permitted the Assyrian to come because of the deep lessons it would teach the king and people that certain abuses must be checked. The siege would surely come, and they would know something of the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, but the Almighty would be near, speaking to His people not only by their sorrows, but by His servants, and by the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. Thus we have an example of the persuasive providence of God. His grace surrounds and keeps His people, but if we wilfully sin, we break the cordon of His protection. When we repent and turn back again to cry to Him, the gentle hand of the Lord will bind up our wounds and soothe our spirits; songs break forth in the night, and our heart is filled with gladness.

The latter part of this chapter (Isa 30:27-33) describes the coming of Sennacherib's troops. They are terrible, and yet there was a sense in which they were called into existence with God: "Behold the Name of the Lord cometh from afar." The advance is compared to a terrific thunderstorm, and then to the rush of a mountain torrent. In Isa 30:28 the final check is given, as when a wild animal is lassoed and brought to its knees. Presently the enemy would vanish silently, and once more the stricken land would be ploughed up for sowing the seed, streams would flow as before, and joyful harvests reaped.

How tender and gracious are these words to those in pain and distress. Be of good cheer, God has not forgotten to be gracious to you! Take to heart these sweet promises, and ask that the counterpart of these blessings may be granted in your experience.

**PRAYER**—*Our Father, we realize that Thou dost need to discipline us when we cease from walking in Thy faith and fear! Make us more sensitive and responsive to the voice of the Holy Spirit, saying: this is the way, walk ye in it; that with gladness of heart we may once more return to Thee. AMEN.*

## GOD OUR DEFENCE AND DELIVERER

*Isaiah 31:5 “As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it.”*

**W**E have in this chapter three beautiful synonyms for God. He is Wise (Isa 31:1-3). The politicians of that time were boasting of their wisdom-in having secured the Egyptian alliance, but their cleverness and strategy were not destined to be of any help to them. Why did they not consult the Holy One of Israel, and seek the help of the Almighty? Was His wisdom only in heavenly and religious matters? Had He not the power to infuse men like Isaiah with a wisdom for earthly and human politics? Surely the boast of wisdom was mockery in the leaders of the people, at that dread hour of Jerusalem’s history, when they turned away from the Light and Glory of the Shekinah to seek human counsellors and worldly stratagems. Not only in religious matters, but in the daily ordering of our human life, “if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting!” (Jam 1:5.)

He is as a Lion (Isa 31:4). The lion is more than a match for the groups of shepherds who endeavour to stand against him with their crooks. He is not afraid of their shouting and views them with contempt. Does not this mean that the mighty presence and power of God would shelter the soul that trusts Him? All the nations might assail the city in vain whilst the Lion of the Tribe of Judah stood as sentry! If you are fearful of heart, and dread the attack of man, flee to God for refuge and defence (Psa 46:1).

He is as a mother-bird and her nest (Isa 31:5). How wonderful these words are! How near God comes to each one of us! We are reminded of our Saviour who longed to gather Jerusalem under His wings! Amid all the fret and worry and anxiety of your life, dare to believe in a Love that will not let you go!

**PRAYER**—*O God our Father, how can we thank Thee for Thy Holy Word, and the many methods by which Thou wouldst gain our confidence and love! Give us grace to return unto our rest beneath the shadow of Thy wings! AMEN.*

## WALKING WITH JESUS

*Colossians 2:6 "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:"*

**T**HE daily walk of the Christian soul is so absolutely important because it is our witness to the world. Our character, as exemplified in our behaviour, is the world's only Bible and sermon (2Cor 3:2-3). Let us learn to walk so as to please God, and to bless mankind. To walk is at first a matter of considering every little step, but afterwards it becomes the habit of the soul (Col 1:10).

We received Jesus into our hearts by faith. He entered through the open door and became our Lord and Master. In the same manner we must live always and everywhere, receiving from Him, by faith, grace upon grace, and allowing what He works in to work out in all manner of godliness, tenderness, and Christlikeness. This practice of looking to Jesus for grace in every circumstance of life tends to become more and more habitual—and this is what the Apostle means when he says, "Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith."

But such a walk is only possible when we have learned to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24). The flesh is the assertion of our self-life, whether in lesser or grosser forms, but whenever self intrudes it exercises a baleful influence on our behaviour and Conversation. Just as the iron of the steamer will deflect the needle of the compass, so the intrusion of our self-life will act as a drag upon our character and walk.

How can we crucify the flesh? Only by allowing the Holy Spirit to have supreme control. He makes the Cross every day dearer and more effective. He will conquer evil habits in us and for us, while we stand by as more than conquerors through His grace. If we will be led by Him, there will not only be deliverance from the self-life, but He will produce in us the fruit of holy living which will please God and refresh men.

**PRAYER**—*Let Thy Holy Spirit be continually with us, and may we feel the powerful effects of Thy Divine Grace constantly directing and supporting our steps. AMEN.*

## THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

*Psalm 100:2 "Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing."*

*Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."*

**T**HE hundredth Psalm is rightly entitled "A Psalm of Praise" (or Thanksgiving). The Psalmist calls for a "joyful noise," i.e. an audible expression of worship. Do not be content with a thankful heart, but express it! It is good to let God have "the fruit of our lips." As a bird will awaken the whole choir of a woodland glade, so the soul really aglow with loving adoration will spread its own contagion of song. How often Christian people hinder the progress of Christianity by their dullness, gloominess, and depression. His service is perfect freedom, and if we delight ourselves in the Lord, we should serve Him with *gladness!*

It is very important to maintain the habit of regular church-going because of its opportunity for worship. Let us "enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise!" By meditation and prayer let us ask that we may be accounted worthy to stand in His Presence, and offer praise and adoration to the Most High God, mingled with the fragrance of our Saviour's Name (Rev 8:3-4).

"The Lord is good!" There are many mysteries, and much pain and sorrow in the world. We must dare to believe and affirm the goodness of God beneath all the distressing elements of modern life. With His goodness are combined His mercy and His truth. Let men do their worst, "His truth endureth to all generations." It is an impregnable Rock, on which the waves of sin can make no sensible impression. What comfort there is in knowing that equally His mercy is everlasting. We need so much patience, forbearance, and longsuffering, that if God's mercy were anything less we should despair, but it is extended to every generation till Time shall be no more!

**PRAYER**—*Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits.*  
**AMEN.**

## PROPOSALS AND DISPOSALS

*Luke 12:15 "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."*

**M**EN are often more eager to get God's help in temporalities than in spiritualities. The man in the crowd, who appealed to Christ, was more anxious that He should interpose on his behalf in a family dispute than to give him the life of the ages. But our Lord refused to be Judge and Arbitrator. His ministry went deeper to the springs of action, and He knew that in each brother there was the root of covetousness, which led the one to wrong the other. He struck at the sin which lay at the root of all such disputes about property.

Our Lord insisted that life does not consist in the abundance of things of which we may happen to possess. We say: "So and so is worth a million pounds!" Heaven estimates a man's worth by the courage, faith, purity, self-control, and love to God and man, which have grown up in the soul by the careful discipline of the years! Acceptance and rank in the Kingdom of God depends on character not on possessions.

How often man proposes and God disposes! We say, "We shall yet live for *many years*, and enjoy the fruit of our labours"; but God says: "*Tonight!*" Listen to the Apostle James, speaking to those who said, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this city or that, and spend a year there, and carry on a successful business! All the while you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. For your life is but a mist, which appears on the hill-side, but vanishes at the touch of dawn. Surely, we ought to say: If it is the Lord's will, we shall live, and do this or that" (Jam 4:13-17).

Many talk of *seeing life* who see only its most sordid and ugly side. If a man really wishes to see life, and know happy days, the secret is given in 1Pet 3:10-19. This is the message of the Gospel, "That God has given us the Life of the ages, and that this life is in Christ Jesus. *He who has the Son has the Life*" (John 3:36; 1John 5:12).

**PRAYER**—*Lord, I know not what is before me, but Thou knowest. Choose Thou my portion for me. Lead me by Thine own hand; and keep me close to Thee, day by day, and night by night. AMEN.*

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## OUR DUTY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR

*Matthew 22:39 "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."*

**O**UR neighbour is the next person who needs our help—man, woman, or child. It is enough that your help is needed, and that you are near! As we read this paragraph from the old Jewish law we see who are our neighbours, and what we are to do for them.

We must give them a chance to live (Lev 19:9-10). We have no right to waste anything that may be of service to others, or to use for ourselves all our possessions. There must always be a margin left which we can give to those who are in need. Well would it be if each reader of these lines would set apart a certain proportion of produce and increase, as well as money, for the cause of Christ and His poor.

We must not withhold payments which are due (Lev 19:13). How many tradesmen and others have been ruined by the long delays of customers in settling their accounts. If only all Christian people would insist on paying cash, especially to small shopkeepers, what a blessed revolution would ensue. It is neither honest nor just to withhold payment from those to whom it is due.

We must be very gentle and considerate to those who suffer from any infirmity (Lev 19:14). God's Love is always endeavouring to make up in some way to those who are handicapped. The blind Milton sings of Paradise, and Helen Keller has been enabled to triumph over insuperable obstacles. We are to become ears to the deaf and eyes to the blind.

We must not hesitate to rebuke sin (Lev 19:17). This needs deep humility, tact, the removal of the beam from one's own eye, the love of Christ for souls; but how much might be done if we would stay the little rift within the lute!

We must not bear a grudge (Lev 19:18). All, this is hard! To feel hurt, to take offence, to be cold and stiff, to stand at a distance, how many of us fail here! But we must act and speak to others in the power of God's Love, as we would do if there were no grudge within.

The lawyer asked Christ: "Who is my neighbour?" suggesting that some one should neighbour him. Our Lord reversed his inquiry, saying in effect: "Whom will *you* neighbour?" If you go through life seeking people to neighbour you, life will be full of disappointment; but blessed is he who seeks to neighbour others; he shall not lack those who, in the hour of trial, will neighbour him.

**PRAYER**—*O Lord, soften our hard and steely hearts, warm our icy and frozen hearts, that we may wish well to one another, and may be the true disciples of Jesus Christ. AMEN.*

## VICTORY OVER DEATH

*Isaiah 25:8 "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it."*

*1 Corinthians 15:55 "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"*

*Revelation 7:17 "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."*

**I**N this marvellous chapter, Isaiah sings a Song of Hope, as he sees the return of the Hebrew people from captivity, and the overthrow of their foes. The Apostle Paul takes up this thought in 1 Cor. 15. He shows that death is the penalty of sin, and it is by the demands of the law that sin is stirred to activity. But Christ has satisfied and met the claims of the law, and gives power by which we are enabled to obey it; therefore the strength of sin is broken, and the sting of death is gone.

The Christian need not dread to die. For him there is no uncertainty about the future. There is no fear of what may come after death, for the condemnation of the law has been met and borne. We may apostrophise death in these exultant words. The viper has been deprived of its fangs! the prison-house cannot hold its inmates! Bunyan describes Satan as exhorting Captain Sepulchre to be sure to hold Christ, but the injunction was useless. No bars or bolts, no seal or sentry would suffice.

Notice that we are to "Put on" incorruption and immortality (1Cor 15:53-54). It is as though the new body will be put on over the old, and as this takes place, all the elements of the old body will be swallowed up and absorbed. When the Holy Spirit completes his work in our souls, there will be no trace of the old rags left in the shining robes in which we shall be arrayed as we go forth to meet the welcome of our Lord. Death to those who believe in Christ is now only a Home-going; the falling asleep to open the eyes in the City of God; the loosening of the anchor, to float down stream in the full tide. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

**PRAYER**—*O God, whensoever Thy ways in nature or in the soul are hard to be understood, then may our quiet confidence, our patient trust, our loving faith in Thee be great, and as children knowing that they are loved, cared for, guarded, kept, may we with a quiet mind at all times put our trust in the unseen God. So may we face life without fear, and death without fainting. AMEN.*

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## THE GROWTH OF THE SOUL

*Psalm 63:8 "My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me."*

**T**HERE are three notes in this Psalm which betoken the stages of the soul's growth: "My soul *thirsteth* for Thee"; "my soul shall be *satisfied*"; "my soul *followeth hard after Thee*." We may be passing through a wilderness of spiritual drought, the dark night of the soul, the seasons of dryness and depression which are apt to befall. In some cases, as when Elijah asked to die, or when John sent his despairing question to Christ from his prison, it is the result of physical or mental overstrain. But at such times, let us never hesitate still to speak of God as "*my God*." Nothing can sever you from His everlasting Love. You may not have the glad consciousness of it, but you must never surrender your belief in it. Go on blessing Him, as long as you live, and lift up your hands in prayer.

But we can never be satisfied with what we have attained. God is ever moving forward! Let us follow hard after Him.

**PRAYER**—*Living or dying, Lord, I would be Thine. Draw me day by day nearer to Thyself, until I be wholly filled with Thy love, and fitted to behold Thee face to face. AMEN.*

## SELF-WATCH!

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

**S**AID Peter to our Lord, "Spare Thyself this death of which Thou speakest—this bitter suffering and anguish shall never be Thine!" These words are continually spoken still, and many are the voices that bid us spare ourselves—the voices of our friends who love us; the voices of prudence and worldly wisdom; the voices of our own wayward hearts.

Do not spare your judgment of yourself. Never permit yourself to do things which you would be the first to condemn in others. Never suppose that there are reasons for you to do a wrong, which, under no circumstances would you tolerate in your neighbour.

Do not spare yourself in confessing your sins and mistakes. Confession is one of the tests of nobility. Not a few are willing to confess to God, who never attempt to confess to men. It is a serious question whether that sorrow for sin is genuine and deep enough which does not lead the offender to ask his fellow-man for pardon, even as he asks his God. Nothing could be clearer than Christ's words, that whenever we remember that our brother has aught against us, we are to leave our gift at the altar, and go first to seek reconciliation with him, before we offer our sacrifice to God.

The supreme test of goodness is not in the greater but in the smaller incidents of our character and practice; not what we are when standing in the searchlight of public scrutiny, but when we reach the firelight flicker of our homes; not what we are when some clarion-call rings through the air, summoning us to fight for life and liberty, but our attitude when we are called to sentry-duty in the grey morning, when the watch-fire is burning low. It is impossible to be our best at the supreme moment if character is corroded and eaten into by dally inconsistency, unfaithfulness, and besetting sin.

You cannot really help people without expending yourself. The only work that tells must cost you something. Gold, silver, and precious stones can never be built into the new Jerusalem unless you are willing to part with them from the stores of your own life.

**PRAYER**—*Most loving Father, may love fill and rule my heart. For then there will spring up and be cherished between Thee and me a likeness of character, and union of will, so that I may choose and refuse what Thou dost. AMEN.*

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## WATCHING FOR SOULS

*Colossians 1:27-28* "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: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:"

*Acts 20:31* "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

**T**HE ministry of warning should be a recognized part of the work of the Church and of each individual member. The foghorn warns the ship from the deadly rocks; the red light warns the train of imminent danger; in the days of the plague people were warned from infected areas: how much more should we, who know the wrath of God which abides on those who refuse Christ, raise our voice in warning. We should do it deliberately, earnestly, patiently, and in reliance upon the Spirit of God to make our words, however much they may be resented, the means of arresting the wicked from the error of his ways, and those who are taking their first steps in forbidden paths from pursuing them (Eze33:7-9).

How wonderful it is that God does not commission angels to carry His warnings and appeals; instead of this, the work that angels might love to do is entrusted to men. It is at our peril that we neglect our opportunities in this direction. If the signalman is placed at a point where many lines of rail cross or diverge, and he sleeps at his post, or neglects his duty, he may be tried for manslaughter; and if we know of people in the immediate circle of our influence who are in danger of ruining their physical, moral, and spiritual well-being, we are bound to raise a warning voice. If we saw, upon the upper reaches of a river, a boat full of people hastening towards the rapids unheeding the danger, surely we might be guilty of being an accessory in their destruction, if we failed to do something to warn them of their peril.

Accompanying our words of warning, there should be the clear reiteration of the *Love of God*. He does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. It is not enough to try and prevent men from taking the wrong path, we must urge and allure them to take the pleasant ways of righteousness and peace. All are included in the love of God. Even sin cannot turn away His love, which is like that described in the parable of the Prodigal Son, or 1Cor 13.

**PRAYER**—*O God, we have left undone many things that we ought to have done. Hands have been reached out for help which we have not given; hearts have turned to us for sympathy which we have not blessed. Forgive us, we pray Thee, and at whatever cost may we follow Christ in His redemptive purpose. AMEN.*

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## THE FOLLY OF BEING UNPREPARED

*Matthew 25:10* “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.”

**T**HE foolish virgins made five great mistakes. (1) *They made no provision* for the continuance of their light. It is not enough merely to have the lamp; it must be lit and maintained, because there is something for the fire to feed on. How many there are who are on fire and in earnest during the first stage of their religious life, but they have made no provision for maintaining the flame which has been kindled by the grace of God. They have lamps, but have neglected to take oil. The oil stands for fellowship with the Lord Jesus, for the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the daily study of the Bible, for the kindling communion of worship with fellow-Christians.

(2) *They slept.* There was a difference between the sleep of the foolish and that of the wise. There are two kinds of sleep. The one arises from a sense of security and trust. Every preparation has been made; all has been done that could be done, and we resign ourselves deliberately to the care of God. So Peter slept in the prison, before the angel came to deliver him. But there is another kind of sleep. The sleep of the sentry, when the foe is stealing up the pass; of the pilot, when the ship is making for the serried teeth of the rocks; of the nurse, when the patient's life is quivering in the balance. These foolish ones had no right to sleep, when they were so utterly unready to meet the Bridegroom. We must not take things for granted, or say “Peace, peace, when there is no peace!”

(3) *They thought they could procure oil from the wise.* But the appeal was in vain. Each must bear his own burden of responsibility in the sight of God. We may “buy without money and without price,” but each must appropriate the living grace and power of Jesus for himself.

(4) *They thought they could get in;* “Lord, Lord, open to us!” But the door was irrevocably closed! “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

(5) *They thought that the Bridegroom would recognize them.* But He said: “I know you not.” Let each ask himself: “Does Jesus know me? Will he recognize me at last?” The only way to be sure, is to kneel at the foot of His Cross until He seals us with the Holy Spirit, and says: “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine.”

**PRAYER**—*O Lord, we pray that our lives may be lamps to which Thou shalt supply oil. Help us to be burning and shining lights for this dark world. AMEN.*

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## WHEAT AND TARES

*Matthew 13:25* “But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.”

**H**OW clearly our Lord taught the personality of Satan! In His explanation of this parable, He said distinctly, “The enemy that sowed them is the devil.” He knew that in every heart—in the Church as well as in the world—the great enemy of God’s Kingdom, and of human happiness, is always at work, sowing tares. The seed may be very small, but in a single night irreparable injury may be wrought.

Notice that we become as the seed we receive—those who receive the wheat-seed become wheat; those who receive the tare-seed become tares. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” How careful we should be over the books we read, the companionship and friendship that we form, the recreations that we take part in. Such are some of the processes by which our characters are being made. If we are thoughtless and careless, we expose ourselves to the reception of tare-seed, which germinates into weeds and rubbish. Of course, if our necessary duties take us into scenes where evil is rife, we may claim the keeping power of Christ, and hide ourselves in Him. As the doctor or nurse will saturate themselves with disinfectant when called to a house where plague or fever is incurred, so the Holy Spirit, in whom we may bathe our souls, will be as the antiseptic, and deliver us from the microbes of temptation (Gal 5:16-17).

There is not much difference, it is said, between wheat and tares, in the earlier stages of growth; it is only when the harvest comes that the distinction is clearly defined. So in the Church and the world, there are many counterfeits, people who seem to be good and true, but they are not what they seem, and in the day of reckoning they will be rooted up and cast forth as rubbish. The two classes that will be rejected at last are “all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;” (Matt 13:41). It may be that you are not amongst those that do iniquity, in any of its glaring forms, but are you causing others to stumble by your inconsistent behaviour or worldliness? Let each of us carefully examine ourselves, and open our hearts to receive from the hand of the Lord Jesus the incorruptible seed which He waits to implant by His Word.

**PRAYER**—*Give us a pure judgment and a true understanding of Thy Word, O Lord, that we may not be deceived and carried away by any error; but grant that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. AMEN.*

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## SHINING LIGHTS

*Philippians 2:15-16* “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”

**T**HE spirit of man, says the wise man, is the candle of the Lord (Pro 20:27). By nature we are like so many unlit lamps and candles. As the wick is adapted for the flame, but stands dark and cold until it is ignited, so we are unable to shed forth any light until our nature is kindled from the Eternal Nature of Him who “is Light, and in whom is no darkness at all.” Has the candle of your life been lit by contact with Christ, the Sun of Righteousness?

Our Lord says: “Let your light shine before men.” He shows how absurd it is to light a lamp, and then obscure its rays by placing it under a bushel. The purpose of ignition is frustrated if the light is covered. Ah! how many of us place bushels on the light of our testimony for God—the bushel of uncharitable speech! Of ill-temper! Of a discontented and querulous spirit! These as well as more conspicuous failings will prevent us from shining forth as light in a dark world. It is not for us to ignite the flame or supply the oil. All we have to do is to keep our lamps clean and bright, to guard against anything that may obstruct the out-shining of the Love and Life of God through the soul. If we are careful to see that anything which might hinder the effect of our testimony and mar our influence is put away, Christ will see to it that our light shall effect the full measure of His purpose.

In contrast to the bushel is the stand or candlestick. The Master of the House may place you in a very small dark corner, and on a very humble stand, but some day, as He passes by, you shall light His footsteps as He goes forth to seek and save that which is lost. What is your stand?—your place in society, your position in the home, your situation in some business house, factory, or school—wherever it be, it doesn’t matter, so long as your light is shining forth, steady and clear, warning and directing men and women in the path of life.

**PRAYER**—*O Christ, may the fire of Thy Divine Love burn up our bushels; help us to shine forth as lights in this dark world. AMEN.*

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## THE CURE FOR SHORT SIGHT

*2 Peter 1:8-9 "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."*

**T**HE Christian graces which we have to supply present themselves to the Apostle's mind as the golden links of a chain or necklace, which begins with Faith, and ends with Love, so that Faith and Love clasp in the centre (2Pet 1:5-7).

The idea of lavish expenditure is here associated with the word translated "Add" (2Pet 1:5,11). Among the ancient customs of Greece, was the expression of goodwill to society on the part of leading citizens by the provision of public entertainment, in honour of benefactors, or generals returning victorious from war. Rich men craved permission to bear the cost, as in modern days men will endow hospitals and libraries.

So the Apostle says, See to it that you spare no cost in the glorious provision of "these things"; spare neither thought nor pains, if only these Christian graces are in you and abound. Then, for you also, there will be a profuse expenditure of Heavenly welcome. You will not enter the Heavenly City unnoticed and alone. A choral and processional greeting will be yours. You will not enter the port like some water-logged vessel, but with colours flying and all sails set! (2Pet 1:11.)

Notice the order of these graces. Each is in the other like those Chinese boxes, each of which contains a number of smaller ones which fit inside. Opening the one marked *Faith, manly courage* should be discovered; opening courage, *knowledge* should present itself; from knowledge, we should come on *self-control*; within self-control should be *patience*; inside patience we have towards men should be *godliness* towards God; then we find *brotherly love*; and finally we come on Love!

The Apostle says that those who lack "these things" are short-sighted—they see only the things of this world, not the real things of eternity. The tenth verse warns us that the careful culture of these things in the heart will prevent stumbling in the outward life (Jude 1:20-24). So many people wait to *feel good* before they act goodness. The Divine method is to step out on the path of obedience to Christ, believing that He will supply the needed grace.

**PRAYER**—*Accept, O Most Merciful Father, of this renewed dedication which we make of ourselves, our bodies, souls, and spirits unto Thee. Grant that we may be like Jesus, pure and undefiled, meek and gentle, peaceable, patient, contented and thankful. AMEN.*

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## STAND AT THE BOW!

*Philippians 3:13-14* “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

**A**LWAYS stand at the bow! Leave the stern with its backward look and make for the bow. To spend time in sad review of past sins and failures is not to put them to the best account. Confess them, and believe that for Christ’s dear sake they are absolutely forgiven! Failure often provides the material for success, and our dead selves may become the stepping-stones to better things. Did not our Lord say to His disciples: “Sleep on now and take your rest”—the past is irreparable, but immediately added: “Arise, let us be going!”—the future is available. Therefore, leave the stern with its backward look, and make for the bow.

True, the sky before us may be dark with storm-clouds. The weather-prophets say that the world is shedding its old sanctions without replacing them with better ones; that seven civilizations have already passed, and we are to see the death of the eighth. Be it so, but they forget that God holds the stormy waters in the hollow of His hand; that Jesus walked the threatening billows to succour His friends. They forget that when the earth was without form and void, the Spirit of God brooded in the chaos and darkness, creating the heavens and earth. They cannot detect the voice of the Creator saying, “Behold, I make all things new!” Out of chaos is born the cosmos. Each age ends in travail, out of which a *new age* is born.

Look out to the vast circle of the horizon, and prepare for the new lands to be explored, the wonderful discoveries that await us, the great missions hidden in the future which are waiting to be fulfilled. Never doubt that the clouds will break. Never dream that wrong will triumph. Never count yourself God-forsaken or forgotten. The Master may seem to be asleep on His pillow, oblivious and uncaring, but His hand is on the helm. He guides your course. He rules the waves and they obey Him.

**PRAYER**—*He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; So He bringeth them in the haven of their desire. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness! AMEN.*

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## THE DEVOTIONAL USE OF SCRIPTURE

*Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

**I**N each verse of Psalm 119, the Psalmist mentions the Scriptures, with one exception, and the constant quotation of the Old Testament by our Lord and His Apostles yields abundant evidence of loving and reverent fellowship with the holy men of past ages, who wrote and spoke as moved by the Holy Spirit. It is specially remarkable that the Lord Jesus in His Temptation, in all His teaching, and in the agony of the Cross bore constant witness to the unique authority of the Word of God spoken through the Old Testament saints.

We may know God, says the Psalmist, through a threefold revelation. Though they have no audible voice or language, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament of space, studded with myriads of stars, shows His handiwork. Though speechless, their words witness for Him to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The closing stanza of this great Psalm unfolds God's handiwork in the construction and direction of our moral nature. Between these golden clasps the Psalmist extols the Scriptures under ten striking similitudes, and that disposition must be indeed extraordinary that does not come within the scope of one of them. The soul that needs restoring; the simple who would become wise; the sad heart who would rejoice; the eyes that would be enlightened; the soul that longs for the gold of truth; the desire for sincerity and reality; the search for understanding and righteousness—all such needs and many more are met from a devout reading of Holy Scripture.

All great ministries which have remained fresh and fragrant through long courses of years have proved the wealth of inexhaustible teaching and inspiration which lies hidden in the Bible. Let us each one resolve to soak ourselves in the Scripture before turning to prayer, as water poured in to moisten the sucker will help to draw water up.

**PRAYER**—*Teach us, O Blessed Spirit of Inspiration, so to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest Thy words, that we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, and be enabled to lead others into a true understanding of and love for its hidden treasures. AMEN.*

## BENEDICITE!

*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.”*

**T**HE theme of this first Psalm is the Blessedness of keeping “the Law,” which is the transcript, of the mind and will of God. David was never weary in its praise—“How I love Thy law; it is my meditation all the day!”

What we all need today is a passionate love for the will and commands of God. Docility to learn, and faith to fulfil are the two qualities by which our heart may be kept pure and childlike, and through which we shall come to understand the Bible, nature, and human life. Well may the Psalter, which enshrines obedience to God’s Law, begin with *Blessed* and end with *Hallelujah!*

Here are, first, the negations of the loyal and true soul. If we refuse to *walk* in the counsel of the wicked, we shall never *sit* in the seat of the scornful. But these negatives are chiefly valuable as contributing to the positive, as the wall protects the plant that grows behind it. Our religious life must be fed from hidden springs, as the rootlets of the tree creep under the soil to drink of the stream (Psa 1:3). Such a life becomes fruitful and beautiful. It is also prosperous, because it abides in the will of God. It cannot be really injured by evil, and in the deepest sense it realizes the purpose for which God commissioned it.

Any life which refuses reverence and obedience to God’s will must resemble the rootless, fruitless, and lifeless chaff, which is scattered by the winnowing wind.

Which type does your life resemble? Are you the deeply-rooted tree, yielding beauty and fruit and shelter to many, or is your life being frittered away like the worthless chaff?

**PRAYER**—*Open to me, I pray Thee, O Spirit of Truth, the treasures of Thy Word, that my soul may be continually enriched, and that I may abound in every good word and work, to Thy honour and glory. AMEN.*

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## THE ATTRACTION OF CHRIST'S HUMANITY

*Matthew 19:2 "And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there."*

*Mark 1:37 "And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee."*

**A** SENTENCE which was once uttered in a Roman theatre, and welcomed with thunderous plaudits was abundantly true of the Son of Man—"I am a Man, and nothing that touches humanity is foreign to Me." This was true during His earthly life, and it is true always, and of this we have ample illustration in the Gospel story.

Our Lord blesses man and wife as they live in holy wedlock; He takes their children in His arms; inspires young men and women with the loftiest ideals; warns men against the evil use of wealth and power; promises to those who are willing to pass through this life, denying themselves the joys of home-life, parents, and children for His sake, that they shall be infinitely compensated.

There is no phase of human life which Jesus is not willing to share, and through all relationships and circumstances He waits to breathe the fragrance of perfect love. Is not that a boon which we all need, but which so many miss? Why do so many marriages turn out ill? Is it not often because each seeks rather to get than to give, to be ministered to rather than to minister? If each were inspired by a love that made the other the centre of thought and care and tenderness, the wedding-bells would ring on through all the passing years.

Christ's love is so attractive that when He is rightly presented boys and girls will turn to Him as flowers turn to the sun. Alas! that by our evil example and failure we so often forbid them. How poor is our appreciation and response to His love! We are willing to keep the commandments of a moral and respectable life because it suits and pleases us, but when it comes to following Him and renouncing wealth, position, and self-pleasing for His dear sake, we turn back! We admire His ideals and teaching, but so often go sorrowfully away because we really love ourselves more than we love Him!

### PRAYER—

*Higher than the highest heavens,  
Deeper than the deepest sea.  
Lord, Thy love at last hath conquered;  
Grant me now my soul's petition,  
None of self, and all of Thee. AMEN.*

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## THE DIVIDING LINE

*Matthew 25:44* “Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?”

**W**E can no longer serve our Lord as they did in the days of His flesh, when they ministered to Him of their substance. But He has left behind His representatives, and whatever we do for them He takes as to Himself. Therefore we are debtors to all men; to every unit of the human family we must pay back a proportion of our infinite debt to the Son of Man (Rom. 1:14).

The dividing line hereafter will not be a *Credal* one—not “How much do you believe?” Nor even a *Devotional* one—“How much did you pray?” But a *Practical* one—“What did you do?” The Apostle James shows that our faith is evidenced by our works (James 2:14-20). It is not enough to say “Lord, Lord!” We must show the same spirit as our Master in love for our fellows, or we shall be rejected at the last.

The Lord’s brethren are spread widely through the world. Whenever we meet the hungry and thirsty, the stranger and the homeless, the sick or imprisoned soul, we encounter one whom He calls “Brother” or “Sister,” and to help any such is to send a thrill of joy through the soul of our Redeemer. We must have the quick eyes of love to penetrate the many disguises that our Lord assumes. It is said that when St. Francis was riding across a plain, he saw a leper standing by the roadside, asking for alms. Dismounting, he not only gave to him, but kissed him on the cheek. As he was riding away, he looked back, and saw Christ Himself standing where the beggar had been, and he knew that he had been permitted to kiss his Lord.

Notice that the saints do not generally realize that they have done anything *directly for Christ*: “Lord, when saw we *Thee*?” The beauty of goodness is its modesty and unobtrusiveness, as the charm of childhood is its unconsciousness. Notice, also, that in Christ’s eyes, it is a crime *not to do*. Moses says that it is wrong to do wrong; Jesus that it is wrong not to do fight. Some were cast away, as men reject weeds, not because they had violated the Ten Commandments, but because they failed to fulfil the Law of Love.

Let us consecrate ourselves to the service of men, women, and children for the sake of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

**PRAYER**—*Help us, dear Lord, to minister to the needs of others, to care for the poor and needy, the destitute and outcast, to show our love to Thee by our sympathy and help to the least of Thy brethren. AMEN.*

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## SECRET IDOLS

*Mark 10:21-22 "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."*

**H**OW many there are who know in their hearts what their duty is, but fail to do it because they are hiding some forbidden thing; they refuse to launch on the current sweeping past them, because they are secretly anchored to a sandbank; they go from one teacher to another, with an appearance of earnest inquiry after eternal life, which never comes to anything, because they are unwilling to renounce their secret idol.

In the case of this young man, it was the love of money. "He had great possessions." There is no harm in money. It is one of God's gifts to men, but it is hard to own it without coming to look upon it as *one's own*, instead of realizing that we are stewards only. It was for this reason that our Lord proposed this supreme test. St. Francis of Assisi thought that these words applied universally, and founded the Order of the Franciscans, pledged to poverty. But it seems more in harmony with the spirit of the Gospel to believe that it was a special test put to this seeker after truth, to reveal him to himself.

The law of love is not negative only but positive. The most essential condition for each of us is to be willing, like another young man who was living at that time, to "count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ," (Phil 3:8). If you would follow Christ and are prepared for Love's sake to surrender all, you will probably be entrusted with manifold more, because Christ knows that He can make you His almoner with no fear of gold dust adhering to your palm in its transmission.

Let us guard against the idol of money or possessions. Riches which open most doors, will not furnish a pass-key to Heaven. Let us see to it that we always act as stewards of God's property, but this is not possible unless we are living perpetually in fellowship with our Master, who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich, and who says to us also, "Come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

**PRAYER**—*The dearest idol I have known, Whate'er that idol be, Help me to tear it from Thy throne, And worship only Thee. AMEN.*

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## FISHERS OF MEN

*Matthew 4:18-19 “And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”*

**I**T is thus that Christ adapts Himself to the understanding and the heart. He caught these fishermen with bait suited to them. Notice the undoubting certainty of His promise to make these two brothers fishers of men, casting their dragnet not into the waters of the sea of Galilee, but into the great ocean of humanity. How impossible it would have been to convince Peter then that within four years he would make the great haul of three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). Ah, we never know what awaits us when we leave all to follow in obedience to the Master’s Call!

“*Follow Me!*” Our Lord is always making this challenge (John 21:19-22). It means bearing the cross, but we must be willing to follow Christ until, like Him, we fall into the ground and die—die to our own ambitions, our love of power and influence, our own strength and gifts, that we may make way for God to work through us. We must learn not to obtrude ourselves, but to lie hidden. The first, the second, and the third condition of successful fishing is to be hidden from sight. The best line and bait for catching men are those where the human element is out of sight, and our one aim is to serve Christ’s purpose, and to glorify Him.

*There must be a leaving of our nets and boats*, and even those who are nearest and dearest (Matt 4:20-23). It must have been something of a wrench for these brothers to leave their nets and fishing to follow Christ. But the attraction of His Personality prevailed. There is no difficulty in persuading men to surrender the lower and inferior article, if you can unfold to them the immense value of the Pearl of great price. Then they will gladly sell all that they have to buy it.

### **PRAYER—**

*Jesus calls us: by Thy mercies,  
Saviour, make us hear Thy call.  
Give our hearts to Thine obedience,  
Serve and love Thee best of all. AMEN.*

## LOVE'S COMPULSION

*Luke 14:23 "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."*

**W**E can never estimate the yearning love of God for the souls of men. He sees us absorbed with farming and industry; business and pleasure; with our homes and family-life, and knows that these will all pass away, as a dream before the first touch of eternity. With intense passion He desires that we shall be really satisfied with abiding joys.

The Feast that He spreads is abundant and ready (Isa 25:6; Isa 55:1-2). A banquet is a happy-making time. As the guests sit together, there is the brilliant flow of conversation, the sparkle of laughter, the enjoyment of the good things provided, the interchange of friendship and fellowship. Everything that a feast stands for God is waiting to give us. "He gives us richly all things to enjoy." How strange it is that men, mocked by the Evil One, are cajoled into forfeiting their places at the banqueting table, which God has spread for them!

The Jewish people were first bidden, but they were too much occupied with material things to respond to the gracious invitation. The excuses offered were shallow and stupid; the real reason lies much deeper, in the disinclination of the soul to arouse itself to lay hold of the life which is life indeed! But God's purpose of Love cannot be defeated (Luke 13:28-30; Acts 13:45-48).

*"Go out into the highways and hedges."* Here is our work as His servants! The high-roads, along which the streams of commerce and pleasure, weddings and funerals, statesmen and business men, young men and women, housewives and children—are constantly passing! The hedgerows are the quiet sequestered lanes of the countryside, now covered with spring flowers, and again with autumn tints. The up-to-date motor car, or the slow-jogging country wagon are symbols of different modes of life, but the souls that use them alike need the message of Good News. Let us go forth and constrain them to come in that our Master's House may be filled!

**PRAYER**—*Blessed Lord, have mercy upon those who reject the invitation of Thy Love! Take from us all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word; and so fetch us home, dear Lord, to Thy flock, that we may be saved, and become one flock under the Great Shepherd of souls. AMEN.*

## WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY!

*Luke 5:19 "And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus."*

**W**HAT a lovely human story this is! The crowds that gathered around our Lord, as He taught them, were so great that they filled not only the house where He was staying, with the Pharisees and learned men sitting by, but overflowed into a vast multitude in the fore-court. The Master may have stood on the balcony of a double-storied house, so as to be able to reach the crowds within and without.

As He was teaching, presently four men approached, carrying on a hammock slung between them a paralysed man. We are not told in so many words that they were young men, but their earnestness and ingenuity incline one to this idea. Perhaps they had been school-chums together, and as they grew up they may have entered upon evil ways—"sown their wild oats" together, and one of their number may have been suffering from the consequences, for our Lord very distinctly set the pardon of his *sins* before the healing of his body. His four companions had probably heard Christ preach and had become His followers, for it was "*seeing their faith*" that He performed this miracle of salvation and healing. They agreed that by hook or by crook they would bring their friend into Christ's gracious presence. Unable to make their way through the throng, they were not daunted, but climbed up on to the roof, and the record says, "let him down through the tiling." Lowered by strong hands, with its four ropes, the hammock swung to the feet of the Master, and the expectant imploring eyes of this poor fellow could not make a more eloquent appeal for help than did the evident faith of his bearers.

The words with which our Lord saluted him were very tender and gracious: "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee!" One of the sure means of physical health is to be assured of spiritual cleansing and forgiveness (James 5:14-16). Would that we were all equally anxious to bring our friends to Christ. If four would agree about a fifth, and never rest until he or she was brought to Jesus, what a revival would break out (John 4:28-30).

**PRAYER**—*Enlarge our souls with a Divine Love, that we may hope all things, endure all things, and become messengers of Thy healing mercy to the grievances and infirmities of men. AMEN.*

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## LOOKING BACKWARD

*Deuteronomy 8:2 “And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.”*

**T**HE keynote of this chapter is “Remember!” Faith begins without certain evidence of an external and positive kind, but as life advances, one day after another adds the weight of its indisputable testimony. If we step out on the supposition that there is an eternal and spiritual world enwrapping us on all sides, we shall come to so clear and distinct an assurance of it, that it would be easier to doubt our existence. It is a good thing to *look back* and see the *way*; it is as certain as possible that the thread of Divine purpose is stringing together the many-coloured links of our life.

Notice the alliteration of Deut 8:15, Deut 8:16. “Who *led* thee”; “Who *fed* thee.” Where God leads, He feeds! Look back on the past, and see that just as sure as the guidance of God, has been His care. There is no lack to those who allow Him to lead them in His own paths.

Look back on the past!—*Its sins and backslidings*—leave them behind for ever, and rise to newness of life. *Its discipline*—intended to chasten and strengthen us. *Its trials*—meant to reveal God’s power to deliver in the hour of trouble that we may glorify Him. The terrible wilderness of *loneliness*, the fiery serpents of *temptation*, the *manna* which has never failed to fail, the *water* which the Rock has ever yielded. Deut 8:17-18 teach us the lesson of humility. If, for some reason, you have been put into a position of wealth, honour, or influence, do not be proud, or think that your talents or abilities are to receive the praise. Thank God, and remember that it is He who gives the power to get wealth or honour, and He does it with a very definite purpose! Will you not pledge yourself to serve and worship Him? As you climb the crest of the hill, and begin to descend into the plain, not knowing what lies before, veiled in the mist, fear not, tighten your girdle, put your hand in His, and walk with Him to be His instrument to bless the world of men.

### PRAYER—

*Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet;  
Lest we forget—lest we forget! AMEN.*

## THE ROYAL TRIUMPH

*Matthew 21:5-9 "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."*

**T**HE King of Glory approached the Holy City, seated not on the richly-draped war-horse, or followed by a glittering band of soldiers, but riding on a lowly ass, and attended by a vast crowd of rustic pilgrims! He was welcomed, not by the Governor Pilate, or Caiaphas the High Priest, but by the children, the poorer folk, the blind and the lame whom He had healed. His lodging-place was the bare ground on the mount of Olives, and on one occasion, at least, He was hungry enough to seek fruit from the fig-leaf.

Yet there was a mystic power about Him before which the rabble, that filled the courts of the Temple with noise and filth, were driven forth, and which the chief priests and scribes had to acknowledge when they challenged Him as to His authority (Matt 21:23). His authority was that of Truth and Purity and God. It was a stray beam of His intrinsic Majesty. One who knew Him intimately said: "We beheld His glory, as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Soul of man, to thee, also, thy King cometh! Let the gates of thy heart lift up their portals and admit Him! At first you may dread the revolution which His coming suggests, but be quick to give to Emmanuel, the Prince, all the keys of Mansoul. Enthroned Him in thine heart! He is the King and Heir, and He will make thee a joint-heir with Himself. Let the kingdom of your life become the kingdom of God and of His Christ. Let every thought be brought into subjection to Him. But if, on the other hand, you are content to build the house of life apart from Him, be very sure that you are rejecting the one Chief Cornerstone, which can alone give the necessary stability and beauty to its structure. To forfeit that will involve the absolute destruction of the edifice on which your whole life-energy may have been expended (Matt 7:27; 1Cor 3:10-15).

### PRAYER—

*But chiefest in our cleansed breast,  
Eternal, bid Thy Spirit rest;  
And make our secret soul to be  
A temple pure and worthy Thee.  
Hosanna in the highest! AMEN.*

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## THE PRACTICE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

*Psalm 139:7,9,10 "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ... If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ... Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."*

**T**HE story of the monk who constantly used this phrase is well known to most people. It was in the sixteenth century, one winter's day, as Brother Lawrence was walking in the forest, he found himself standing beneath a tree stripped of its foliage. The thought suddenly flashed on him that before very long that same tree would be covered with the leaves and glory of spring. "Then God must be here," said he to himself, and his whole being became awed and filled with the thought of God. That impression remained with him for the rest of his life, and he said that he was more deeply impressed with the actual sense of God's Presence in the kitchen, when he was preparing the food for his brother monks, than when he was kneeling before the Sacrament.

It is a blessed experience when the soul lives in this awareness of God; when we live, and move, and have our being in Him; whether we take the wings of the morning, and go with the sun in its passage to the western sea, or descend into the valley of the shadow of death. Let us read this Psalm (Psa 139) again, remembering that our Lord said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt 28:20)

The habit of practicing God's Presence is specially acquired when we accustom ourselves to draw on the Divine resources. We can recall two outstanding illustrations—one given by Abraham's faithful servant, and the other by Nehemiah. In the one case, the traveler lifted up his heart to God for direction as to the choice of a wife for his master's son; and the other tells us that between the king's question as to the reason for his sadness, and his reply, he flashed a cry to God for a suitable answer, and it was given him. Why do not we, in every moment of uncertainty and perplexity, when the tempter draws near, instantly claim the equivalent of God's gracious help?

**PRAYER**—*Gracious Spirit, wilt Thou so enable us by Thy grace, that we may live in the fear of God all the day long; may the difficulties and temptations of our daily experience have the effect of leading us to take each step in the consciousness of the Presence of God. AMEN.*

## EARTH CRAMMED WITH HEAVEN

*Isaiah 6:3 “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

**T**HE prosperity of King Uzziah’s reign seems to have weakened the national character; a deep-seated degeneracy was eating out its vitals. The unbroken summer of fifty years of prosperity and wealth had induced a moral decay which filled the heart of the prophet with dismay. It was in this depressed frame of mind that Isaiah entered the Temple, where the ceremonial of the priests and Levites, the offering of the sacrifice, the antiphonal chanting of the choirs, appear to have further moved his spirit.

*The Vision* (Isa 6:1-4). The limitation of the earthly fabric faded from his sight, and he became aware of the worship of the Seraphim, their faces veiled before the Divine Majesty, their persons clothed with humility, and their remaining wings prepared for immediate obedience. They sang antiphonally, inciting each other to lowlier reverence and more ecstatic praise.

What a lesson is present to ourselves! What a contrast is here to our lethargic worship and often tardy obedience! This great God is our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ but do we blend sufficient reverence with our childlike trust? Are we not too often glib in our prayers? Do we realize the need of pure hearts and clean hands as we kneel before Him?

*The Call* (Isa 6:5-8). The humble confession of sin must be ours also. The Seraphim knew that there was only one answer. The altar coals had absorbed the blood of the sacrifice and were now glowing with white heat. They would serve for cleansing and inspiration, and when this was completed, there was nothing left to delay the call to service.

*The Commission* (Isa 6:9-13). The prophet was not to be disappointed. He was to persist in his message, even though there were only gleams of light through the darkness.

**PRAYER**—*Great and Holy God, cleanse us in heart and speech and action, with the Blood shed on Calvary and the Fire of Thy Spirit, that we may be fitted for Thy Holy service. Cleanse, Call, and Commission us! AMEN.*

## OUR SHEET ANCHOR!

*Ephesians 4:14-15* “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

*1 John 3:3* “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

**O**UR destiny is the highest possible—“We shall be like Him.” For this we were created, redeemed, and sanctified, that we should be conformed to the image of God’s Son, that He might be the First Born among many brethren (Rom 8:29).

The Apostle says that those who have this Hope will purify themselves. A young friend of mine once asked me if I would try to see her lover, as my train stopped at a wayside station in a far-distant western State. It was a dark night when we arrived, and a hurried conversation took place on the steps of the great Pullman car. I found that amid the many temptations of a rancher’s life, this young fellow was holding on to purity and truth. He said that he had very infrequent opportunities of attending any religious services, but that the letters which came from the old country had been his sheet anchor. I understood what he meant. He realized the strong drift of circumstances, but to be loved by a sweet pure girl, who made him the object of her incessant prayer, and to receive her inspiring letters, kept him from yielding to the evil which enveloped him as an atmosphere; the thought that before long he might claim her as his bride helped to purify and steady his life. So the expectation of being with, and like Christ, should be to us as a sheet-anchor, who bear His Name.

To see Christ face to face, to be with Him in unbroken fellowship, and to be like Him—this is the threefold destiny of every Christian soul. But how little can we imagine our future life! We strive to penetrate the dense veil of mist in vain—what the resurrection body will be like; what the converse with holy beings will amount to; what ministry may be assigned to us—we know not what we shall be, but “*we know that we shall be like Him*”—and it is enough! All that we have ever dreamed and hoped for will find its flower and fruitage in that glad summer time.

**PRAYER**—*O God, it is my earnest desire that I may not only live, but grow: grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May I grow in patience and fortitude of soul, in humility and zeal, in spirituality with a heavenly disposition of mind. AMEN.*

## GOD'S RESOURCES

*Genesis 18:14 "Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."*

*Jeremiah 32:17 "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:"*

**T**HERE is no doubt as to the identification of these three guests that suddenly appeared before the tent-door of Abraham. We are expressly told that "Jehovah appeared unto him." It was thus that our Lord anticipated His Incarnation. He came *incognito*, and "His delights were with the sons of men" (Prov 8:31). During His earthly life, He loved the homes of men, lodged with Peter and Zacchaeus, and in the dear home where Mary loved and Martha served. After His resurrection, He tarried with two of them in the village inn. So He will come to thy heart and mine. Though He is the High and lofty One, who inhabits Eternity, yet He will plead for admission to sup with us and we with Him (Rev 3:20). But He often comes disguised as a wayfaring man, hungry and athirst. Let us "run to meet Him," remembering Matt 25:40.

God is no man's debtor; He always pays for His lodging, hence His promise to Sarah! She laughed with incredulity, but is anything too hard for the Lord? That is one of God's unanswered questions. It has accosted the human conscience all down the ages. Let us look away from the difficulties imposed by nature, to Him who holds the oceans in the hollow of His Almighty hand. Then we can stand with Him on the mountainside, and plead for Sodom; then God Himself will draw us on to ask for more and yet more, till, when our faith gives out, He will do something far in advance of all that we asked or thought.

**PRAYER**—*Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, World without end. AMEN.*

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## THE GRACE OF CHRISTIAN SPEECH

*1 Peter 3:10 "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:"*

*Colossians 4:6 "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."*

**T**HE ideal of Christian speech is given in the Apostle's words to the Colossians. Our speech should always be gracious; and grace stands for mercifulness, charity, the willingness to put the best constructions upon the words and actions of another. It is a great help in dealing with envy, jealousy, or unkind feeling to compel our lips to speak as Christ would have them. If you are jealous of another, the temptation is to say unkind or depreciating things, but if we live in the power of the Holy Spirit, He will enable us to check such words and replace them by those that suggest kindly consideration on the part of ourselves and others. Endeavour to say all the good that can be said, and none of the evil. It is remarkable that when we make the effort to speak kindly on behalf of those against whom we feel exasperated, the whole inward temper changes and takes on the tone of our voice.

There should be salt in our speech—purity, antiseptic, and sparkling like the Book of Proverbs. A playful wit, a bright repartee, are not inconsistent with the Apostle's standard, but whenever we mix in conversation with people, they should be aware of an element in us which makes it impossible for them to indulge in ill-natured gossip or coarse jokes.

We must continue in prayer that God would open to us doors of utterance, so that we may speak of the hidden beauty and glory of our Saviour. Sometimes, also, when we are hard pressed to know how to answer difficult questions, it is given to us in that same hour how we ought to speak, and we find that the Holy Spirit has found an utterance by our lips (Luke 12:12; 1Pet 3:15).

It is recorded of our Lord that during His trial He spoke not a word to Pilate or Herod, but as soon as He reached the Cross, He poured out His heart as their Intercessor, saying: "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do!" Speak more to God than to men who may be reviling and threatening you. It is blessed to realize that He is able to guard the door of our lips, for probably there is no part of our nature that stands more in need of His keeping power.

**PRAYER**—*Live in us, Blessed Lord, by Thy Holy Spirit, that our lives may be gospels of helpfulness and blessedness. May all foolish talking and covetousness, bitterness, wrath, and anger be put away from us, with all malice. AMEN.*

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## THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

*Mark 6:31 "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."*

**T**HERE is something in our blood which cries out at certain times for rest and change. We may love our home, our work, and the chance of doing our share in the toil of this work-a-day world but when the summer comes, we long to escape from the crowded city, the arduous toil, and pine for respite and rest. The love of Nature is a sacred heritage from the love of God, and it is His voice that calls to us: "Come, My children, Be glad with Me, breathe the scented air which I have flavoured in its passage through clover-fields, gorse, and heather; rejoice in the woods and flowers, golden sunsets and purple mountains; the glory of the ocean and the sea-shore."

But we must be unselfish, if we would really enjoy our holiday. It is difficult to resist the temptation to obtain the best possible return for our money, and a little over, even at the expense of others. Always think of some one else—the short Zacchaeus who cannot see over your shoulder! The child who loves to look out of the carriage window; the invalid who cannot stand the draught! the tired mother with the restless children! Look out for daily opportunities for showing the gentleness, sweetness, and unselfishness of the Lord Jesus.

Make time to be alone sometimes. It is a mistake always to be in the presence of another. The soul must be still and quiet. There are accents in the voice of God so deep and still, that the breathing of a companion may make them inaudible. But it is delightful to have a choice friend and companion with whom you can hold sweet fellowship, and "there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." He will draw near and walk with you, and as He talks with you by the way, your hearts will bum within you.

Remember those who are in poverty, in sickness, and in need, and amidst your own gladness and joy, send a portion unto them for whom nothing is prepared (Neh 8:10-12).

**PRAYER**—*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits to me? I will praise, and bless, and give thee Thanks, all the days of my life. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power. AMEN.*

## BREAD WINNING!

*Matthew 4:4 "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

*Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

**T**HE question which Satan put to our Lord, has to be settled in every life. Where does bread and bread-getting come in? Is it to be our first consideration or the last? According to Satan's way of looking at life, the bread question is paramount; according to Christ, secondary. Have you ever seriously considered which policy is yours, and what *you* would do if you had to choose in any supreme crisis? This temptation which came to our Lord occurs to us all; sooner or later, whether on the lone mountain-side, or in the crowded thoroughfares of life, the Devil comes to us with the suggestion that we must *live*, and in the last resort we must make or get our bread, leaving considerations of purity, truth, honour of God and Eternity to come in second best!

At every important turning-point in the history of the inner life these two methods are suggested: Satan says: "command this stone that it be made bread"; Christ says: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." We must choose between God and mammon. We are liable to attacks of hunger in various parts of our nature—for food, Satan bids us snatch it; for love, we are tempted to gratify it apart from God; for knowledge, we are apt to seek it in ways that are not illumined by the light of eternal truth.

God, who gave us these strong appetites and desires, knows that we need food. The body is more than meat, and if He gave the one, He is responsible for meeting the other. The blessed angels of His help are even now on their way to you, and have been commissioned to bring with them supplies for every need in your life. Do not take your life out of God's hands and act at the dictate of passion! Throw all the responsibility on Him; they cannot be ashamed that wait for Him. Remember the angel that prepared the meal for Elijah in the desert, and the breakfast that our Lord Himself prepared for His tired and hungry friends. If you will dare to trust and wait for Him even though there be but a step between you and death, He will supply all your need, according to His riches in glory. "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

**PRAYER**—*Give us grace to seek first Thy kingdom and its righteousness, in the sure and certain faith that all else shall be added unto us. AMEN.*

## THE FILE LEADER

*Isaiah 55:4 "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."*

**F**OUR times in the New Testament our Lord is called Leader or Prince. Originally the word means the First of a file of men, and therefore their Captain or Commanding Officer (see Acts 3:15; Acts 5:31; Heb 2:10; Heb 12:2).

*Christ leads from death into Life.* Probably Joshua was the first to pass over the dried bed of the Jordan, as the priests stood by bearing the Ark of the Covenant; but this, at least is true, that our Saviour has preceded us through the waters of death, and will hold them back until each of the ransomed has passed "clean over" (Josh 3:17).

*Christ leads His followers into victory.* When our Lord was exalted to the fight hand of power, He opened up a path to be trodden throughout the ages by a company which no man can number. As He overcame, we may overcome; as He reigns over all principality and power, so we believe that He will bruise Satan under our feet, and make us more than conquerors.

*Christ leads those who suffer to perfection.* Though He was the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things that He suffered, and transformed suffering, showing that it was an elemic, a purifying furnace, a means of discipline, strength, and ennoblement. If we are thrust into the fiery furnace we shall find the Son of God walking at our side, and shall emerge without our bonds, and with no smell of fire upon us. Jesus is the Leader of a long procession of martyrs and sufferers. He leads through no darker rooms than He went through before; He knows exactly how much we can bear, and will not test us beyond our strength. He is with us "all the days," and will help us to learn obedience, faith, and hope, as we follow in His footsteps.

**PRAYER**—*O Lord, whose way is perfect, help us always to trust in Thy goodness: that walking with Thee and following Thee in all simplicity, we may possess quiet and contented minds; and may cast all our care on Thee, for Thou carest for us. AMEN.*

## BEAUTIFUL GARMENTS

*Isaiah 52:1 “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.”*

*Romans 13:11-12 “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”*

**P**UT on strength. We have not to purchase it, or generate it by prayers and resolutions, but simply to *put it on*. As we awake in the early morning hour, and have to pass out into the arena of life, which has so often witnessed failure and defeat, let us put on the strength and might of the living Christ. He waits to strengthen us with all power, according to the riches of His glory (Eph 3:16). Do not simply pray to be kept and helped, but put on the whole armour of God. “The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” (Ps 27:1)

*Put on beautiful garments.* The emblem of the life of the Christian soul is that of the bridegroom or the bride (Rev 19:7) decked with jewels; or a garden filled with beautiful flowers (Isa 61:10-11). We are not only to do right things, but we must do them beautifully; not only to speak the truth, but to speak it in love (Eph 4:15); not only to give to those who need our help, but to do it graciously and joyously. We must cultivate the bloom of the soul, which is made up of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, generosity (Col 3:12). The beauty of the Lord our God must be upon us.

*We cannot weave these beautiful robes, or fashion them out of our own nature, but they are all prepared for us in Christ, who is “made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.”* (1Cor 1:30) Let us wake up out of sleep (Eph 5:12), put off the works of darkness (Rom 13:13), and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the armour of Light. (Rom 13:14)

**PRAYER**—*Lord of Power and Love! I come, trusting in Thine almighty strength, and Thine infinite goodness, to beg from Thee what is wanting in myself; even that grace which shall help me such to be, and such to do, as Thou wouldst have me. I will trust Thee, in Whom is everlasting strength. Be Thou my Helper, to carry me on beyond my own strength, and to make all that I think, and speak, and do, acceptable in Thy sight, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.*

## MODERN MIRACLES

*John 10:41-42 "And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there."*

**T**HE people were inclined to disparage the life of John the Baptist because he performed no miracle. But surely his whole life was a miracle; from first to last it vibrated with Divine power. This is still the mistake of men. They allege that the age of miracles has passed. If they admit that such prodigies may possibly have happened once, they insist that the world has outgrown them, and that in its maturity mankind has put them away as childish things!

No miracles! But last summer God made the handfuls of grain, which the farmers cast on the fields, sufficient to feed all the populations of the world as easily as He made five barley loaves suffice for more than five thousand persons! No miracles! But last autumn He changed the dews of night and the showers of morning into the fruits that rejoice the heart of man, as once in Cana He turned the water drawn from the stone jars into the blushing wine! No miracles! but next spring, from tiny seeds and dead-looking bulbs, He will clothe the world with beauty and colour and perfume.

Many who will read these lines seem powerless to work miracles. For them the monotony of the commonplace, the grey sky of uneventful routine seems the predestined lot. But let all such take heart! The real greatness of life is within their reach, if they will only claim it by the grace of God. Do not try to do a great thing, or you may waste all your life waiting for the opportunity which may never come. But since little things are always claiming your attention, do them as they come from a great motive, for the glory of God and to do good to men. No such action, however trivial, goes without the swift recognition and the ultimate recompense of Christ. All life is so interesting, but we need eyes to see and hearts to understand! Dare to be yourself—a simple, humble, sincere follower of Jesus, and it may be said also of you: "He or she did no miracle, but by life and word spoke true things about Jesus Christ, which we have tested for ourselves. Indeed, they led us to believe in Christ for ourselves."

### PRAYER—

*Teach me, my God and King  
In all things Thee to see,  
And what I do in anything,  
To do it as for Thee.  
A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine!  
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,  
Makes that and th' action fine. AMEN.*

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## OBEDIENCE

*John 12:46 "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."*

**T**HE light of Christ is always distinguishable because it means the deepest impression of what is right, the clearest conviction of the will of God. Everywhere men are asking how they may come to know Christ, and there is but one answer: believe that He loves you, that He died on the Cross to save you, that He is prompting you by His Spirit to follow every perception and longing for a better and holier life.

How different is this teaching from that of the world around! There we are bidden to *know* before we dare entrust our lives to any leader, whatever be his fair speeches and promises; but Christ bids us *obey* the first glimmer of light breaking on us, and He undertakes that if we do, we shall not walk in darkness. Disobedience, like scales, veils Christ from us; whilst obedience leads us into His very presence. The judgment always becomes just, and the vision clear, when we deny ourselves to follow whatsoever things are lovely, true, pure, just, and of good report.

It may be that as you read these lines there is some duty you shirk, some cross you refuse to lift, some act from which you flinch. Though you may not have directly associated it with Christ, yet you cannot doubt that it is His will for you, and that in the doing He will be pleased. It is useless to try to know Him until that nearest act of obedience is wrought. Men can never know what the mighty forces of Nature will do for them until they set themselves to obey, in the minutest detail, its laws. And it is so in relation to Christ and the laws of the spiritual realm. That was a true word which the Mother of our Lord spoke to the servants at Cana, when she said: "*Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it!*" She had probably learnt that lesson in those long, quiet, blessed years at Nazareth. She knew that there was no such way of understanding Him, as by rendering Him literal obedience, and she passed on the results of her experience to us all.

"Walk while ye have the light," so you will know the Light, and become light in the Lord.

**PRAYER**—*My son, forsake thyself, and thou shalt find Me Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and wherein shall I forsake myself? Always, yea, every hour, as well in small things as in great. AMEN.*

## THE TALE OF THE YEARS

*Psalm 90:9 "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told."*

**T**HIS Psalm (Psalm 90) is almost without parallel for sublimity, a worthy monument of the inspired genius of Moses, "the man of God." It reflects the wanderings and experiences of the wilderness march; the watch in the night against the intrusion of the Bedouin thief, or the prowl of the wild beast; the rush of the flood, caused by torrential rain, but disappearing as quickly as on the sandy soil; the morning grass, scorched by the sirocco; the tales borne by the camp spies so soon ended; the disappointment of the springs of Marah; the inevitable leaving of Elim! the long weary days of marching, the mother and babe, the aged and little children, the weakling on the desert trail; the constant pitching and removal of tents—all these emblems of transitoriness, depicting the hard experiences of life's toil and trial. Secret sins and iniquities; the averted face of God because of transgression; the death of the old at eighty, and of the young child cut down as a frail flower. Yes! But in spite of all these, God is the dwelling-place and home of the individual soul, as of the succeeding generation.

Shall we not make the concluding petitions of this Psalm our own? For we, too, are pilgrims over the desert-waste to the eternal Home. We need to be more careful of our days, watching their decreasing number, with careful anxiety to make the most of those that are left. We need to be satisfied and replenished each morning with God's mercy, that we may have perennial springs of rejoicing and gladness. We long to help in the overthrowing of the power of evil, and as we grow older, we pray that the beauty of the Lord our God may be upon us, and may we feel that He has given permanence to the work of our hands.

**PRAYER**—*How shall we thank Thee sufficiently, dear Lord, that Thou hast demolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light. Give us grace to follow Thee all the days of our life, and when the Call comes to us to pass over, may the waters of the River be at the lowest ebb. AMEN.*

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## THE TALISMAN OF VICTORY

*Romans 8:37 "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."*

**C**AN anything separate me from the love of Christ? was the only question that St. Paul felt worth consideration. In this paragraph he takes the extreme conditions of being, and carefully investigates them, knowing that they include all between. First, he interrogates Existence—"death and life"; next, created Intelligences—"Angels, principalities, and powers"; next, the extremes of Time—"things present, things to come"; next, of Space—"height and depth"; lastly, the created Universe—"any other creature." Each of these extremes is passed in review. He is like a man proving every link of the chain in which he is going to swing out over the abyss. Carefully and fervently he has tested all, and is satisfied that none of them can cut him off from the love of God.

We strangely misjudge and mistrust the Love of God our Father, and think that our distresses and sufferings, our sins and failures, may make Him love us less. But in the home, it is not the troop of sturdy children that engross the mother's care so much as the puny feeble life, that lies in the cot, unable to help itself and reciprocate her love. And in the world, death and pain, disease and sorrow, sin and failure, so far from separating us from God's love, bind us closer.

Oh blessed Love! that comes down to us from the heart of Jesus, the essence of the eternal love of God—nothing can ever staunch, exhaust, intercept it. It is not our love to Him, but His to us, and since nothing can separate us from the love of God, He will go on loving us for ever, and pouring into us the entire fullness of His life and glory. Whatever our difficulties, whatever our weaknesses and infirmities, we shall be kept steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; gaining by our losses, succeeding by our failures, triumphing in our defeats, and ever more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

**PRAYER**—*Yea thro' life, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed: Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning, Christ is the beginning, for the end is Christ.*

# CALENDAR FOR READING THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD IN A YEAR

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

## THE ADVANTAGES

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

## DIRECTIONS

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

July								
Family					Secret			
Joshua	3	Psalms	126-128	1st	Isaiah	63	Matthew	11
Joshua	4	Psalms	129-131	2nd	Isaiah	64	Matthew	12
Joshua	5-6:5	Psalms	132-134	3rd	Isaiah	65	Matthew	13
Joshua	6:6ff	Psalms	135-136	4th	Isaiah	66	Matthew	14
Joshua	7	Psalms	137-138	5th	Jeremiah	1	Matthew	15
Joshua	8	Psalms	139	6th	Jeremiah	2	Matthew	16
Joshua	9	Psalms	140-141	7th	Jeremiah	3	Matthew	17
Joshua	10	Psalms	142-143	8th	Jeremiah	4	Matthew	18
Joshua	11	Psalms	144	9th	Jeremiah	5	Matthew	19
Joshua	12-13	Psalms	145	10th	Jeremiah	6	Matthew	20
Joshua	14-15	Psalms	146-147	11th	Jeremiah	7	Matthew	21
Joshua	16-17	Psalms	148	12th	Jeremiah	8	Matthew	22
Joshua	18-19	Psalms	149-150	13th	Jeremiah	9	Matthew	23
Joshua	20-21	Acts	1	14th	Jeremiah	10	Matthew	24
Joshua	22	Acts	2	15th	Jeremiah	11	Matthew	25
Joshua	23	Acts	3	16th	Jeremiah	12	Matthew	26
Joshua	24	Acts	4	17th	Jeremiah	13	Matthew	27
Judges	1	Acts	5	18th	Jeremiah	14	Matthew	28
Judges	2	Acts	6	19th	Jeremiah	15	Mark	1
Judges	3	Acts	7	20th	Jeremiah	16	Mark	2
Judges	4	Acts	8	21st	Jeremiah	17	Mark	3
Judges	5	Acts	9	22nd	Jeremiah	18	Mark	4
Judges	6	Acts	10	23rd	Jeremiah	19	Mark	5
Judges	7	Acts	11	24th	Jeremiah	20	Mark	6
Judges	8	Acts	12	25th	Jeremiah	21	Mark	7
Judges	9	Acts	13	26th	Jeremiah	22	Mark	8
Judges	10-11:11	Acts	14	27th	Jeremiah	23	Mark	9
Judges	11:12ff	Acts	15	28th	Jeremiah	24	Mark	10
Judges	12	Acts	16	29th	Jeremiah	25	Mark	11
Judges	13	Acts	17	30th	Jeremiah	26	Mark	12
Judges	14	Acts	18	31st	Jeremiah	27	Mark	13

August								
Family					Secret			
Judges	15	Acts	19	<b>1st</b>	Jeremiah	28	Mark	14
Judges	16	Acts	20	<b>2nd</b>	Jeremiah	29	Mark	15
Judges	17	Acts	21	<b>3rd</b>	Jeremiah	30-31	Mark	16
Judges	18	Acts	22	<b>4th</b>	Jeremiah	32	Psalms	1-2
Judges	19	Acts	23	<b>5th</b>	Jeremiah	33	Psalms	3-4
Judges	20	Acts	24	<b>6th</b>	Jeremiah	34	Psalms	5-6
Judges	21	Acts	25	<b>7th</b>	Jeremiah	35	Psalms	7-8
Ruth	1	Acts	26	<b>8th</b>	Jeremiah	36&45	Psalms	9
Ruth	2	Acts	27	<b>9th</b>	Jeremiah	37	Psalms	10
Ruth	3-4	Acts	28	<b>10th</b>	Jeremiah	38	Psalms	11-12
1 Samuel	1	Romans	1	<b>11th</b>	Jeremiah	39	Psalms	13-14
1 Samuel	2	Romans	2	<b>12th</b>	Jeremiah	40	Psalms	15-16
1 Samuel	3	Romans	3	<b>13th</b>	Jeremiah	41	Psalms	17
1 Samuel	4	Romans	4	<b>14th</b>	Jeremiah	42	Psalms	18
1 Samuel	5-6	Romans	5	<b>15th</b>	Jeremiah	43	Psalms	19
1 Samuel	7-8	Romans	6	<b>16th</b>	Jeremiah	44	Psalms	20-21
1 Samuel	9	Romans	7	<b>17th</b>	Jeremiah	46	Psalms	22
1 Samuel	10	Romans	8	<b>18th</b>	Jeremiah	47	Psalms	23-24
1 Samuel	11	Romans	9	<b>19th</b>	Jeremiah	48	Psalms	25
1 Samuel	12	Romans	10	<b>20th</b>	Jeremiah	49	Psalms	26-27
1 Samuel	13	Romans	11	<b>21st</b>	Jeremiah	50	Psalms	28-29
1 Samuel	14	Romans	12	<b>22nd</b>	Jeremiah	51	Psalms	30
1 Samuel	15	Romans	13	<b>23rd</b>	Jeremiah	52	Psalms	31
1 Samuel	16	Romans	14	<b>24th</b>	Lamentations	1	Psalms	32
1 Samuel	17	Romans	15	<b>25th</b>	Lamentations	2	Psalms	33
1 Samuel	18	Romans	16	<b>26th</b>	Lamentations	3	Psalms	34
1 Samuel	19	1 Corinthians	1	<b>27th</b>	Lamentations	4	Psalms	35
1 Samuel	20	1 Corinthians	2	<b>28th</b>	Lamentations	5	Psalms	36
1 Samuel	21-22	1 Corinthians	3	<b>29th</b>	Ezekiel	1	Psalms	37
1 Samuel	23	1 Corinthians	4	<b>30th</b>	Ezekiel	2	Psalms	38
1 Samuel	24	1 Corinthians	5	<b>31st</b>	Ezekiel	3	Psalms	39

September								
Family					Secret			
1 Samuel	25	1 Corinthians	6	<b>1st</b>	Ezekiel	4	Psalms	40-41
1 Samuel	26	1 Corinthians	7	<b>2nd</b>	Ezekiel	5	Psalms	42-43
1 Samuel	27	1 Corinthians	8	<b>3rd</b>	Ezekiel	6	Psalms	44
1 Samuel	28	1 Corinthians	9	<b>4th</b>	Ezekiel	7	Psalms	45
1 Samuel	29-30	1 Corinthians	10	<b>5th</b>	Ezekiel	8	Psalms	46-47
1 Samuel	31	1 Corinthians	11	<b>6th</b>	Ezekiel	9	Psalms	48
2 Samuel	1	1 Corinthians	12	<b>7th</b>	Ezekiel	10	Psalms	49
2 Samuel	2	1 Corinthians	13	<b>8th</b>	Ezekiel	11	Psalms	50
2 Samuel	3	1 Corinthians	14	<b>9th</b>	Ezekiel	12	Psalms	51
2 Samuel	4-5	1 Corinthians	15	<b>10th</b>	Ezekiel	13	Psalms	52-54
2 Samuel	6	1 Corinthians	16	<b>11th</b>	Ezekiel	14	Psalms	55
2 Samuel	7	2 Corinthians	1	<b>12th</b>	Ezekiel	15	Psalms	56-57
2 Samuel	8-9	2 Corinthians	2	<b>13th</b>	Ezekiel	16	Psalms	58-59
2 Samuel	10	2 Corinthians	3	<b>14th</b>	Ezekiel	17	Psalms	60-61
2 Samuel	11	2 Corinthians	4	<b>15th</b>	Ezekiel	18	Psalms	62-63
2 Samuel	12	2 Corinthians	5	<b>16th</b>	Ezekiel	19	Psalms	64-65
2 Samuel	13	2 Corinthians	6	<b>17th</b>	Ezekiel	20	Psalms	66-67
2 Samuel	14	2 Corinthians	7	<b>18th</b>	Ezekiel	21	Psalms	68
2 Samuel	15	2 Corinthians	8	<b>19th</b>	Ezekiel	22	Psalms	69
2 Samuel	16	2 Corinthians	9	<b>20th</b>	Ezekiel	23	Psalms	70-71
2 Samuel	17	2 Corinthians	10	<b>21st</b>	Ezekiel	24	Psalms	72
2 Samuel	18	2 Corinthians	11	<b>22nd</b>	Ezekiel	25	Psalms	73
2 Samuel	19	2 Corinthians	12	<b>23rd</b>	Ezekiel	26	Psalms	74
2 Samuel	20	2 Corinthians	13	<b>24th</b>	Ezekiel	27	Psalms	75-76
2 Samuel	21	Galatians	1	<b>25th</b>	Ezekiel	28	Psalms	77
2 Samuel	22	Galatians	2	<b>26th</b>	Ezekiel	29	Psalms	78:1-37
2 Samuel	23	Galatians	3	<b>27th</b>	Ezekiel	30	Psalms	78:38ff
2 Samuel	24	Galatians	4	<b>28th</b>	Ezekiel	31	Psalms	79
1 Kings	1	Galatians	5	<b>29th</b>	Ezekiel	32	Psalms	80
1 Kings	2	Galatians	6	<b>30th</b>	Ezekiel	33	Psalms	81-82

**YEAR 2007**  
**O For a Closer Walk with God!**

**July 1 & 8 – Communion with Christ**

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

**July 15 & 22 – Love for God**

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

**July 29 – Gospel**

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

**August 5 & 12 – Love not the World**

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

**August 19 & 26 – Assurance from God**

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

**September 2 & 9 – Confidence in God**

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

**September 16 & 23 – Protection from God**

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

## **September 30 – Gospel**

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

## **October 7 & 14 – Help from God**

1 Corinthians 10:13 – There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

## **October 21 & 28 – The Word of God**

Joshua 1:8 – This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

## **November 4 & 11 – The Word of God**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

## **November 18 & 25 – The Spirit-filled Life**

Ephesians 5:18 – And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

## **December 2 & 9 – Walking in the Spirit**

Galatians 5:16 - This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

## **December 16 & 23 – Living for Christ**

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.

## **December 30 – Consecrated Living**

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.

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