

Our Daily Homily

By
F.B. Meyer
VOLUME Nine
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.

Job 36:5

“Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom.”

WHAT entrancing assurances are contained in this and the preceding sentence! To think that in all our wayfarings through this world, One that is perfect in knowledge is always with us, and One that is mighty is pledged to bring us through! Nothing could be desired beside. This makes prayer new. It is a child’s confidential whisper to the One who is attent to the lowest murmur, who cannot forget, who will not relinquish a purpose which He has formed though years pass, and who is able to do exceeding abundantly.

It is because God is so great that He despises none. If He were less than infinite, He might overlook. The boundlessness of His being has no ebb, fails of no soul He has made, and is as much at any one point as if He had no care or thought beside. In fact, those that man despises stand the best chance with God. Just because no one else cares for them, He must; just because no one else will help them, He will. This is necessary to His nature.

When a philanthropist adopts a certain lapsed section of the community, he does so because no one else will. It becomes a matter of honor with him that none of these, outcast by all else, should miss his help. And God has constituted Himself Champion, Guardian and Savior, of all who have no help from their fellows. Friendless, forlorn, helpless, despised, He recognizes and meets the claim of their urgent necessity. Bruised reeds, bits of smoking tow, half-consumed firebrands, lost sheep, prodigal sons, waifs and strays, homeless, destitute, neglected—these have a first claim on the Almightyness of the living God.

Job 37:21

“And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them.”

THE world owes much of its beauty to cloudland. The unchanging blue of the Italian sky hardly compensates for the changefulness and glory of the clouds. Clouds also are the cisterns of the rain. Earth would become a wilderness apart from their ministry. There are clouds in human life, shadowing, refreshing and sometimes draping it in blackness of night; but there is never a cloud without its bright light. “I do set my bow in the cloud!”

If only we could see the clouds from the other side where they lie in billowy glory, bathed in the light they intercept, like heaped ranges of Alps, we should be amazed at their splendid magnificence. We look at their under side; but who shall describe the bright light that bathes their summits, and searches their valleys, and is reflected from every pinnacle of their expanse? Is not every drop drinking in health-giving qualities, which it will carry to the earth?

O child of God! If you could see your sorrows and troubles from the other side; if instead of looking up at them from earth, you would look down on them from the heavenly places where you sit with Christ; if you knew how they are reflecting in prismatic beauty before the gaze of heaven, the bright light of Christ’s face — you would be content that they should cast their deep shadows over the mountain slopes of existence. Only remember that clouds are always moving, and passing before God’s cleansing wind.

“Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen;
Bright skies will soon be o’er me, where the dark clouds have been:
My hope I cannot measure, my path of life is free;
My Savior hath my treasure, and He will walk with me.”

Job 38:31

“Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?”

THE seven stars of the Pleiades always stand for the sweet influences of spring; Orion for the storm and tempest. In this sublime catechism, Jehovah asks Job if he has any control over the one or the other. As it is with the year, so with our life.

There are times when the Pleiades are in the ascendant. The winter is over and gone, the time of the singing of birds is come. Doves coo their love notes in the trees, and the flowers gem the soil. Days of hope, of radiant light, of ecstatic joy! Days in which God seems to be making a new heaven and a new earth within us! Days when our Beloved shows Himself through the lattice-work, and says, “Come, my beloved!” Oh, tender influences of the Pleiades, we would that ye might ever stay, filling us with immortal youth! When God bids them shine, no one can bind them. When He gives joy, none can give sorrow. No mortal man can restrain the outburst of Nature’s spring. You might as well stay the resurrection of the Son of God and His saints!

But Orion has his work as well. Storms come; the drenching rain veils the landscape; the mighty billows are lashed to fury. But all works for good. The blast in the forest snaps off dead wood. The rain fills up the wells. Frost pulverizes the earth. When God binds Orion, man cannot unloose him; “no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.” (Isaiah 54:17) But when the Almighty Unlooses Orion, like another Samson, He does His work of devastation, before which we must find refuge in the cleft of the Rock.

“God sendeth sun,
He sendeth shower,
Alike they’re needful for the flower.”

Job 39:1

“Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?”

THE catechism of this chapter is designed to convince man of his ignorance. How little he knows of nature! Even though centuries of investigation and research have passed, there are still many questions which baffle us. And if we know so little of the Creator’s handiwork, how much less do we know of Himself, or the principles on which He acts!

The knowledge of God is not intellectual, but moral and spiritual. Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, are made known to Love and Obedience. Let the Love of God be shed through the heart, and the will of God be the ruling principle of life, and there will be given a knowledge of God which the research of the investigator could never gain. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God ... they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2: 12, 14) Knowest thou?

Dost thou know the exceeding greatness of His power, which He wrought in the Resurrection of thy Lord — that it is all around thee waiting to do as much for thee also; lifting thee, dead weight as thou art, to sit in the heavenlies?

Dost thou know the hope of His calling to a life within the veil, with the veil behind thee, and the light of the Shekinah ever on thy face?

Dost thou know the riches of His glorious indwelling, that He is prepared so to infill thee, that thou shalt partake of the very life wherewith He liveth and reigneth evermore?

Dost thou know the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of the love that passeth knowledge; and Christ Jesus the Lord?

Job 40:4

“Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.”

WHAT a different tone is here! This is he who so vehemently protested his innocence, and defended himself against the attacks of his accusers. The Master is come, and the servant who had contended with his fellows takes a lowly place of humility and silence.

The first step in the noblest life, possible to any of us, is to learn and say that we are of small account. We may learn it by successive and perpetual failures which abash and confound us. It is better to learn it by seeing the light of God rise in majesty above the loftiest of earth's mountains. “When I was young,” said Gounod to a friend, “I used to talk of ‘I and Mozart.’ Later I said, ‘Mozart and I.’ But now I only say Mozart.” Substitute *God*, and you have the true story of many a soul.

The next step is to choke back words, and lay the hand on the mouth. Silence and meditation! Not arguing or contending! Not complaining or murmuring! Not caviling or criticizing! But just being still — still, that you may feel God near; still, that you may hear Him speak. “Take heed of many words,” said George Fox; “keep down, keep low, that nothing may reign in you but life itself.”

The greatest saints avoided, when they could, the society of men, and did rather choose to live to God, in secret. A certain one said, “As oft as I have been among men I returned home less a man than I was before. Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto Jesus, thy Beloved. Stay with Him in thy closet; for thou shalt not find elsewhere so great peace.” How good it would be to lay our hands on our mouths rather oftener, whether in silence with our fellows, or in the hour of secret prayer!

Job 41:10

“None is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me?”

THE first catechism had been on Job’s knowledge; now it turns on his power. The pivot of the one was, *Knowest thou?* of the other, *Canst thou?* If a man cannot stand before one of God’s creatures, how much less before the Creator! If we dread the wrath of the enraged crocodile, what should not be our dread before the wrath of the Eternal? Canst thou stand before Him? Canst thou strive against Him, with any hope of success? Canst thou force thyself, unbidden and unfit, into the presence of the Most Holy? Thou couldst not intrude on an earthly sovereign; how much less on Him, in whose sight the heavens are not clean?

Eternal light! eternal light!
How pure the soul must be,
When placed within thy searching light,
It shrinks not, but with calm delight
Can live, and look on Thee!

But Jesus can make it possible. Through Him we draw nigh to God. We have boldness to enter into the Holiest of All by His Blood. We may, through Him, be able to say, with Elijah, “As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand.” (1 Kings 17:1) Jesus is the minister of the heavenly sanctuary, and in virtue of His office He is able to bring us into, and maintain us within, the Most Holy Place. He comes out to take us by the hand; and then, having fulfilled in us the good pleasure of His will, He brings us in and places us before the face of God forever. Like Solomon’s servants, we evermore stand before the king, see His face and hear His words.

The sons of ignorance and night
May dwell in the Eternal Light,
Through the Eternal Love.

Job 42:6

“Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

THIS is the clue to the entire book. Here is a man, who was universally known as perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil; who abounded in beneficent and loving ministries to all who were in need; to whom respect and love flowed in a full tide. He was not conscious of any failure in perfect obedience, or of secret sin; indeed, when his friends endeavored to account for his unparalleled calamities by suggesting that there was some discrepancy between his outward reputation and inward consistency, he indignantly repelled the charge, and repudiated the impeachment.

But there were inconsistencies and failures in him that needed to be exposed and put away before he could attain to perfect blessedness and enjoy unbroken peace. If man could not discover them, and if Job were unconscious of them, they were, nevertheless, present, poisoning the fountain of his being; as a hidden cesspool, whose presence is undetected, may be doing a deadly work of undermining the health of an entire household. So God let the man into His presence; and, like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Peter, and many others, he at once confessed himself vile. The light of the great white throne exposes all unsuspected blemishes. Have you ever seen God! Oh, ask for that vision, that you may know yourself! In proportion as we know God, we abhor ourselves. Then Jesus becomes unspeakably precious. Through His death we pass into the true life, and begin to intercede for others. We never have such power for the blessing of the world as when we lie most humbly at the feet of God.

Psalm 1:3

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

IF a man abide not in Me,” said our Lord, “he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.” (John 15:6) The same thought is here. Thrust down your rootlets to the oozy river bed, and there is no doubt about your continuing earnest, patient, God-filled life. The sun of temptation may strike you with sword-like beams, but you will have a source of supply which they cannot exhaust. The secret of an unwithering beauty is in the Word of God, delighted in and meditated upon day and night. And what is the Word of God, but the life of God translated into human speech?

Wean yourself from all beside, and learn to feed on God. Withdraw your rootlets from men and things, and let them travel to the river of God, which is full of water. Close other doors, and open those that lead out on to the terrace, whence you may behold the far-spread landscape of what He is, and says, and is willing to be to us all.

Note that word *meditate*. (Psalm 1:2) The root must lie in contact with the stream, and the soul must steep itself in the Word of God. We must give the truth time to enter and pervade our souls. We must have retreats, shut away from the rush of life, up and down the glades of which we may tread. These retreats are oftener found within the soul; than without. Just as the temple of old, there was Solomon’s porch, where Jesus walked, so in the temple within there are closes and cloisters, where we may commune with our heart, and be still.

Psalm 2:7

“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

THE Holy Ghost tells us that this was addressed by the Father to the Son in His Resurrection (see Acts 8:33). It was from the grave that our Lord stepped up to His mediatorial throne, whence all the hatred of His foes has had no power to dislodge Him, and never shall have. Death is a birth unto the true life. Jesus was the Firstborn from the dead; we too are to be born out of the darkness of the grave into the Life Immortal.

“There is a beyond, and he who has once caught a glimpse of it is like a man who has gazed at the sun. Wherever he looks, he sees everywhere the image of the sun. Speak to him of finite things, and he will tell you that the finite is impossible and meaningless without the infinite. Speak to him of death, and he will call it birth; speak to him of time, and he will call it the mere shadow of eternity.”

But is it not wonderful that He has begotten us also unto a living hope by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead to an incorruptible inheritance? We are the sons of the resurrection. In Jesus we are already on resurrection-ground. Our sun shall no more go down, nor our moon withdraw herself. For us, at least, God hath destroyed “the vail that is spread over all nations.” (Isaiah 25:7)

Do not wonder, then, at the hate of men. They will rage, and imagine vain things; they will take counsel together. It cannot be otherwise.

Thou mayest expect, then, to be bruised by thy brethren, and hated by the world. But at such times Christ will come to thee, and give thee fresh accessions of His resurrection life, carrying thee into the hidden house of His abiding, and confirming the weak knees and the heart that faints.

Psalm 3:3

“But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.”

OH, my soul, hast thou made God thy glory? Others boast in their wealth, beauty, position, achievements: dost thou find in God what they find in these? Thou needest safety from the shocks of time and change: is He thy shield? Thou must have something outside of thee, to complete thy blessedness: is He thine ideal? Thy head is drooping like a flower-cup—it sadly needs the dexterous hand of the Gardener:

“Nothing resting in its own completeness
 Can have worth or beauty: but alone—
 Because it leads and lends to further sweetness,
 Fuller, higher, deeper than its own—
 Life is only bright when it proceedeth
 Towards a truer, deeper life above;
 Human love is sweetest when it leadeth
 To a more divine and perfect love.”

God around us as a shield, God above and within us as an ideal, God lifting up the tired and sorrowful face — this was David’s threefold conception of his relation with God. All around men were filled with wrath at him. He heard their harsh voices, and what they said. Nevertheless he comforted, and stayed his heart with the words, *But Thou, O Lord*. Ah, what an instant change they make!

“We kneel, and all round us seems to lower;
 We rise and all, the distant and the near,
 Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
 We kneel, how weak — we rise, how full of power!”

Ah, these *Buts*! What a difference they make in our lives. There is always the hedge of God’s care, always an illimitable reserve of power and help within our reach, of which we may avail ourselves; and we are so sure of it, that we lay ourselves down in peace to sleep, though the foe in thousands encamps around.

Psalm 4:3

“But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.”

T*HE Lord sets apart for His own enjoyment.* — “A garden inclosed is my sister.” (Song of Solomon 4:12) Out of the wild prairie Christ encloses favoured bits of land, that they may become fair gardens in which to walk. God must have spirits with which He can commune; and therefore He shuts selected ones away in sick chambers, in loneliness, and in prisons, that there may be nothing to divert them from the holy intercourse with Himself, which is His refreshment and delight.

The Lord sets apart for fellowship in intercessory prayer.—He leads three of the apostles into the shadows of Gethsemane, that they may add their intercessions with His. In each church there is a favoured band to whom He tells his secret anxiety for other souls, and whom He leads out in prayer on the behalf of them and of the world.

The Lord sets apart for service.—Those that separate themselves from evil become vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use. Do not be surprised if you are withdrawn from the molding crowd, from the ambitions and interests of earlier years; it is the Lord’s way of engaging you for special service.

We can never forget how the Holy Ghost bade the early Church separate Barnabas and Saul to their appointed ministry. They were separated unto the Holy Ghost. A similar separation may become ours. Let us live in the world as those who are set apart for God, like the Temple vessels that might not be put, as Belshazzar attempted to put them, to idolatrous and lascivious purposes. Oh to know what God means when He puts His reserve on the soul, and says, *This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell!*

Psalm 5:3

“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”

IT is very important to consider *the order* of our petitions. No man would approach an earthly sovereign without taking time to consider how best to present his requests. He would consider the pleas on which to rely, the arguments to present, and the method in which he would be most likely to carry his case. Upon entering the presence of the great King, our Father, would it not well repay us to stay on the threshold for a moment to ask what petitions we are about to proffer, the order in which we should arrange them, and the reasons we should adduce?

It is manifestly a mistake to pray at haphazard. There is too much random praying with us all. We do not return again and again to the same petition, pressing it home with all humility and reverence and arguing the case. Did not Abraham do this for the three of the plain?

Study the order of the Lord’s prayer — the adoration and prostration of soul before God prior to supplication for definite gifts; the acquiescence in the Divine will before the prayer for daily bread; the entreaty for forgiveness before there can be a thought of deliverance from evil. Or consider the order of the High Priest’s intercession for His own in John 17 before He pours out His soul in prayer for the world. Lay the wood “in order.” Enter the temple of prayer through successive courts — Confession, Absolution, Ascriptions of Praise, the Te Deum, the broken sentences, the outburst of intercession, as suggested by the Church of England liturgy. At the same time, do not forget to be perfectly natural. Whilst the soul ascends the temple by regular steps, let there be the glad conviction of the tender love of the waiting Father.

Psalm 6:3

“My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?”

YOU have been long in coming, love says. So miserly are we of the minutes, so leaden-paced is the beat of the pendulum, when our heart stands on the tip-toe of expectation. Moments lengthen to hours when we suffer and await deliverance, just as hours contract to moments when the heart is young and gay.

How long, Lord, ere the trial cease? — When we are entering into the furnace, we like to make bargains with God that it shall not last beyond a certain hour; but He never tells us, lest patience might miss her perfect work. He says simply, *It is enough to suffer one moment at a time.*

How long, Lord, ere deliverance arrive? — Long ago we sent for reinforcements; and since then the battle has been waxing more fierce. We have looked eagerly to the horizon to see the relieving column, clear-cut on the sky line; but in vain. We think we can hold out no more. We have strained at the oar to the last degree of strength and if some deliverance does not come to us, the fourth watch of night will see us drifting helplessly to destruction. “Where is thy God?” the enemy cries; and we are tempted to think ourselves forsaken and forgotten.

How long, Lord, ere the Advent break? — He said that He would come quickly — but the weary centuries pass; and, strain our ears as we may, we cannot detect His princely footfall along the corridor of time.

Cease, fond heart, thy complaining. Delay is not denial. He counts a thousand years as a day. He is coming on the wings of every wind; already He is nigh, even at the doors. Never a moment too early — but not a moment too late.

Psalm 7:8

“The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.”

SPECIFIC charges were being made against David, of which he knew himself to be absolutely innocent. He would not have dared to challenge God thus, if the whole of his life was passing under review. In that case there would have been no hesitation in confessing that, taken generally, he was a sinful man. Similarly, God’s children are often accused of wrongs of which they are absolutely innocent. In such case they have a right to declare their innocence before their fellows; then if this avail not to procure their acquittal, they must turn to God, and ask Him to interpose.

But what a question this suggests! Are you able, child of God, to declare that, as far as you have the light, you are living righteously, soberly, godly, in this present world? Is your life *right-wise* — that is, four-square with the demands of God’s law, able to bear the test of His line and plummet? Can you assert your integrity? Integrity is derived from the Latin *integer*, a whole, a number unbroken by fractions. Are you whole-hearted? Or, to use the grand old word, is your heart perfect before God? If it be, it matters very little what men shall say of your character. If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God on this behalf. What is said is aimed rather at the Master than the servant. God becomes responsible for your vindication. He will arise and show Himself strong, putting to silence the enemy and avenger. Trust your reputation with God, and, in the meanwhile, go on doing His will. There is no harm in calmly and temperately attesting your innocence; but if this avails not to stay the storm, bend before it. Do not appeal to law. God will vindicate you.

Psalm 8:6

*“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet:”*

YES, broken, beaten, fallen, O child of man, thou wast made to have dominion. Not only over cattle, birds and fish, but over thine own wonderful nature. Within thee there is a realm as full of multitudinous life as Paradise was when God brought the animals to Adam that he might name them; and over all this thou wast meant to rule. Yea, thou wert made to have dominion also over the wicked spirits that are thy sworn foes. A royal, regnant, victorious life was that which the Creator inbreathed. There is no reason, on God’s side, or in the original constitution, why thou shouldest not exercise thy dominion. Remember, thou wast made to have dominion.

We see not yet all things put under us. There is open revolt and anarchy within. The will resembles the ancient kings whose sway was limited by proud and strong barons. The animal creation largely defies us, and is in this the symbol of our loss of authority everywhere. But look away to Jesus. This old psalm is fulfilled in Him. His glorious nature rose, by its inherent glory, to the right hand of power. All authority is His in heaven and on earth. And in proportion as we identify ourselves with Him, and receive His life, we regain our lost dominion. He makes us kings and priests unto God. We share a life which neither death nor the devil can master.

What shall we say of the excellency of His name, who is not only our Creator, but our Redeemer, and who at such great cost to Himself has replaced on our brows the crown that sin tore from them? He made us to have dominion by the word of creation. He made us kings unto God *by His blood*. His name shall, therefore, be honoured through all the earth.

Psalm 9:10

“And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.”

WE do not trust, because we do not know. If we were once to know God, it would seem as absurd to doubt Him as to fear that we should fly off at a tangent from the surface of the earth. Men complain of their little faith: the remedy is in their own hands; let them set themselves to know God. We may know *about* God, and yet not know *Him*. We may hear what others say about Him, but have no direct and personal acquaintance. “That I may know Him,” (Philippians 3:10) said the Apostle.

The materials for the knowledge of God are all around thee; make use of them. Think of the promises by which God has bound Himself to succour those that come to Him; of the record of His gracious interpositions for His saints; of the necessity that He should maintain His character and reputation in the face of the universe.

Above all, argue, as Jesus bade, from your own heart. Would you give stones to hungry babes, and scorpions into childish hands? Would you desert a forlorn and hunted soul that trusted? Would you insist on a certain measure of agony before stepping in to deliver? Would you take delight in inflicting needless anguish? And will God? *Trust* may be read as the superlative of true. To trust is to count God *true*, though circumstances belie; to count Him *truer* than the melancholy forebodings of our hearts; to count Him our truest and tenderest Friend. “Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” (Romans 3:4)

But for all this, you must make time. You cannot know a friend in harried interviews, much less God. So you must steep yourself in deep, long thoughts of His nearness and love.

Psalm 10:1

“Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?”

MEN in sorrow do not always speak wisely; and they ask many questions which God does not answer. Here is one. God does not stand afar off and hide Himself in times of trouble. As the psalmist sings, in a happier mood, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1) But He permits trouble to pursue us as though He were indifferent to its overwhelming pressure; that we may be brought to an end of ourselves, and led to discover the treasures of darkness, the immeasurable gains of tribulation. No cross, no crown. No pain, no gain.

We may be sure that He who permits the suffering is with us in it. The form of the Fourth may be hard to distinguish, but it is there in the fire. It may be that we shall only see Him when the trial is passing; but we must dare to believe that He never leaves the crucible. Our eyes are holden; and we cannot behold Him whom our soul loveth. It is dark — the bandages blind us so that we cannot see the form of our High priest. But He is there, deeply touched. Let us not rely on feeling, but on faith in His unswerving fidelity; and though we see Him not, let us talk to Him in whispers as though we could detect Him.

“I take the pain, Lord Jesus, from thine own hand,
The strength to bear it bravely, Thou wilt command.”

Directly we begin to speak to Jesus, as being literally present, though His presence is veiled, there comes an answering voice which shows that He is in the shadow, keeping watch upon His own. Do not be afraid of the darkness. Behind the cloud, the sun is shining. Little child, your Father is as near when you journey through the dark tunnel as when under the open heaven! Go nearer, and you will feel Him!

Psalm 11:5

“The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.”

DO not be surprised if you are passing through trials. The righteous Lord is exercising you towards righteousness, that your face may ever behold His in unswerving communion. As the trainer of a young athlete will place him, now in one position, and again in another, to call certain muscles into play, to strengthen them by use, and to make the whole organization supple and subservient to the impulses of the soul, so God tries us — to call into operation, and test by use, each faculty of our being.

“Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring us to his feet,
Lay us low, and keep us there.”

There is a great difference between the temptings of Satan and the tryings of the Lord. The former are intended to make us fall; the great adversary takes pleasure in showing how weak and sinful we are, and in casting us down to destruction. The latter, that we may be led out towards faith, patience, courage, meekness, and other worldliness. “Tribulation *worketh* patience, and patience experience, and experience, hope.” (Romans 5:3,4) Whatever spiritual power is latent within us, we may be unaware of its value or helpfulness till it is called into exercise by trial, But when once it has been summoned into manifestation, it becomes the invaluable possession of all after time.

There is this consolation in trial, that at least we are not reprobates. The Lord trieth *the righteous*. The lapidary does not waste his time in cutting common pebbles. If we endure chastisement, we are clearly not bastards, but sons. Our Father loves us too much to let us miss the rich fruit, that is, reward us when all the pruning is over.

Psalm 12:6

“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”

WHAT a contrast is presented in this Psalm between God’s words and man’s! “They speak vanity ... with flattering lips and with a double heart ...” (Psalm 12:2) God never flatters; His words are absolutely pure because they have passed through the furnace of His holiness, but they are therefore absolutely reliable and trustworthy.

As silver *enriches* its owner, so does the Word of God enrich its lovers. Nothing so strengthens the intellect, clears the judgment, enlarges the views, purifies the taste, quickens the imagination, and educates the whole man. The humblest day-laborer who imbibes the Bible becomes rich in thought and speech, and able to dispense his riches to others.

As silver is *beautiful* to the eye, so fair is the Word of God. After a boy born blind had been suddenly possessed of sight through an operation by a skilful oculist, his mother, led him out-of-doors, took off the bandages, and gave him his first view of sunshine, sky and flowers. “Oh, mother,” he cried, “why did you never tell me it was so beautiful!” With starting tears, she said, “I tried to tell you, my dear, but you could not understand me.” We need opened eyes, and then the Bible is more to be desired than fine gold.

As silver is *pure*, so is the Word of God; and it purifies. It has been the main purifying agent of the world. Though it deals with the corruptions of the human heart, it does so in such a delicate and holy manner as to excite within us something of the abhorrence of the Holy God. Like the passage of water through a sieve, it cleanses the heart and life.

Psalm 13:6

“I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.”

HERE is the man who had sorrow in his heart all the day breaking into song! We do not find that his troubles were any less. The enemy was still exalted over him, and boasted of having prevailed; it seemed indeed as though he must soon sleep the sleep of death. But he never let go his trust. Whatever were his outward discomforts and trials, he clung to his God and waited patiently for Him; with the result that out of his stormy griefs he built a Bethel, and in the midst of his anguish broke out into song.

When we are sitting under the shadow of severe trial, God can wrap us about with the garment of praise, and fill our mouths with singing. Although the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vines, yet the soul may rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of salvation. You cannot starve a man who is feeding on God's promises; and you cannot make that man or woman wretched who has a clean conscience, the smile of God, and the love of Jesus in the soul.

When brave old Thomas Halyburton lost his much-loved son, he made this record: “This day has been a day to be remembered. O my soul never forget what this day I reached. My soul had smiles that almost wasted nature. Oh, what a sweet day! About half-an-hour after the Sabbath, my child, after a sharp conflict, slept pleasantly in Jesus, to whom pleasantly he was so often given... Jesus came to me in the third watch of the night, walking upon the waters... He stilled the tempest in my soul, and lo! there was a great calm.” When God is bereaving us of all else, He may so fill us with Himself that we shall magnify His bountifulness.

Psalm 14:7

“Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.”

IT is good to have an eye on the future, even though we get sometimes a little weary of waiting, and impatient of delay. Here a captive soul transports itself to the hours when its captivity shall be ended; and although it cannot altogether suppress the “Oh!” of longing desire, it dilates with ecstasy, as it anticipates the outburst of joy that shall hail the Divine deliverance.

Let us look on and up. Bunyan tells us that the heart of the Pilgrim “waxed warm about the place whither he was going.” A real lover of Christ, who knows something of the law of sin in his members, and of the dull weight of this mortal tabernacle, is apt to have, at times, eager desires for his home and his glorious inheritance. Paul was one of the most eager of workers, but he was ever dwelling on the blessed hope.

“When,” exclaimed Baxter, “when, O my soul, hast thou most forgot thy wintry sorrows? Is it not when thou hast got above, closest to Jesus Christ, and hast conversed with Him, and viewed the mansions of glory, and filled thyself with sweet foretastes, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world?” Such devout anticipations do not slacken our work down here during this little while. It is said of Samuel Rutherford that he was always studying, always preaching, and always visiting the sick; but it was he who exclaimed, “Oh, time, run fast! Oh, fair day, when wilt thou dawn? Oh, shadows, flee away! Oh, well-beloved Bridegroom, be Thou to me like the roe or the young hart on the mountains!”

“The best is yet to be—

The last, for which the first was made.”

Psalm 15:1

“LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?”

THIS holy soul was not content to stand in the outer court without the sacred tent; he coveted to enter where the High Priest entered, and to live there. It was impossible then; the way into the Holiest was not made manifest. No ordinary worshipper might pass the Vail, and the high priest who passed it once a year remained but a few moments.

How marvelously different our experience may be! We have boldness to enter into the holy place, and remain there, by the blood of Jesus; and, by the enabling of His Priesthood, we may spend our entire lives under the consciousness of the presence and favor of God. It is much like the servants of Solomon, to stand before our King, and to hear Him speaking, bidding us either to perform His errands, or fold the wings of activity in rapt communion.

This is not your experience? Then look carefully through the conditions which this Psalm enumerates. Perhaps you are not transparently truthful; or your tongue is not carefully controlled; or you are not perfectly honourable in your business dealings; or you do not know the power of the blood of Christ, as it cleanses from dead works to serve the living God.

It is worth any sacrifice to maintain this habit of indwelling the Most Holy Place. Ask that it may become your second nature. The Lord Jesus will secure this, since He was appointed for us in things that pertain to God. Whenever anything in the inner life seems faulty and deficient, we may turn with unabated confidence to our High Priest, asking Him to adjust it, to bring us into the presence of God, and to keep us there.

Psalm 16:10

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

THIS hymn is for ever sacred because of its application by the Holy Ghost to our Savior’s resurrection (Acts 2). It was as though our Lord had stayed His soul upon these words as He left this world and entered the unseen. The last words He uttered were of committal to His Father, and then He commenced to traverse the land of shadow. “Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” (Ephesians 4:9) The Apostle Peter says that He went to visit the spirits in prison. Whither He went is not material — it is enough for our purpose that He sang, as He went, this hymn of immortal hope. Sure that He was the Father’s beloved, He knew that He would not be left to Hades, nor suffered to see corruption. He knew that there was a path of life somewhere, which God would show.

Whenever you are stepping down into the dark, unable to see a hand’s breadth before you, and just letting the foot fall from step to step — it may be because of some act of obedience to conscience, or because you are called to enter the unknown and untried, or even death itself — cheer your heart with this holy Psalm. God will never desert the soul that absolutely honours and obeys Him. His way leads to the light through the dark, to the deathless through death, to the abounding fruit-bearing through desertion and loneliness. How lonely the vine-stock is through the winter! Follow Him, He will show.

“She is sinking very fast,” whispered an attendant in the dying chamber of a godly woman. “No, no,” was the quick response of the departing saint, who had overheard the words: “no; I am not sinking; I am in the arms of my Savior.”

Psalm 17:15

“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

TO a good man, then, this is the world of dream and shadow, and death is the awakening. We are like men asleep in some chamber that looks towards the eastern sky. Outside is the day with its revealing beams, but our heavy eyes are closed to it all. “Here and there, some lighter sleeper with thinner eyelids or face turned to the sun is half conscious of a vague brightness and feels the light, though he sees not the wealth of color it reveals. Such souls are our saints and prophets; but most of us sleep on unconscious.” But the moment is at hand when we shall awake and start up and declare ourselves fools for having counted dreams as realities, whilst we were oblivious to the eternal realities.

When we awake we shall behold the face of God. Likeness is properly “form,” and is the same word employed in reference to Moses, who saw the similitude of the Lord. We shall see Him as He is. There will be an outward revelation and manifestation of His lovely and holy character, and it will satisfy us completely. “The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6) And we shall be satisfied. The mind will be satisfied with His truth, the heart with His love, the will with His authority. We shall need nothing else. Heaven itself, with its outspread mystery of beauty, will not divert our gaze from God, nor contribute to our satisfaction. To know God, to stand before Him, to realize that we are accepted in the righteousness of the Well-beloved — this will be enough for evermore.

“This life’s a dream, an empty show;
But the bright work to which I go
Hath joys substantial and sincere:
When shall I wake, and find me there?”

Psalm 18:35

“Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.”

THE Nasmyth hammer which can pulverize blocks of tough metal, will break the shell of a nut without hurting the kernel. In this it resembles this Psalm, in the earlier part of which there is one of the grandest descriptions that words can give of God’s mighty interposition on behalf of His threatened child. But here we are told that it is the Divine gentleness which has made him great. It is as though God’s *power* were exerted against our foes, whilst our education is undertaken by His love.

Review your life. See the perils from which you have been rescued; the process of your education; the slow degrees by which you have climbed to any eminence of Christian character; the method by which you have attained the power of influencing others: is it not attributable to the gentleness of the Good Shepherd? Not by sudden cataclysms and catastrophes; not by the earthquake, the fire, or the hurricane; not even by the stringent requirements of law; but by a succession of tenderest, gentlest movements of the Divine Spirit. He has remonstrated in whispered accents; He has seemed grieved and sad; He has turned and looked; He has sent a message by a woman’s lips; He has put a little child into your life to lead you; He has poured on you one continual stream of sunshine. Now, it has been the distilling of dew; and again, soft showers on the mown grass, and through all, the purpose has run of eliminating the self-life, and leading you to the full stature of the perfect man. The strongest soul I ever knew, one who seemed to have been fashioned by God’s mightiest strokes, was wont, to life’s eventide, to attribute all to the effect of God’s gentleness.

Psalm 19:12

“Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

IT is not likely that we shall be kept from the great transgression unless we are preserved from presumptuous sins; and these in turn will befall us unless we have been cleansed from hidden faults. Just as the germ of disease taken into the system will presently reveal itself in an outburst of malignant fever, so hidden faults flower out into presumptuous sins, and these into great transgression. “Then lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and the sin, when it is *full-grown* bringeth forth death.”

First, we need forgiveness for secret sins. The Jewish law made large provision for sins of ignorance. A man might unawares walk across a grave, or touch some article of furniture which was ceremonially unclean, and so became defiled. Even though unconscious of actual transgression, he would find his communion with God broken. Thus, after the holiest day we have ever spent we need to ask for cleansing in the precious blood, for which God has discerned, but which in the twilight of our ignorance, and because we compared ourselves with those beneath us in spiritual attainment, have escaped notice.

Next, we need deliverance from the love and power of sin, in lower depths than we have ever realized. We desire to pass muster at the bar, not only of our neighbours and ourselves, but of God. We desire that the Spirit should antagonize the flesh in depths below the reach of the plumb-line of our consciousness. We desire the inner purity of heart. But this is peculiarly God’s prerogative. It is *His* work to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit “Cleanse Thou *me*.”

Psalm 20:6

“Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.”

THIS was no doubt true of David as the anointed king of Israel, and of the Lord Jesus for whom the Father hath promised that He will subdue all things under Him; but it is also true of every saint who has been anointed with the Holy Ghost. *Christian* means *an anointed one*. Alas, that in so many cases the name is a misnomer! And men cannot claim the saving strength of God’s right hand because they have not bent head and heart beneath the chrism of the Holy Spirit. How is it with thee? Art thou included in what Paul said, “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;” (2 Corinthians 1:21) and in what John said, “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you ...” (1 John 2:27) If so, there can be no doubt that Jehovah will ever save thee with a present-tense salvation. He saveth those whom He anointeth with the saving strength of His right hand.

Dost thou doubt this? Sayest thou that the annoyances and solicitations, the pitfalls and snares, the antagonisms and temptations of thy life, are so great as to offer an insuperable obstacle to thy entire deliverance from fret, irritation and failure? Then turn to the marvelous phrase that follows, and tell me, if thou canst, the meaning of the saving strength of God’s right hand. Is not God’s right hand strong enough? And notice that its strength is pledged not to destroy, but to save. All the strength of God’s right hand goes forth to save unto the uttermost. Look away from adversary and temptation, and keep murmuring to thyself, “He shall save me today, and always, with the saving strength of His right hand.” And is not the right hand of the Most High the place where Jesus sits? Is not the right hand of God moved by the love that died on Calvary? “And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not;” (Revelation 1:17)

Psalm 21:3

“For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.”

GOD is always beforehand with us. The word “preventest” is not as familiar to our modern English as it was when the Bible was translated. Then it meant “that which comes or goes before.” And the idea is that God goes before us, preparing our way, and laying up supplies of grace to anticipate our need. This is the meaning of the prayer: “Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings.”

Go into the chamber where the mother is preparing for the advent of a little babe. You have no difficulty in telling what the wants of the child will be by all the articles which her tender forethought is providing; and when presently the little one opens its eyes in this strange, new world, it finds that it has been prevented with the blessings of goodness.

For ages prior to the appearance of man on the earth, the great heart of God was exercised in preparing for him. To please his ear, Music tuned her lyre; to satisfy his eye, the Great Artist wrought variety of colour and form; to warm him, seams of coal were laid down; to give him drink, rivers poured from crystal urns of snow-clad peaks; and Adam might have adored God’s prevenient grace. Think, for instance, of the color, the light and scent and driving-power in rock-oils!

Still more is this the case in the kingdom of redemption. God has stored all the blessings of goodness in Jesus. In eternal ages, in the incarnation, the cross, the ascension, He has prepared beforehand for every possible need of our spiritual life. Whenever you pray, remember that you are not to procure unthought-of help; but to avail yourself of the blessings of goodness with which God has anticipated your coming.

Psalm 22:31

“They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.”

THIS is the Hebrew equivalent for the words, “It is finished.” Surely it was meet that the Psalm of the Cross, which our Lord must have recited to Himself during those hours of anguish, should close with this triumphant outburst.

Finished, the ceremonial law. — It had served its purpose in prefiguring the person and work of Jesus; but now the rending of the vail betokened the abolition of the forms of the earlier dispensation. The things which could be shaken passed, that those which could not be shaken might remain.

Finished, the fulfillment of prophecy. — Very diverse predictions had met, and were closed, as gates are when the king has passed through. That He should be a King and a Sufferer; a Priest and a Victim; a Lion of the tribe of Judah, and a Lamb for substitution.

Finished, the work which was given to Him to do. — The Messiah was to be cut off, not for Himself, to finish transgressions, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. And each of these great ends was realized.

Finished, the work of atonement. — As the Substitute and Sin-bearer, the Lord Jesus stood with the sins of the race meeting on Him; but when He died He put them away by the sacrifice of Himself. They were borne into the land of forgetfulness, from which they can never be recovered. The demand of Divine justice was satisfied. Mercy and truth had met. Righteousness and peace embraced. And this cry of a finished redemption shall be finally crowned by a cry of complete restitution (Revelation 21:6).

Psalm 23:6

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

WE are well escorted, with a Shepherd in front and these twin angels behind! Someone called them watch-dogs; but I prefer to think of them as angels. Do you not see the special beauty of these fair, strong angel-forms following? We make such mistakes, give unnecessary pain, leave work ill-done and half-done, often succeed rather in raising dust than cleaning the rooms which we would fain sweep! It is good to think that two such angels follow close upon our track as we go through life, putting kind constructions on our actions, disentangling knots, making good deficiencies, and preventing the consequences of ill-advised and inconsiderate action pursuing us to the bitter end.

There are mothers who are always tidying up after their children. The little ones have had a rare time, which has left confusion and disorder; but the mother comes, mending the broken toys, stitching the rent garments, making everything neat and tidy. As the ambulance corps goes over the battle-field; as time festoons with verdure ruins and decay; as love puts the most tender construction on word and act — so the love of God follows us.

His goodness imputes to us the noble motive, though the act itself has been a failure; credits us with what was in our heart; reckons us the full wage, though we have only wrought one hour. His mercy forgives, obliterates the traces of our sins from His heart, undoes their ill-effect so far as possible towards others, and treats us as if we had never transgressed. Do not fear the future. God’s angels do not tire. What has been will be, in all worlds, and to all eternity. *All* the days, even those in which Satan seems to have obtained permission to sift.

Psalm 24:7, 9

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. ... Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.”

THIS is what we all want. We must have the King of Glory *within*. To have Him without, even though He be on the Throne, will not avail. He must come in to abide, to reign, to sway His sceptre, to keep the everlasting doors through which He has passed. This has been our difficulty, that those doors have so often been forced. We want one who is strong and mighty to keep them strongly barred against our mortal foe.

This Psalm was first realized in the entrance of the Ark into Mount Zion, when God went up with a merry noise. It is supposed that the first part of the verse was a challenge from the warders of the ancient gates, whilst the second was a reply from the escorting band that accompanied the sacred emblem. It was a moment of vast triumph when the Ark of the King of Glory passed to the ancient city of the Jebusites.

A still greater fulfillment took place when Jesus, having overcome the sharpness of death, victor over sin and the grave, mighty in battle, vanquished principalities and powers, and entered the city of God. Then to and fro these challenges and answers flew between the angels that awaited Him, and those who accompanied.

But the most vital fulfillment is when the heart opens to receive Him, and He enters, to go out no more, and to hold it against all comers. Oh, heated and baffled saint, it is impossible for thee to fail when Jesus, all-victorious, garrisons thy heart! He is strong and mighty. Dost thou want strength? It is in the strong Son of God. Dost thou want might! He is all-mighty. Dost thou want deliverance from thy foes? He is mighty in battle.

Psalm 25:14

“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.”

WHAT marvellous words! They remind one of the sapphire work which the elders saw at the foot of the throne, and which was like “the body of heaven in his clearness.” (Exodus 24:10) Three different renderings are suggested.

The Secret of the Lord. — To some it is permitted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. To these the white stone is given, on which is engraven a name, which only he knows that receives it. There are secret passages of love between Christ and the believing soul, which it would not be lawful for it to utter. High fellowship: deep blessedness. Things which eye hath not seen. Jesus revealed His secrets when Judas had gone forth. “Why askest thou thus after my name,” He said to Manoah, “seeing it is secret?” (Judges 13:18)

The Counsel of the Lord. — “His Name shall be called... Counsellor.” (Isaiah 9:6) He draws near to those that fear to grieve Him, and gives them counsel. He instructs them in the way that He chooses for them; He guides them in His truth and teaches them; He guides them in judgment; and tells them, as He did Abraham, what He is about to do.

The Friendship of the Lord. — “Ye are my friends,” said Jesus, “if ye do whatsoever I command you.” (John 15:14) He longs for friends — those to whom He can tell His desires, on whom He may impose implicit confidence, and who will be so taken up with Him as to be indifferent to everything else, their one purpose to do His least bidding. Oh to be honored with the personal friendship of Jesus! It was a rare privilege to be entrusted with His secrets and to hear Him say, “I call you not servants; ... but I have called you friends; ...” (John 15:15)

Psalm 26:6

“I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:”

THE Psalmist realized that he could not avail himself of all that was typified by the altar, unless, so far as he knew himself, he had washed his hands innocency. But he also knew that the washing, to be effective, must be in costlier waters than those of his own innocency. The soul requires a Savior who comes by water and blood, not by water only.

The compassing of the altar is probably a picturesque way of describing the joyous or penitent circle of worshippers that gathered around the altar; and which needed to be prepared for by the usual lustrations, “Of the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands.” (Hebrews 6:2) We must separate ourselves from known sin, and wash our hands in innocency, if we are to enjoy the blessings of the altar and its sacred associations.

There is the sacrifice of the *burnt-offering*, which stands for Christ’s perfectness and entire devotedness to God on our behalf. But how can we be utterly given up to God unless, so far as we know we are innocent of presumptuous and cherished sin?

There are the sacrifices of the *meal-offering* and the *peace-offering*. But how can we feed on Christ, or feast with Him in holy rapture, whilst we are concealing the stains of the hands that take the food?

There is the sacrifice of the *sin-offering*. But is it not a sacrilege to claim a share in its blessing if we permit those very sins which cost the Savior agony and tears? No, we must come out and be separate; we must be willing for God to examine and prove us; we must hate the congregation of the wicked, their conversation and ways; we must occupy ourselves perpetually with the Divine lovingkindness and truth. So only can we compass the altar of God, and taste its comfort and help.

Psalm 27:4

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.”

ONE purpose dominated prayer and life. It was never long absent from the Psalmist's thought. The men of one idea are irresistible. The arrowy stream will force its way through the toughest soil. See that all the prayers, incidents, and circumstances of life sub-serve one intense purpose. String all the beads on one thread. When the eye is single, the whole body is full of light.

The Psalmist's purpose. — What a blessing that the Psalmist's purpose may be ours! To dwell in the house of the Lord is to live within the veil in fellowship with God, in the habitual recollection of His presence. To behold His beauty is to keep looking off unto Jesus. To inquire in His Temple is to commune with the Lord about all the concerns of home and business, of church and commonwealth. In senses of which the material Temple could give but a faint conception, we may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives.

The Psalmist's search. — Let us seek after this as well as pray for it. Let it be the fixed purpose and resolution of every day. Let us begin with it in the morning, and at every spare moment remember that we have boldness to stand in the Most Holy Place. Oh to be as intent on this high quest as the man of science to discover nature's secrets; as the business man to make a fortune; as the brave explorer to extort the secret from the Polar Seas!

True prayer will never be presumptuous. It will not ask God to do for us what we may do for ourselves. It will ask as though all depended on asking, but it will seek as though all depended on seeking.

“Thrice blest, whose *lives* are faithful prayers;

What souls possess themselves so pure?”

Psalm 28:9

“Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever.”

THE people of God are here compared to a flock, scattered over many hills, marked by differing brands, sheltering in varied folds, but under the care of one Shepherd, and being conducted to one Home.

The holy soul is as eager for the welfare of the Lord’s “beautiful flock” as He is. Whatever is dear to the loved ones is dear to the lover. You cannot love the pastor without taking a keen and constant interest in all that interests him, and especially in the sheep of his pasture, and the people of his hand. Hence when you are nearest the Lord, you are almost certain to begin pleading for His inheritance, and saying: “Save thy people; and bless thine inheritance: feed them also and lift them up forever.”

“Lift them up forever.” The Good Shepherd bare His flock through the desert, and carried them all the days of old. It is as easy for Him to bear a flock, as a single lamb. Jesus does not simply lead us to green pastures and still waters, He bears us, and He bears us up, and He does so forever. Never tiring, though He imparts infinite rest; never ceasing for a moment His shepherd-care. Are you depressed today? Are there strong influences dragging you down? Does your soul cleave to the dust? Let those strong arms and that tender breast lift you up forever. A dying child asked her father to place his arms beneath her weary, emaciated body. “Lift me,” she said. He did so. “A little higher.” He did so. “Higher, father.” And when he had lifted her as high as he could, the convulsive movement proved that Christ had come to lift her up forever.

Psalm 29:9

“The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.”

THIS psalm describes a thunderstorm gathering over the Mediterranean, passing with devastating fury over Palestine, and finally dissolving in floods of rain on the pasture-lands of Bashan and Gilead. But how differently such a scene is regarded! To the man of the world it presents an interceding study, or awakes spasms of fear: to the man of God, contemplating the scene from his safe hiding in the Temple, it seems as though nature, with a myriad voices, were proclaiming the glory of God. Many storms are sweeping athwart the world just now. Our standpoint for watching them must be God’s presence-chamber.

Somehow, everything that has been, is, and shall be; all that seems startling and dreadful; all that excites fear and foreboding — shall conduce to the glory of God. Wait, O child of God, in patient trust; Jehovah is King, and He shall sit as King forever; all is under law. “For of Him and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.” (Romans 11:36)

Our body in the temple of the Holy Ghost: does every whit of it say, Glory? I know of few things that stir my heart more than the repeated ascription of “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.” But is that the refrain of our life? Outside there may be confusion and storm, wild chaos and desolation; but see to it that from your heart’s shrine there rises moment after moment the ascription of “Glory be to Thee, O Thou most High.”

“Glory to God, to God, he saith. Knowledge of suffering entereth, And life is perfected in death.”

Psalm 30:5

“For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

THE Hebrew might be rendered, “Weeping may come in to lodge at even”. See, at nightfall, a black-vestured guest comes to thy heart. Thou must let him in; he brings a warrant from your King for his quartering and entertainment. But he is only a lodger; he has no abiding-place with thee; at daybreak he must be gone. Canst thou not bear with him for these brief hours? It is only for the brief space of an Eastern summer-night. Let the first tint of the dawn flush yon sky, he will go. Like the ghosts of fable, he dies in the light.

Now, see, the morning breaks! Who is this hurrying up the hill, and knocking at the door? Hark to his joyous shout! Who is this? Ah! It is Joy. The child of the morning light! The first-born of Resurrection! And he comes not as a lodger, but as the Lord and Master of Life, to abide forever. Oh, welcome him in the name of the Lord, and throw open each chamber and each closet in your heart, that all may be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And as he enters, sorrow and sighing flee away. They have passed out at the back as he came in at the front.

Joy in the morning at the resurrection of Jesus: Joy in the coming of the Savior for His bride: Joy as the Millennium breaks on the world: Joy when the Eternal Day comes to gladden those who have drunk of Christ’s sorrow, and shall share His bliss.

Child of God, be on the outlook to welcome Joy. Do not fear his advent, nor thrust him away. Milton’s *L’Allegro* is a truer presentation of Christian experience than *Il Penseroso*, “And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee.” (Deuteronomy 26:11)

Psalm 31:7

“I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;”

MEN have a way of forgetting their companions when they fall into adversity. They do not know them or visit them, or recognize them if they meet them in the street. But the love of God is always most tender and considerate then. He seeks us out when the sky is shadowed, and life is overcast with somber tints. Adversity, so far from alienating Him, draws Him closer, and brings out His tenderest, loveliest traits. He knows us in adversity.

It is only when we are overtaken by adversity that we are revealed by the innermost depths of our nature. God knows us in adversity. “And thou shalt remember,” said Moses, “all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart ...” (Deuteronomy 8:2) What revelations of unsubdued pride and imperious self-will are afforded, when we are searched and tested by the fiery trial of pain!

“Thou hast known my soul in adversities.” Is it not enough that God should know? Need we go to all our friends and explain to them all we are called to endure? Is not this a needless addition to their sorrow, and the sorrow of the world? What a glorious piece of advice the Master gave, when He said, “Anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret, shall reward thee openly.” (Matthew 6:17,18)

“Thou know’st our bitterness! — our joys are thine!

No stranger Thou to all our wanderings wild!

But yet Thou call’st us Brethren! Sweet repose

Is in that word;— the Lord who dwells on high

Knows all, yet loves us better than He knows.”

Psalm 32:8

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.”

LEARN of Me,” (Matthew 11:29) said the Master: and indeed there is no teacher like Him; no school like His. We stand at the door of the school-house, saying, “What I know not, teach Thou me;” and He does not hesitate to undertake our case. But there are several points of difference from our methods. In Christ’s school there is but one Master for all the scholars, and they all learn from the same books; the pupils begin with the upper classes and end with the lowest; and those that are most proficient, and have been longest under His tuition, are most conscious of their ignorance. There are no holidays; but every day is a holy day. The school never breaks up; but the students leave it for Home, and the prizes are sent after them, and given when they arrive.

We need more than personal instruction; we are travelling through an unknown land, and require direction for the way. This also is guaranteed; but not as in the cases of tourists, who extract all information from their friends before they start from home, as to the places they are about to visit. Our Guide accompanies us. He counsels us with His eye upon us, detecting every pitfall and chasm, and warning us; perhaps even guiding us by the movement of His eye.

How greatly then are we in need of the quickened sense! The eye fixed on His eye; the ear open to His slightest whisper; the foot quick to place itself down in His footprints. The horse and mule need bit and bridle; but it is enough for us if the heart fears to miss the least indication of the Master’s will. Be willing to know; it then becomes His part to make thee know somehow. If not in one way, then in another.

Psalm 33:5

“He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.”

THE Psalmist means that there is no spot in it where the traces and footprints of God’s love may not be discerned, if only the eyes and the heart are opened. Just as every corner of a room which faces the south is filled with the morning sunlight, unless artificial and violent means are adopted to keep it out, so every part of human life is full of God’s loving-kindness, unless it is blocked out by sin. You think that your lot is absolutely destitute of God’s loving-kindness; but may not your eyes be blinded? May there not be more than you suppose? May you not be so occupied with the one irksome thing in it as to be oblivious to ten thousand marks of tender compassion and unobtrusive mercy?

Your chamber is very bare and comfortless; but it is part of the earth, and it is therefore full of God’s loving-kindness: look around for it. Your home seems uncongenial and trying; but it must be full to the brim of loving-kindness. Your daily life is hard and difficult; but there is as much loving-kindness in it as if it were easy and prosperous. There is indeed more loving-kindness in these trying and difficult surroundings than in happier ones. It costs God more to give us pain. We need more love, and we get it. We should rejoice in it if our eyes were opened.

The loveless heart can detect nothing but disappointment and unkindness. But the heart that loves, and sings, and rejoices in the Lord, detects the evident tokens of God’s love; just as the child of nature knows when friend or foe has passed through the forest-glade, by indications which would be unintelligible to our unpracticed eye. Echo always answers in the same key in which we address her!

Psalm 34:18

“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”

WHAT broke your heart? Unkindness? Desertion? Unfaithfulness on the part of those you trusted? Or did you attempt to do something which was beyond your power, and in the effort, the heartstrings snapped? A bird with a broken wing, an animal with a broken leg, a woman with a broken heart, a man with a broken purpose in his life — these seem to drop out of the main current of life into shadow. They go apart to suffer and droop. The busy rush of life goes on without them. But God draws nigh. The Great Lover of man is always at the best when the lights burn low and dim in the house of life. He always comes to us then. He shall sit as the Refiner.

Where do you see love perfected? Not between the father and his stalwart son who counts himself independent, or between the mother and the girl in whom love is awakening in its first faint blush: but where the crippled child of eleven years lies in the truckle-bed, pale and wan, unable to help herself. There the noblest fruits of love ripen and yield refreshment. The father draws nigh to the little sufferer, so soon as he gets home at night, and the mother is nigh all the time to sympathize and comfort and minister. So brokenness attracts God. It is dark; you think yourself deserted; but it is not so. God is there — He is nigh; call to Him — a whisper will bring a response.

“There, little one, don’t cry;
They have broken your heart, I know
And the rainbow gleams
Of your youthful dreams
Are things of the long ago;
But heaven holds all for which you sigh—
There, little one, don’t cry.”

Psalm 35:20

“For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.”

A SIGNIFICANT title for the saints, which has been adopted at least by one great religious body. In every age God has had his quiet ones. Retired from its noise and strife, withdrawn from its ambitions and jealousies, unshaken by its alarms; because they had entered into the secret of a life hidden in God. We must have an outlet for the energies of our nature. If we are unfamiliar with the hidden depths of eternal life, we shall necessarily live a busy, fussy, frothy, ambitious, eager life, in contact with men and things. But the man who is intense on the eternal, can be quiet in the temporal.

The man whose house is shallow, but one room in depth, cannot help living on the street. But directly we begin to dwell deep — deep in God, deep in the watch for the Master’s advent, deep in considering the mysteries of the kingdom, we become quiet. We fill our little space; we get our daily bread and are content; we enjoy natural and simple pleasures; we do not strive, nor cry, nor cause our voice to be heard in the street; we pass through the world, with noiseless tread, dropping a blessing on all we meet; but we are no sooner recognized than we are gone.

Get quiet, beloved soul; tell out thy sorrow and complaint to God. Let not the greatest business or pressure divert thee from God. When men rage about thee, go and tell Jesus. When storms are high, hide thee in His secret place. When others compete for fame and applause, and their passion might infect thee, get into thy closet, and shut thy door, and quiet thyself as a weaned babe. For if thy voice is quiet to man, let it never cease to speak loudly and mightily for man in the ear of God. Oh to be a Quietist in the best sense!

Psalm 36:9

“For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”

THERE are many dark things around us in which we detect light only when we behold them in the light which streams from the face of Jesus. In His light we see light in them. Yonder lies a bit of charcoal, black and opaque; and even when it has been changed by chemistry to crystals, it is dull and dense, so long as it is in the dark. Who could guess that such depths and fountains of light exist in that insignificant atom? But let it be brought into the rays of the morning sun, and as it flashes and glistens, in that light we see its light; fountains of light welling up; caverns of light, where the elves and fairies of childish story hide.

So it is of the Bible.—Its pages seem devoid of help and comfort, till we open them under the light of Jesus. Cleopas and the other learnt this on the road to Emmaus.

So it is of nature.—The Greek, lover of nature though he was, never saw in her face the loveliness which has been the theme of Christian poetry and art. In the light of Christ’s parables and allusions we see light.

“Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen.
Birds with gladder songs o’erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
While I know, as now I know,
I am His, and He is mine.”

So it is of human love.—There is a new preciousness, tenderness, thoughtfulness, blessedness, where the love and light of Jesus reign in home and heart. We see a loveliness and beauty in our dear ones that had eluded us till we beheld them in the love of Jesus.

Psalm 37:4

“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

ONE of Tauler’s hymns is a lovely specimen of how a man delights in the Lord. He takes a number of familiar instances of close affinity and interdependence, and applies them to the intimacy subsisting between him and his beloved Lord:—

“As the bridegroom to his chosen,
As the king unto his realm,
As the keep unto the castle,
As the pilot to the helm,
So, Lord, art Thou to me.”

But we cannot delight thus without effort. We must withdraw our eager desires from the things of earth, fastening and fixing them on Him. The current of our being must set towards God. We must cultivate the habit of holy intimacy with Him, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. We must accustom ourselves to hold up before us the successive attributes and works of God, till they strike our admiration, and elicit our homage.

Then we shall find rest unto our souls, because He will give us the desires of our hearts. When God Himself is our desire we shall be for ever delivered from disappointment, because we can always have Him; we shall be removed from risk of penury and want, because we can have as much of Him as we need; we shall be beyond the fear of loss, because He changes not. They who want God possess Him. To long for God is to have that for which you long. To delight in God is to delight in One, of whom there is an infinity for everyone, so that there need be no stint, no jealousy, no envy, no satiety. Everyone can have as much as he can hold. “For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (John 3:34) that is, *by meter*. There is no gauge of our consumption!

Psalm 38:9

“Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.”

GOD knows our desires. We cannot always put them into words; we dare not trust them to the ears of our dearest, but they lie open to Him — the ideal we desire in our holiest moments; the thorn in the flesh from which we long to be delivered; the prayer for one who is dearer to us than life. “Lord, all my desire is before Thee.”

Think of the desires of the saints — for the realization of their ideals; for the salvation of men; for the glory of the Redeemer; for the Divine answer to the scoff, the sneer, the taunt of infidelity; for the coming of the King, the restoration of His ancient people, the setting up of the millennial reign.

“Lo, as some ship, outworn and overladen,
Strains for the harbour, where her sails are furled;
Lo, as some innocent and eager maiden
Leans o’er the wistful limit of the world:

“So even I, and with a pang more thrilling;
So even I, and with a hope more sweet,
Yearn for the sign, O Christ! of Thy fulfilling,
Faint for the flaming of Thine advent feet.”

And remember, He who implanted the desire does abundantly above all we ask or think. There is always a defect in every earthly joy, a something which shows itself for a moment to elude us.

“It blossoms just beyond the paths I follow,
It shines beyond the farthest stars I see;
It echoes faint from ocean caverns hollow,
And from the land of dreams it beckons me.”

But it never can be thus with any desire that God has taught us to cherish. Of these, as the ages pass, we shall say: It was a true report that I heard, but the half was not told. The desire which is directed to God cannot miss gratification.

Psalm 39:12

“Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.”

SORROW and pain had taught the Psalmist some deep lessons touching the life of men around him — they seemed to be shadows pursuing shadows. They walked in a vain show, and were disquieted in vain. At their best estate, *i.e.*, when most firmly rooted, they were only a breath, curling from lip or nostril into the chill morning air, and then gone for ever. The outward life and activity of man seemed to him as the shadow which darkens for a moment a whole mountain side, and, whilst you look, it has been chased away by the succeeding sheets of sunshine.

Amid all these vanities, the child of God is a pilgrim to the Unseen. He passes through Vanity Fair, with his eyes steadily fixed on the Eternal City, whose Builder and Maker is God. Abraham first described himself as a stranger and sojourner, when he stood up from before his dead, and craved a burying-place from the sons of Heth. All his children, those who inherit a like faith, must say the same. Faith cannot find a home on this side of the stars. It has caught a glimpse of the Infinite, and it can never be content with anything less.

But we are sojourners “with God.” He is our constant companion. What Greatheart was to the women and feeble ones, God is to each of His saints. We may be strangers; but we are not solitary. We may be compelled to relax our grasp from the hands of beloved ones; but never alone — the Father is with us. Good company, safe escort, is it not? In the strength of it, we may obey without reluctance or fear the old motto — *Habita, ut migraturus*: Live as about to emigrate. “There is nothing greater than God; nothing less than I. He is rich; I am very poor, but I want for nothing.”

Psalm 40:7-8

“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

THE writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 10) lays great stress on these words. He says that this yielding up of Christ’s will to His Father’s was consummated on the cross, and was the inner heart of our Savior’s passion. “By the which will (surrendered and given back to God) we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:10) He then proceeds to suggest that it is only as we enter into a living oneness with Jesus in this that we can pass from the outer court and have boldness to enter into the Holiest of all. This, he says, is the new and living way. Jesus entered into the Holiest because He gave Himself absolutely to His Father. We cannot expect to go thither till we have become possessed of the same spirit.

It is a solemn question for each. Have we all stood at the cross, as the slave of old at the doorpost of his master’s house, and said, “I love my Master. I will not go out free?” Have we been united to that cross, as by the boring of the awl? Have we so embraced the will of God that we are prepared to follow it, though it lead to the Cross and grave? Then one condition at least is fulfilled for our standing unabashed where angels veil their faces.

But there is yet another condition. We can have no right to stand within the Holiest, except through the blood of Jesus, shed for sin on the cross. This is necessary ere sinners can have boldness in the presence of Divine Purity.

When Rutherford was like to die of sore illness, instead of a martyr’s death, he said, “I would think it a more glorious way of going home, to lay down my life for the cause at the cross of Edinburgh or St. Andrew’s; but I *submit* to my Master’s will. Oh for arms to embrace Him!”

Psalm 41:1

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.”

THE realm of Blessedness is all around. It may be entered at any minute, and we may dwell in it all the days of our life. Our enjoyment of blessedness is totally undetermined by outward circumstances. If you stand in some great retail emporium and watch the faces of the women, you will be greatly instructed. Yonder sits a richly-dressed lady with society and fashion, dress and money at her command, but her manner and tone are utterly weary and dissatisfied; whilst across the counter a girl waits on her, whose thin face and simple attire tell their own story, but her expression and bearing betoken the possession of an inner calm and strength, an inexhaustible fund of patience and sweetness. Such contrasts meet us everywhere. The realm of blessedness dips down into humble and lowly lives on every side of us. Have we entered it?

Christ's beatitudes give us eight gates, any one of which will immediately conduct us within its confines. But here is another: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Even if you cannot help or relieve them to any appreciable extent, consider them; let them feel that you are thinking of and for them; do not hurry them when they recite their long, sad story; put them at their ease; treat them with Christian courtesy and consideration. Begin at once. There are plenty around you, who, if not poor in the things of this world, are poor in love and hope and the knowledge of God. Tell them of "the blessing of the Lord," which "maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." (Proverbs 10:22) Silver and gold you may have none; but such as you have be sure and give. Learn to consider people. Try and look on things from their standpoint.

Psalm 42:7

“Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.”

THERE are wonderful harmonies in nature. Voices call to one another across vast spaces. The depths below the firmament call to the heights above. The deep of the ocean calls to the deep of the azure sky. Listen, O my soul, to the mighty voices sounding ever through the universe of God.

The deep of Divine Redemption calls to the deep of human need. — It sometimes seems as though the opposite were true, and as though the cry originated in man; but it is not so. God is always first; and as He looks into hearts stricken and desperate, conscious of unfathomable yearnings, and infinite capacity, He calls aloud, and the depth of His heart appeals to the depth of the heart of man. Would that it might ever answer back!

The deep of Christ's wealth calls to the deep of the saint's poverty. — He looks down upon our attenuated and poverty-stricken experience with an infinite yearning. He cannot endure that we should go through life naked and miserable, poor and blind, when He has got gold, and precious stones, and white raiment. “Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” (Psalm 81:8-10)

The deep of the Holy Spirit's intercession calls to the deep of the Church's prayer. — He awakens in us groanings that cannot be uttered, and burdens us with the will of God.

Whatever depths there are in God, they appeal to corresponding depths in us. And whatever be the depths of our sorrow, desire, or necessity, there are correspondences in God from which full supplies may be obtained. Thou hast the pitcher of faith, and the well is deep.

Psalm 43:4

*“Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy:
yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.”*

WHAT a change within the soul one short hour spent in God’s presence will prevail to make! The psalmist is opposed by an ungodly nation, and resisted by a deceitful and unjust man. He mourns because of the oppression of the enemy; he questions whether God has cast him off. Then led by those twin angels, Light and Truth, commissioned and sent forth for that purpose from the presence of God, he enters in thought and spirit within the precincts of the Divine Tabernacle, and stands before the Altar. Immediately the clouds break. Putting his puny hand upon the great God, he appropriates all He is and has, as though it were his own, and takes again, in a very ecstasy of realizing faith, his harp, too long silent, and breaks into rapturous melody.

Have you not sometimes groped in the dark, till those two angels have come to lead you also to the altar where the High Priest stands? Then what a change! Your circumstances have not altered, but you have conceived a new idea of what God can be to you. You have said, This God is my God for ever and ever. You have said, O God, my God! You have laid your hand on God’s wealth and called it all your own. You have chided your soul for being disquieted and depressed whilst such a heritage is yours. You have spoken of God, first as the God of your strength; secondly, as the gladness of your joy; thirdly, as the health of your face.

“Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,

Or others — that we are not always strong,

That we are ever overborne with care,

That we should ever weak and heartless be,

Anxious or troubled when with us is prayer,

And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?”

Psalm 44:4

“Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.”

BEFORE a man can say that God is his King, he must have very definitely consecrated himself to God. The relation of too many believers to Christ falls short of this supreme act of the soul; and in consequence their lives lack directness, power, victory over temptation. My reader, thou hast been sorely tried by overmastering temptations before which thy resolutions have been swept as children’s sand-heaps by the tide. Wilt thou quietly consider whether from the very depth of thy being thou hast ever said to God, Thou art my King. The kingship of Jesus is always associated with victory; and just as soon as His supremacy is acknowledged, He will begin to command deliverance and victory.

Behold, thy King cometh to thee, having salvation. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in; but He is also the merciful Savior. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior. It is always Prince first. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, thou shalt be saved.

What a battle-shout this is! Whenever temptation is near; when the foe seems about to take the citadel by assault; when heart and flesh quail before the noise of battle — then to look up to the living Christ, and say, Thou *art* my King, O Son of God: command victory! There is no devil in hell but would flee before that cry of the tempted and tried believer; and God could not be neglectful of such an appeal. Jacob is only a worm; yet even he is more than a conqueror when God fights for him. It is thus that Jacob Behmen begins one of his letters: “May the Overcomer, Jesus Christ, through Himself, over come in as all *His* enemies.”

Psalm 45:1

“My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.”

THIS dignifies the meanest occupation. By this motive the apostles urged their converts to daily duty, slaves though they were in the houses of rich and godless owners. They were taught to look upon their lot as the will of God; and to do service as unto the Lord, and not unto men, seeking the praise of God as their sufficient reward.

As we take in hand the bits of carved work which once stood high in the cathedral roof, but now lie almost hidden by rank vegetation, and consider the exquisite carving, which the artists never thought would be so minutely inspected, we feel that each unknown craftsman did his work for the King. There is no doubt that the religious intention of their work elevated their meanest toils to the level of sacred service. Let us endeavour each day to realize that everything may be done for Jesus which may be done at all. Do you take food? It is that the body may be deft and quick to execute his purposes. Do you rest and seek recreation? It is that your energies may be recuperated, and that the tide of nervous power may return with fresh vigor. Do you manufacture, buy and sell, advise and preach? All may be inspired by the one purpose, that His will may be done, His kingdom come — which is righteousness, peace, and goodwill to men.

Such a life, however, is only possible when the heart overflows, bubbles up and over, with goodly matter. The heart must always be in contact with the fervent love of Christ. It is only as the Divine heat passes into us that the affections will boil up and overflow in holy act. Let us make the things about the King before we speak them. Let us give time to muse, that the fire may burn.

Psalm 46:9

“He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.”

“MY soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.” (Psalm 57:4) Such is the frequent confession of the child of God. Hemmed in by foes, the butt of vehement hate! But the moment comes at length when God arises to deliver. He utters His voice — the earth melts. In the night the enemy has wrapped up his tents and stolen silently away. War has ceased, and all the land of life lies plain and open.

God makes *the wars of the outward life* cease, so that as life’s afternoon comes the man who had fought his way through overwhelming odds — as a reformer, or inventor, or philanthropist — spends his years amid troops of friends and loving recognition.

God makes *the wars of the home* cease, so that the disturbing elements pass out, or are transmuted by invincible patience and love.

God makes *the wars of the heart* cease, so that Satan no longer annoys. The storm dies down, and the river which makes glad the city of God purls quietly through the soul. Sennacherib and his vast army lie as the leaves of autumn, silent in the last sleep.

If as yet God has not made your wars to cease, it is because He knows that you have still strength to fight on. Do not faint in the day of battle. Ponder those great words of Cromwell: “Call not your burden sad or heavy, for if your Heavenly Father sent it (or permitted it) He intended it to be neither.” It is through the fight that you are winning experience, strength, the approval of your Captain, and the crown.

Psalm 47:4

“He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.”

“**C**HOOSE for us, our Father.” We say it deliberately. If He were to give us our choice at this moment, though there is no one of us that does not cherish a secret longing too deep for words, we would put it back into His hand and say, “Thou knowest better than words can tell Thee what lies closest to our soul, but we dare not take the opportunity of snatching at it; Thou wilt give it or its equivalent in the sweetest form and at the most opportune hour.” Would not this be the wisest attitude for any one of us to assume, believing, as we do, that our Father’s wisdom is only outshone by His love?

Wilt thou, O soul of man, standing at the foot of the Hill of God, ask thy Father to choose the track? He knows thy strength and powers of endurance; He knows also thy ardent yearning for the best. Subordinate thy choice to His in all things. Then whatever the difficulties may prove to be, dare to believe that they are less than any that would have opposed thee hadst thou chosen the route for thyself. Never look back; never doubt thy Father’s personal interest; the clouds that sweep darkly over thy path may hide Him from thee, but not thee from Him.

And thou, who hast had much experience of God, wilt thou not still say, He shall choose? Thou canst not repent the trust which thou reposedst years ago in His selection. Thou wilt not withdraw thy confidence. For evermore, whatever life may bring here or hereafter, we will cry, He shall choose, He shall choose. As Nicholas Herman said: “Pains and sufferings would be a paradise to me which I should suffer with my God; and the greatest pleasures hell, if I could relish them without Him.”

Psalm 48:13

“Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.”

THE pious Jew broke into exclamations as he considered the beloved city of his fathers. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. In proud confidence he challenged the world of men to walk about Zion, count her towers, and mark her bulwarks. Finally they were to traverse her palaces. But what Jerusalem was to the Jews, God’s lovingkindness is to us, as we think of it, in the midst of His temple. Let us consider its beauty and joy, its strength and glory. “For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!” (Zechariah 9:17)

Traverse the rooms in the Palace of God’s love — that council-chamber of the eternal foreknowledge where we were chosen in Christ; this suite of apartments, which began with the disrobing-room of Bethlehem, and ended with the golden stairway of Olivet; those mansions of the Home-land which He is preparing for them that love Him; the pavilion whither He will lead His bride where He comes to take her to Himself: then look onward to the new heaven and the new earth, where God shall spread His tabernacle over His people, and all our loftiest ideals will be realized for evermore.

Life is a traversing of the successive rooms of the Palace of Love. They are not alike: each has its own beauty; each leads to something better; in each God is All. Some seem to pass through the rooms veiled or blind; others miss seeing the King. But those who dare to look for Him everywhere, find Him. Always our Christ forever and ever; always our Guide even unto death, and beyond. Always the present opening to something better, as the rosebud to the rose; as the acorn to the oak; as the chrysalis to the butterfly.

Psalm 49:5

“Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?”

HAVE I not God? At sundry times and in divers manners, He spake to, and succoured His saints. Will He not come to me, and cast around me the soft mantle of His protecting love? And if I love Him, do I need any beside?

“Who that one moment has the least descried (*caught sight of*) Him,
Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
Pleasures and powers that are not, and that are?”

Did He not walk with Enoch, and then take him home, before the deluge came? Did He not shut Noah in, with His own hand, that there should be no jeopardy from the overflowing flood? Did He not assure Abram that He was his shield and exceeding great reward, quieting his fears against any possible combination of foes? Did He not preserve His servant Moses from the fury of Pharaoh and the murmurings of Israel? Was not Elijah hidden in the secret of His pavilion from the wrath of Ahab? Did He not send His angel to shut the lions’ mouths that they might not hurt Daniel? Were not the coals of the burning fiery furnace as sweet and soft as forest glades to the feet of the three young confessors? Has God ever forsaken those that trusted Him? Has He ever given them over to the will of their enemies?

Wherefore, then, should I fear in the day of evil? I may be standing on the deck, whilst the ship is beset by icebergs and jagged splintered rocks; the fog drapes everything, as the way slowly opens through this archipelago of peril: but God is at the helm — why should I fear? Days of evil to others cannot be so to me, for the presence of God transmutes the evil to good.

Psalm 50:3

“Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.”

THE years pass as snowflakes on the river; and as each drops into the mighty past, it cries, God will come! Each Advent season, with its cluster of services, herald-voices, reminiscences and anticipations, lifts the message clear above the turmoil and tumult of mankind, God will come! The disappointments of our fairest hopes, the overcasting of our sunrises, the failures of our politicians, statesmen and counsellors, to effect a permanent and radical improvement of man’s nature, all take up the word, Our God shall come!

“Surely He cometh, and a thousand voices
Call to the saints and to the deaf and dumb;
Surely He cometh, and the earth rejoices,
Glad in His coming, who hath sworn, I come.”

Dear heart, get thee often to thine oriel window, and look out for the breaking of the day. Did not the Master assure us that He would soon return? Hearken, He saith again today, “Surely I come quickly.” (Revelation 22:20) The little while will soon be over, and He will come first to receive His saints to Himself, and afterwards to come with them to the earth. Why are we disconsolate and dismayed? The perplexities of the Eastern problem, the gradual return of the Jews to Palestine, the despair and lawlessness of men, the unrest of nations, the preparedness on the part of the Church — like so many minute guns at night — keep the heart awake. Oh, let your eyes flash with the glow of thanksgiving! Be glad and strong, confident and calm. Let your loins be girded, and your lamps burning. Through heaven’s spaces you shall detect the advent of your God; and when He comes He will break the silence of the ages with words of majesty and might.

Psalm 51:10

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

PERHAPS that is our chiefest need: especially so as we gird up our loins for a new stretch of pilgrimage. We do not need nobler ideals. They flash over our souls. We read of Browning kissing, on each anniversary of his wedding, the steps by which his bride went to the marriage altar; and we vow to lift our wedded life higher. We read of Henry Martyn mourning that he had devoted too much time to public work, and too little to private communion with God; and we vow to pray more. We recall the motto written on Green the historian’s grave at Mentone, “He died learning;” and we vow that each day shall see some lesson learnt from the great store of Truth. We read those noble words of W. C. Burns, “Oh to have a martyr’s heart, if not a martyr’s crown;” and we vow to give ourselves absolutely to witness and suffer for Jesus. But, alas! our ideals fade within a few hours, and the withered petals are all that remain. We need the steadfast spirit.

But this God can give us by His Holy Spirit. He can renew our will from day to day, and infuse into us His own unaltering, unalterable purpose. He can make possible, obedience to the apostolic injunction, “Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:58) Hear what comfortable words the Apostle Peter saith: “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.” (1 Peter 5:10) Then we shall move resolutely and unfalteringly onward; like Columbus, undaunted by discouragement, we shall cross unknown seas, till the scent of the land we seek is wafted across the brief intervening distance.

Psalm 52:8

“But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.”

IN its dress of evergreen, the olive is at all times a beautiful object. Many reasons demand that we should resemble it. There are three ways of becoming like a green olive tree, mentioned in this and the following verses:—

Trust in the mercy of God. — To trust when the light has burnt to its socket in the house of life, and the heart is as lonely as Job’s amid the wreck of his home. To believe that the mercy of God is not clear gone, nor His tender mercies have failed. To know that all is well, that seems most ill. This keeps the heart from withering.

Thanksgiving. — “I will give thee thanks for ever.” There is always something to thank God for. When someone condoled with the old slave woman, because she had only two teeth left, she replied quickly, “But I thank Him, honey, all the time, that they are opposite each other.” Find out with Paul something to be happy about, even when arraigned before a judge, on trial for your life. “I think myself happy, King Agrippa.” (Acts 26:2)

Waiting on God. — Not always talking to Him or about Him, but waiting before Him, till the stream runs clear; till the cream rises to the top; till the mists part, and the soul regains its equilibrium. This keeps the soul calm and still. The name of God is good, a wholesome theme for meditation, because it includes His nature. To meditate on it is soul-quieting and elevating. O troubled one, get away to some quiet spot and wait on God! Look away from the wind and waves to the face of Jesus. The Divine Name is written on those dear features; and heaven looks forth from those true, deep, tender eyes. The house of God is a safe and sheltered place for his olive-trees!

Psalm 53:6

“Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.”

IT is wonderful to notice the many ways in which God brings us back to Himself. We may have been carried into captivity by a troop of anxieties or a horde of worries; by temptations like the sons of Anak; by pride and other evils, as when David found that the Amalekites had carried off his belongings into captivity. Then God comes to the rescue: sometimes by a drawing felt throughout the soul; sometimes by a little word dropped by another; sometimes by an incident from a biography. Any one of these acts upon us as the sunbeams on frost — there is a meeting and yielding, a desire to get alone, confession of waywardness and wandering, and earnest petitions for renewal of the blessed past. Thus God bringeth back the captivity of His people.

Are you a captive, pining in some distant bondage? It is not surprising that you hang your harp upon the willows, and weep as you remember Zion — how you went with the throng, and even led them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise. And as you contrast the past and the present, it is well that your soul is cast down. But when the Lord brings again your captivity, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Would it not be well to look out for your brother Lot if he has been carried off down the long Jordan Plain? Should you not arm and go to his rescue, as Abraham did? Perhaps the Lord would turn your captivity, if you sought to turn the captivity of others; and Melchizedek would meet you with the bread and wine.

“O my God!

Draw me still nearer, closer unto Thee

Till all the hollow of these deep desires

May with Thyself be filled!”

Psalm 54:1, 7

*“Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. ...
For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath
seen his desire upon mine enemies.”*

THERE are only seven stanzas in this psalm. It is one of the briefer of David’s compositions. Written when the Ziphites told of David’s hiding-place and compelled him to shift his quarters, perhaps its brevity attests some hasty moment snatched from the hurry and bustle of the necessary flight. It is said that Mr. Gladstone made his memorable Latin version of “Rock of Ages” during an interval of a House of Commons debate. It is worthy of remark that, however hurried David might have been, and however great the responsibility resting upon him, he found time to turn to God for help. He had learnt the secret of abiding in the Divine Presence.

It is said of one, “He was so accustomed to the Divine Presence that he received from it continual succour upon all occasions. It was his continual care to be always with God, and to do nothing, say nothing, which should endanger the perpetual intercourse.” But obviously, this frame of mind depended on a previous dedication of himself as a freewill offering to God. There must be no division of interests, if God is to be all. You must consider yourself as a stone before a carver, whereof he is to make a statue — presenting yourself before Him that He may make His perfect image in you and do as He will with your life. You must realize that He has permitted this interruption of your peace, this intrusion of Ziphite hate. You must look beyond the hand that smites, to the Father who permits. Then the soul will rock itself to rest; and before you have been five minutes with God you will be able to say as David, “He hath delivered me.” Be of good cheer; rest on His Name; He will deliver you out of *all* trouble.

Psalm 55:22

“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

WE all know the story of the man wearily trudging along the road with the burden on his back, to whom a friend offered a lift in his cart. To the latter’s surprise the wayfarer sat beside him with his burden still strapped to his shoulder. “Why do you not put your burden down?” quoth he. “Thank you,” was the reply, “I am so obliged at your carrying me that I will not trouble you with my burden also.” And so he hugged it still. How many a child of God trusts Him with his soul, but not with his load! Yet if God has undertaken the greater, surely He may be trusted with the less. If He has borne thy sins, He can surely carry thy sorrows.

Thy burden is that which He hath given thee. Whatever it be — the weight of a church, the pressure of a family, the burden of other souls — thy Father hath given it thee. Give its pressure back to Him, whilst thou retaineth the salutary lesson of hourly patience and faith. God imposes burdens, to see what we will do with them. We may carry them to our undoing, or we may cast them on Him for His blessed countenance.

“Oh for the faith to cast our load,
E’en while we pray, upon our God,
Then rise with lightened cheer.”

Notice, that if we cast our burden, we must believe He takes it. We must definitely leave it with Him, and count as a positive sin the temptation to reconsider it. When you cast your burden, God will take it, and will do more. He will sustain you. He will catch up your burden and you, and bear you all the day long between His shoulders.

Psalm 56:13

“For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?”

IT has been a wonderful deliverance! The blood and righteousness of Christ have satisfied the demands of a holy law. Into our souls, dead in trespasses and sins, He has poured the power of an endless life. The very life of God Himself has become resident within us, through the grace of the one Man, Christ Jesus. We cannot be hurt by the second death. We have eaten of the flesh, and drunk of the blood of the Son of Man, and ours is the everlasting life. Death and the grave for ever behind us, whilst before is the city, whose streets are never shadowed by death or crying.

And will not God finish what He has begun? Has He given us life, and will He not give us all that is necessary for right and holy living? Does not the one necessarily involve the other, as the gift of the body involves the bestowment of food and clothing? Have we been saved by Christ's death? Shall we not also be saved by His life? Will it not be for the glory of God that we should walk worthy of the high calling? Trust Him, child of God, whatever the traps and pitfalls, whatever the slipperiness and difficulty of keeping a foothold; believe that He is able to keep you from stumbling, and that His ability is only exceeded by His love. Let your Guide bind you by a strong rope to Himself as you start each morning in His company.

The answer to these reasonings, the fulfillment of our hopes, comes back to us from a verse in Romans 5, as rendered by combining the suggestions of Dr. Moule, and of Conybeare and Howson, “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being already reconciled, we shall be kept safe by sharing in his life.”

Psalm 57:2

“I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.”

IT seemed to David that he was condemned to spend his days in a lion’s den; on every side were blasphemy and reproach; his enemies breathed out flames, and their slanders cut like swords. But amid it all he steadily looked away to God, the Most High, who from His elevation would reach down to deliver, and would surely accomplish all that was necessary. It is a marvellous thing to consider that God is literally willing to perform *all* things in us, and for us, if only we will let Him. The mischief is that most of us insist on performing all things in the energy of our own resolve, in the strength of our own power. We shut God out of our life: and whilst He is coming to our help, we have forced ourselves, and offered the sacrifice to our own hurt.

Before, therefore, God will perform all things for us, as He did for His servant, we must learn, like him, to wait in His presence that He may teach us our absolute poverty and helplessness; that He may assure us of our need of absolute and unceasing dependence; that He may open our eyes to see the well-spring which Hagar saw on the desert sand. The fixed heart (Psalm 57:7), fixed only upon God, set upon waiting His time, receiving His help, and doing all things according to the inspiration and energy of His Spirit, is absolutely essential.

Awake the dawn, O child of God (Psalm 57:8). Give thanks to God: sing His praises (Psalm 57:9): let thy aspiration be for His exaltation (Psalm 57:5, 11): let thy heart be fixed in its resolve to take deliverance from none other — and He will send forth His twin-angels, Mercy and Truth (Psalm 57:3). They will come, even into the lion’s den, and save thee from those who would swallow thee up (Psalm 57:4).

Psalm 58:11

“So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.”

THIS is one of the imprecatory psalms, and some are seriously disturbed with what seems an unforgiving spirit on the part of the psalmist. We must remember, however, that he was brought up in a severer school than ours. The cliffs of Sinai are sterner than the undulations of the mountain of Beatitudes. He was impressed more by the righteousness and less by the love of God than we are. The true key to the solution of the difficulty which these words suggest is in the words quoted above, which show his zeal for the character of Jehovah.

We must remember that the great conflict of his time was — why the wicked were permitted to flourish. Their success seemed to suggest that God was indifferent to sin. The book of Job is filled with controversy on the same theme: its chapters are filled with reasonings how God could be just, and allow the wicked to prosper, whilst the righteous suffered sore affliction. The psalmist, therefore, pleads that the wicked should be taken away with a whirlwind, that men may be compelled to admit that there is a God that judgeth. Let wicked men be put to shame and punished, then surely men will seek after righteousness because of the immunity it secures and the blessedness it offers.

Yes, child of God, there is a reward for thee. It is not in vain that thou hast washed thy hands in innocency. But it will not come in the coinage of honour of this age, else it would be evanescent and perishable. God is already giving thee of the eternal and divine — peace, joy, blessedness; and one day thou shalt be fully vindicated.

“Perhaps the cup was broken here

That Heaven’s new wine might show more clear.”

Psalm 59:9, 17

“Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence. ... Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.”

THIS contrast comes out in exquisite beauty. First, the soul waits upon God, its strength; and then to Him who had been its strength, it breaks into praise.

Notice the circumstances in which this psalm was composed. Around the house lurk Saul’s emissaries, gathering themselves together against him. At any moment they threaten to break in and murder him upon the psalmist’s bed. Michal and he are reduced to their last straits, yet the hunted man finds opportunity to wait upon God. It is not that he asks for aught as a definite gift; but he waits on God Himself, still expectant, eager. There are times when we cannot tell God what He should do; we can only hush our soul, as a mother her babe, and wait patiently until He tells us what He has prepared.

Meditate on these three attributes. He is the God of your mercy, the Fountain from which pure mercy flows, and nothing but mercy; He is your High Tower, whom you may put between yourself and Saul’s hate; He is your Strength, not that you receive strength from Him, but that you appropriate Him as your strength. Stay thus musing and resting, until in that very house, pent in and besieged, you shall break into song, singing of God’s strength, singing aloud of His mercy in the morning.

There are many beleaguered souls in the world, who have learnt to put God between themselves and their besiegers, and to sing to Him.

“For the glory and the passion of this midnight I praise
Thy Name, I give thee thanks, O Christ!
Thou hast neither failed me nor forsaken
Through these hard hours with victory overpriced;
Now that I too of Thy passion have partaken,
For the world’s sake, called—elected—sacrificed.”

Psalm 60:1

“O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.”

CAST off! There is a sense in which that can never be. God will not cast off from salvation any soul of man that has sheltered under the covert of His Almighty wings. He may withdraw the sensible enjoyment and realization of His presence; but He cannot cast off for ever, in the sense of consigning any fugitive to his foes or to the fate he dreads.

And yet there is a sense in which we are cast off, when we have been unbelieving and disobedient. Allowed to take our own way, that we may learn its bitterness; permitted to hunger and thirst, that we may know how evil a thing it is to seek our supreme good anywhere else than in God; given over to the tender mercies of the gods we have chosen, that we may be taught their helplessness. It was thus that God cast off His people. He showed them hard things, and allowed them to reap as they had sown.

But now they cry for restoration. Put us back, they say, into the old place; be to us what Thou wert, and make us to Thee as we were. Restore us again. He did it for Peter, putting him back to the front place in the Apostolic band; for Mark, allowing him, who had gone back in his first missionary journey, to write a Gospel; for Cranmer and many more, who in the first burst of fiery trial shrank back, but to whom He gave more grace. Believe in the restoring grace of Christ, who not only forgives, but puts back the penitent and believing soul where it was before it fell away. Indeed, it has been suggested that the prodigal fares better on his return than those who do not go astray. It is not really so. But there is much music and song when the lost is found and the dead lives.

Psalm 61:2

“From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

DAVID is in the wilderness, fleeing from Absalom. It seems to him that he is at the end of the earth. “Love and Longing are potent magnifiers of space.” His soul seems wrapped in gloom; then, from afar, he sees the Rock of his salvation, and asks to be led thither, and set thereon.

Can you not see that rock? All the desert is baking like a furnace. The very pebbles burn the hand like cinders. Nothing can abide the scorching glare but the little green lizards that dart to and fro among the stones. Sunbeams strike like swords on the head of the luckless travellers that dare to brave their glittering edge. But yonder there is a rock, rising high above the shimmering sands, and casting a deep black shadow on one side. Little lichens hide in its crevices, streaks of vegetation are enameled on its steep surfaces, and at its foot there are even a few rock-plants growing as best they can in the arid soil. That is the higher rock—the rock higher than the traveler’s stature. He makes for it; or if he is too faint and overwhelmed, he is led to it, and beneath its gracious shadow finds instant respite and repose. The shadow of a great rock in a weary land!

Jesus will be all this to thee, dear heart. Thou hast got to the end of the earth and of thyself; call out to Christ, and He will bring thee, faint and ready to die, to Himself as the Shadow from the heat. The Man of men can be this for thee, because He is higher than thou art. Higher than I, because of His Divine origin; higher, because of His perfect obedience; higher, because of His supreme sufferings; higher, because of His ascension to the right hand of power. Yet His side is scarred and cleft.

Psalm 62:1

“Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.”

DR. Kay gives as the literal translation: “Only toward God my soul is in silence;” or, “Only for God waits my soul all hushed.” The noises of contending desires, the whispers of earthly hopes, are hushed: and the soul listens.

This is the test of true waiting. Wait before God till the voices, suggestions, and energies of nature become silent. Then only can God realize his uttermost of salvation. This was the secret of Abraham’s long trial. He was left waiting till nature was spent, till all expedients proving abortive were surrendered; till all that knew him pitied him for clinging to an impossible dream. But as this great silence fell on him, the evidence of utter helplessness and despair, there arose within his soul an ever-accumulating faith in the power of God; and there was no obstacle to prevent God realizing all, and beyond all, because all the glory accrued to Himself.

This is why God keeps you waiting. All that is of self and nature must be silenced; one voice after another cease to boast; one light after another be put out; until the soul is shut up to God alone. This process prevails equally in respect to salvation from penalty, deliverance from the power of sin, and our efforts to win souls. O my soul, be silent! Hush thee! Wait thou only upon God! Surrender thy cherished plans and reliances. Only when death has done its perfect work, will He bestow the power of an endless (an indissoluble) life.

“O Lord, my God, do Thou Thy holy will!

I will lie still!

I will not stir, lest I forsake thine arm,

And break the charm,

Which lulls me, clinging to my Father’s breast

In perfect rest.”

Psalm 63:8

“My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.”

THIS is a marvelous saying. Literally rendered, the words are, “cleaves after Thee” — contact and eager pursuit. The metaphor which underlies it is obviously borrowed from the psalmist’s familiarity with the wilderness. It is a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: one says that he knows of a secret spring, whose waters are clear and cool, and offers to lead the thirsty one to its margin, lined with mosses and grasses. Instantly the soul starts in pursuit, and follows hard on the footsteps of the pioneer.

So when we are athirst for God, He comes, and, in the person of Jesus, leads us to Himself. He is Guide and Guerdon, Prompter of the impulse, and Promoter of its satisfaction. He excites the desire, offers to show us its sufficient supply, and finally brings us to his own lovingkindness, which is better than life. It becomes us, then, to follow hard after Him. Let us do as Jonathan’s armour-bearer, to whom the young prince said, Come up after me. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and feet, and his armor-bearer after him, and the Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armour-bearer slew after him.

Follow hard after Christ, over hedge and ditch, through stubble and gorse, across dyke and brook, sometimes down the steep fall into the hollow, and again breasting the mountain slope, in the teeth of the pitiless blast. He has left an example that we should follow His steps. The scent lies lightly; catch it ere it fade. What though the fresh blood marks the track — follow hard! Follow on to apprehend that for which thou wast apprehended. Press toward the mark. Let there be no needless space between the Master and thee.

Psalm 64:10

*“The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him;
and all the upright in heart shall glory.”*

ARE you glad in your Christian life? Gladness is the perquisite of children and childlike hearts, and there is nothing which is more distinctively characteristic of the work of grace in the heart than Christian gladness. The world may simulate it, but it is conscious of its dreary failure. Often faded worldlings will come to the true Christian, saying, What is the secret of your perennial gladness?

The glad heart is conscious of the love of God; knows that it is reconciled through the blood of the cross; realizes that there is nothing between itself and the light of the Father’s smile; is conscious of rectitude in intention and tenderness of yearning love and pity. In every difficult circumstance it recognizes the Father’s appointment; in every archipelago of rocks it is aware of the presence of God aboard the vessel, holding the helm and keeping the keel in the deepest current.

O souls, get right with God! avail yourselves of the perfect righteousness of Christ; watch that there be nothing between you and Him; walk in the light as He is in the light; cultivate the habit of considering what has been given rather than what has been withheld — and you will find that He will make you glad in proportion to the days in which He has afflicted you, and the years in which you have seen evil. The sad heart tires in a mile. The glad one mounts up with wings as eagles. After his vision Jacob “went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east” (Genesis 29:1)

“Oh for the joy thy presence gives—

What peace shall reign when Thou art here!

Thy presence makes this den of thieves

A calm, delightful house of prayer.”

Psalm 65:4

“Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.”

I WOULD be one of those favoured ones, my Savior. There is nothing that the heart can conceive, which is to be compared with this blessedness. The light of nature, the joy of friendship, the fascination of art and books, can give no such delight as this approach unto Thee, this dwelling in thy courts. But the longer I know myself, the surer I am that *Thou* must cause me to approach, that Thou must put forth extraordinary means for making me *dwell*. So cause me to approach that I may dwell.

When thy soul has put up such a prayer as this, be sure that an answer will come. Thou mayest be brought nigh by an invisible but all-penetrating attraction, as when the sun draws the earth, or the magnet the needle: or perhaps God will answer thee by terrible things in righteousness. There will be deep humiliations, solemn heart-searchings, sharp crucifixions, cherished purposes thwarted, the keenest pain, the most searching fire. But through all, there will come a growing tenderness and desire.

It was said by the late Mr. Spurgeon that he was not conscious of spending a quarter of an hour of his waking moments without a distinct recognition of the presence of God. And this will be true of us if we will trust the great High Priest to bring us within the veil, and keep us there. He entered that we may enter. He abides that we may abide. He stands in the Holiest that He may cause us to have a place of access among those that stand before the face of God. The anointing which we receive from Him will teach us how to abide. This may well be adopted as a life-prayer: “Cause me to approach, that I may dwell in thy presence.”

Psalm 66:10

“For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.”

SILVER is tried by fire, and the heart by pain. “We went through fire.” (Psalm 66:12) But in the fire thou shalt not be burned; only thy dross shall be removed. The smell of burning shall not pass upon thee, for the form of the Son of God shall be at thy side.

“Be still, and He shall mould thee for his heritage of rest;

The vessel must be shapen for the joys of Paradise.

And if the great Refiner in furnaces of pain

Would do his work more truly, count all his dealings gain.”

The main end of our life is not to do, but to become. For this we are being molded and disciplined each hour. You cannot understand why year after year the stern ordeal is perpetuated; you think the time is wasted; you are doing nothing. Yes, but you are situated in the set of circumstances that gives you the best opportunity for manifesting, and therefore acquiring, the qualities in which your character is naturally deficient. And the Refiner sits patiently beside the crucible, intent on the process, tempering the heat, and eager that the scum should pass off, and his own face become perfectly reflected in the surface.

Only be satisfied, with Archbishop Leighton, that nothing can befall thee but what has first passed concerning thee in the courts of heaven. And say with the saintly Fletcher: “I felt the will of my God like unto a soft pillow, upon which I could lie down and find rest and safety in all circumstances. Oh, it is a blessed thing to sink into the will of God in all things. Absolute resignation to the Divine will baffles a thousand temptations; confidence in our Savior carries us sweetly through a thousand trials.”

Psalm 67:7

“God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”

THIS psalm is full of yearnings for the salvation of mankind. The selfish desire for the exclusive blessing of the chosen people is lost sight of in the catholic yearning that all the earth should fear Jehovah. Indeed, this is the ground on which the psalmist rests his personal claim for the Divine blessing. It is as though he said, “We only ask for gifts of grace, that through us they may be transmitted to all mankind.” Turn us again, O God, that times of refreshing may come from thy presence to all men; our one desire is that the peoples may praise Thee.

We are reminded of those noble words of Andrew Fuller, to whom the initiation of modern missions to the heathen is so largely due: “We met and prayed for the heathen. We were drawn out of ourselves. God blessed us while we tried to be a blessing. Our hearts were enlarged, and we were baptized into a deeper sympathy with the soul-saving purposes of the Redeemer.”

Are we infected with this noble passion? Do we echo from our hearts the repeated prayer of this psalm: “Let all the people praise Thee”? (Psalm 67:3, 5) Do we ask for blessing from our own God, that we may be able to be a greater blessing to others? It is because God is “our own God,” (Psalm 67:6) that we are so anxious to make Him known. Oh that we might be carried out to sea on the tide of God’s purposes, and yearnings, and pity; and long as the psalmist did that his saving health might be known among all nations!

“Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest,
 Cannot confound, nor doubt Him, nor deny;
 Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
 Stand thou on that side, for on this am I”

Psalm 68:19

“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.”

NEVER tired or out of patience, that mighty God, of whose advent the psalmist is so full, daily bends beneath our burdens, and sets Himself to help us through crushing difficulties. They are unbearable to us, but to Him only a very little thing. If He taketh up the isles as a very little thing, surely your heaviest burden must be less.

But our mistake is that we do not realize that God is bearing our burdens. We think that we must cope with them; we let ourselves worry, as though we were the loneliest, most deserted, most pitiable beings in existence, when all the while God is going beside, ready to bear our burdens. The burden of our sins; of our anxieties about ourselves, and about others; of our frailties and infirmities; the responsibility of keeping us; the pressure of our daily need — all these rest daily on our God.

“’Tis enough that He should care;

Why should we the burden bear!”

Oh, do not carry your burdens for a single moment longer; pass them over to Him who has already taken your eternal interests to His heart. Only be patient, and wait on Him, and do not run to and fro seeking for help from man, or making men your consolers and confidants. Those who do this have their reward. But as for you, anoint your head and wash your face, so as not to excite the pity of others. “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) But, when it has been cast, leave it with Him. Refuse to yield to anxious suggestions, and forthwith burst out into a song of thankful confidence. Bless Him! Praise Him! Be glad, and rejoice! When the heart is lightened of its load, it will soar.

Psalm 69:1

“Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul.”

MATTERS sometimes become desperate. For days the waters have been out on the low-lying lands, and slowly rising against the embankment, in the shelter of which some house is situated. Now, however, they have undermined and swept it away. With a crash it has fallen into the yellow foaming waters. A moment's agitation, and then not a trace of it. There is nothing now to keep back the flood, and it comes into the home, rising stealthily up the walls. In the life of the soul such a crisis comes not infrequently. You have dreaded something, and the cold chill of fear has cast a shudder over you; but surely it could never come to *you!* There is that protection, that barrier, of position, money, wealthy friends. But one by one these are swept aside, and the waters come ever nearer, till there is nothing between them and the soul. They come in unto the soul.

It is well for a man to be able then to turn to God with the “Save me” of the psalmist. God must have the entire trust of our soul. He takes away all that lies between Him and us, that we may hang on Him, and lie naked and open to Him in our utter helplessness. From the midst of your sorrows, from the deep sin in which you are sinking, from the deep waters that overflow you, cry to God. He knows your foolishness; your sins are not hid from Him. He will stretch out His right hand and catch you, saying, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matthew 14:31) Then our crying and tears will be turned to joyous shouts. We shall praise the name of God with a song, and magnify Him with thanksgiving; for the Lord heareth the needy, and despiseth not his prisoners (Psalm 69:30, 33).

Psalm 70:5

“But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.”

MAKE haste!” Our frail patience gives out full often. We think that God is never coming. So many days I have waited for Thee, and as yet there has not been one symptom of Thine approach. Why are Thy chariots so tardy? Lazarus is dying; a few hours more, and life will have ebbed away. Provisions are failing and water is scarce, and still the enemy is entrenched in proud security. The world scoffs; but Thou comest not down the mountain slope, bringing salvation. Where is the Pentecost of which Thou speakest? Where Thy Second Advent?

But God is making haste. On the wings of every hour, quicker than light leaps from world to world, He is on His way. Delays are not denials, but are necessary to the perfecting of his arrangements. “Behold, I come quickly!” (Revelation 3:11; 22:7; 22:12) is still true, though nineteen hundred years have passed.

We do not wish the destruction of our enemies, but their salvation. We long that God should be magnified, and souls saved. We yearn for the setting up of the Kingdom of God, which is peace on earth, and blessing. And for this end we desire that God should accelerate His coming. O God, make no tarrying! Thine enemies boast themselves; our spirits faint for fear; men are sinking into perdition. Make haste!

Thy God will not be a moment overdue. When the fourth watch breaks, He will interpose. Not too soon for education; not too late for deliverance. But dare to believe that He is never absent. He is near thee all the while, bending over thee and all men, with tender pity, only waiting till He can see, with infallible wisdom, the best instant to interfere.

Psalm 71:20

“Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.”

GOD shows us the troubles. We stand beside Him, and the mighty billows break around, but are shivered into myriads of drops. As we ride beside Him in the chariot of salvation, He points out to us the forms of dreaded evils, the ravines, the glaciers, the awful steeps; but it is as though we were cradled in some soft golden cloud which fringes the edge of the precipice, and glides along splintered cliffs where the chamois could not find footing. Look at this, saith our Guide. These are the troubles that overwhelm souls, and drain their life! Behold them, but thou shalt not suffer them! I show you them that you may know how to comfort and help those who have been overwhelmed. Sometimes, as this part of our education is being carried forward, we have to descend into “the lower parts of the earth,” pass through subterranean passages, lie buried amongst the dead. But never for a moment is the cord of fellowship and union between God and us strained to breaking; and from the depths God will bring us up again.

Never doubt God. Never say that He has forsaken or forgotten. Never think that He is unsympathetic. He will quicken again. There is always a smooth piece in every skein, however tangled. The longest day at last rings out the evensong. The winter snow lies long, but it goes at last. Be steadfast; your labour is not in vain. God turns again, and comforts. And when He does, the heart which had forgotten its psalmody breaks out in jubilant song, as does the psalmist’s.

“I will thank Thee with the lyre, even thy truth, my God;
I will harp unto Thee with the harp, Thou Holy One of Israel;
My lips shall sing aloud when I harp unto Thee,
And my soul which Thou hast redeemed.”

Psalm 72:6

“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.”

AMOS speaks of the king’s mowings. Our King has many scythes, and is perpetually mowing his lawns. The musical tinkle of the whetstone on the scythe portends the cutting down of myriads of green blades, daisies, and other flowers. Beautiful as they were in the morning, within an hour or two they lie in long, faded rows. Thus in human life we make a brave show, which passes away like the beauty of grass, before the scythe of pain, the shears of disappointment, the sickle of death.

There is no method of obtaining a velvety lawn but by repeated mowings; and there is no way of getting tenderness, evenness, sympathy, but by the passing of God’s scythes. How constantly the Word of God compares man to grass, and his glory to its flower! But when grass is mown, and all the tender shoots are bleeding, and desolation reigns where flowers were bursting, it is the most acceptable time for showers of rain falling soft and warm.

O soul, thou hast been mown. Time after time the King has come to thee with His sharp scythe. Thou hast sadly learnt that all flesh is grass, and that the efforts of thy self-life are vain. Where are the kingcups and butter-cups of thy pride? They are laid low that thou shouldest bear better crops than ever; and that thou mayest do so, lo, He comes down as spring rain! He comes *down*; thus you have the miracle of His condescension. He comes down *like rain*; there you have the manner of His gentle advent. He comes *on the mown grass*; there is His expectancy, showing that His reason in mowing, followed as it is by the gentle raindrops, lies in the direction of new beauty and use. Do not dread the scythe — it is sure to be followed by the shower.

Psalm 73:1

“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.”

GOD is only good. Such is the better rendering of the original. He makes “all things work together for good to them that love God.” (Romans 8:28) However unlike goodness something in your lot may be, turn from the suggestions of sense to the affirmations of faith, and dare to say,

“His every act pure blessing is,

His path unsullied light.”

Nothing so glorifies God as when a Cowper, rescued from the border of despair, snatched from committing suicide, dares still to cling to his belief in the goodness of God.

Our faith is sometimes assailed, as Asaph’s was, by the anomalies we meet with in the world. The wicked prosper, whilst the waters of a full cup are wrung out to the people of God. The scribes and Pharisees greedily devour widows’ houses, and prey on the helpless; whilst earnest merit seeks for work and recognition in vain. It is a strange world, full of contradictions, perplexities, and insoluble questions; but through it all God’s children must dare to affirm that He is only good. You do not feel it? Nevertheless, reason, Scripture, experience, demand that you should assert it. The fact is, we have lost the standpoint of vision. The psalmist found these things too painful till he went into the sanctuary of God, and then he understood. Do not take earth as the centre of the universe, but the sun. Do not look at God from circumstances, but at circumstances from God. Live continually with Him: then will mystery become unraveled, and dark problems solved. Above all, be pure in heart, free from the stain of sin, with one purpose. Thou shalt see the soul of good in what seems evil.

Psalm 74:20

“Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.”

WHAT a marvelous ejaculation! Here is a broken heart, pouring out its wail into the ear of God about his sanctuary and city. His adversaries have broken into the sacred precincts, and have hewn down its exquisitely carved work with hammer and hatchet. They were as men who lift up the hatchet against a forest of trees. There is nothing more utterly sad than the lament, “We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.” (Psalm 74:9)

But from it all the suppliant rises to a climax of insistent appeal, and bids God have respect unto the covenant, made centuries before with Abraham and his seed. This was an appeal which struck right home to the heart of God. He could not deny Himself.

Here is an attitude in prayer, which can only be taken when the soul has become intimate with God, and come to close grip with Him. When every other reason has been marshaled, and every argument alleged; when still the answer tarries, and the case is desperate, then turn to God, and say, “Thou canst not run back from the terms of the covenant to which Thou hast pledged Thyself. This is included in the bond of agreement. I claim that Thou shouldst do as Thou hast said.”

The covenant is set out at length in Hebrews 8. It will cover all the exigencies of our lives. And by Galatians 3:14 we may also place ourselves under the provision of the three-fold covenant which God ratified with Abraham. In every trial, when desiring any blessing, when the crashing blows of the adversaries’ hatchet are heard, turn to God, and say, “Have respect unto the covenant: ...” (Psalm 74:20) which Jesus is the Mediator and his blood the seal.

Psalm 75:7

“But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.”

THIS is the psalm of up-lifts. Against the up-lifts of the wicked, described in the fourth verse, the psalmist contrasts the up-lifts of God. They come neither from East nor West, but from above. God is the supreme arbiter of human destiny. The horns of the wicked are cut off, and those of the righteous are lifted up, by the interpositions of his Providence for God is judge.

Are you depressed today? Look up to Him, and ask that you may be uplifted into fellowship with the risen glorified Lord. The Ascension of our Lord is the measure and example of our own. Are you lying among the pots? Seek for the wings of the dove, that with flitting pinion you may make your way to the Ark, where the hand awaits to take you in. Have you been in the valley of the shadow of death? Claim that the mighty power which wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead, and made Him sit in the heavenlies far above all power and principality, may do as much for you.

This is also true in a temporal sense. Promotions in any direction, to positions of credit, influence, or consideration, are the gift and work of God. To be lifted up to a chief place in his Church, to the stewardship of large wealth, to the exercise of commanding influence, is due to the Divine interposition. You do not hold it at the caprice of man, but as the direct bestowment of your Father. Do not fear to lose it because you are true to Him. He expects you to be true to Him. He has put you where you are for no other purpose than that you should realize His purposes among men. “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” (John 3:27) But if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory?

Psalm 76:10

*“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of
wrath shalt thou restrain.”*

FROM this review of the fate of the foes of Israel, the psalmist comes to this conclusion. He has seen the serried hosts of Sennacherib come up against the city of God, but the warriors have slept their sleep: it was as though the Almighty had snapped the instruments of war across his knee. The wrath of man had been allowed up to a certain point, to bring into clear evidence the greater power of God; and then He had quietly put a term to its further manifestation.

Pharaoh's wrath against Israel only served to make God's mighty arm conspicuous. So with Herod, who took Peter to behead him; and with the high priests who fumed against the early Church. So shall it be with the arch-enemy of all. Christ is mightier than he. All he has done has acted as a foil to our Lord's glorious majesty. What he has wrought against man has only brought out more of the grace and the love of God. So shall it be to the end, when there shall be an eternal limit put to his hellish deeds, for he shall be bound by a great chain and cast into the bottomless pit.

Ah, tried soul, what is permitted to happen in your life will tend ultimately and eternally to the praise and glory of God, if only you will abide in Him, and suffer bravely, nobly, in the grace of Christ. And there always will be a restraint. There will always be a “thus far and no farther.” God's faithfulness will not let us be tempted above that we are able. When the lesson is learnt, and the opportunity for the revelation of God is complete, and the tried soul is proved to have won as its reward the crown of life, then God will stay the enemy and avenger, and give spoils more glorious than mountains of prey.

Psalm 77:19–20

“Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”

THIS is almost the climax of sublimity, because of the contrast of the majesty and gentleness of God. In the first of these verses you have the former. God is described as wading through mighty oceans as a man might ford some tiny stream. The Atlantic with fathomless depths is no more to Him than a brook to us — not so much. But as the brook hides the footmarks which are imprinted on its soft ooze, so are God’s footprints hidden. We cannot detect His great and wonderful secrets. We are unable to gauge His reasons. He marches through the ages with steps we cannot track. For His orbit there is no standard of computation.

But dread Him not. This mighty God has the tender heart of a shepherd. He leads His people like a flock; not overdriving, but carrying the lambs in His bosom, and gently leading those that are with young. Mightier than the mightiest, but meeker than the meekest! The Lion of Judah, but the Lamb of Bethlehem! Prince and Savior; Fellow of Jehovah; and yet the smitten Shepherd of the scattered flock!

Nor is this all. It is a human hand that leads the flock. God does His work through the hands of human and fallible agents. You have not recognized Him; but had your eyes been opened, you would have seen His leading in the gentle hand of that mother, in the strong grasp of that friend, in the trembling fingers of that young girl, in the tiny hand of your little babe. Ah, how many good and tender hands have molded and fashioned our lives! — but beneath them all there have been the leadings of the great God, convoying us through deep and dark waters to our fold.

Psalm 78:19

*“Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table
in the wilderness?”*

OH, fatal question! It shut Israel out of the Land of Promise, and it will do as much for you. Israel had seen the wonderful works of God, cleaving the sea, lighting the night, and giving water from rocks. Yet they questioned God’s ability to give bread, and to spread a table in the wilderness. Surely it was a slur on His gracious Providence to suppose that He had begun what He could not complete, and had done so much but could not do all.

But we are in danger of making the same mistake. Though behind us lay the gift of the Cross, the miracles of Resurrection and Ascension, the care exercised by God over our early years, the goodness and mercy of our after lives, we are disposed to say, “Can God?” Can God keep me from yielding to that besetting sin? Can God find me a situation, or provide food for my children? Can God extricate me from this terrible snare in which I am entangled? We look at the difficulties, the many who have succumbed, the surges that are rolling high, the poor devil-possessed child, and we say, *If* Thou canst do anything, help us!

Nay, nay, there is no *If* with God; there is no limit to His almightiness but thy unbelief. The words are wrongly placed. Never say again, “Can God?” but *God can*. Never, *If* Thou canst; but *If* I can believe. Never, *If* Thou canst Thou wilt; but *If* Thou wilt Thou canst; and Thou wilt, since Thou hast made and redeemed me, and Thou canst not forsake the work of thine own hands. Argue from all the past to the present and future. Fetch arguments for faith from the days that have gone.

“His love in time past forbids me to think

He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink.”

Psalm 79:5

“How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?”

TO us, also, as to this long-suffering Jew, God’s dealings seem sometimes interminable. We do not understand why the cloud hangs over us so long, why the pressure of trouble lasts year after year. We cry, “How long, O Lord?” in gusts of impatience; but take care not to hurry God unduly, lest thou force Him to forego doing His best work in thy life.

This parable helped me; may it help you to be silent, still, and long-suffering. A bar of iron, worth £1, when wrought into horseshoes, is worth £2; if made into needles, it is worth £70; if into pen-knife blades, it is worth £650; if into springs for watches, it is worth £50,000. What a drilling the poor bar must undergo to be worth this; but the more it is manipulated, the more it is hammered and passed through the fire, and beaten, and pounded, and polished, the greater its value.

So with the Jews. No other nation has passed through such awful trial and discipline as they have; but no other nation was capable of yielding such wealth of service to mankind, nor affording such untold service in the highest regions.

So with ourselves. Those that suffer most are capable of yielding most; and it is through pain that God is getting the most out of us for His glory and the blessing of others. It will be all right some day. We shall see it and be satisfied. Yes, great Father, we would like to be watch-springs. Take no heed of our cry if sometimes we forget ourselves and say, How long?

“Then haste Thee, Lord! Come down,

Take thy great power and reign!

But frame Thee first a perfect crown

Of spirits freed from stain.”

Psalm 80:3

“Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

THREE times we have this cry repeated in this psalm. (Vs 3, 7, 19) Again and again, and each time with some additional thought, the soul pleads for Restoration.

The Master said to Peter: When thou art converted (*i.e.*, turned again) strengthen thy brethren. But Peter did not realize that the Master Himself would need to turn him. He turned his back on his Lord and denied Him; but Jesus turned him back, by that look, that message from his grave mouth, that interview in the garden and on the lake-shore. He turned him face-wards to Himself, and caused his face to shine, and Peter was saved. We can be regenerated only once, but we can be converted many times. The new life is implanted once for all, and it is everlasting, inextinguishable, and permanent; but those who have been born from above, and are undoubtedly children of God, may, beneath the power of some strong fascination, turn aside, may wander in forbidden paths, may get into such a maze as to be walking in the contrary direction to that on which they started. There may even be times when our desire for God is slackened, our appetite for the Bible is lost, our soul is bound and tied with the cords of sin; at such times, let us bemoan ourselves, our folly and impotence, and cry, “Turn us again, O God,” and we shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord our God. He who at first called us to Himself must call us back: He who regenerated, must renew: He who reconciled us to God by His death, must save us by His life. When most dark, and dead, and estranged, cry with Ephraim: “Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God” (Jeremiah 31:18).

Psalm 81:7

“Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.”

SUCH trouble as Israel passed through in the Exodus comes but once in the history of a nation. From the brick-kilns and treasure-cities which they built, God’s people called to Him with strong crying and tears, extorted by insupportable sorrows. Still more did they need to cry for help when they stood between the Egyptians and the waters of the Red Sea. From the beach a nation’s call rose to God. Then was their trouble and heart-travail — a nation in throes of pain! Are you in trouble? Call upon God in the day of trouble; He will answer.

God’s answers are often in the secret place of thunder. From His pavilion of cloud God spoke in tones of thunder that pealed over the heavily-breaking surf of the Red Sea. Several of the Psalms allude to the thunderstorm that rolled through the night of the passage through the deep. The march of Israel was to the roll of thunder. The peals of heaven’s artillery struck dismay into the hearts of the alien; but it was as though the Father was speaking to His children, the people with whom He was in covenant.

God’s answer to our prayer is often in thunder-tones that hurtle through the air. By terrible things in righteousness He answers us. When Jesus asked the Father to glorify His name, the quiet reply, “I have ... and will,” which He understood, sounded like thunder to the bystanders. Happy the child who in thunder-claps detects the Father’s voice, and in mystic characters of flame reads the Father’s handwriting! Whilst, at Sinai, the people trembled at the repeated thunder-peals reverberating above them, Moses went into the thunder-covert where God was. There is no fear in love, because perfect love casteth out the fear that hath torment.

Psalm 82:8

“Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.”

THE judges and magistrates are compared in this psalm to God, because they exercise something of his power in the right ordering of human society. The Bible always inculcates respect and reverence to properly constituted authority, though it never hesitates to demand of all in authority that they should exercise their high functions impartially. Too often has the high trust been abused, and the psalmist turns with relief to the upright Judge, and comforts himself with the reflection that one day God Himself shall judge the earth, because He shall inherit all the nations.

Christ is the Firstborn and Only Begotten. As such He shall inherit all things. They were made for Him. He is the Heir. He came in His incarnation to claim His inheritance; but His claim was denied. He was cast out of the vineyard and slain; but His claims were not annulled, they remained intact. And during the present age they are being vindicated; and in answer to His appeal He is receiving the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. One nation after another is becoming His province. The kings of the isles are bringing presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba are offering gifts.

It is great encouragement in missionary work to know that every nation is by *right* of gift and inheritance our Lord's. He sold His all to purchase it, because His treasure was buried here. It is ours to make it His in *fact*. It is always easy to work on the line of the Divine purpose. God never purposes outside what is practicable and possible for man to realize. Apprehend the purpose of God, and without hesitation claim its realization.

Psalm 83:1

“Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.”

OH that God would break the silence! If He would but say one word! If we might but hear that voice — deep as the sound of many waters, and tender as the call of love — just to say that He was there; that all which we believed was true; that He was satisfied and pleased; that our perplexities would work out right at last! It is so difficult sometimes to go on living day by day without one authoritative word; and we are prone to rebuke Him for silence, that He is still, that He holds his peace. “Be not Thou silent unto me, lest I be like those that go down into the pit.”

But God has not kept silence. The Word was manifested. In Him the silence of eternity was broken. And if thou and I are still, if our ear is purged, and anointed with the blood and oil, if we make a great silence in our heart, we shall hear Him speak.

“Where is thy haunt, Eternal Voice?

The region of thy choice;

Where, undisturbed by earth, the soul

Owens thy entire control.”

’Tis not where torrents are born, nor amid snowcapped peaks, nor in the break of the surf; but in the heart, weaned from itself, isolated in chambers of sickness, cast among strangers, yearning for tender voices that cannot make themselves heard — there God is no longer still. He breaks the silence. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.” (Isaiah 40:1) “It is I; be not afraid.” (Matthew 14:27) It is always easy to detect God’s voice, because it is full of Jesus, who is the Word of God, and it is corroborated by Providence; but the heart must be still, and on the listen!

INFORMATION ON THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS USED IN THIS DEVOTIONAL

JOB: Trusting God in Suffering

Writer: Probably Moses

Key Passage: “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:” Job 19:25,26

Remarks: It records the physical and spiritual experiences of Job, an ancient Patriarch, whose faith was severely tested.

Outline:

1. The Sufferings of Job (1-3)
2. The Opinions of Job’s Friends (4-37)
3. The Answer of God (38-42)

* * *

PSALMS: Book of Worship

Writer: David and others

Key Passage: “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.” (Psalm 29:2)

Remarks: It is a collection of lyrics of praise songs, many of which were meant for public use at the Temple.

Outline:

1. Man’s Fall and Redemption (1-41)
2. Israel’s Ruin and Redeemer (42-72)
3. Worship and the Sanctuary (73-89)

4. Our Journey on Earth (90-106)
5. Praise and the Word of God (107-150)

Scripture Memory Programme 2010

Living For Jesus

To live for Jesus is to be aflame with love for Him, to build our family relationships on Him, to have a passion for godliness, and to handle our daily issues of life with His wisdom. May you experience the blessedness of a Christ-filled life as you memorise and meditate on the passages of Scripture found below.

January 3 & 10 – Surrender all for Christ

Philippians 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

January 17 & 24 – Repentance

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

January 31 – Repentance

Romans 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

February 7 & 14 – Living for Christ

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

February 21 & 28 – Strength in Weakness

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

March 7 & 14 – Desiring God

Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

March 21 & 28 – Sufficiency of Christ

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

April 4 & 11 – New Life in Christ

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

April 18 & 25 – Family Responsibility

Colossians 3:18-19 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

May 2 & 9 – Family Responsibility

1 Timothy 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

May 16 & 23 – Inward Beauty

1 Peter 3:4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

May 30 – Salvation

Isaiah 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

June 6 & 13 – Family Responsibility

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

June 20 & 27 – Family Relationships

Malachi 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

July 4 & 11 – Obedience to God

Psalms 119:1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

July 18 & 25 – Sanctification

2 Peter 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.

August 1 & 8 – Obedience to Authority

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

August 15 & 22 – Sanctification

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

August 29 – Salvation

Ezekiel 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

September 5 & 12 – Wisdom for Living

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

September 19 & 26 – Humility

Psalms 34:18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

October 3 & 10 – Marriage

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

October 17 & 24 – Sins of the Heart

Matthew 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

October 31 – Salvation

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

November 7 & 14 – Spiritual Vigilance

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

November 21 & 28 – Acquisition of Wealth

Proverbs 13:11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

December 5 & 12 – Wonderfully Made

Psalms 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

December 19 & 26 – End of the World

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

