

Our Daily Homily

By

F.B. Meyer

VOLUME Three

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

FREDERICK BROTHERTON MEYER (1847–1929)

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



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

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

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

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

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

1 Thessalonians 1:10

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

OH blessed hope! Is it not wonderful that each of the chapters of this Epistle brims over with the glad anticipation of the Master’s quick return!

We should never lose this spirit of eager longing and waiting. It hath the promise of the life that now is, as of that which is to come. It lifts above the darkness of the present age; links the present with the great future; comforts us amid bereavement with the hope of speedy reunion; quickens us to watchfulness and consecration by the thought of the shortening of our opportunities; leads us to purify ourselves as He is pure, to gird our loins and trim our lamps.

Notice how closely the apostle combines the service of the living and true God, herein distinguishing Him from the dumb, dead stones of heathen idolatries, with this waiting for His Son from heaven. It has been alleged that the hope of the Second Advent is a dreamy, mystical sentiment, which disqualifies one for the active fulfilment of the duties of life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who cherish that anticipation, who awake in the morning, saying, “Perhaps it will be today”; who go to their sleep whispering to their hearts, “Perchance I shall be changed into His likeness in a moment as I sleep, and wake in my resurrection body” these are among the most devoted, strenuous, and successful workers of the Church. They are not recognized in the daily or religious Press; but God knows and honours them.

“Oh, blessed Hope! With this elate,
Let not our hearts be desolate;
But strong in faith and patience, wait
Until He come.”

1 Thessalonians 2:19

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”

THE tender heart of the apostle suffered keenly in his enforced absence from these beloved converts. He had cherished them as a nurse her children; he would have gladly imparted to them his own soul. Not once nor twice he had sought to see them again, but had been hindered by malign spiritual forces that were very real to him. He found comfort, however, in the thought that, at the Lord's coming, they and he would be reunited, and that they would be his joy, as now they were his hope. Now they lit his hope to a more intense passion; then they would intensify his joy to a more exquisite fullness.

But there is a further thought. The souls whom he had won for Jesus were to constitute his crown. It was as though they would be woven into a wreath like that given to the ancient athlete, and placed on his brow as he emerged from the terrific conflict of his life—not to be worn there, but cast forthwith at the feet of his Lord. What an incentive was this! Each soul plucked from the enemy would be another jewel for the Master's crown, and herein a fresh source of heavenly blessedness to himself.

I remember Mr. Spurgeon telling of an old Christian woman in his almshouses, who persisted in saying loving thoughts about her beloved pastor to his face, at which he greatly demurred. He feared that she was making more of him than of Christ. But she said sweetly, “It is written in the Song, ‘Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit two hundred’; so, dear pastor, you must have your two hundred.” Yes, it will be so; we shall partake with Jesus of the fish that we have caught; we shall have fellowship in His exceeding joy over the saved.

1 Thessalonians 3:3

“That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.”

WE all love the sunshine, but the Arabs have a proverb that “all sunshine makes the desert”; and it is a matter for common observation that the graces of Christian living are more often apparent in the case of those who have passed through great tribulation. God desires to get as rich crops as possible from the soil of our natures. There are certain plants of the Christian life, such as meekness, gentleness, kindness, humility, which cannot come to perfection if the sun of prosperity always shines.

We often shrank from the lessons set us at school, and looked out of the windows, longing for the hour of release. But now how thankful we are for the tutors and governors, appointed by our parents, who kept us steadily at our tasks. We feel almost kindly to the schoolmaster or mistress that we dreaded. And, similarly, one day we shall be glad for those hard lessons acquired from the horn-book of pain. “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” (Heb 12:9)

The tears of those who suffer according to the will of God are spiritual lenses and windows of agate. As the weights of the clock or the ballast in the vessel are necessary for their right ordering, so is trouble in the soul-life. The sweetest scents are only obtained by tremendous pressure; the fairest flowers grow amid Alpine snow-solitudes; the rarest gems have suffered longest from the lapidary’s wheel; the noblest statues have borne most blows of the chisel. All, however, is under law. Nothing happens that has not been appointed with consummate care and foresight.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

NATURE will have her due. Tears will fall, and hearts seem near to breaking. Nowhere does God chide the tears of natural affection; how could He, since it is written that “Jesus wept”? But He sets Himself to extract their bitterness. Sorrow you may, and must; but not as without hope.

Those who die in Christ are with Him. They are said to sleep, not because they are unconscious, but because their decease was as devoid of terror as an infant’s slumbers. Believers have all died once in Christ, and it was necessary to find a word which, whilst significant of death, was not death, in order to describe the moment of our farewell to this world and birth into the next. This word was furnished by Death’s twin sister Sleep. The catacombs are covered with the brief significant sentence, *Obdormivit in Christo* (He slept in Christ). But just as in sleep the spirit is conscious, of which dreams bear witness, so in the last sleep. Absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord.

Those who die in Christ will come with Him. They are now waiting around Him till He give the final order for the whole heavenly cortege, which has been collecting for ages, to move. The holy angels will accompany; but the beloved saints shall ride in the chariots of God as the bride beside the bridegroom.

Those who die in Christ shall be forever reunited with us who wait for Him and them. They shall come with Him. “God will bring them.” We, on the other hand, if we are living at that supreme moment, shall be changed and caught up to meet Him and them; and then, all one in Christ, we shall be forever with Him, to go no more out.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

OUR God has set Himself the work of our sanctification. As the Greek indicates, He looks upon us as His inheritance, and He will not rest until He has brought every acre of territory under cultivation. It is not enough that briars and thistles should be exterminated; they must be replaced by the rare growth of Christian virtue, which is Christ.

The work of sanctification is quiet and silent. It is wrought by the *God of Peace*. The mightiest forces of nature are stilled; and when God comes with power into the human spirit there is often no hurricane, tempest, fire, or earthquake, but the thrilling whisper of the still, small voice. Do not be afraid, as though God would treat you roughly. So long as peaceful, gentle methods will effect His purpose, He will gladly employ them.

The work is also gradual. We are not made *faultless*, but preserved *blameless*; i.e., we are kept from known sin, preserved from incurring perpetual self-reproach. “There is no condemnation.” I saw the other day the love-letter of a little boy to his father. It was anything but faultless; but the father, at least, did not count it worthy of blame, since he carried it next to his heart. So we are not to be faultless, as judged by God’s perfect standard, till we are presented before the presence of His glory; but we may be blameless up to our acquaintance with the Divine will.

The work is from within outward. Notice the order—spirit, soul, body. The Shekinah of His presence shines in the holy of holies, and thence pours over into the holy place, and so into the outer court, until the very curtains of the body are irradiated with its light. He will do it.

2 Thessalonians 1:12

“That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

WILL you, dear Christian soul, enter into a solemn compact with the Holy Spirit that you will live for this as your supreme purpose, namely, to glorify the name (i.e., the character) of the Lord Jesus? This is his supreme purpose and aim throughout the present age. He seeks the glory of Jesus with the same persistent patience as Jesus sought the glory of His Father, and longs for our fellowship and cooperation. Nothing gratifies the Holy Spirit more than to welcome into partnership those who love the Lord Jesus with a consuming passion, and are prepared to glorify Him, at whatever cost to themselves.

It has made a great difference to my life since I responded to the call of the Spirit, as though He said directly, as once through His servant, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together.” One has now a worthy object always in view, whether in speaking or keeping silence; in acting or suffering: in life or death—that the Lord Jesus may be magnified.

Does this seem too high an aim? Then ponder the gracious assurance that the Lord will fulfil every desire of goodness (2 Thessalonians 1:11). He first instills the desire, and then realizes it; first suggests the outline plan, and then fills in the colons. Take your desires for goodness to Him, and trust Him, in all faithfulness, to realize and fulfil them. They are like the chalice which the child brings to the lake-side; impure, indeed, but capable of being rinsed; and the father, taking it from its hand, plunges it into the pellucid waters, that cleanse and fill to the brim. Thank God for every desire of goodness! But be not content till that which you desire is in actual possession; for He who prompts the desire is well able to fulfil it.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:”

FROM the beginning! Who shall compute the contents of the vast unknown abyss, which is comprehended in that phrase? The beginning of creation was preceded by the anticipation of Redemption, and the love of God to all who were one with Christ.

God’s aim and purpose: Salvation. Not simply our deliverance from the penalty, but from the power of all besetting sin; so that we may be delivered from the fear of our enemies, and serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. This He is prepared to give to us; but we must claim it by faith.

God’s choice: Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate. From all eternity He saw those who would be attracted to Jesus by a Divine affinity, and these were included in His gift to the Son. “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me, and they have kept Thy word.” We must not presume on the eternal choice; but we may be very grateful that the tendencies emanating from the fall are met, in mid-flow, by the grace and choice of the Almighty.

God’s method: Through sanctification of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost sets us apart from sin, and consecrates us to God. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price:” (1 Cor 6:19-20) Our sanctification is not the property of our soul, but its possession of the Holy One; not an attribute, but a Person. *And belief of the truth.* Let the Word of God dwell in you richly. (Col 3:16) Hide it in your heart, that you may be kept from sin. We are sanctified by the truth in so far as we expose our hearts to its entrance and rule. We are cleansed by the washing of water through the Word.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

“DIRECT” might be rendered “make straight.” It is used of the apostle’s own coming to these beloved converts in 1 Thessalonians 3:11. It is as though he asked that their hearts might travel easily and swiftly along the road which leads into the love of God, and the patience which, untiring, waits for Christ.

The Love of God: We urgently need, for many reasons, to be brought into the love of God. Only so can our selfishness be conquered and expelled; only so can we become like God in our daily life and conversation; only this is the complete evidence to the world that our holy religion is true; only thus shall we have power to influence the lost and fallen; only so can we know God, “for he that loveth not, knoweth not God.” (1 John 4:8) But how can we learn to love? God alone can teach us and guide our way into this sacred art. His Holy Spirit must fill our hearts with His love; we must ever claim and receive it as our power for daily self-sacrifice, and we must be prepared to take every opportunity of sharing the love of God in unselfishness and thoughtfulness for those with whom we come in contact.

The Patience of Christ: Thus the original might be rendered; and the beloved disciple confesses himself a brother and companion in the patience of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:9). We all know something of this. Longing for answers to prayers that are still delayed; yearning for the realization of hopes and ideals of which God’s Spirit has spoken to us; waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. May we be led into something of that sublime faith and patience with which Jesus sits, until all things are put under Him, and He is satisfied.

1 Timothy 1:15

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

IF the elephant can go safely over the swaying bridge, the horse and mule can; and the apostle seems to glory that in the very beginning of the progress of the Gospel through the world, it had laid hold of and converted himself because if he had been saved, any one might be. As men have been brought under conviction, in successive ages, it has been a profound consolation to learn that the chief of sinners has been in heaven for eighteen hundred years. In him first Jesus Christ showed forth “all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.”

Without doubt Paul never forgot the excess of his hatred and persecutions toward the infant Church. But probably he alludes here also to the deepening consciousness of unworthiness and sinfulness which accompanies all progress toward the knowledge and love of God. This phase of experience may be accounted for thus. The true saint of God, though certain of forgiveness, reviews his past sins in the light of that purity of which he is ever obtaining truer perceptions, and thus recognizes shades of evil in them which a slighter knowledge of God had failed to reveal. He also feels himself a greater sinner than others, because he supposes that God cannot have treated another with the same forbearance and mercy as have been extended to himself; and the greater the love the more heinous the transgression. And in addition, as subtler forms of temptation are suggested to him, and to every one, he knows that there are kindred susceptibilities within him, even though they are abhorred and resisted. It is beneath the pressure of such thoughts that he recognizes his uttermost indebtedness to the grace of God.

1 Timothy 2:1

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;”

A LIFE is revealed here of which many of us know practically nothing. We do not feel the absolute necessity of being much alone in the presence of God, not so much for ourselves, as for others; and this sad neglect of intercessory prayer, which we all deplore, really points to a lack of the divine life, since if that were mightily within us we should inevitably feel its throb and pulse in this direction. This comes out clearly in the words that follow.

Intercession is necessary that we may know the secrets of a *quiet, peaceable, and godly life* (1 Timothy 2:2).

Such intercession for others is *good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour* (1 Timothy 2:3). And the word translated good might be rendered *beautiful*.

It is consonant with the Divine purpose, for God wishes to have all men saved (1 Timothy 2:4). If, then, His Spirit is within us, we, too, shall long that men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Our hearts will be filled with a Divine tenderness of yearning which will find vent in strong cryings and tears. It is only thus we can live in harmony within the Divine purpose. One writes: “When I think of this, I feel I must pray. Oh, how near it brings to God to pray in the Spirit, and leads me to see that no pressure of duty among men can free us from the absolute need of much prayer.”

Such intercession is in profound union with *the mediation of our Lord* (1 Timothy 2:5-6). As the great High Priest He ever liveth to intercede; and in our little measure we, too, as members of a holy priesthood, must blend our supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks with His (1 Peter 2:5).

1 Timothy 3:16

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

IT is more than likely that this is a fragment of one of the earliest hymns of the Church. In her hymns, and maintenance of the ordinances, she thus becomes the pillar and ground of the truth. The words “mystery of godliness” are probably a general heading which is further unfolded and expanded in the six following sentences, which may have been sung antiphonally:

“God was manifest in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit.
Seen of angels,
Preached unto the Gentiles.
Believed on in the world,
Received up into glory.”

The Extremes of Manifestation: The Eternal Word was manifested in the flesh. But it was not simply a physical manifestation; we cannot forget the descent of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, or the authentication of His words which the Spirit gave in signs and wonders, and convinced hearts, and converted lives.

The Extremes of Created Intelligence: Angels worship Him; and Gentiles, sunk in heathen darkness, hear the story of His wondrous love. Jesus is the centre of all worlds: from heaven’s bright spaces they come to Him on the one hand; from earth’s dark sins they come on the other. In Him meet angels and men.

The Extremes of Space: Glory is above: “He was received up into glory.” The world is but a speck, a mote in the beam of eternity. How great the space between the two! But the feet of our Emmanuel have trodden its low pavement, and He has now taken to Himself His former glory. Like Jacob’s ladder, He links earth with the throne of God.

1 Timothy 4:4

“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:”

WE must be very careful in applying these words. Intoxicating liquor, for instance, is sometimes described as “a good creature of God.” But surely that term is not legitimate. Whatever grounds there may be for defending its use, can this text be alleged as one? For there is a great deal of human manipulation in its preparation. Before it reaches our lips, it is greatly altered by the process of fermentation. It can hardly be called God’s good creature.

When we are quite sure that we are dealing with one of God’s pure and unadulterated gifts, such as human love, friendship, the beauties of nature, wholesome food, fresh young spirits, the innocent mirth of the Christmas home-gathering; we must distinguish between God’s gifts and our abuse of them; between His creation and our distortion of it. There are things in our lives which are not His creation or gift, and which we must resolutely refuse and put away. There are others which come to us clearly and absolutely from His hand.

Rejoice in every good thing which the Lord gives. Rejoice! Do not enjoy things as though under the sword of Damocles, suspended by a thread.

Be careful to maintain the spirit of thanksgiving and prayer. What you can thank God for or use in His name and for His glory; what lifts you from the gift to the Giver, or is capable of being prayed over, with no shadow of misgiving, is innocent and healthy.

Watch only against the intrusion of self. Whatever you place between yourself and God, or rest on apart from God, or make the aim and centre of your life, is hurtful and must pass through the fire. The way to rid yourself of its poison is to insist on making it a subject of thanksgiving.

1 Timothy 5:5

“Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.”

ART thou desolate indeed, because the light of thine eyes has passed from view, leaving thee immeasurably lonely? Dear soul, do not look down into the grave which has received the precious mortal frame, but up into the face of God.

He lent thee thy beloved. From the time of the first knitting of soul with soul he was but a loan for a specified time; and wouldst thou not rather have had him for so short a time than not at all? Wouldst thou not have said, had God asked thee, “I would rather have a year or month of such love as his than none”? Do not be angry, because God has done as He always intended.

Besides, that beloved one is still thine. Thy love so entered into his heart that it could not be eradicated, though ages should pass. Do not suppose that death is so mighty a magician as to alter the very nature of those who pass for a moment beneath His wand.

And God will care for thee. Trust Him for society, that thou be not lonely; for the provision of what is necessary to thy support; and for the protecting love which thy shrinking nature calls for. Thy Maker will be thy husband.

Wouldst thou be comforted, continue in prayers and supplications for others night and day. Cease to shut thyself up with thy sorrow, and go out to minister comfort to those who sorrow as without hope. An Indian story tells of a bereaved mother, who was advised to obtain a handful of corn from a house where there was no trouble, and was so occupied in seeking it, and in comforting the inmates of the various homes she visited, that her own grief was assuaged.

1 Timothy 6:17

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;”

THE contrast here is very beautiful. Men, for the most part, look to riches to supply them with all they need richly to enjoy; but the apostle says that it is beyond all comparison better to look away from dead coin to a living Person, who takes pleasure in giving liberally without upbraiding. (Jas 1:5)

Here is a rebuke: Supposing you had your cellars filled with gold coin, would you not think yourself secure against all possible need and care? Almost certainly you would. But you ought to be even more at rest, since you have neither silver nor gold, and only your Heavenly Father’s hand.

Here is a contrast: Riches are uncertain at the best. A man in these difficult days finds it easier to gain money than to hold it. He who is rich today may awake tomorrow to find that some sudden turn of the market has made him poor. But God is not uncertain. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His covenants are certainties.

Here is an appeal: Trust in the living God with as much restfulness as others in their lands and revenues, and be almost glad if God takes away from you what you have clung to so tenaciously, that you may drop securely into His everlasting arms. You smile at the story of the lady who was told by the captain that he had done all he could for the vessel, and they must now look to the Almighty; and who replied, “O captain, has it come to that?” But you may be nearer akin to her spirit than you suppose!

Here is an assured destiny: Those who trust in riches are pierced through with many sorrows, and are caught in the maelstrom, which drowns souls in perdition; they who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed.

2 Timothy 1:12-14

“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. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”

THERE is a double deposit here, and the comparison comes out clear and marked in the Greek. When we give our most precious treasure into the custodianship of Jesus, He turns to honour us by entrusting His own treasure to our care. Oh that we might be as eager to keep that which He entrusts to us, as He is that which we entrust to Him; so that He might be able to say of us, “I know them in whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that they will never fail to do whatever needs to be done for My honour and glory.”

Our deposit with Christ: What is the true policy of life? How can I best spend these few years to the best advantage? What is there beyond, and beyond? Such questions come to all earnest souls, and greatly trouble them, till they entrust the keeping of their souls and the direction of their lives into the hands of the faithful Saviour. We feel sure that He has the words of eternal life, and that all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth. At first there is something of a venture—we trust Him; next, there is the knowledge which comes from experience—we know Him; lastly, there is strong confidence—we are *persuaded* that He is able.

Christ’s deposit with us: And what is this? 1 Timothy 6:20, 4:16, suggest the answer. To every believer Jesus hands the custody of His honour, His Gospel, His Father’s glory, His holy day, the ordinances which He bequeathed to the Church. As Ezra charged the priests to bear safely through the desert march the sacred vessels, so our Captain charges us, and throughout the whole Bible rings the injunction: “Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord.”

2 Timothy 2:21

“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

THIS I would be, O Lord, clay though I am. Be Thou my potter. Make of me what Thou canst and by what process Thou wilt, only let me be what Thou canst use.

Art thou able to drink the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

By Thy grace I am able. Let me die with Thee; lie in the grave of obscurity and neglect; be counted as the off-scouring of all things; be broken on the edge of Thy wheel; pass through the fire of Thy hottest kiln—only let me be one whom Thou choosest and usest, constantly in Thy hand; dipped down often into the brimming well, and back to Thy dear lips, or to the lips of whom Thou lovest.

The spirit is willing, My child, but the flesh is weak.

I know it, I know it, Lord. But I desire to die to the weakness of the flesh, its ache, its tears, its faintness, that I may live in the Spirit. Is not Thy grace sufficient? It not Thy strength perfected in weakness? Is not the residue of the Spirit with Thee, to give without measure? Heed not my weak cryings, but perfect that which concerneth me. Only make me a vessel that Thou canst use.

He that would be great, let him be as he that doth serve.

I understand Thee, Master. Thou wouldst winnow my heart, and rid me of all that is proud and selfish. It is true that in the time past I have sought great things for myself: but that is gone now: I am but a weaned babe: my only desire is for Thee, for Thy glory, for the magnifying of Thy name: my one cry to be often, always, in Thy hand.

2 Timothy 3:16

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

LITERALLY the words stand, *All Scripture, God-breathed and profitable*. It is a remarkable expression, reminding of the early record, “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul.” The breath of God has entered these holy words, and they live.

This makes Scripture fragrant: I write these words beneath the leafy shadow of an oak-tree, on a ridge of hill commanding the Weald of Kent. The summer breeze is hurrying past. Since it left the southern sea it has passed over miles of fragrant country, imbibing the sweet scents of flower gardens, orchards, and hop gardens; lading it with perfume, which makes it an ecstasy to inhale. Ah, fragrant breeze, how thou remindest me of those holy thoughts which are wafted to me from the orchards of Paradise, whensoever I open the sacred Word!

This makes it refreshing: On this hot summer day the heat would be overpowering but for this delightful breeze, which fans the cheek and cools the atmosphere. The current is always changing, hence the refreshment. And the Word of God is always fresh and interesting, because the Spirit of God is perpetually passing into and through it, bringing His own life to us, and through us to the world.

This makes it beautiful: The effect of the wind, in the music of the leaves above, the swaying of the grasses at my feet, the rustling of yonder golden corn across the beaten foot-path, adds an element of incomparable delight. There is new meaning, movement, music, in it all. And it is only as the Divine breath breathes through apostles and prophets, that, like great organ-pipes, they become resonant with heavenly music.

2 Timothy 4:1

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;”

PROFESSOR Rendel Harris reminds us that an early piece of Christian literature, called *the Second Epistle of Clement*, opens with these words: “Brethren, we ought to think of Jesus Christ as God, as the Judge of quick and dead. And we ought not to think meanly of our salvation; for when we think meanly of Him, meanly also do we expect to receive.” In the view of this holy soul there was a very deep and necessary connection between creed and character. Those who esteem Him most worthily will derive most from Him.

Large thoughts of Christ are necessary to holiness. Unless we think of Christ as the Ideal Man, in whom there was no flaw or stain, how can we make Him the model of our daily life? Unless we think of Him as the Son of God, able to subdue all things to Himself, how can we dare to hope to become like Him? “I should die, O my Lord,” cried a saint in a moment of religious ecstasy, “if I thought that I should fail of loving Thee with all my heart.”

Large thoughts of Christ are necessary to prayer. He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the Rewarder. (Heb 11:6) Bethink thee well before thou openest thy lips in the first entreaty, who He is whom thou addresseth, and forthwith great and far-reaching petitions will naturally form themselves within thine heart.

Large thoughts of Christ are necessary for Christian work. The solid belief that Christ has redeemed our race, and that the Father has given Him the kingdom over all the world, is absolutely necessary before there can be any enthusiastic effort on our part to make Him King and secure for Him actually the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

Titus 1:1

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;”

THESE seem to have been the two guiding stars of the apostle’s life—faith and knowledge. Some are afraid of the conjunction. The men of faith are afraid of science, and the men of science often despise faith. But they are not antagonistic.

Faith: The faith that inspires all elect souls is one and the same. In some there may be more, in others less; but its attitude toward God and its phases of experience, trial, and triumph, are the same in all who believe. In addition to this, the general facts and truths on which our faith lays hold, and from which it extracts its nourishment, are the same: and it is a comfort to know that these have been passed on from age to age from the earliest days, and that we are called to believe in them, and hold them fast.

Knowledge of the Truth: We need not fear or shun knowledge, which is simply the exploring and discovery of the ways and thoughts of God. “Let knowledge grow from more to more.” Only let her always concern herself with the great facts and methods of God’s universe, rather than with human speculation and fancy. There is a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. The one may be only intellectual; the other is always moral. Those who pretend to know are not always wise; but the wise always know.

Godliness: True knowledge will make you godly, reverent, devout; filling you with the Spirit of God within, and with likeness to God without. It is only as you are godly, that you will really be wise and know things that are hidden from the wise and prudent. True knowledge leads to godliness, and godliness back to knowledge.

Titus 2:14

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

AFTER all that we have professed and learned, how hard it is to believe that God intends just what He says! When the Holy Spirit says all, He clearly means ALL. And we are, therefore, taught that the death of Jesus was intended, not for our forgiveness and justification merely, but for our sanctification, and our deliverance from the power of all our besetting sins. The text does not promise freedom from temptation; but from all yielding to habits, dispositions, and tempers of soul which have ruthlessly tyrannized over us as Egypt over Israel.

Jesus died for thee, O child of God, that having been set free from the bondage of all iniquity thou mightest live soberly as regards the use of the world, righteously toward thy fellows, and godly toward the Almighty, and “looking for that blessed hope.” The grace of God has appeared; His glory will appear. There has been an Epiphany of the one; there shall be as certainly an Epiphany of the other. Many awaited the first; more shall await the second. The one was in humiliation; the other shall be in glory: the one was as a Babe; the other shall be in the glory of the Divine Man. But till then we are called to wait with garments unspotted from the world, and hearts delivered from the love and power of human sin.

Let us teach the world that God has something tangible and practicable to give — not for the next life only, but for this. We are taught by that gentle school-mistress, the Grace of God, to *live* — soberly, as regards our personal life; righteously, in relation to others; godly, in our attitude toward God. Wesley says, “Until you press believers to accept full salvation now, you must not look for any revival,”

Titus 3:4

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,”

THE emphasis must surely rest on *appeared*. Kindness and love toward man were always in the heart of God, but they were not clearly revealed. They might have been perceived in the order of nature and human life; but there are stormy winds as well as zephyrs in the one—and in the other deaths as well as births; knells of hope as well as marriage peals. But in Jesus the true heart of God toward man was manifested. It is thus in human life.

At first God blessed us anonymously. In Cowper’s memoirs we read how Theodora, his cousin, pursued him throughout his sad life with her gifts; but they always came without indication of their source. As the poet unwrapped his new-come treasure, he would say, “Dear Anonymous has come again; God bless him.” So, through years of thoughtless childhood, and afterward in opening youth, we were the recipients of myriads of gifts contrived with the most exquisite skill to give us pleasure; but we did not trace them to their source. They were from God.

Since then His grace and loving kindness have appeared. We have had eyes to see, and hearts to understand. The Anonymous Benefactor is now recognized as our Father and Friend. We no longer praise our earthly loves for our cornfields and vineyards, but our Heavenly Spouse (Hosea 2). In the breaking of the bread we have recognized the Son of God, and we know now who it was that walked with us along the path of life, and why our hearts burned.

“Oh to grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be;
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.”

Philemon 12

*“Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is,
mine own bowels:”*

THIS fragment of ancient letter-writing gives us a model of the way in which our commonest or most prosaic dealings, and our letters, even on business matters, may breathe Christ’s spirit. It also illustrates the relation in which we stand to Jesus Christ. What Onesimus was to Paul and Philemon combined, that we are to our Lord.

What was Onesimus to Paul? His child, whom he had begotten in his bonds. He had probably been discovered by some of his companions in the purlieu of Rome, where criminals concealed themselves from justice, and abandoned characters gave vent to the wildest passions. Or, having heard that the apostle, whom he had so often met in his master’s house, was residing in his own hired house in Rome, the runaway slave had found him out, when in the extremity of hunger. In either case he had now become dear as the apostle’s heart; had learned to minister to him in his bonds; had proved more than a servant—a brother beloved. O Thou who hast redeemed us from our sins, may we be all this to Thee!

What was Onesimus to Philemon? He had been unprofitable; and we have been. He was sent back; and we have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. He had been a servant, henceforth he should be a beloved brother; and we are no longer servants but friends. He had grievously wronged his master; but his sin had been forgiven, and so covered by over-abounding grace, that it would bring him into a position of greater privilege and blessing than ever before. In this man’s sin and restoration we see ourselves. Where our sin abounded, grace has much more abounded, through the tender pity of Him who had put our defalcations to His own account.

Hebrews 1:12

“And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.”

THOU *art the same, when contrasted with nature.* The solid bases of the hills were laid in their sockets by Thy hands. The blue tapestry of the sky was woven by Thy fingers; and it is as easy for Thee to lay it aside and substitute new heavens as for us to lay aside a worn-out dress and take another. And as the change of dress does not affect the nature of the wearer, neither will all the changes of creation or nature affect the power of Thine hand or the tenderness of Thy heart. Thou art the same!

Thou art the same, when contrasted with men. They come and go. The great ones of the past—Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah—stood with Thee for a moment on the earth, and then passed into the great silence. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, wrought for Thee and with Thee, and passed away. Our own teachers and friends have not been suffered to continue by reason of death. One by one they have passed from us; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.

Thou art the same, when contrasted with our own moods and impulses. They are too fitful; like the morning dew; like the evening wind. Sometimes we feel we could die for Thee; at other times we sleep amid Thy sorrows. Emotions, resolutions, methods of thought and action, are permanent only in their changefulness. But Thou art the same—changeless and timeless, our Rock of Ages, our impregnable Fortress and Home!

This was the import of the Burning Bush which flamed out on the hillside in the dark night, but did not burn to the ground. Steadily, constantly, fiercely, the fire shone, but needed no fuel from the tree—symbol of the I AM.

Hebrews 2:17

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

THE priesthood of Jesus stretches like the sky from the horizon of the past to that of the eternal future. It covers all we know of Him.

In the days that preceded His incarnation: We are told that the priesthood of Melchizedek was made like that of the Son of God (Hebrews 7:3), from which it is clear that all the apparatus of priesthood within and without the Jewish system was some faint imagining forth of the priestly mediation and intercession of the Saviour. The eternal temple was reared, the incense of intercession ascended, the sacrifice of the Lamb was slain, before the first thin spiral of smoke rose from Moriah’s summit.

In the days of His earthly ministry: At the Passover, when the High Priest had finished the sacred rites, he came forth to the people, and said, “Now ye are clean.” In John 15:3 Jesus addressed His disciples in the same words. His authority to forgive sins; His quick sympathy, and likeness to His brethren; His frequent prayers; His intercessions for sinners, as when He pleaded for His crucifiers; His intercessions for the tempted, as when He prayed for Peter; His intercessions for His own, as in the matchless John 17; His reference to the shedding of blood; the whole circumstances of His death-show His priestly attitude, which culminated in His passing within the veil.

In the days of the present dispensation: The divine apostle tells us that he saw Christ clothed in a vesture to the foot, and employs this specific word for high-priestly dress. He saw Him engaged in priestly ministry; and in a subsequent vision tells us that he saw Him mingle much incense with the prayer of saints, and present them before God.

Hebrews 3:1

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;”

WHO are to consider Him? “Holy brethren.” Because we are the brethren of Jesus, we must consider our Brother. Because we are brethren with all, whom He brothers, we should emulate the saints of all ages in their eager gaze at Christ. We must possess the holiness without which none can see the Lord, and we must live in holy love with all who bear the name of Christ. Do you lack either of these? This is the reason why your eyes are blinded. Step out of the mist into the clear prospect:

“a step,
A single step, shall free you from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, and open to your view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul.”

What right have they to consider Him? Because they are “partakers of a heavenly calling.” They have turned from the world, from the fascinations of the sin and the flesh; they are seeking the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. Surely such have a right, given them of grace, to live in daily personal vision of their King!

In what aspects should they consider Him? As *Apostle*, whom God has sent out of His bosom to man, and whom man sends back to God. As *Priest*, who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, who bears our needs and sins and sorrows on His heart. As the *Son*, compared with whom Moses was but a servant. As *Creator*, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made. As the *Head* of the household of those who believe. As the *All-faithful One*, who will never resign His charge. Consider Jesus in each of these aspects, and rejoice in Him.

Hebrews 4:9

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

THERE is a rest for weary souls. God speaks of it as His Rest. He entered it, we are told, when He had finished His work, and beheld it to be very good; and ever since the door has been standing open for the travel-stained, weary children of men to enter it. To every other creation-day there were evening and morning, but not to this; it partakes of the nature of eternity in its timeless bliss.

Let us rejoice that this rest remaineth. Of course, the Sabbath, which was and is a type of it, could not exhaust it. And Canaan, with its sweet plains and cessation of the wilderness wanderings, could not completely fulfil it; because centuries after it had been given through Joshua, in the Psalms God spoke of yet another day, as though His rest were still future.

The rest may be a present experience. The word “remaineth” has diverted the thoughts of commentators who have supposed it referred to heaven. There is rest, sweet rest, there. But “remaineth” means “unexhausted, unrealized, by aught which has taken place.” The rest is for us here and now. “We which have believed *do* enter into rest.” Where is it? In the bosom of Christ: “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” It is in ploughing the furrow of daily duty—“Take My yoke;... and find rest.”

This rest is compatible with great activity. He that enters into the Divine rest is not reduced to quietism. On the seventh day the Creator rested from creation; but He works in providence. Jesus, on the seventh day, rested from Calvary; but He pleads in heaven. Cease from your own works, after a similar fashion; abandon your restless planning and striving; by the grace of the Holy Spirit better service will be produced.

Hebrews 5:14

“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

IT is difficult to exaggerate the value of the physical senses. Take, for instance, that of scent. It is the means of exquisite enjoyment, conveying to us the perfume of garden or field; and it secures us against serious perils that lie in wait for our unwary footsteps. By the order of God’s providence, hurtful substances exhale noxious and forbidding odours, by reason of which we are warned from going into their close proximity.

The soul also is endowed with senses. How important a part our spiritual senses may play in the regimen of the inner life! If we are quick to discern good and evil, we may welcome the one and avoid the other with ever-increasing readiness. We may receive the blessing of the one when still afar off, and avoid the curse of the other when only threatening us.

The army which is ill served by its scouts stands a much worse chance than if it were forewarned when an attack was advancing. The foremost ranks of the foe may be over the ramparts, and engaged in the heart of the fortress, before there has been time for preparation. Oh, to detect temptation, when still it is only a thought, a suggestion, a faint shadow on the sky!

We may sharpen our senses by use. When I was in the tea-trade, my sense of touch and taste and smell became acute to discern quite minute differences. We need a similar acuteness in discerning good and evil. May our hearts become most sensitive to all that might lead to temptation, so that we may deal with the tempter in the very earliest suggestions of evil. Lord, make us of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:3).

Hebrews 6:6

“If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

THE writer of this Epistle is eager to lead his readers from first principles to that strong meat which was befitting for those of mature growth; and, as he proceeds to do so, it was as though he were arrested by a sudden thought of some who had recently fallen away from the faith.

In the awful stress of trial which accompanied the fall of Jerusalem, the Hebrew Christians, who were still dwelling in Palestine, were strongly tempted to apostatize. Some, indeed, had done so. But can we really consider that they ever were true Christians? They went *out*, because they had never been truly *of*. They had been enlightened as to the doctrines of Christianity; but the enlightenment had been of their head rather than of their heart. They had tasted of the heavenly hopes, anticipations, and joys of the Gospel message, without really belonging to the Household of Faith. But, notwithstanding all, they had gone back.

It is impossible to renew such to repentance, *whilst they go on* living as they do, crucifying the Son of God by their vicious and cowardly course of action, and putting Him to an open shame. Notice that the impossibility of renewal is only for those who persist in their evil ways. Abandon your sins, and God will restore you to your old place.

It cannot be too clearly emphasized that this text does not say that backsliders cannot be restored to the favour and forgiveness of God; but that they cannot be restored so long as they cling to the things which had been the sources of their declension.

Hebrews 7:16

“Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.”

THIS chapter is a veritable Psalm of Life. It overflows with the message of the Easter morning. Throughout its verses it is witnessed that He liveth; that He ever liveth; that He liveth after the power of an indissoluble life.

Remember all that was done to dissolve and loose it. Satan spoke to his chief captains, Sepulchre and Corruption, and bade them hold his Prisoner fast. The Sanhedrin affixed their seal, set the watch, and made the grave as secure as possible. But it was all in vain. His body could not see corruption. His life defied death. All through the Greek mythology there is the wail of infinite sorrow. Laocoon and his sons strangled by the folds of the mighty serpent: day always mastered by night: the year with its wealth of life descending to the abyss. Strive as man might, he would be mastered at last, and primeval night reign once more. But all this is altered in Jesus. He is Priest after the power of an indissoluble life.

And, what is more, that life may be communicated to us by the Holy Spirit. It is not only true that He ever liveth; but also that because He lives, and as He lives, we shall live also. In the first creation God breathed into Adam the breath of his life, and he became a living soul; but in the second creation Christ breathes into us the spirit of His life, and our spirit is filled with a property which it had not previously, and in which the sons of men have no share. “The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” See to it that you deny your own life, so that His life may become evermore regnant within you.

Hebrews 8:13

“In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

THERE had been a manifest decay and vanishing away of the first Tabernacle or Temple with its rites and services. At the time when these words were written there were evident symptoms of the approaching collapse of the whole system of which pious Jews had been wont to boast. But the Holy Spirit reassures their failing hearts.

It is well, He seems to say, that these should vanish from the earth; that men may be certified that the old covenant, of which they were the sign and seal, has also gone—gone never to be recalled. Thereupon, the very natural enquiry was suggested: If the old covenant has decayed and vanished away, what is the agreement or arrangement under which we are living now? To this enquiry the present chapter is an answer.

Those who believe in Christ are still in covenant relationship with God. A new covenant has been set up, which indeed is as old as the everlasting hills. It is the covenant of love; the covenant which says very little of what man does, and much of the I WILLS of Jehovah; a covenant which was entered into between God and His Son, standing as Mediator; a covenant which has been sealed with priceless blood.

The provisions of that covenant are enumerated in the foregoing verses: that God will engrave His law on mind and heart, and take us to be His people and be our God, and remember our sins no more. As the decay of the symbols of the Old Testament indicated that it was vanishing, so the ever-fresh beauty of the supper of our Lord, as it was practiced in the first Church, witnessed to the permanence of the New Testament.

Hebrews 9:28

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

THERE is an evident parallel intended between the first and second Advent, and especially in the manner of looking for it. At the first Advent there were many who were definitely looking for and hastening to that day. Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel; and Anna spoke of the infant Lord to those who were expecting redemption in Israel. To look for the consolation and to look for the redemption were the two articles in that early creed. And presently this quiet, patient waiting broke out into the rapturous song of the *Nunc Dimittis*.

But all Jews were not looking for that blessed Hope, the appearance of the Grace of God. When our Lord came, the leading teacher of Judaism was Philo, and he not only had no Messianic hopes of his own, but discouraged them in other people. He conceded that there might be a return of Jewish national life; but he had no expectation of it being under the leadership of the Christ.

It has been truly remarked that this eager looking for the Advent has always been the mark of the living Church. “Ye turned,” said the apostle, “unto God from idols...to wait for His Son from heaven.” (1 Thess 1:9-10) And again he said, “A crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” (2 Tim 4:8)

As it was with the first Advent it shall be with the second. The Son of God will come at a time and in a manner for which men are not prepared; and only the elect, who may have been contemned and despised by the world at large, will discern Him, and go forth to meet Him in the air.

Hebrews 10:9

“Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.”

THE meaning of this is clear. In the old covenant the stress was laid on the outward rite; but in the new covenant, burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin are substituted by the devotion and consecration of the blessed Lord to His Father’s will.

It is very noticeable that by the offering at the cross, in which the Saviour’s yielded will culminated, we are said to have been sanctified, consecrated, or set apart *once for all* (Hebrews 10:10). The thought there is, evidently, that our Saviour’s death has implicated us forevermore; and that His Church, whom He represented in that supreme act, is forever pledged to be dead unto the world and sin.

But still later we learn that He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified (Hebrews 10:14). The change of tense surely indicates that what was accomplished for us in the purpose of God when Jesus died, must be accomplished in us by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Every time, therefore, our will is brought into more perfect union with that of God, a further step is taken toward that glorious elevation which Jesus made ours in the death of the cross.

And if you would have an incentive to this, remember how Jesus promised that all who would do the will of God should be reckoned members of the holy family (Matthew 12:46-50). Are you a member of that family? You may be, and sit only on the outer circle, for the constituent members are always altering their position toward the central Christ; now advancing toward the inner heart, now receding. Oh, see to it that you are not only within the holy circle of the will of God, but that you are near the golden centre where Jesus is seated.

Hebrews 11:40

“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

THIS chapter proves that the saints of all ages are essentially one. There is a link which unites them; a thrill which passes from hand to hand around the circle. One theme for many voices; one attitude for many faces; one inspiration for many hearts. The saints that lived before the Advent and those that have lived since are one in their faith in the living God, making the unseen visible, the distant near, and seeing the eternal through the transient and ephemeral.

And now heaven waits. Its joys are not complete; its rapture not full. The blessed are blessed; but there is yet a margin between what they are and what they will be—between what they enjoy, and what they may enjoy. The choir is not full, and the anthem cannot be fully rendered till our voices blend in it. There is a pause, a halt, an expectancy, an incompleteness, till we come. Your dear ones want you to be there. They have not gone far into the heart of God’s bliss, but are lingering near the gate till you have joined them.

From Switzerland your friends write you to say it is perfectly beautiful, but “it will be better when you join us; we are reserving the best excursions till you arrive; we are incomplete without you; make haste.” It is thus that the blessed await us. The spirit of Heaven is well represented by the courtesy of the old prophet, who would not sit down to meet with Jesse and his sons, till David, the youngest, had come thither also. And when the whole family is gathered, it will be perfect indeed, from which no element shall be wanting.

Oh rapture of eternal joy! We stretch out our hands in yearning desire, and in doing so touch other hands as they reach toward ours!

Hebrews 12:22

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,”

THESE poor Hebrew Christians, outcast from their Temple, and soon to see their beloved city vanish from the earth, were sore at heart. What a contrast was presented by the bare room in which they celebrated the simple supper and the splendid Temple with its magnificent rites! What a tiny rill their hymns were, compared with the mighty torrent of Temple psalmody! What a handful of worshippers, compared with the multitudes that congregated from all over the world! Sometimes it seemed as though the contrast were unbearable.

Then said the Holy Ghost, lift up your eyes and see. Ye are not the lonely, isolated handful ye suppose. Every time you offer your prayer and sing your hymns ye are joining with the spirits of the perfected just, with numberless holy angels, and with vast multitudes in heaven and on earth who are ever adoring Christ. You climb the temple of Worship, of which the steps are prayers and the gates praise, and as you do so, on either hand go myriads of happy and holy spirits; and those surely are specially near whom you “have loved long since and lost awhile.”

What special blessing these thoughts will bring to the bedridden, who for many years have not entered the courts of God’s house; to the aged, and lonely, and exiled! We never worship God alone. As soon as we begin to pray, we say, *Our Father* which art in heaven, forgive *our* sins; give us *our* daily bread. We need not die to pass within thy gates,

O Jerusalem, city of God! Already we tread thy golden pavement, and hear the music of the waters of life, and press to our wounds the leaves of thy tree.

Hebrews 13:21

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

TO perfect is to adjust, to put in joint, to articulate us with the living Saviour. It may be described as a surgical operation. Too many of those who are in the Body of Christ are not in living articulate union with Him. Hence the writer asks that we may be properly jointed with Christ.

The Agent of this process: The God of Peace. Let us not be afraid of Him, as though He must use some terrible anguish, some heartrending grief. He will not shrink from this, if all other methods fail; but He prefers to achieve His purpose by gentle, tender, peaceful means. He is the God of the summer evening; of the bursting spring; of the slumber of the little babe.

The Guarantee that He will perform this process: He brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep; and surely the power which achieved that bringing again is capable of any demand that may be made on it. Will He do so much for the Shepherd, and neglect the flock? Will He give Him the victory, and forsake those for whom He won it? In bringing the Shepherd did He not pledge Himself by the most solemn sanctions to do all that needed doing for the weakest of His sheep?

The Object of this process: He adjusts us, that all which is well pleasing in His sight may be readily fulfilled in and through our yielded natures. When the helmsman is right with the captain, the boat will naturally take the course that the captain selects. When the machinery is adjusted with the motive power, the pulse of the piston will be felt away at the furthest loom, with the smallest amount of leakage and the largest of result.

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.”

“**T**HE white flower of a blameless life!” The view of pure and undefiled religion presented in this definition was characteristic of James, surnamed the Just, who was revered even by the Jews for his austere piety, and whose vesture of simple white was emblematic of his stainless character. Whatever may be our views about the doctrines of Christianity, we must see to it that their outcome be in pure and holy living. Orthodoxy of view is utterly worthless unless it be combined with orthodoxy of life. This was the side of truth on which James insisted.

What a beautiful conception is here! The unspotted life! No book is like the Bible in its conceptions of sin; indeed, we owe to it the thought of sin, and its evil in the sight of God. But there is no book with so lofty an ideal of what life may become when it is yielded to the grace of Christ. A cleansed heart, and an unspotted robe; no sin allowed and permitted in the soul, and no evil habit allowed to dominate and enthrall the life.

But how is it to be ours?

(1) Put the grave of Christ between you and your former life, and so reckon that you are dead to all solicitations that would induce you to live according to the lusts and passions that dominate the rest of the Gentiles.

(2) Seek to use your spiritual senses, that you may be quick to discern the first and most distant approach of temptation, that so it may find you hidden in the risen living Saviour.

(3) Let the blood of Jesus be instantly applied, so that you may be immediately cleansed from the least spot that may have defiled your dress.

(4) Keep away your eyes, and speech, and feet from all scenes and society that have a defiling influence.

James 2:5

“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”

THERE is nothing that men dread more than poverty. They will break every commandment in the Decalogue rather than be poor. But it is God’s chosen lot. He had one opportunity only of living our life, and He chose to be born of parents too poor to present more than two doves at His presentation in the temple. All His life was spent among the poor. His chosen apostles and friends were, with few exceptions, poor. He lived on charity, rode in triumph on a borrowed steed, ate His last meal in a borrowed room, and lay in a borrowed grave. “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?” Why is poverty so dear to God?

It is in harmony with the spirit of the Gospel. The world-spirit aggrandizes itself with the abundance of its possessions. Its children vie with each other in luxury and display. The spirit of Christ, on the other hand, chooses obscurity, lowliness, humility; and with these poverty is close akin.

It compels to simpler faith in God. The rich man may trust Him; but the poor man must. There is so much temptation to the well-to-do classes to interpose their wealth between themselves and the pressure of daily need; but the poor man has no fortress in which to hide, except the two strong arms of God. He waits on Him for his daily bread, and gathers the manna falling straight from the sky.

It gives more opportunities of service. The rich are waited on, and pay for servants to wait on those they love. The poor, on the contrary, are called to minister to one another, at every meal, and in all the daily round of life. Herein they become like Him who was, and is, as one that serveth, and who became poor, that through His poverty we might be rich.

James 3:2

“For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”

THINK of the sins of speech! How innumerable they are! When we see them in the light of this chapter, we can understand the holy Isaiah saying, “Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King.”

The sins of speech about ourselves: The tongue boasteth great things. We are all apt to be vain, boastful, exaggerated. We tell stories that redound to our own credit; contrive to focus attention on our own words and deeds; and even in delivering God’s messages manage to let it be seen that we have a clearer insight into truth or a closer familiarity with God than our fellows.

The sins of speech about others: “We break the law of courtesy, and become harsh, insolent, and uncivil; or the law of purity, and repeat stories that leave a stain; or the law of truth, and practice insincerity, equivocation, and dissimulation; or the law of kindness, and are harsh and implacable to those who are beneath us in station. Or in our desire to stand well with others we are guilty of flattery, servility, timeserving, and the like.”

The sins of speech in connection with God’s work: We disparage other workers; compliment them to their faces on addresses they have delivered, and disparage them behind their backs; pass criticisms which take away the effect which their words had otherwise exercised over others; contrive to indicate one defect in which was otherwise a perfect achievement. Alas for us! How greatly we need to offer the prayer of the psalmist: Set a watch, O God, upon our lips!

James 4:5

“Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?”

A VERY deep and remarkable verse! The apostle is contending against the worldliness which was so rife among the believers he was addressing. They were set on pleasure; they sought the friendship of the world, and became unfaithful to their divine Lover; they were proud and high-minded. He went so far as to speak of them as adulterers and adulteresses; and then adopting a gentler, pleading tone, he says, “You are grieving the gentle Holy Spirit who has come to dwell within you, who yearns with a jealous envy to possess your entire nature for Himself.”

The Spirit of God dwells within thee, O believer in Jesus Christ. If a man have not the Spirit of God, he is none of His; and since thou art undoubtedly one of us, thou hast most certainly the Holy Spirit. But the mistake of thy life consists in this, that He hath not thee. Some part of thy heart is given, but not all; and this causes Him the most exquisite pain, like that which we suffer from jealousy.

No keener pain is possible to the heart of man than to have good reason for the belief that a loved one is not wholly true; that there has been an alienation of affection which was once whole and entire; that another is receiving a part at least of the heart's devotion. The fire and screw are light in comparison with our anguish then; but, this is what the Spirit of God suffers when we share between Him and the world that love which should be all His own. “I, the Lord thy God am a jealous God,” is as true as when first spoken from Sinai. The person of Jesus Christ must be the Sun of our system, though that system may include many planets beside.

James 5:16

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

IT might be rendered literally: “Very strong is the supplication of a righteous man, energizing.” When a man is right with God, not regarding iniquity in his heart, nor seeking aught for his own pleasure, the energy of the Divine Spirit moves mightily within him, and his prayers become very strong. They recall the Master’s, with their strong cryings and tears.

The righteous man finds relief for suffering in prayer. “Is any among you suffering? Let him pray.” There are sorrows we cannot tell to our dearest. Surges of grief sweep over us for which we have no words. Life is a stern fight for us all; and each heart knows its own bitterness. But there is always one resort: we can pour out our sorrows into the ear of our compassionate and merciful High Priest.

The righteous man prays the prayer of faith. The prayer of faith is that which is so sure of the Divine answer that it knows that it has received it, though there is no appearance of its having been granted to the sense. We can only pray that prayer when we have asked what is in God’s will to bestow. But righteous men cannot always pray thus, because they do not know the Lord’s will on matters not recorded in the Bible. There are some sicknesses which are unto death, and we cannot pray the prayer of faith for these. *If you cannot pray the prayer of faith, take medicine, and use the best means within your reach.*

The righteous man can affect the whole history of his fatherland by his prayers. It was so with Elijah, as we learn here. It was so with John Knox, whose prayers were more dreaded by Mary of Scots than the armies of Philip.

1 Peter 1:4

“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,”

YES, it is an inheritance. It is a free gift, and yet we have a right to it. We do not ask for it—we were born into its blessed privilege. The child that lies in yonder cradle, over which the coronet is emblazoned, may claim his broad ancestral estates simply by right of birth: and it is on that tenure that the saints hold heaven. By God’s great mercy we have been begotten again.

Oh, blessed heritage! *Incorruptible!* The gnawing tooth decay cannot injure it. Moth and rust cannot consume, nor thieves break through to steal. No spendthrift hand can scatter or overspend its treasures. *Undefiled!* Not a stain on its pure robes; not a freckle on its leaves; not a taint of miasma on its atmosphere. Into the city entereth nothing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. *That fadeth not away!* To use the Greek word, it is *amaranthine*. Some of the fairest hopes that ever blessed human vision; the most delightful friendships; the most perfect dreams of delight, have faded and withered before our eyes.

It is kept for us, and we are kept for it. ... It is reserved in heaven for you.

“I have a heritage of joy,
That yet I must not see;
The hand that bled to make it mine,
Is keeping it for me.”

Who by the power of God are guarded through faith. The idea is that we are being brought through an enemy’s country under a strong escort—as the women and children from Lucknow, between the double line of English soldiers, till they were safe from the onset of the Sepoys. We are not in heaven yet; but we are as safe as if we were.

1 Peter 2:24

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

HE *came into the sinner’s world.* Himself sinless, He took our nature. Accustomed to the pure atmosphere of His own bright home, He allowed His ears and eyes to be assailed by sounds and sights beneath which they must have smarted. His blessed feet trod among the dust of death, the mounds of graves, and the traps that men laid to catch Him. And all for love of us.

He lived amongst the sinners. Not a sinner’s life, but the ordinary life of men. He wrought in the carpenter’s shed; attended wedding festivals, and heartrending funerals; ate, and drank, and slept. He sailed in the boat with His fisher-friends; sat wearied at the well-head; and was hungry with the sharp morning air.

He sympathized with the sinners’ grief. In their affliction He was afflicted. He often groaned, and sighed, and wept. When leprosy with its sores, bereavement with its heartrending loneliness, dumbness and deafness, and devil possession, came beneath His notice, they elicited the profoundest response from His sympathetic heart.

He died the sinner’s death. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was treated as the scapegoat, the leper, the sin-offering of the human family. Our iniquities were laid on Him, as the dark waters of the streets pour into one whirling pool. He stood as our substitute, sacrifice, and satisfaction: the guilt, and curse, and penalty of a broken law borne and exhausted in His suffering nature.

He is preparing the sinner’s home. “I go to prepare a place for you”; and no mother was ever more intent on preparing his bedroom for her sailor-boy on his return, than Jesus on preparing heaven.

1 Peter 3:14

“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;”

IT was a time of very real and fiery trial when Peter wrote these words. Persecution was already beginning with the House of God. The first mutterings of the awful storm which was to break in Nero’s terrible atrocities were making themselves heard throughout the Roman world. The intention of this Epistle, therefore, was to encourage these scattered saints, that they might not be overwhelmed. Some who read these words may need similar comfort.

Remember, beloved fellow-believers, that Jesus has suffered; your Lord and Master has trodden these thorns before you. See, they are flecked with His blood. Would you not desire to be fellow-partaker with Him in His sorrow, that you may share His glory? It is only in suffering that we can properly identify ourselves with the great anguish of the world, or learn to comfort or pray for others. And, probably, none know the innermost tenderness and companionship of Jesus like those who daily fill up that which is behind of His sufferings. Besides, their fear is much worse in anticipation than in actual experience. Probably God entirely delivers His martyrs from those physical tortures which to onlookers might seem unbearable.

This has been the perpetual testimony of the Armenian refugees. Miss Codrington’s story of her experiences in China, and Dr. Baedeker’s statement of what he has learned in his wide experience amid the refugees and imprisoned saints in all parts of Europe, support and confirm the same conclusion. Sanctify Jesus Christ in your heart as Lord and King. Maintain a good conscience; do not be turned aside for fear of man; and when you come to suffer, you will find the fire has lost its sting.

1 Peter 4:1

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;”

THE Church was redeemed in a baptism of pain: for her members to suffer, and by suffering to overcome the world, is to fulfil the forecast which Jesus gave when He said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation; be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Arm yourselves with this mind; put on this thought, this resolution, this purpose; determine that suffering at least shall never daunt you.

The reason for donning this armour: Here we have no continuing city. In the death of Jesus we suffered in the flesh, and ceased from our connection with the world which cast Him out: and, as suffering is meted out to us, we become increasingly convinced that we can have no fellowship with its sins. The pain which the world allots to the followers of Jesus widens the chasm between them and it pulls down the old nests in which their affections once built, and makes them more determined than ever to follow their Lord.

The choice which this armour involves: No more the lusts of men, but the will of God. Never again to work the desire of the Gentiles, but to live according to God. Not henceforth to bow before the bondage of evil habit, but with erect and upright gaze to behold the face of Christ—such is the choice. Will you not now make it at this solemn moment, as you stand on this watershed between the two continents—here of the morning, there of the midnight? Follow the King, cost what it may.

The nature of the armour: It is the armour of Light: in which Christ’s nature was encased, and on which all the shafts of man and devil broke into splinters. No weapon that was ever manufactured can prevail against its heavenly temper.

1 Peter 5:10

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

SUCH a little while! In the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 10:37) it is called *a little while*. The late Dr. Gordon loved to read it, *Yet a little while, how little, how little!* which is the literal rendering of the Greek. *A little while!* compared with the eternal years; with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; with the compensations which await us in the Home of God. Though our life were one long agony, it would seem but as yesterday when it is passed; a dream, or a sleepless watch in the night, when the morning breaks.

There is a limitation to our suffering. It is only for a little while; but every moment has been fixed by the immutable purpose and love of God. The hour of darkness is timed with an exact measurement. You shall not suffer one moment more than is absolutely necessary for your perfecting of God’s glory; and for every moment there is an ample supply of grace.

But remember also that in Christ God has called you to His Eternal Glory. You heard that call years ago, and have been following it through days of evil and nights of pain. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, and He is waiting to fulfil His eternal purpose. What a banquet that will be when God will satisfy the expectations of those whom He has called to partake of it!

And the suffering is being used in ways you little understand to perfect, stablish, and strengthen you. It is from sick chambers and torture-rooms that God brings forth His veteran hosts in the day of battle. Think not so much of affliction as of the love of Christ, and the blessedness of being like Him and with Him forever.

2 Peter 1:11

“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

THERE are two ways of entering a port. A ship may come in, waterlogged and just kept afloat by continual working at the pumps, or it may enter with every sail set, her pennon floating at the masthead. The latter is what the apostle desires for himself and those whom he addresses. He desired that an abundant entrance should be ministered unto them.

An abundant entrance is really a choral entrance. The idea may be illustrated from the entrance of a Roman conqueror to his city, whence he had been sent out to war. Amid the crowds of spectators, the procession climbed slowly to the capital, while sweet incense was poured in the air, and music raised her sweetest and most inspiring strains. Will your entrance into heaven be like that? Will you enter it, saved so as by fire, or to receive a reward? Will you come unrecognized and unknown, or be welcomed by scores and hundreds to whom you have been the means of blessing, and who will await you? Will your coming make music right through the home of God? This is the meaning of the choral entrance. It reminds us of those words of Christ about the friends whom we have made by the right use of money welcoming us into eternal habitations.

The conditions on which that choral welcome will be afforded are clearly enunciated here. Look back to 2 Peter 1:5-6. There the identical word of the choir occurs again, translated “add.” It is as though these eight Christian graces composed the octave choir, and that our diligence in acquiring and cultivating these will be rewarded hereafter by the choral welcome into the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Wherefore give diligence.

2 Peter 2:9

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:”

THE following authentic story will best illustrate and enforce this text. I give it as it was given to me by a friend who had verified the circumstances during a visit to Blankenburg. A godly Lutheran pastor, Sander, of Elberfeld, had been compelled to rebuke an evil-doer for some gross sin, and had thereby attracted to himself his malicious hate; and the man vowed to repay him. One night the pastor was called to visit a house that could only be reached by passing over a plank which bridged an impetuous torrent. Nothing seemed easier to his enemy than to conceal himself on the bank till the man of God was returning from the opposite end of the plank, to meet him in the middle, throw him into the deep and turbid stream, leaving it to be surmised that in the darkness he had simply lost his foothold. When, however, from his hiding-place he caught sight of the pastor's figure in the dim light, he was surprised to see that he was not alone, but accompanied by another. There were two figures advancing toward him across the narrow plank, and he did not dare attempt his murderous deed. And as they passed his hiding-place, the one whom he did not know cast such a glance toward him as convinced him of the sinfulness of the act he had contemplated, and began a work in his heart which led to his conversion.

When converted, he sought out the pastor, to confess to him the murderous intention which had so nearly mastered him, and said: “It would have been your death had you not been accompanied.” “What do you mean?” said the other; “I was absolutely alone.” “Nay,” said he, “there were two.” Then the pastor knew that God had sent His angel, as He sent him to bring Lot out of Sodom.

2 Peter 3:8

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

THERE is no succession of time with God: no past, no future; He dwells in the eternal present, as I AM. As we may look down from a lofty mountain on a stream in the valley beneath, tracing it from its source to its fall into the ocean, and feeling that each part of it is equally distant from the spot where we stand, so must time appear to the Eternal; who was, and is, and is to come.

One day is as a thousand years. He could do in a single day, if He chose, what He has at other times taken a thousand years to accomplish. Do not say that He will require so long to do this or that—to restore or convert the Jews; to introduce the millennial age; to undo the effects of the Curse, and fill the years with blessing. Do not say that He must have as long to make the second heavens and earth as the first. Do not say that the overthrow of the empire of darkness, and the conversion of multitudes to God, can only be achieved by the processes which are now in vogue. All this could be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; and between sunrise and sunset God could effect the work of a thousand ordinary years.

A thousand years as one day. Periods that seem so long to our finite minds are not so to God. A thousand years in our reckoning is but a day in His. You say it is nearly two thousand years ago since Jesus died, or at least that we are in the evening of the second thousand. But in God’s reckoning, the Cross, the Grave, the Resurrection, took place in the morning of yesterday. Take wider views of God’s horizon; believe in His mighty march throughout the centuries; He takes up the isles as a very little thing, and the centuries are the beats of the minute-hand.

1 John 1:6-7

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

IN three marked passages, the beloved apostle guards against what men are apt to say, and indicates to them what it would be better for them to substitute in thought and speech.

Men are apt to say that they have fellowship with Christ and yet continue to walk in darkness. It arises sometimes from their desire to stand well with their fellows, or because they do not realize how much darkness is still in their lives. But whichever be the cause, they lie and do not tell the truth. It is far better to walk quietly in the light, and thus we shall secure His blessed fellowship, and His blood will be continually cleansing us from sin, removing all hindrance on Christ’s side to the free communication of His choicest gifts.

Again, men are apt to say that they have no sin (1 John 1:8). It is a profound mistake on their part, arising from defective ideas of what sin is, or from self-ignorance. If they realized what God’s standard of holiness and sinlessness is; if they understood that sin consists of coming short of His glory as much as in distinct violation of His will; if they knew that there may be sin in motive as much as in act, and even in want of love—they would not speak thus. As it is, they deceive themselves, though no one else. It is better to confess our sins and seek cleansing, even for those of ignorance, in the precious blood of Jesus.

Again, men, are apt to say that they have not sinned. Though they have fallen below their own standard, they do not like to admit it, and cling tenaciously to their position of having gone beyond the range of sinning. Much better to admit it, and obtain forgiveness through the one Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

1 John 2:17

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

THE world stands for the entire system of human interests by which we are surrounded. It does not refer to what God made by His creative fiat and moulding hands, but to the shows, fashions, and pursuits of men. It is used here in the sense in which the devil took Jesus into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said, “It hath been delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it.”

The word used of its evanescence is a remarkably interesting one. It is that employed of the rapid change in some scenic display or performance. A moment ago the stage was full of life and colour; but it is suddenly deserted, and the actors and actresses have put off their splendid dresses, and are habited in mean and common attire. Or we might compare the passing away of the world to the dying colour of the sunset. The tempter offers us some bait, some outward object which appeals to the eye of the body or the mind, and we reach out toward it; but as we grasp, it is gone. We have caught a soap bubble, have journeyed after a mirage, have hunted the will-o'-the-wisp. So unsubstantial and fleeting are the things with which the men of this world try to appease their immortal appetite.

But it is to be noticed that the desire for these things is even more evanescent than the things themselves. The apostle says that the lust thereof passeth away. The power of enjoyment dies away. The eye is sated with spectacles; the mind with constant change.

How great the contrast!—“He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

1 John 3:2

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

IT is our privilege, not only to be children, but to know that we are such. The world knows us not; but God knows us, and we know Him, and we know that we are His sons and daughters, through regeneration and faith. How do we know?

We believe His Word (John 1:12). By faith we have received Him, we do trust in His name; then, by the authority of that text, if there were no other, we may claim to have been born into the Divine household.

We have the witness of the Spirit (Galatians 4:6). The fact that our hearts look to God as Father, and appeal to Him with the infant’s cry, Abba, is a proof that we are born again. Do not look for an audible voice in your heart, but notice whether the thought of the fatherly love of God toward you is not becoming more familiar and precious. It is not the perception of your childhood, but of His fatherhood, which will reassure you.

We are led by the Spirit: If we are led by the Spirit, we shall love the things we once hated, and hate those we once loved. Our choices, tastes, methods of life, habits, and companionships, will undergo a radical alteration.

We love the people of God (1 John 4:7). The converse is also true, that he who is begotten of God loveth.

We do not presumptuously and habitually yield to known sin (1 John 3:9). The apostle is not speaking of some isolated act into which a man may fall under unexpected temptation, but of habitual courses of inconsistency and wrongdoing. Test yourselves, therefore, whether ye are indeed born again.

1 John 4:16

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

LIFE is one long education in various phases and aspects of love. First as a child, then as a friend, then as a lover, as wife or husband, as father or mother. We are perpetually being allowed to sit in some higher form for the progress of this Divine study. For to love is to live. To be loved is to drink of the sweetest cordial that can be prepared from the vintages of earth. And all is intended to help us to understand better the nature of God, who is love. As each new experience enters our life, we should consider a fresh facet or angle to break up and reveal to us the glory of God’s love. We should say to ourselves, Now I understand and know more accurately than before how God feels, and what His love is.

The apostle says we have known the love of God. Indeed, it is so. Through years of life, each of which has been filled with the most various experiences, but filled also to the brim with proofs of God’s tender loving-kindness, we have had innumerable proofs of His love, for

“E’en the cloud that spreads above, and veileth Love,
Itself is Love.”

The apostle says we must believe God’s love. Standing on the sure foundation of what we have proved God to be in the past, we may look on the present and future with perfect faith. We have known Him too well to doubt Him now. We have known, and now we believe. He has made no mistakes. He is making none. He has done the best, and is doing it. We do not understand His dealings, but we know Him who is behind the mystery of Providence, and can hear Him saying:

“It is all right, only trust Me. Fear not! It is I.”

1 John 5:15

“And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

THIS Epistle is full of certainty. It rings with the words we know. And in these words we are taught that we may be certain in the region of prayer. Probably there is no region of the Christian life concerning which there is more uncertainty than this of prayer. Perhaps this is also the reason why there is so little prayer. Men doubt the use of spending time in shooting arrows, a very small percentage of which seem to strike the target.

The first condition in true prayer is to be sure that it is according to the will of God. It is not difficult to do this when we base prayer on a promise. And this is what we should do to secure definiteness and assurance. There is nothing that pleases our Father more in His praying children than that they should bring His promises to Him for fulfilment, saying, “Do as Thou hast said.” But in cases where there is no promise to guide us we shall discover His will as we pray.

The next condition is to believe that God is listening. We need not pray long to know this. Only be quiet and silent before Him, and a blessed sense, induced by the Holy Spirit, will pervade your heart and mind, that you are literally speaking into the ear and heart of your Heavenly Father, who is listening as intently as if He had nothing else to attend to in all the universe.

The third condition is to be sure that the thing we asked is granted. It may not have come to hand, and it may not come in the precise form in which we sought it, but it is ours. We must dare to believe that we have that petition, labelled with our name, consigned to us, perhaps started on its way to us, although it may take years to come.

2 John 6

“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”

HERE is a solution to many difficulties, and given so easily and naturally by this beloved elder to the elect lady and her children. He had been laying much emphasis on truth, and combining truth and love in an exquisite unity. Probably we can never love perfectly, till we are perfectly true. If you examine yourself in the feelings of distance and dislike, which you have toward some individual, it is almost certain that you will want some transparency and sincerity in your dealings with them. It is also the case that if we put away all insincerity, and want of consecration, as between us and God, we shall come to love God more perfectly.

What deep, sweet rhythm of meaning there is in the first three verses of this letter! One reads them over and over again. Oh may grace, mercy, and peace may be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

The difficulty that you feel is that you do not love enough. You would like to love with a strong, undying flame, burning steadily toward Jesus Christ, cleansing you with its heat, constraining you with its love. But perhaps you fail to distinguish between love and the emotion of love. They are not the same. We may love without being directly conscious of love, or being able to estimate its strength and passion. Here is the solution to many of our questionings: They who obey also love.

It is recorded of Dr. Chalmers that when a Scotch girl applied to be admitted to the sacrament, her testimony was so halting that it seemed as though she must stand back; but as she was leaving his room she turned back and said, “I cannot speak for the Lord Jesus, but I could die for Him.”

3 John 7

“Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.”

THE beloved elder is anxious about some travelling evangelists, who had gone forth to visit the churches; and is commending them to the care of Gaius. He was to set them forward in a manner that should be worthy of God. This is a high standard for our entertainment of brethren and strangers withal. It would save us from niggardliness and stint, for God is never miserly. It would equally save us from ostentation, since in God there is perfect simplicity. It would pervade our behaviour with the most perfect grace. But notice, in respect of these evangelists:—

Their motive: “For his name’s sake” It is not needful to say whose Name. There is one Name above every name; in which whatever we do is to be done. To teach the meaning hidden in that Name; to unfold its sweetness and power; to exert its spell over souls that had never felt its magnetism; to glorify it and make it honoured and beloved – this was their one thought and aim. Oh that we were animated by the same gracious motive!

Their delicacy: They would take nothing of the Gentiles. It seemed to them incongruous to go for alms and maintenance to those who do not love their Lord. Besides, could not He maintain His own servants? They certainly would not have sanctioned the means that modern Christians adopt of getting money from the ungodly.

Their welcome: We ought to welcome all; and in doing so we may be fellow-helpers with them and with the truth. It is a very beautiful act to link ourselves with God’s honoured servants by prayer and sympathy, that we may be counted their fellow-helpers and companions.

Jude 21

“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

THERE is a strong current running. If you keep in its main stream, it will bear you gently but irresistibly forward; but there are so many side-currents, that we must be very careful not to be swept out of it. You are in it by grace, now keep in it.

Build yourselves on your most holy faith: Build, not on your emotions; not on your conceptions of what may be right or wrong; not on your experience—but on the strong and massive outlines of the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude1:3). We may well contend for it, if it is to yield the foundation of our spiritual upbuilding. In other words, you must come back, again and yet again, to the teachings of the Word of God, and specially of the life of Jesus.

Pray in the Holy Spirit: Wait at the Divine footstool until your prayers are indicted by Him, and the spring arises from the depths of God. And whensoever you feel the inward movement of God’s Spirit, yield to it. He will correct and prune from your prayers all that should not be in them. He will lead you out in intercession for others, and for the glory of Christ, of which you did not know yourself capable. To pray in the Holy Spirit is to let the Holy Spirit pray in you.

Look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ: Always be on the outlook. Let your soul stand on tiptoe in anticipation of His coming. Let yours be the words of the Canticles, “I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my Beloved, that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister; my love, my undefiled.” The heart that waits for Jesus, will not have to wait in vain. And even in the act of waiting, it will be kept in the love of God, which is also eternal life.

Revelation 1:11

“Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”

IT is true, O Son of God. Thou art! The First in order of Being, and Last in the full completeness of Thy glory.

First in respect of Time, for Thou art the everlasting Father—Father and Creator of the ages; and when time shall be no more Thou wilt last forever. From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God. Thy years shall not fail.

First in respect of Creation: Thou wast before all things; Thine was an age prior to the creation of matter; all things were made by Thee: and when the heavens and earth that are now have passed away forever; when the elements shall have melted with fervent heat; when the sun shall be burned out and the stars wane—Thou wilt still be the last, able to bring into being new heavens and a new earth.

First in the order of Redemption: God first loved us. From before the foundation of the world, Thou were the slain Lamb; before the foundation of the world we were chosen in Thee. First in the love that resolved to redeem; first in the mystery of Thine incarnation, lowest in the depth of Thy descent unto death, and in the resurrection through which Thou becamest the Firstborn among the dead; first to open the way within the veil, to bear our nature risen before the throne, and to inaugurate for man the life of resurrection-power.

First in respect to the experience of Thine elect: None is to be compared with Thee, Thou Prince of the kings of the earth. Their Alpha, their Beginning, the Day-star of their Hope, the Dawn of their Life, the Origin of all that is good and blessed in their Life; whom they take to be their Ideal, their Goal, their Aim, their Omega, their End.

Revelation 2:17

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

THERE is every reason to suppose that this white stone is a diamond, and that it stands for the Urim and Thummim stone, which the high priest wore in his breast-plate, and which he consulted for the oracles of God. It probably darkened with the Divine *No*, and grew lustrous with *Yes*.

The believer may have direct knowledge of the will of God. You may have your white stone. If only your heart is right with God, you may know His will for your path, not only by the pillared cloud of outward circumstances, but by the inner bearing of the heart. By a quick intuition you may know what God's mind is, both when you kneel in prayer and when you are called on to act. Only the surface of the inner life must be unruffled and pure; there must be no anxious agitation, no blurring miasma of sin.

Each revelation of God's will carries with it a deeper knowledge of Himself. On the Urim stone were engraven the mystic characters of the Divine name. On these no eye but Aaron's might rest; so, deep in our heart, these revelations of God's nature are given, which are direct and special for each loving and obedient soul. Eye hath not seen nor heart conceived what God says to His children about life and death, and Himself, and their relationship, and the glorious future.

Such revelations are in proportion to our overcoming life. If you are perpetually yielding to sin and impurity, and being trodden down by the heel of passion, such communications from the Infinite will be rare and indistinct. To him that overcometh, not once for all, but perpetually, shall be made the revelations of God.

Revelation 3:12

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”

ALL who lived on the seaboard of Asia Minor were familiar with the vast and beautiful temples, in which Oriental lavishness and Greek art combined to realize the utmost magnificence. Their ruins strew the deserted sites of former cities to this day. The Lord therefore used familiar imagery in this promise. A column hewn from its rocky bed, richly sculptured, and conveyed to the rising temple-structure!

Stability: “Shall go no more out.” God Himself shall establish, strengthen, and settle, the soul which trusts Him, and is willing to follow at all costs where He leads. He will make such a one to be as Jachin or Boaz, the two mighty pillars which Solomon erected in the Temple court, their names signifying establishment and strength. There is no spectacle more inspiring than to behold the steadfastness of the soul that wavers and swerves not, but stands to its post, though all nature rocks.

Responsibility: The pillar bears up some part of the structure; and it is Christ’s good pleasure to call us to share with Him the weight of ministering to His Church. As you show yourself true and faithful, God will allow you to bear up the common life of His people by ministering comfort, direction, encouragement, to such as could not stand by themselves.

Beauty: The mediaeval architects and masons took great pleasure in their designs. In many cases each pillar is sculptured as to its capital in its own fashion. There is infinite variety and beauty in the patterns. So Jesus is cutting deep into us the name of His Father and Himself, and making us bear new revelations to the world. Do not shrink from the deep cutting of His chisel.

Revelation 4:1

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”

YOU must remember that John was in the isle of Patmos, a lone, rocky, inhospitable prison, for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And yet to him, under such circumstances, separated from all the loved ones of Ephesus; debarred from the worship of the Church; condemned to the companionship of uncongenial fellow-captives—were vouchsafed these visions. For him, also, a door was opened.

We are reminded of Jacob, exiled from his father's house, who laid himself down in a desert place to sleep, and in whose dreams beheld a ladder which united earth with heaven, and at the top God stood.

Not to these only, but to many more, doors have been opened into heaven; when, so far as this world was concerned, it seemed as though their circumstances were altogether unlikely for such revelations. To prisoners and captives; to constant sufferers, bound by iron chains of pain to sick couches; to lonely pilgrims and wanderers; to women detained from the Lord's house by the demands of home; to domestic servants, missing the blessed opportunities of the sanctuary—how often has the door been opened in heaven. And what has not Nature been to some of us! How often in a country glade, the first flower of spring, a bird's warble, a gleam of light checkering the path, has been as a door opened in heaven!

There are conditions. You must know what it is to be in the Spirit; you must be pure in heart, and obedient in life; you must be willing to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Then, when God is all in all to us, when we live, move, and have our being in His favor, to us also will the door be opened.

Revelation 5:6

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”

IT is a marvellous combination, but how reassuring! Not the throne without the Lamb, else sinners dare not venture nigh: not the Lamb without the throne, or we might question His victory, His omnipotence to succour and save. No; but the throne with the Lamb, the Lamb and the throne, the Lamb in its very midst.

How does the Lamb come here? Surely meekness, humility, gentle submissiveness to an irresistible lot, are not the virtues that win thrones! Perhaps not in man's world, but they do in God's. In the eternal world the passive virtues are stronger than the active; sufferers wield more might than wrestlers; to yield is to overcome; to be vanquished is to conquer. It is because He was God's Lamb that He is now God's Anointed King, having seven horns for His omnipotence, seven eyes for omniscience, and seven spirits sent into all the world for omnipresence.

But see: the marks of suffering, of agony and death, of sacrifice, are stamped upon His flesh. “A Lamb as it had been slain.” The redeemed ones that stand around tell the story; He purchased and cleansed them by His blood; He is worthy to fill the throne and rule forever. He who could make Himself the supreme sacrifice and offering for the sins of the world is worthy to be the world's King. The angels corroborate their verdict. In concentric rings they stand around the throne in their massed myriads. From ten thousand times ten thousand clear voices the acclamation rings out, *Thou art worthy!*

Take the scroll of history, of empire, of our lives, O gentle, holy, victorious, mighty Lamb. Break the seals, and unroll it page by page. All must be well that passes beneath Thy tender and mighty hand.

Revelation 6:1

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.”

THIS word rings through the corridors of this book like a clarion. *Come*, Son of God! *Come*, according to Thy plighted word! *Come*, for creation travails in pain together until now! *Come* restore Thine ancient people, and bring in the golden age! *Come!* Take to Thyself Thy great power, and reign! The time is rife! Midnight has faded into dawn, and dawn is lightening fast to day!

The ages which are characterized by the bloodless victories of civilization and peace are incomplete without Thee; and as the white horse issues forth, men are not satisfied with the abundance of this world's goods, there is still an unsatisfied yearning which says, *Come*.

The ages most saturated with blood—the blood of men, shed by the hands of men, where harvests grow rank because the soil has been so richly fertilized by blood and tears—need Thee sorely; and as the *red horse* comes forth, sad Mother Earth, who has received so many mangled bodies to her bosom, bids Thee *come*.

The ages, filled with plague, pestilence, and famine, wherein beasts multiply about the homes of men, because there is no hand to keep them back, since men have perished from the earth, as the *livid horses* go forth, cry, *Come*.

And listen to the cry of Thy martyrs, from beneath the altar. Is it not time to arrest the heavy hand of the persecutor, and avenge their blood? Then come, and add to all Thy other crowns, the crown of all the earth!

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.”

WE do not live until we have been born again. The moment of regeneration is the first moment of life. All the years before are as though they had never been. But from the moment we receive the life of the eternal God into our being, we begin an endless progression.

The entrance of that life makes us lambs in the flock of the Good Shepherd. We no longer resist, or fight, or boast in things of which we should be ashamed. We become pure, sweet, gentle, lowly and submissive. We are willing to lay down our lives for others. We follow the way of the cross without murmur or complaint. Every time we eat of that bread and drink of the cup we witness to the world our desire to absorb more and more of the lamb-like nature of the Son of God. Hence, it is said, the Lamb shall lead, shall shepherd, shall tend us as His flock.

The life which God has implanted yearns for satisfaction. As a parched flock desires the crystal streams that purl over the pebbles, so the flock of God in this life and the next cry out for God, for the living God. Nothing will satisfy God's lambs and sheep but God Himself. And this is satisfied in Jesus. In Him the eternal God comes near to us; we follow Him without fear.

And in that life there is eternal progression. Jesus leads us from one fountain to another, from one well to the next; always deeper into the heart of heaven, always further toward the very centre of all things, which is God. We shall always be satisfied; but our capacity will constantly enlarge, and it will become necessary to give us fuller manifestations, according to His own promise (John 17:26).

Revelation 8:3

“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.”

EACH series of seven, whether of the candlesticks, the seals, the trumpets, or the vials, is introduced by some appropriate and suggestive appearance of Christ. Here, for instance, the seven trumpets are restrained until this inspiring vision of the Redeemer is delineated as an imperishable fresco on the wall of Scripture.

It is not startling that He assumes here the appearance of an angel. This was His frequent guise in the ages which preceded His incarnation. And as to the priestly function here ascribed to Him, they are His habitual practice and wont throughout the present dispensation. He appears in the presence of God on our behalf. He has gone within the veil to make intercession for us. Such a Priest becomes us who is a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord has pitched, and not man. And since it is necessary that, as High Priest, He should have somewhat to offer, there is given to Him the praises, prayers, and gifts of the saints, that He should mingle them with the much incense of His own merit, and present them at the golden altar which is before the throne. Whenever we approach God in the name of Jesus we are really appealing to Him on the ground of that presentation, of that much incense, and the prevalence of that intercession.

Our prayers appear at times too utterly unworthy to bring to God. How can we dare to believe that they can be acceptable to the Holy God! Granted! It is all true. But never forget the much incense which is added to each petition; and remember that Christ gave Himself unto God, and is perpetually giving Himself, for us, an offering and a sacrifice, for an odour of a sweet smell.

Revelation 9:4

“And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.”

THIS reference carries us back to Revelation 7, with its sublime description of the angel ascending from the sunrise, having the seal of the living God. He had cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea (Revelation 8:3).

The seal of God! Whatever that means in this pictorial or hieroglyphic book, we know what it means throughout the Epistles. The sealed have no doubt about their personal acceptance with God. They have set their seal to God, and He to them. They realize that they belong to Him in bonds of ownership which neither life nor death can dissolve. They bear upon their lives the impression of His image and superscription. They go to and fro about the world under the protecting escort of His high angels, who are commissioned to bring them safely to their Father’s home. They have been anointed as kings and priests.

What a remarkable inference may be derived from the prohibition of the previous chapter, and the immunity accorded to the sealed ones in this! If the hordes of horsemen are withheld from touching the servants of God, whom the Angel sealed, we may infer, when no such caution is uttered about our lives, and no such immunity secured, that God has allowed pain, and sorrow, and death to hurt us for some sufficient reason—one which we shall be able to appreciate when we stand in His light. If He who has power to withhold the power of the adversary does not withhold it, the assaults which make our frail craft tremble from stem to stem must be His appointment and choice for us, and we must dare to look up into His face, and say, *It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.*

Revelation 10:6

“And swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:”

TIME is but an incident in the procession of eternity: a wreath of cloud on its expanse; a throb of its pendulum; a drop in its multitudinous ocean. There was a moment when it began; there shall be another of its pause and cessation.

But we may look for this expiration of the Time Ages without alarm. We have already received the germ of the eternal life, which existed before time began, and will last when it has fulfilled its course. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life.” (1 John 5:11,12) We are the children of eternity; our eternal life dates from the moment of our regeneration; we know not how it befell, but we awoke in the time sphere to discover that we were objects of an eternal love, and that we are destined to a life which will outlast the universe of matter. From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God; and Thou hast made us partakers of Thy Divine Nature, who art, and was, and art to come!

The margin suggests another rendering, that there should be no longer delay for the finishing of the mystery of God. From times eternal God has been elaborating His secret purpose, which surely must include the overruling of evil for good; the vindication of His permission of evil; and the final restitution of all things. For long that mystery has remained unfinished. God has not told His deep design. To many questionings He has given no reply. But the moment is at hand when the mystery of God will be finished, and the draping veil will be removed. Then, beloved, but not before, you will understand. Then you shall see the end from the beginning; and in God’s light, see light.

Revelation 11:19

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

WE are constantly encountering evidences that the Bible is one. Its writers are as various in their styles and characteristics as their respective ages; but they keep striking the same notes, and making allusion to the same objects. We have not heard of the Ark for centuries. Now we suddenly meet with it in a description of the coronation of the Son of Man. He has taken His great power and reigned. The kingdoms of the world have become His. The portals of the temple of God have been thrown open, and within is seen the Ark of the Covenant.

God will never forget His covenant. When once He has pledged Himself to a nation or an individual, to Israel or Abraham, or to Christ and His seed, He will infallibly stand to it. All traces of His faithfulness may elude the eye of the earthly watchers, obliterated by the storms of sorrows that sweep the world; the very emblems of the covenant may have passed from human custody; and the time may be long—but at the destined hour the parted veil will reveal the Ark of the Covenant, as though to show that the victory of Christ was the fulfilment of that ancient pledge.

The covenant, which means blessing to God’s children, is fraught with terror to His enemies. “There followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.” It was so of old, when the ark brought deliverance to Israel, but disaster to Philistia. The savour of life and of death; the pillar of cloud which was light, and midnight darkness; the “Come, ye blessed,” and “Depart, ye cursed”—these alternatives are presented to us all.

Revelation 12:11

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

THE overcoming and casting-out of Satan is the theme of the Book. First he overcomes; then he is overcome. Overcome first by Christ; and secondly by those who belong to Christ. Cast out from Heaven to the heavenly places or the air, of which as prince he wields the power. Cast out from there into the earth. Cast out thence into the bottomless pit. Cast out thence into the lake of fire. Such are the stages of the overthrow of the adversary of God and man.

Though Satan has no access to the presence of God now that the risen Saviour has entered there by virtue of His own blood, yet he may accuse us to our own conscience:

“I hear the accuser roar

Of ills that I have done:

I know them well, and thousands more;

Jehovah findeth none.”

How are such accusations to be met? By the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony. There is no force so potent as the witness of the saints for truth, purity, and spirituality. Oh that there were more of this, by life and lip! Oh that there were more unswerving loyalty to the King, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession!

For when this is so Satan gives back. The darkness cannot withstand the light. Victory is assured to those who love not their life unto the death, in their steadfast obedience to the truth. Then the fruit of the tree of life, immunity from the second death, the hidden manna, the white stone, the morning star, the confession before the angels of God, and the pillar in the temple of Eternity!

Revelation 13:17

“And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

FROM many hints dropped from time to time by business men it would seem as though the time described in these words is already being inaugurated. Christian men are finding it increasingly difficult to carry on their business without adopting a lower standard than that of the sanctuary. Trades people are strongly tempted to adopt two prices, adulterate, or sell beneath their samples. Workmen are hardly put to it when association with their fellows threatens to involve them in movements from which in their secret souls they revolt. How much business is done over the glass of wine or in the public-house!

Under these circumstances, Christians must resolve:

First, that they will not trifle with their conscience, but will dare in all respects to obey the law of Christ. For every one there is an inevitable choice to be made and maintained, whether a clear conscience or a fortune is to hold the first place in their business career. At many a subsequent crisis the decision may be tested; but the peril of reversing it will become always less.

Second, men must be content to bear poverty as part of the cross of Christ. We admire and canonize the martyrs, but are strangely unwilling to face the disgrace of poverty, the dens and caves of the earth, which they endured for principle. Our religion will cost us something, or we may fairly question its vitality and worth. What a man will not suffer for, he does not value.

Third, Christian people should teach their children the nobility of frugality, simplicity, and contentment. There would be fewer hearts broken by prodigals if we lived as though Christian life did not consist in our possessions, but in God. (Luke 12:15)

Revelation 14:4

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.”

WHAT a word is here! The apostle points to the radiant throng, grouped around Christ as His bodyguard of personal attendants. We had just beheld in the previous chapter the mighty legions mustering under the prince of darkness, and which furnish a strange contrast to this galaxy of strength and beauty. And as we wonder and admire, we are told that they are but as the first fruit sheaf of the mighty harvest to be reaped from the earth.

By examining the first-fruit sheaf, we are able to tell the nature and quality of all the other sheaves that stand in the harvest-field under the golden autumn light. It is by studying the characteristics of these happy and holy spirits that we may learn what we shall be, and what the whole body of the elect shall be one day. Let us consider their number, their character, and their occupation.

Their number: “With Him, a hundred and forty-four thousand.” But if this vast multitude is only a sheaf, what will not the entire harvest be but a multitude which none shall be able to compute?

Their character: Stamped indelibly with the name of God and of the Lamb; singing a new song, which only redeemed hearts can learn and redeemed lips utter; virgin souls, clad in stainless purity, with no lie in their mouths, and no blemish in their lives; purchased from among men to follow the Lamb. Such are they before the throne.

Their occupation: Adoration: they sing a new song. Loyal obedience and companionship: they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They cannot claim aught to themselves. Their whole story is told in the announcement that they were purchased—purchased by the blood of the Lamb they love.

Revelation 15:3

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”

THIS is the scene of the deliverance from Pharaoh on the shores of the Red Sea, translated into the imagery and language of eternity. The hosts of God shall emerge ere long from their long oppressions; by suffering they shall conquer; they shall come off victorious from the beast, and from His image, and from the number of His name. Behind them shall be spread out the sea of time, so calm and still, so hushed from all its tumult and storm, that it shall seem to be like sheets of glass; and as the morning of eternity breaks, it shall be drenched with fire. Fire here is probably an emblem of the holiness and the judgments of God.

Israel broke into rapturous thanksgiving, as the people saw their enemies dead upon the shore. “Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously!” But those triumphant notes, though chanted by an entire nation, shall be as a whisper compared with that song which shall break in thunder from the saints of all the ages. Those who were brought up under the dispensation of Moses, and the followers of the Lamb in the present dispensation, together with all holy souls who have overcome, shall constitute one vast choir.

But search the song of Moses as you will, you will fail to find one note that equals this in sublimity. Here are the saints of God, trained in distinguishing the niceties of righteous and holy government and behaviour, enabled from their vantage-ground in eternity to survey the entire history of the Divine dealings, adoring Him as King of the Ages, and acknowledging that all His ways had been righteous and true. What a confession! What an acknowledgment!

Revelation 16:15

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

THE Second Advent will come on men generally suddenly and unexpectedly. When they say, *Peace* and *Safety*, then sudden destruction shall overtake them, as travail a woman with child, and they shall not escape. With the rapidity of the lightning flash; with the suddenness of a flood or avalanche; with the surprise of the midnight robber—Christ will come. When men are asleep, when every bolt and fastening refuses admittance, when the streets are still and hushed, behold the Judge will stand before the door.

As Lightfoot, quoted by Dr. Macduff, suggests, the allusion may be to a Jewish custom in the service of the temple. Twenty-four wards or companies were appointed night by night to guard the various entrances to the sacred courts. One individual was appointed as captain or marshal over the others, called the “Man of the Mountain of the House of God.” His duty was to go round the various gates during the night to see that his subordinates were faithful to their charge. Preceded as he was by men bearing torches, it was expected that each wakeful sentinel should hail his appearance with the password, “Thou Man of the Mountains of the House, peace be unto thee!” If through unwatchfulness and slumber this were neglected, the offender was beaten with the staff of office, his garments were burned, and he was branded with shame.

It was in contrast with these slumbering Levites that Jesus pronounces a blessing on His own people who watch and keep their garments, and are saved from the reproach of spiritual nakedness. Let us, therefore, wait for the promise of His coming, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.

Revelation 17:6

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”

PAGAN and papal Rome have had to contend with an unbroken line of the witnesses of Jesus. In the words of an exiled Huguenot, “Since the birth of anti-Christianity, there have not been wanting those who have cried against its errors and idolatries.” They have been called by various names—Paulicians, Waldenses, Albigenses, Wycliffites, Lollards, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Pietists, and Schismatics; but God never left Himself without witness. They might all have adopted the symbol and motto of one of them, “A. lighted candle in a candlestick,” with the words, “The light shineth in darkness.”

But how terribly has the vision of the text been verified! Think of the persecutions under the Emperors, when the entire empire was filled with fire and sword. Take the single instance of the Empress Theodora, who slaughtered and drowned one hundred thousand of these Paulician Christians. During the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, Romanism, then in the plenitude of its power, gathered itself for a great, determined, and persistent effort to crush out all that opposed its supremacy, and to clear Christendom of heresy. And wherever any revival of true religion took place, or any confessors of Christ could be found, they were hunted, if possible, to death.

We have not yet resisted unto blood, in the strife against the sin and evil of our time. It is not that the world or the professing Church loves us better, but, probably, we are deficient in the spirit that lived in the martyr’s breast. O Spirit of the Living God, kindle that flame of love again which shall make us willing to suffer the loss of all, even of life, for the sake of Jesus!

Revelation 18:4

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

WE cannot be surprised to find that God has people in the midst of Babylon. Probably in the most corrupt days there has always been a remnant of seven thousand who have not bowed the knee or kissed the hand to Baal. It is the presence of true, though benighted, piety which has perpetuated the existence of organizations which are an offence and a stumbling-block. But their presence in such company cannot be tolerated.

It is often argued that we should stay in the midst of churches and bodies whose sins and follies we deplore, in the hope of saving them for God and man. And such reasoning has a good deal of force in the first stages of declension. A strong protest may arrest error. A vigorous policy may stop the gangrene. But as time advances, and the whole body becomes infected and diseased; when the protests have been disregarded, and the arguments trampled under foot; when the majority have clearly taken up their position against the truth; when her sins have reached up to heaven, and the plagues are about to befall—there is need for another policy; we have no alternative but to come out and be separate, and not touch the unclean thing. “Let us, therefore, go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach.”

The place from which we can exert the strongest influence for good is not from within, but from without. Lot lost all influence of his life in Sodom; but Abraham, from the heights of Mamre, was able to exert a mighty influence on its history. Obadiah might hide the prophets of God by fifties in a cave; but Elijah, from the Mount of Carmel, was able to exterminate the priests of Baal, and call back again the people’s hearts to God.

Revelation 19:9

“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

AT the epoch described in the text we behold the Church of Christ unveiled and visible to heaven and earth. She has laid aside her weeds of sorrow, her ashen garments, her evidences of persecution and rejection, and stands forth a monument of grace, the masterpiece of Christ, the joy of the Bridegroom’s heart. There will be no churches then, but one Church, which will contain within her borders the believing ones of all the churches.

The marriage supper, it has been truly said, is the arrival of that epoch which the redeemed of every age have anticipated. It has been the longed-for day of patriarchs, the glowing prediction of prophets, the burden of songs, the hope of the Church, the era for which creation groans and the sons of God pray.

But there must be a present character to fit us for this future felicity. Who are they that are thus called to the marriage supper? They are of every kindred, nation, people, and tongue, who have accepted the promises and invitations of the everlasting Gospel, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Let us now pass on that invitation; let him that heareth say *come*. Let us go forth into the highways and hedges and compel men to come in, that God’s feast may be furnished with guests. Let us not be content with the first refusal, or the second; but with eager persistency press on men the urgency of these closing hours of opportunity, remembering that, when once the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, it will be hopeless and impossible to secure an entrance. “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.”

Revelation 20:11

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”

GREAT, because of the great causes that will be decided there; the great destinies that will impinge; the great God who will sit there; the great eternity which will be decided for good or bad.

White, because of its immaculate purity: Sir Walter Raleigh, involved in a network of malice, and unjustly condemned to die, turned from the earthly court in which he had suffered vile insult and cruel wrong to the thought of heaven’s unimpeachable truth. Whilst being ferried from Westminster to his dark cell in the Tower, which we visit with hushed footsteps and bated breath, he wrote by lamplight of,

“Heaven’s bribeless hall,
Where no corrupted voices brawl,
No conscience molten into gold,
No forged accuser bought or sold,
No cause deferred, no vain-spent journey—
For Christ is there, the King’s Attorney.”

A Throne, because a King will sit there, the Son of Man, the Son of God: What a change is here! He that hung upon the cross in shame, shall sit upon the throne in glory. He who stood condemned before the earthly tribunal, shall decide the destinies of the race, and reveal the principles of the Divine government.

But that judgment will not affect those who have fled to the refuge of His wounds. These cannot come into judgment. Let us always distinguish between the judgment of the world-spirit, when Jesus died; the judgment of sin on the cross; the judgment which awaits each believer as to the use he has made of his talents, and the work he has done in the world; and finally, the last great judgment which has to do with those who have refused the love and light of God, and have voluntarily cast in their lot with Satan.

Revelation 21:1

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

ALL through this book we hear the clash of the waves. Throughout there is the voice of many waters. But when there dawns on the eye of the seer the bright and blessed time, which is yet to come; when the new heavens and earth appear, this is among the chief attractions of that glorious world—that there is no more sea. The sea is a characteristic emblem of this age, but not of the next.

There shall be no more painful mystery. To the Jew there was a double mystery in the sea—that which lay in its sunless caves, and that which lay beyond the rim of the horizon; and because there was mystery there was dread and alarm. We, too, live on the shores of mystery, and float above it, with only a plank between it and us. But there we shall know as we are known; our questions answered; our problems solved.

There shall be no more rebellious power. The sea is the emblem of untamed power. Lashed into yeasty foam it drives the great ships before it and eats into the land. Men cry, *Let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords.* But God laughs at them. Remember the motto that England struck on its medal to celebrate the destruction of the Armada: “The Lord blew upon them, and they were scattered.” And so shall it be one day when all proud opposition to His will is vanquished.

There shall be no more disquiet and unrest. Life is like a voyage over the sea—now miles of calm, then days of storm; now monotonous and slow progress, then the awful stress of peril and threatening death. Outside of Christ life is like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, but casts up mire and dirt. But yonder there will be unbroken peace and rest.

Revelation 22:3-4

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.”

THESE are the three elements in heavenly bliss:

Service: In the disciples’ prayer the Lord taught us that the will of God is done there. Not that there is any breach in its perfect rest. Activity there will be as easy and natural as the play of the bees among the limes, or of minnows in the pool. There will be no strain, no effort, no exhaustion. To stay those ministries which the blessed render to Him would be intolerable pain. They would be weary with forbearing, and could not stay.

Vision: “They shall see His face.” Here, through a glass darkly; there, face to face. Here, as when the two walked to Emmaus, and knew not their Companion, though their burning hearts might have told them the secret; there, as when their eyes were opened, and they knew Him (though He will not vanish from our sight). Oh, what a glad surprise!

Transfiguration: “His name shall be in their foreheads.” The name of God is the totality of the Divine perfection and beauty, and the bearing of His name on their foreheads indicates that they are becoming like Him, whilst they see Him as He is.

There the Bible closes its record, finding man in a garden, leaving him in a city; demonstrating that where sin reigned unto death, there much more grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, giving man a more exalted and blessed lot than Adam enjoyed in the cool of the day in Eden.

Genesis 1:5

*“And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
And the evening and the morning were the first day.”*

HOW different is God’s method from man’s! The creature works from day to night, his best is first; but darkness overshadows his fairest hopes and best-concerted schemes. The Creator’s days begin with the preceding eve. He reckons the evenings and nights into the days, because out of them the day is born; they usher in the light, and recreate body and brain for the busy hours that follow.

Art thou disappointed in Christian work?—Remember that God wrought on through long dark ages, ere His schemes were evolved in order and beauty. *Human* schemes begin with blare of trumpet and roll of drum, but are soon plunged in darkness. The heavenly seed is sown in autumn shadows; the foundation-stone of redemption was laid amid the gloom of Calvary; the work that lasts generally begins amid disappointment, difficulty, and heart-break, but inevitably passes into the day.

Art thou passing through the bitterness of soul-trouble?—For weeks there has been no ray of comfort, no sign of deliverance. Yet every dark hour is hastening toward the dawn. Thou shalt see thy Beloved walking toward thee in the morning light.

Art thou in despair for the worm?—The times are dark, and threaten to get darker. But if the first creation began in the dark, can it be wondered at that the second must begin there to? But as the one emerged in daylight, so shall the other. The morning cometh; see the star of day standing sentry! Time, is bearing us to a day that shall never go down to night, but shall mount ever toward its meridian.

Genesis 2:15

“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”

THUS God started man in an ideal home. Memories of Eden, exquisite as dreams, weave the background of human life. Fellowship with the Creator, who walked its glades; its river, trees, and fruits; its blessed companionship; its light and ennobling toils—how fair the picture!

The Garden of Eden: That was God’s ideal. When men point thee to the scars on the world’s face, left by the trail of the Arab slaver, the march of the army, the decaying glory of human civilization, and ask how such things are consistent with God’s love, point to that garden and say, “That is what the love of God meant for man; Satan and sin have wrought this.”

The Garden of Gethsemane: When man forfeited Paradise, the Saviour was revealed to regain it. He trod the winepress alone in the shadowed garden of the olive trees, that through its glades He might pass to His cross, and so make the wastes of sin bloom again as Eden. Is it wonderful that another Paradise is possible, when He sowed its seeds and watered the soil with His blood?

Turning wastes into gardens: In Eden man wrought as God’s fellow worker; and we are called each day to do something toward reconstructing the Lost Paradise. Find thy part in delving, sowing, watering, or tending the tender shoots! Seek that thine heart should be an Eden, kept sacred for thy King, and endeavour thy best to plant gardens where hitherto sand-wastes and thorn, thickets have prevailed. Then, “instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” (Isa 55:13)

Genesis 3:9

*“And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him,
Where art thou?”*

THE cool of the day, when the breeze steals over the fevered landscape, is an appropriate time for man to hold fellowship with God. We need to have His hand laid on our throbbing temples, stilling, tranquillizing, shedding His serenity throughout our being. What the breath of evening is in summer, fellowship with God will be for thee, my soul; see that thou art not so absorbed with thy sins, thy love, or thy business, as to miss the tryst, when the sun is setting.

God misses His child. That hour of fellowship was much to Adam, and it was more to God. Love, God’s love, craves for fellowship. As the musician for his lute, as the hart for the brook, as the mother for the twining arms and babbling talk of her child—so does God long for the free outpourings of His child’s heart in prayer; misses them when withheld; is jealous when they are fitful and intermittent.

God seeks His child. He did not wait till Adam found his way back to His side. But He hastened in search of him. So through the glades He comes to seek thee, O truant one! Where art thou, that for these many days thou hast withheld thyself from the hour of prayer? Wilt thou not say with the psalmist, “When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek?” (Ps 27:8)

God mourns over His child. These words, in one version, are rendered, Alas, for thee: as though the heart of God were wrung with sorrow for our loss, as well as His. But He does not content Himself with regret. By the pang of travail, by the prick of thorns, by the necessity of labour, by sacrifice and gifts of covering for our nakedness, He brings us back to Himself.

Genesis 4:9

“And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?”

THE first question God puts to the soul is, “Adam, where art thou?” The next, “Where is Abel thy brother?” We are our brothers’ keepers. Each within our reach, all who need our help, all related to us by the ties of the family, have a claim on us. We must not take an advantage over them; their weakness and need are strong claims on our resources of every kind; we are bound to keep them so far as we can; we may at any moment be called to give an account of their whereabouts. To dispute this is to betray the spirit of Cain, who was a murderer.

God keeps an inventory of His saints. In His book their names are written. Their names, abode and circumstances; their fathers, mothers and brothers; their occupation, whether they keep the sheep or till the land: all are known to Him, because they are fixed by His providence. Whatever touches them is, therefore, instantly known to Him. It is as though they were part of His very being, and a stab of pain to them thrills His heart.

God calls us to help Him in keeping one another. We are to watch for each other’s souls; to consider one another to provoke to good works; to bear one another’s burden; to exhort each other, to convert the wanderer from the path of the destroyer, and to wash stains from his feet. The cure of souls is the work of all the saints. But this is only possible to those who have been baptized into the Spirit of Christ. Remember that you have just as much love toward God, as you are willing to show toward the brother whom you have seen. “This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” (1 John 4:21)

Genesis 5:24

“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

WHAT an epitaph on this ancient saint! It is as clear-cut today as when first recorded here. We know nothing of Enoch but this brief record; but it tells us everything. It was not an act or a number of acts, but a high tone of life constantly maintained. Better to walk with God every day in calm, unbroken fellowship, than to have occasional rapturous experiences, succeeded by long relapses and backslidings. The Hebrew word might be rendered, “Enoch walked, and continued to walk.”

Be sure to go God’s Way. He will not walk with thee in thy way, but thou mayest walk with Him in His. To this He calls thee. Each moment, and especially when two or three roads diverge, look up to Him, and say, “Which way art Thou taking, that I may accompany Thee?” It will not be so hard to forsake inviting paths and engaging companions, if only the eye is kept fixed on His face, and the track of His footsteps determines thy road beyond hesitation or dispute.

Be sure to keep God’s Pace. Do not run impetuously before Him; learn to wait His time: the minute-hand as well as the hour-hand must point the exact moment for action. Do not loiter behind in indolence or sloth. Be loyal and true to His ideals, and quick to obey His least commands.

Be sure to wear God’s Livery. He is in the light; the light is His chosen symbol; it ill becomes thee to wear the unfruitful works of darkness. Put them off, and put on the armour of light. Walk with Him daily in stainless robes, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Then thy fellowship shall be with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and with all holy souls everywhere.

Genesis 6:9

“These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”

THE eyes of God went to and fro over the ancient world, where sin reigned unchecked, to discover one grateful spectacle. But they were doomed to disappointment, till they lighted on Noah. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord, because he only had God seen to be righteous in all his generation. Like Antipas, he dwelt where Satan’s seat was, held fast the Divine name, and was God’s faithful witness. Be thou loyal to God, my soul, though thou stand alone. There are three characteristics in the man who finds grace in the eyes of the Lord.

In himself he is Just. Not faultless, as judged by the white light of eternity; but blameless, so far as his own consciousness is concerned. He wears ever the white flower of a blameless life. His strength is as the strength of ten, because his heart is pure. He exercises himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and man. This condition is only possible to faith that opens the door of the heart to receive the life of God. Wouldst thou be just, welcome that Just One. Let Him live within thee.

Toward man he is Upright. He does not keep his eyes bowing down to the ground in shame, or furtively looking around to gain a secret advantage; he looks the whole world in the face. His eyes reflect the integrity and purity of his soul; they beam with sincerity, unselfishness and love.

With respect to God, he abides in Perpetual Fellowship. This was worth our getting, though we parted with all our jewels to win it. To be tuned into one deep accord with the Divine nature; to answer to Him with one full, responsive chord; to be always found where God is, and never where He is not—that was life indeed.

Genesis 7:9

“There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.”

THIS is the secret of a holy and blessed Life. Most of our sorrows and disappointments have come on us because we have chosen our own path, and done according to our own will.

In obeying, we must sometimes walk in the dark. When Noah began to walk with God, he knew not that it would lead him into collision with his generation, with the suggestions of common sense and experience, and with much that he held dear as life. But walking on each day, he grew strong to trust in the bare word of his Almighty Guide, and grasped it as men in the catacombs will keep their hand on a tiny string or cord, until the first streak of daylight appear. Obey absolutely the voice that speaks in thy heart; the way is dark, but it is the way.

In obeying, we must learn to wait. For one hundred and twenty years the long-suffering of God waited, and during that weary period this true heart failed not. Then for seven days the patriarch waited within the closed doors. It is not easy to bear the long strain of endurance. To rush into the battle, to do something desperate, to strike for liberty—this is the choice of the flesh; but to live in hourly fear, to toil on without result, to see the years stealing away the bank or shoal on which our heart had erected its structures of hope—this is hardest of all, unless our hope is anchored beyond life’s ebb and swell.

In obeying God others obey us. How came it that these creeping things and flying fowls, these living creatures, clean and unclean, entered the Ark so tamely and submissively? Surely a Divine constraint was upon them. When we are under authority, we can say, “Go,” “Come,” “Do this.” All things serve the man who serves the Divine Master, Christ.

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;”

HE cannot forget thee, though all hearts that loved thee are cold in death, and though floods of trouble surge and break around. He comes nearest when there is none else to intercept His love. The floods but bear us nearer to His heart, above the tops of the highest hills.

He could not forget because His honour was pledged. There was a tacit understanding between Noah and Himself, that if His servant obeyed His mandate He would be responsible for the consequences that obedience might involve. There is no need to make bargains with God, as Jacob did. It is far better simply to obey, sure that whatever the highest honour may demand, God will be equal to it. He will have prepared more than we expected.

He could not forget, because He rode the waters with His child. He said, “Come thou into the Ark,” evidently He was inside; and when it is said that God shut him in, it was from inside that the door was locked. Whatever happened to Noah was an experience for his Almighty Friend. They had walked together on the earth; they now shared together the seclusion of the Ark. God is identified in the experiences of His saints. Their pangs, and tears, and waiting-hours are His. He can no more forget, than a mother her sucking child.

He could not forget, because Noah was a type of His beloved Son. Across the dark sea of death, the cross of Jesus has brought Him and His own: so that we now belong, not to the old world which is under the curse, but to the world of Resurrection-Life. The dark woes of Calvary were imaged there: how could God forget? Reckon on God’s faithfulness: He will not leave thy soul in Hades.

Genesis 9:13

“I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.”

A COVENANT is a promise or undertaking, resting on certain conditions, with a sign or token attached to it. The rainbow on the rain cloud, the Lord’s Supper, the wedding-ring, are signs and seals of the respective covenants to which they belong. Whenever we see them we should bethink ourselves of the covenant. Whenever you see a rainbow, recall the covenant into which God has entered with thee; for as He has sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so His kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of His peace be removed. Three things are needed to make a rainbow.

A cloud: When man’s sin overshadowed Paradise, the bow of promise shone; and when the thunderclouds gathered about the Saviour’s path, the Divine voice assured Him that as He had glorified the Divine Name by His life, He should glorify it much more by His death. When the black clouds of conviction, bereavement, soul-anguish beset thee, look out for the bow: it is always there, though sufferers do not always perceive it.

Rain: There are no rainbows unless there be falling drops to catch and unravel the sunbeams. It may be that all evil is worse in its anticipation than in its endurance; but this is certain, that the big drops of sorrow have to patter on our souls before we can realize all that God is prepared to be to us.

Sunshine: It is only when God comes into our grief that we can see the treasures of Love and Grace which are stored for us in Him. We never know how great a blessing sorrow may be till we carry it into the light of the King’s face. It is the dark canvas on which the artist produces his most marvellous effects.

Genesis 10:5

“By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.”

FEW realize the treasures that lie in this heap of names. This chapter is the key to ancient histories and contains many of the names that lie on our modern maps. What teeming myriads are here! We learn three things.

The Oneness of the Human Race: “God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth.” The slave that crouches in the African wood, the meanest outcast that creeps along in the dark, the veriest ruffian red-handed in crime—are bone of our bone, no less than the kings and saints, the prophets and martyrs.

The Wealth of our Saviour’s nature: He loved all; He gave Himself for all; He became the Propitiation for the sins of all; through Him all will rise; and He is able to satisfy all from His royal heart. “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” There is not one child of man who may not find his consummation and bliss in Jesus, the One Man. All men are but broken lights of Him; and of all men that have ever lived He is the one flawless, sinless, perfect Man, the apex of the pyramid of humanity, the Head and Prince.

The warrant for Foreign Missions: If the races of mankind have sprung from a common stock, the experience of one is the key to all. Each may learn from his own heart to estimate the hopes and fears, the yearnings and temptations, the weariness and sin-consciousness of the rest. The Gospel which has brought the blessing will do as much for each of those who bear, however obliterated, the print-mark of our race. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

Genesis 11:7

“Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”

GOD comes down into human life. Though the world is corrupt and full of violence; though His arch-enemy has taught man to dread and hate Him; though attempts are on foot to resist Him in open rebellion, by making a unity apart from Him, and in exclusion of His cornerstone, yet He comes down.

He comes down to see. He will not pronounce judgment till He has satisfied Himself by personal inspection how things stand. He comes down to our bedrooms, and overhears the words we speak, the deeds we do there; to our home-life, and is a silent listener and observer of all its incidents; to our shops, warehouses, and bank-parlours, auditing our accounts, casting up the columns, examining our samples, our weights and measures, our advertisements and circulars. From Him no secrets are hid.

He comes down to punish. “Let me alone, that I may destroy.” (Deut 9:14) Never forget the punitive side of God’s character. How easily He asserts His power! He can disorganize the memory, breathe on the brain, touch one small nerve or muscle, and the best-concerted schemes fail. Why shouldst thou fear every day the fury of the oppressor, when God is at thy side! (Isa 51:13)

He comes down to save. If there be one Lot, He will bring him forth. What was the Incarnation, the descent to Calvary and the grave, but the coming down of the “us” of the blessed Trinity. He that ascended is the same that also first descended. He has come that He may heal our wounds, take us in His arms, and bear us with Him far beyond all principality and power. He is the way, by which we may pass from the confusion of Babel to the love of Pentecost, and the one speech of heaven.

Genesis 12:1

“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:”

NEVER did a corn of wheat more utterly fall into the ground to die. It seemed as though he were urgently needed in his country and among his kindred; but man’s thoughts and ways are not God’s. The blessing of Abraham’s life could only come in the land of promise, and after he had died to the whole life of nature. To every one who is to be richly blessed and made a blessing there is the inevitable command, “Get thee out. Be willing to die.”

Get thee out of the land of idols. Beyond the flood of the Euphrates, Terah and the rest served other gods. Had Abram remained there, he might have touched the unclean thing; hence God’s desire to get him beyond the reach of infection, that he and his race might remain monotheistic. Hast thou had communion with darkness, with Belial, with idols? Get thee out and be separate; touch not the unclean thing. Be clean, thou who art to bear the vessels of the Lord. Reckon thyself to have died.

Get thee out in loneliness. “I called him alone, and increased him.” If thou art unwilling to abide alone, thou must fall alone into the ground and die. God must reduce us to a minimum before He can work through us to the maximum. But there is also no loneliness to the soul who is one with God. Alone against the world, it is still in a majority.

Get thee out in faith. “He went out, not knowing whither.” It was what man calls a venture; but as he stepped out on what seemed a void, he found it rock beneath his feet. Day by day a track appeared across the desert, and all his needs were met till he reached the place of blessing. Death was the gate of life. Having died to Haran, he began to bring forth much fruit in every soil of the world.

Genesis 13:14

“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:”

ABRAM’S life was one of an ever-perfecting separation. But out of these experiences sprang his rarest joys. The separate and obedient soul may reckon on:-

Fresh Revelation: Whenever Abram dared to step out in obedience, the Lord spake freshly to him. But in Egypt we find no trace of the Divine voice. If God spake there, it would be in warning and rebuke. Has the voice of God long been silent to thee—no fresh command, no deeper insight into truth? See to it that thou art not in Egypt. Separate thyself, not only from Haran, but from Lot; not only from what is clearly wrong, but from all that is questionable; and the Lord will speak to thee things it is not possible for men to utter.

Further Vision: Lot lifted up his eyes to espy what would make for his advantage and well-being, and beheld only the plain of Sodom, which indeed was well-watered, but the seat of exceeding sin. But when Abram lifted up his eyes, not to search out ought for himself, but to see what God had prepared, he looked northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward—words which remind us of the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of Christ. The single eye is full of light; the far climber gets the widest horizon; if thou wilt do His will, thou shalt know.

Hundredfold Compensation: Whatever Abram renounced, when he left his home, or gave Lot the right to choose, he received back in the usual measure of God, with an overflowing overpass. God gave him the entire land, including Lot’s portion. We can never give up for God, without receiving in this life more than we gave.

Genesis 14:19

“And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:”

IT was to Melchizedek, the lonely king-priest living outside the busy rush of the world, that this new name of God was given. There are some to whom God gives these direct revelations of Himself, that they may communicate them to others. These are our seers. This title for God, which Abram immediately appropriated, was the source:-

Of Humility: To think of God as the Maker and Possessor of heaven and earth induces the profoundest humility of heaven. “They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou didst create all things.” How great God is! His greatness is unsearchable. Earth and heaven are His handiwork. Take time to think of this, but never forget that He is Love; then, with the familiarity of the child, thou wilt combine the lowly reverence of the creature.

Of Steadfastness in the hour of temptation: When the king of Sodom desired Abram to share in the spoils of the kings, setting before him a most subtle temptation, and one which might have dragged him from the life and walk of faith, Abram fell back on the revelation of God just vouchsafed to him, and said in effect: “What need is there that I should do this thing, or receive of thy gold? All God is mine; in God all things are mine also. What I need He will assuredly give. What He withholds I will receive from no other source.” There is no need for us to get wealth wrongly; God can supply all we need.

Of Security: God owns all; all the earth is His empire; wherever we travel we are within His dominion, breathe His air, are ministered to by His angels. We have a right to the best in all good things, since they are our Father’s, and we are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ.

INFORMATION ON THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS USED IN THIS DEVOTIONAL

1 THESSALONIANS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verses: *1 Thessalonians 5:2,3,6*

Key Word: *Faith*

Outline:

1. Christ's Return as Inspiration for New Believers (ch. 1)
2. Christ's Return as Incentive for Faithful Servants (ch. 2-3)
3. Christ's Return as Challenge for Holy Living (4:1-12; 5:1-28)
4. Christ's Return as Comfort for the Bereaved (4:13-18)

2 THESSALONIANS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *2 Thessalonians 2:3,4*

Key Word: *Day*

Outline:

1. Christ's Return as Comfort for the Persecuted (ch. 1)
2. Christ's Return to Judge the World & the Wicked (ch. 2)
3. Christ's Return as Motivation to Maintain Church Purity (ch. 3)

1 TIMOTHY

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *1 Timothy 3:15*

Key Word: *Godliness*

Outline:

1. Advice to Guard the Glorious Gospel (ch. 1)
2. Advice concerning Prayer and Worship (ch. 2)
3. Advice on Church Leaders (ch. 3)
4. Advice on How to Be a Good Minister of Christ (ch. 4)
5. Advice on Cultivating a Caring Church (ch. 5)
6. Advice on Dealing with Problems and Sins (ch. 6)

2 TIMOTHY

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *2 Timothy 2:3*

Outline:

1. The Soldier's Call (ch. 1)
2. The Soldier's Character (ch. 2)
3. The Soldier's Caution (ch. 3)
4. The Soldier's Charge (ch. 4)

TITUS

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *Titus 3:8*

Key Word: *Good works*

Outline:

1. Governors of the Church (1:1-9)
2. Offenders in the Church (1:10-16)
3. Operation of the Church (2:1-15)
4. Deeds of the Church (3:1-15)

PHILEMON

Writer: *Paul, the Apostle*

Key Verses: *Philemon 15,16*

Outline:

1. Letter of Philemon's love (1-7)
2. Onesimus becomes a Christian (8-14)
3. Vindication requested for Onesimus (15-20)
4. Expectation cited by Paul (21-25)

HEBREWS

Writer: *Unknown*

Key Verse: *Hebrews 4:14*

Key Word: *Better*

Outline:

1. The Superior Person of Christ (ch. 1-7)
2. The Superior Institutions of Christ (8:1-10:18)
3. The Superior Life in Christ (10:19-13:25)

JAMES

Writer: *James, the half-brother of Jesus*

Key Verse: *1:22*

Outline:

1. Working patience through trials (ch. 1)
2. Obedience that accompanies faith (ch. 2)
3. Restraining the unbridled tongue (ch. 3)
4. Keeping the calm in conflicts (ch. 4)
5. Suffering and sick saints (ch. 5)

1 PETER

Writer: *Peter, the Apostle*

Key Verses: *1 Peter 3:15,16*

Key Word: *Hope*

Outline:

1. The Security we have in every trial (1:1-12)
2. The Sobriety we need in the midst of trials (1:13-2:10)
3. The Submission we should render despite trials (2:11-3:12)
4. The Solace we can rely on to cope with trials (3:13-4:19)
5. The Sample we set by coping with trials (5:1-14)

2 PETER

Writer: *Peter, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *1 Peter 3:17*

Key Word: *Knowledge*

Outline:

1. The Development of Faith (ch. 1)
2. The Denouncing of False Teachers (ch. 2)
3. The Disclosure of the Future (ch. 3)

1 JOHN

Writer: *John, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *1 John 1:7*

Key Words: *Love, Life, Truth, Light*

Outline:

1. The Christian's advance in the Light divine (1:1-2:27)
2. The Christian's attitude to the Love divine (2:28-4:21)
3. The Christian's affinity with the Life divine (5:1-21)

2 JOHN

Writer: *John, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *2 John 6*

Key Words: *Love, Truth*

Outline:

1. Love for the Lady (1-3)
2. Admonished to love others (4-6)
3. Deception of the Antichrist (7-11)
4. Yearning to pay a visit (12-13)

3 JOHN

Writer: *John, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *3 John 11*

Outline:

1. Greeting to brother Gaius (1-4)
2. Accept strangers and brethren (5-6)
3. Invest in God's work (7-8)
4. Unjust words of Diotrophes (9-10)
5. Special thanks to Demetrius (11-14)

JUDE

Writer: *Jude, the half-brother of Jesus*

Key Verse: *Jude 3*

Outline:

1. Jude warns against apostasy (1-4)
2. Unbelief seen throughout history (5-7)
3. Description of false teachers (8-16)
4. Exhortation to stay faithful (17-25)

REVELATION

Writer: *John, the Apostle*

Key Verse: *1:19*

Outline:

1. The things which thou has seen (1:1-18)
2. The things which are (1:20-3:22)
3. The things which shall be hereafter (4:1-22:21)

Scripture Memory Programme 2008 - The Growing Christian

July 6 & 13 – God’s Holiness

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

July 20 & 27 – God’s Holiness

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

August 3 & 10 – God’s Judgment

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

August 17 & 24 – Witnessing

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

August 31 – Gospel

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

September 7 & 14 – God’s Judgment

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

September 21 & 28 – God’s Judgment

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

October 5 & 12 – God’s Power

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