

Our Daily Homily

By

F.B. Meyer

VOLUME Seven

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.

2 Samuel 21:1

“Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.”

THE Gibeonites were under the protection of a special covenant, which had been entered into between them and Joshua. That covenant was the outcome of a ruse on their part. But since it had been most solemnly made by the leaders of Israel, it held good. The fact of their deceit and chicanery could not absolve Israel from the oath which had been passed for their safety. For centuries the provisions of this covenant had been observed, till Saul invaded them, and slew the Gibeonites. This was a grievous sin, which, according to the religious light of the time, seemed to demand blood; and David proposed to atone for blood by blood. Nothing but blood could atone for sin so black and dark.

We are also protected by a covenant, into which the Father has entered with the Son, not for our worthiness or merit, but only because He would. The provisions of that covenant engage to take us to be his people, to remember our sins no more, and to make the Divine law the object of our love (Hebrews 8). And the argument is irresistible, that if man is so mindful of a covenant as to feel that its infraction is a sin which can only be expiated by blood shedding, it is impossible to suppose that God will ever run back from his.

O my soul, thou mayest rest secure in this: here is an everlasting rock; this foundation shall suffice thee for evermore. Thou art in the Son of his love. Though thou art sinful and evil, yet thou art included in the covenant which is more lasting than that of day and night. Jesus has met its conditions on thy behalf, and has undertaken to secure thy obedience and holiness.

2 Samuel 22:36

“Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great.”

THE triumph of God’s gentle goodness will be our song forever. In those far distant ages, when we look back on our earthly course, as a grown man on his boyhood, and when the words of this Psalm shall express our glad emotions, we shall recognize that the Hand which brought us thither was as gentle as our mother’s; and that the things we craved, but failed to receive, were withheld by His gentle goodness. Our history tells what gentleness will do.

The Apostle besought the Corinthian converts by the gentleness of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:1). Though there were abuses amongst them that seemed to call for stringent dealing, he felt that they could be best removed by the gentle love which he had learned from the heart of Christ. The wisdom which is from above is gentle as well as pure; and in dealing with the sin that chokes our growth, it is probable that gentleness will do more than severity. The gentleness of the nurse that cherishes her children; of the lover to her whom he cherishes above himself; of the infinite love which bears and endures to the uttermost — is the furnace before which the foul ingredients of our hearts are driven never to return. We might brave the lion; we are vanquished by the Lamb; we could withstand the scathing look of scorn; but when the gentle Lord casts on us the look of ineffable tenderness, we go out to weep bitterly.

That He has borne with us so lovingly; that He has filled our lives with mercy even when compelled to correct; that He has never altered in His tender behavior toward us; that He has returned our rebuffs and slights with meekness and forbearance; that He has never wearied of us — this is an everlasting tribute to the gentleness that makes great.

2 Samuel 23:4

“And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”

THE dealings of God with man are compared to morning light, and the sprouting of tender grass in the sunshine that follows rain. The one may refer to youth, and the other to age. In each there is sunlight: in the one case it is before the clouds have gathered; in the other after they have dispersed.

Clouds.— There are many different sorts: the cirrus, like platines in the sky; the cumulus, in heaps, like the summits of distant mountains; the strata, or long bars; the nimbus, heavy with showers. There is a counterpart for each in human life, without which we should miss much of those experiences of light and shade that so frequently reveal the nature of the light. We would not know God’s comfort and very present help, if it were not for the clouds which are born in the marshlands of trouble. Who would not prefer the changeful beauty of an English spring to the unclouded blue of Italian skies?

The Light of the Morning.— The love of God steals over hearts as the dawn. He is the Rock; but His advent breaks gently as light. So God’s love came to Lydia, whose heart opened as a flower its petals. This makes it difficult for some of us to decide the moment of our regeneration; only we know that, once in darkness, we are now light in the Lord.

Clear Shining after Rain.— We all know something of cloud and rain. If we did not, our lives would be arid as a desert. Rain is necessary to fructify the seeds that lie buried in the soil; but clear shining is needed too. Times of joy are needed equally as those of sorrow. The tender grass is the child of rain and sun. Hast thou had tears, thou shalt have smiles! Hast thou had clouds and rain, thou shalt have clear shining!

2 Samuel 24:24

“And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.”

GOD’S love to us *cost Him something*. He spared not His own Son, and that Son spared not His blood. But how little our love to Him costs us! Let us understand that where there is true, strong love for Jesus, it will cost us something. Love is the costliest of all undertakings.

It will cost us *Self-denial*. Christ and self are perfectly incompatible; to have the one we must be prepared to surrender the other. The heart subtly schemes to hold both; but it does not deceive Christ. He knows in a moment when we have preferred to spare ourselves and to sacrifice Him, or to obey Him and sacrifice ourselves. We know it also. At first we may find it an effort to count all things but loss for Him; but as we go on doing it, and drink in the fresh air that breathes about the mountains of self-denial—above all, as we see the smile of pleasure on His face—our hearts leap with joy, and we love to give Him everything, not thinking of the cost, any more than Mary did when she broke the alabaster box of very precious ointment. After all, it is but fitting that we offer our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.”

It will cost us *Companionships*. Those who knew us will pass us with averted faces. It will cost us *hard-earned money*; for we shall realize that we have no property in anything that we possess. It will cost us *high repute* amongst our fellows. But what shall we mind if we gain Christ? You cannot give up for Him without regaining everything you have renounced; but purified and transfigured. Did not the Lord say so? And did He not add a *hundredfold, with persecution*. Let us heartily respond, “Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee!”

1 Kings 1:29

“And the king sware, and said, As the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress,”

IN my distress I called on the Lord, and cried to my God.” Never let there be distress without its cry. He will hear your voice out of His temple, and your cry will come before Him even into His ears. He will answer, and set you in a large place. There is even a gain to be won from distress, because it brings out new phases of Christ’s redemptive help.

God redeemed David from *the calumny of those* who maligned him without cause. In so many of his Psalms he refers to the unjust and cruel hatred which misrepresented him and his doings. But God, to whom he committed his cause, vindicated him, so that his righteousness shone as the light, and his judgment as the noonday. So He will do for you. Those who now lay all manner of unkind charges at your door, will be compelled to admit your innocence. Only leave your cause with God, and be still.

God redeemed David from all *the afflictions that shadowed his early days*: from his wanderings in the wilderness; from his hairbreadth escapes in the caves; from meeting his death on many a terrible battlefield. We hardly realize, just now, how much we owe to the Angel of God’s redemption, who is ever beside us, environing us with careful love, so that no evil may approach us, or snare take our feet. Our pathway is thick with snares and dangers, as the pilgrims found it when journeying through the valley of the shadow; but there is a way out, and in the morning we shall marvel to see how we escaped.

God redeemed David’s *life from destruction*. This was the greatest miracle of all, when we consider the strong passions that slumbered within him, breaking out whenever he broke loose from God’s grace.

1 Kings 2:4

“That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.”

HOW strongly David held to God’s promise! It was deeply graven in his soul. How could he forget the word which guaranteed the succession of his race upon the throne of Israel! At the same time he distinctly recognized that the fulfillment was conditional. There was an *if* in it. It was only in so far as his children took heed to walk before God in truth that God was bound to place them on the throne of Israel; therefore he urged Solomon to keep the charge of the Lord, that the Lord might continue His word. We also must obey the threefold condition if we would enjoy a continuance of God’s helpful care.

1. *Be thou strong.*— The strength which is in Jesus Christ waits to make us strong. In the Lion of the tribe of Judah there is the boldness which will not swerve in the face of the foe. Timid women and little children in the days of persecution have waxed valiant in the fight, and have not flinched from death, because Jesus was beside them.

2. *Keep the charge of the Lord thy God.*— He has committed to our care many a sacred deposit, in return for our deposit with Him (2 Timothy 1:12, 14). They are His holy Gospel, the Rest Day, the doctrines of the Evangelical Faith, and the Inspired Word. Let us watch them until we see them weighed out in the temple as were the sacred vessels which Ezra committed to the priests for transport across the desert (Ezra 8:33).

3. *Keep His statutes and commandments.*— We must obey with reverent care the one great law of love, which includes all the rest. Acting thus, we shall put ourselves in the way of enjoying a continuance of that favor which God has promised.

1 Kings 3:13

“And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.”

THE understanding heart was Solomon’s supreme request, and it was given him before the morning light had broken over Jerusalem. But God did exceeding abundantly beyond what he asked or thought. Riches and honor, victory and long life, were thrown in as part of the Divine gift; as paper and string are given by the tradesmen with the goods we purchase. It seems as though our Lord’s words were anticipated, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Put first things first.— One of the most important lessons of life is to discern the relative value of the objects within our reach. The child will take the handful of glass beads, and leave the heap of diamonds in the rough. It is the terrible mistake of men that, perplexed by earth’s cross-lights, they put evil for good and good for evil; they make earth rather than heaven their center; time rather than eternity their measurement.

Seek God and all things in Him.— Things without God cannot satisfy the craving of the soul. To know God, and to be known by Him, is to possess all things. All that is lovely, strong, or right, in any human being was in the Creator before it entered the creature; having God, you possess all things in Him.

Be more careful of what you are than what you have.— A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth; but in his purity, truth, tenderness, and the properties of his soul. The fruit of the Spirit must ever be manifest in the life of the believer—“Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

1 Kings 4:29

“And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.”

WE must all admit that our soul is too narrow. It holds too little, knows too little, is deficient in will-power, and, above all, in capacity of love; and when we are called to run in the way of God’s commandments, we break down in despair, and cry, “If I am to be a runner, Thou must first enlarge my heart.”

How little we know of the experience which Madame Guyon describes when she says: “This vastness or enlargedness, which is not bounded by anything, increases every day; so that my soul in partaking of the qualities of her Spouse seems also to partake of his immensity.”

“There is,” remarks one of the old Puritans, “a straitness, slavery, and narrowness, in all sin; sin crumples up our souls; which, if they were freely spread abroad, would be as large and wide as the whole universe. No man is truly free; but he that has his will enlarged to the extent of God’s will, by loving whatsoever God loves, and nothing else. ... he enjoys a boundless liberty, and a boundless sweetness.” God’s love embraces the universe. He “so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” We who have partaken of the Divine nature must also love as He does.

Thomas à Kempis says, finally: “He who desires glory in things outside of God, or to take pleasure in some private good, shall many ways be encumbered and straitened; but if heavenly grace enter in, and true charity, there will be no envy, neither narrowness of heart, neither will self-love busy itself, for Divine charity overcometh all things, and enlargeth all the powers of the soul.” Give unto us, O God, this largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore!

1 Kings 5:4

“But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent.”

GOD is the Rest-Giver. When He surrounds us on every side with His protecting care, so that our life resembles one of the cities of the Netherlands in the great war—inaccessible to the foe because surrounded by the waters of the sea, admitted through the sluice— then neither adversary nor evil occurrent can break in, and we are kept in perfect peace, our minds being stayed on God.

Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
Never foe can enter, never traitor stand.

Have you experienced the rest which comes by putting God round about you, on every side—like the light which burns brightly on a windy night because it is surrounded by its four panes of clear glass? Ah! what a contrast between the third (1 Kings 5:3) and fourth verse: Wars on every side; Rest on every side. And yet the two are compatible, because the wars expend themselves on God, as the waves on the shingle; and there are far reaches of rest within, like orchards and meadows and pasture-lands beyond the reach of the devastating water.

Out of such rest should come the best work. We are not surprised to find Solomon announcing his purpose to build a house unto the name of the Lord. Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus, anointed Him. Out of quiet hearts arise the greatest resolves; just as from the seclusion of country hamlets have come the greatest warriors, statesmen, and patriots. Men think, foolishly, that the active, ever-moving souls are the strongest. It is not so, however. They expend themselves before the day of trial comes. Give me those who have the power to restrain themselves and wait; these are they that can act with the greatest momentum in the hour of crisis.

1 Kings 6:7

“And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.”

IN absolute silence, like the growth of a palm in the desert, that noble building arose in the symmetry of its fair proportions. But there was plenty of quarrying and hammering and chiseling before the materials were brought to the site.

The absolute silence with which the Temple rose is a meet emblem of the progress of the Church, from its foundations laid in the Apostolate toward the top stone, which before very long will be laid upon the completed structure. Amid the rise and fall of dynasties and empires, the Church is being built. Soul after soul, as so many added bricks, is being quietly placed upon the walls. Some day the world will be amazed when it sees the New Jerusalem descend out of heaven from God. The mightiest works of God are the fruit of silence.

You and I are now in the quarry, hewn, chipped, chiseled: or we are in the saw-pit, being sawn, planed, pierced by nails. Be of good cheer! It will not be long, the preparatory work will be over, and we shall become part of the eternal structure. Into heaven there can enter neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron. The trial will have done its work. Sorrow and crying will flee away. The Apostle Paul, who knew more than any man what trial and pain meant, could confidently declare: “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Then shall the city of God shine forth in completed beauty, her walls Salvation and her gates Praise; and the triumphant song of the redeemed shall ring forth: “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

1 Kings 7:46

“In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan.”

THE Apostle tells us to obey from the heart that mould or form of doctrine to which we were delivered (Romans 6:17). What a mould is to the metal which is wrought into various forms of utensils, that the form of sound doctrine is to believers who desire to resemble Christ. When our hearts, melted in contrition and penitence, are poured into the teaching of the Apostles, to ponder it in memory, and to carry it out in life, they are, so to speak, cast into the pattern of Jesus Christ, which they wear forevermore. Thus we are conformed to the image of His Son.

We differ as widely as the vessels named here. Some are lavers, and some bases; some shovels, and some basins. It matters little what shape we bear; so long as we are cleansed and meet for the Master's use. Each vessel in Solomon's temple filled its own niche. The machinery of the whole would have been hindered if one had been missing. Be content with the shape which the Great Designer hath intended for thee. Yield to it. Dare to pour thyself into the dark passages of the mould. Do not ask the intention of this or that. Obey from the heart, otherwise thou mayest have to be broken up, and put back again into the furnace to go through the process once more. This is the Plain of the Jordan for us, the place of death; but soon we shall be remitted to the Palace and Temple of God.

There is no clue to the understanding of the mysteries of our mortal life, save the hypothesis, that we are being prepared for the position which has been prepared for us in the eternal world. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”

1 Kings 8:59

“And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require:”

WHAT rest would come into our lives, if we really believed that God maintained the cause of his servants! Men hate you, and say unkind or untrue things about you; on your part, though you are quite prepared to admit that you have made mistakes, yet you know that you desire above all things to act as God’s servant should, that your motives are sincere, and your hands clean—be of good courage then: God will maintain your cause, as every day may require.

Or, you are beset by strong competition; and, in order to hold your own, you have been tempted to do what is not perfectly the best—to spice your teaching with a little heterodoxy, puff your wares with misleading titles, to adulterate your goods. But there is no need to do this; if only you are faithful to God, He will maintain your cause, as every day may require.

Or, you are tempted almost beyond endurance, and think that you must yield. The seductions are so insidious, the pitfalls so carefully concealed, the charm of evil so subtle. But, if you will only look away to God, you will find Him a very present help to maintain your cause. Oh, trust Him; for none of them that do so can be desolate. Daily strength for daily need; daily manna for daily hunger; daily maintenance for daily temptation. These are assured.

As we stand on the hill top in the morning and look across the valley of the coming day, its scenes are too closely veiled in heavy hanging mists for us to specify all our requests. We can breathe the comprehensive petition, “Give us this day our daily bread.” And God will suit his help to each requirement. As the moment arrives “the thing” will be there.

1 Kings 9:3

“And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.”

MAN builds; God hallows. This cooperation between man and God pervades all life. Man performs the outward and mechanical; God the inward and spiritual. Paul plants, Apollos waters; but God gives the increase. We elaborate our sermons and addresses, building them up with careful, eager thought; but God must work in and through them for His own glory in the salvation and upbuilding of souls. We must be careful to do our part with reverence and godly fear, remembering that God must work in realms we cannot touch, and to issues we cannot reach, before our poor exertions can avail.

May we not apply this especially to the education of a child's life? Many who read these lines are engaged in building structures which will outlive the Pyramids. The body is only the scaffolding, behind and through which the building of the soul is being upreared. The materials with which we build may be the gold, silver, and precious stones, of our example, precept, careful watching, and discipline; but God must come in to hallow. Our strenuous endeavor must be supplemented by the incoming of the Holy Spirit.

God hallows by His indwelling. Holiness is the result of His putting His Name into a place, a day, a human soul; for His Name is His nature, Himself. Each day may be a building, reared between sunrise and sunset, with our activities; but it were vain to hope to realize our ideal unless the structure become a temple filled with God. Build what you will; but never be satisfied unless God sets His eyes and heart upon your life, hallowing and sanctifying each day and act to Himself.

1 Kings 10:9

“Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.”

THERE were two reasons why Solomon was on the throne. First, because of God’s love to him; secondly, because of God’s love to Israel. May we not address our Savior with similar expressions of gladness as those which the queen addressed to a less than He?

How well it is, now and again, to let ourselves go in exuberant adoration! Prayer is good, but it may revolve too largely about our own needs and desires: thanks are right, when we have received great benefits at His hands; but praise is best, because the heart forgets itself and earth and time, in enlarged conceptions of its adorable Lover and Savior.

We are reminded in this connection of a noble hymn of old written by John Ryland:—

“Thou Son of God, and Son of Man,
Beloved, adored Emmanuel,
Who didst, before all time began,
In glory with Thy Father dwell:

“We sing Thy love, who didst in time,
For us, humanity assume,
To answer for the sinner’s crime,
To suffer in the sinner’s room.

“The ransomed Church Thy glory sings,
The hosts of heaven Thy will obey;
And, Lord of lords, and King of kings,
We celebrate Thy blessed sway.”

We can never praise Him enough. Our furthest thoughts fall short of the reality. His wisdom and prosperity exceed His fame. No question He cannot answer; no desire He cannot gratify; no munificence He cannot excel. Happy are they who stand continually before Him. Let us see that this is our happy privilege; not content to pay Him a transient visit, returning to our own land, but communing with Him always of that which is in our heart.

1 Kings 11:4

“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.”

EVERY man is vulnerable at one point of his character. Strong everywhere else, and armor-plated, he is weak there; and our great enemy knows just where to strike home. It would have been useless to argue with Solomon for the claims of idols. He could at once, by his wisdom, have annihilated all infidel arguments, and have established the existence and unity of God. But, step by step, he was led by silken cords, a captive, to the worship of other gods. It is a solemn warning; and Nehemiah was perfectly justified when, in his contention with the Jews who had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab, he said, “Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him who was beloved of his God.”

Let young people beware where they let their hearts go forth in love. Whom we love we resemble; and in the marriage tie it is almost inevitable that seductions to the lower will overcome the drawings to the higher. When a Christian disobeys God’s distinct command against intermarriage with the ungodly, he begins to sink to the level of his ungodly partner whom he had thought to raise to his own religious standing.

Our associates determine the drift and current of our life. It is so easy to launch upon the current that flows past our feet; it seems impossible that the laughing, enticing water should ever carry us against sharp, splintering rocks, or over-breaking cataracts. When we are compelled to associate with the ungodly, let us maintain a strict self-watch, and pray that the breath of the heavenward gale may more than counteract the tendency of the earthward current.

1 Kings 12:33

“So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.”

JEROBOAM acted on expediency. It did seem reasonable to argue that the constant going up to Jerusalem to worship might alienate the people from his throne, and awaken a desire for the old national unity; and without doubt a mere worldly wisdom extolled his setting-up of idol-gods at Bethel and Dan; but his policy in this respect led to the downfall of his kingdom. Had he trusted God’s promise, made through the prophet Ahijah, the Divine purpose would have ensured the continuance of his rule; but the prompting of expediency resulted in ultimate disaster (1 Kings 14).

How prone we all are to devise out of our own hearts! We take counsel with ourselves, and do what seems prudent and farseeing, with the inevitable result of being betrayed into courses of action that God cannot approve, and of which we have reason to repent bitterly. It is infinitely better to wait on God till He develop His plan, as He most certainly will, when the predestined hour strikes. He who trusts in his own heart, and takes his own way, is a fool. To run before God is to sink knee-deep into the swamp. We must make all things after the pattern shown us on the Mount, and take our time from God’s almanac. What a contrast to the course of Jeroboam was that of the Son of Man! He would do nothing of Himself. His eye was always on His Father’s dial-plate, and thus He knew when His time was not yet fulfilled. He was always consulting the movement of His Father’s will, and did only those things which He saw His Father doing. Similarly make God’s will and way thy Pole-star. Oh to be able to say with our blessed Lord, “I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me”!

1 Kings 13:21–22

“And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.”

WE are inclined at first sight to pity this unknown prophet, and to justify his return; but as we look closer into the story, we not only discover the reason for the severe penalty that overtook him, but we are warned lest we make a similar mistake. When we have received a direct command fresh from the lips of Christ, we must act on it, and not be turned aside by a different suggestion, made to us through the lips of professing Christians. God does not vacillate or alter in the thing which proceeds from His mouth. When we know we are in the line of His purpose, we must not allow ourselves to be diverted by any appeal or threat, from whomsoever it may emanate. Deal with God at first-hand.

The rule for determining the true worth of the advice which our friends proffer us, is to ask, first, whether it conflicts with our own deep-seated conviction of God’s will; and, secondly, whether it tends to the ease and satisfaction of the flesh, as the old prophet’s suggestion certainly did. Beware of any one who allures you with the bread and water that are to break your fast. That bait is likely enough to disturb the balance of your judgment. When a voice says spare thyself, be on the alert; it savors the things that be of man, not of those that be of God.

Learn to deal with God at first-hand. Do not run hither and thither to human teachers, or to the Church. Be still before God, and what He says in the depths of thy soul, do. His Holy Spirit shall guide you into all truth; and when once His way has been revealed to thee, go straight on, listening to no other voice, however much it professes Divine inspiration.

1 Kings 14:6

“And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.”

HOW foolish! Jeroboam thought that the old prophet could penetrate the veil that hid the future, but not the disguise in which his wife wished to conceal herself. As we might have expected, the aged prophet's inner sight read her heart. From God no secrets are hid. Immediately on His accosting her by her name there came the dread announcement of inevitable disaster.

We must not hesitate to unfold all the consequences of sin. As watchmen on the walls, we are bound to tell men of the certain fearful looking for of fiery indignation which shall devour the transgressors. None of us should flinch from declaring the whole counsel of God. We should specially insist on the guilt side of sin. Not only that it is a misfortune, a mistake, an error, a disease, a tyranny; but a crime. The sinner is a criminal, who has incurred the just wrath and anger of a holy God: for which he must suffer a due recompense.

Oh for more tenderness that we may with tears warn men of their doom! We are so self-possessed, so stolid; we need to ask that our eyes, like Jeremiah's, should be fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night. If the tidings are heavy, let us first feel their pressure on our own hearts; let us bend over the regions of despair and darkness, and hear the bitter weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and come back to warn our brethren, lest they also come to that place of torment. Though it was with fear and much trembling that Paul preached the Gospel, yet he did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. And while we go to men with the good tidings of salvation, we must not withhold the heavy tidings from those who persist in unbelief.

1 Kings 15:11

“And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father.”

IT is a great thing to have such a testimony as this. We may do right in our own eyes; yet the eye of the Lord may detect evil which neither our associates nor we have seen. We may deceive ourselves, we may deceive others; but we cannot deceive God. In the home or business, in situation or factory, let us live as under the searching gaze of God.

Asa's life was one of religious activity: he destroyed the idols of his father, and even deposed his queen-mother, “because she made an idol in a grove.” It needs Divine courage so to live for God that at home or afield men shall take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. This is what the world is languishing for— *reality*, consistency under all circumstances, and before all men.

There are, however, two clouds overhanging this otherwise bright life. “The high places were not removed” (1 Kings 15:14). Though idols were destroyed, the groves in which they were erected remained. They were no scare to him; and he took care that during his life they should not ensnare others; but after his death, in the reign of Jehoshaphat his son, “the people offered and burned incense” in them (1 Kings 22:43). We must not only cleanse our way before the Lord, but remove any evil thing which may cause others to stumble.

The other cloud is indicated in 2 Chronicles 16:12: He “was diseased in his feet ... yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.” Strange that in affliction he should not have turned to the Great Physician. The enemy of souls is ever on the watch. Pray that amid the pains of death, you may not act unworthily.

1 Kings 16:33

“And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.”

HIS sin was very aggravated, largely through the influence of Jezebel, his young and beautiful wife, who introduced the abominations of Phoenician idol-worship. This is why he is said to have exceeded his predecessors in wickedness. *They* broke the second commandment, and worshipped Jehovah under the form of a calf. *Ahab and Jezebel* broke the first, and chose other gods—Baal, the sun, and Ashtoreth, the moon. The inveterate love for this idolatry was connected with licentious rites with which these deities were served. What wonder that the land became corrupt when the fountains of its religious life were polluted at the source?

The connection between the indulgence of impurity and the declension of the spiritual life is very close. As the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1, the men that refuse to retain God in their knowledge are given up to the working of passion; and as they yield to passion they lose the sweet, clear impression of the truth and nearness of the Christ. The first, second and third thing to be said to young people on venturing out into the world, corrupt through many deceitful lusts, is, *Be pure*. Wear the white flower of a blameless life. If you cannot be faultless, be blameless. If you cannot realize all the good you know, at least refrain from all the evil. Keep your robes unspotted from the world. Then through purity of heart and obedience in life, you shall see God. As the living Christ enters the heart, He will drive before Him the brute forms of evil, overthrow the tables of the moneychangers, and will sit to teach of God. Give yourself unreservedly into His keeping, that He may govern and control every avenue of your life.

1 Kings 17:4, 9

“And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. ... Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.”

WE must be where God desires.—Elijah spoke of himself as always standing before the Lord God of Israel. He deemed himself as much a courtier in the royal palace as Gabriel (Luke 1:19). And he could as distinctly stand before God when hiding beside Cherith, or sheltering in the widow's house at Zarephath, as when he stood erect on Carmel, or listened to the voice of God at Horeb. Wherever you go, and whatever ministry you are called to undertake, glory in this, that you never go to any greater distance from God.

If we are where God wants us to be, *He will see to the supply of our need.* It is as easy for Him to feed us by the ravens as by the widow woman. As long as God says, Stay here, or there, be sure that He is pledged to provide for you. Though you resemble a lonely sentinel in some distant post of missionary service, God will see to you. The ravens are not less amenable to His command than of old: and out of the stores of widow women He is as able to supply your need as He did Elijah's at Zarephath.

How often *God teaches best in seclusion and solitude!* It is by the murmuring brooks of nature that we have our deepest lessons. It is in the homes of the poor that we are fitted for our greatest tasks. It is beside couches where children suffer and die, that we receive those preparations of the heart which avail us when the bugle note summons us to some difficult post.

God leads through death to life.—It was needful that the child should die, that sin might be remembered and dealt with; but through Death's portal the trio entered a richer, fuller life. Fear not that gateway!

1 Kings 18:42

“So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,”

SUCH differences obtain still. The children of this world and the children of light are manifest. What though the bodies of four hundred and fifty prophets lay slain in the gorge of the Kishon; or that by one great act Elijah had hewn down the upas tree, the deadly, influence of which had corrupted Palestine; or that the long-expected rain was in the air— yet Ahab must eat and drink. These are the things which the children of the world seek after. Watch and pray, lest you enter into this temptation. Let appetite be kept well in hand— your servant, not your master; and see to it that you are capable of such profound and absorbing interest in the things of the Kingdom of God, as to count the gratification of physical desire unworthy to be compared with the high delights of service, prayer, and communion with the unseen.

Though he must have been exhausted with the excitements and efforts of the day, Elijah must spend the evening hour with God. Though he knew that the rain was near, he felt that his prayers were a needful condition for its bestowment. Though any part of Carmel might have become his oratory, he sought the lonely solitudes of the summit with the outspread sea before him, that his soul might hold undisturbed vigil, and that he might see over the wide expanse of the ocean the first tokens of the coming answer. His attitude denoted his humility. His repeated injunction to the lad, his perseverance. His success approved his faith.

Stand, O suppliant soul, on the highest point of expectant hope; see the hurrying answer, which was being prepared from pools and lakes and seas, long ere thy prayer began. “Before they call, I will answer.”

1 Kings 19:5

“And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.”

IN all probability the angels often touch us when danger is near, threatening our health and life, or when foul fiends step up to us with hideous temptation. They find us out, especially when, like Elijah, we are alone and depressed; when nervous depression has crept about our hearts; when we seem to have failed in the conflict against evil and long for death to end our long and weary strife. It was the lament of a holy soul on the verge of eternity, that he had made so little of the ministry of God’s holy and tender angels.

It was very gracious for God to deal thus with His servant. We might have expected rebuke or remonstrance, chiding or chastisement; but we would hardly have expected such loving, gentle treatment as this. Is this the man who defied Ahab and all his priests? He is as frail and impotent as any! Nay, but God looked beneath the surface depression, and detected the strong fountains of courage and devotion that lay beneath, only capable of being called again into intense manifestation. He knew His servant’s frame, and recognized that he was dust. He knew how to distinguish between the passing overstrain of the body and the heroic temper of the spirit. So, He understands us in our fits of depression and despair.

Whenever these angel-fingers touch you, whether directly or through the medium of loving mortal hands, you will always find the cake and the cruse of water. God never awakens to disappoint. It is an infinite pleasure to Him to awaken His loved ones to good things, which they had neither asked nor thought. Will not dying be something like this! The angel of life will touch us, and we shall awake to see what love has prepared.

1 Kings 20:40

“And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it.”

THIS was likely enough to happen on a battlefield. It would not be possible to hold your prisoner, and to busy yourself about other things at the same time. This man, in the prophet's parable, made a great mistake to concern himself about a number of trifles, when so serious a matter as his own life depended on giving all his attention to the custodianship of the prisoner entrusted to his care. But is it not thus that men miss the main end of life?

Busy here and there and life is gone.— Many spend their days in mere trivialities. Like children they dig in the sand; like the butterfly they flit from flower to flower. A round of visits, a few novels, a good many hours of light gaiety; vanity, fashion, and amusement; these fill their hours, the days flash by, and life is gone. They have nothing to show for it.

Busy here and there, and the chance of saving others is gone.— Lives touch lives, for the chief purpose that one should influence the other. But too often we deal only with superficialities, busying ourselves in the slightest interests, but not seeking the salvation of those with whom we associate. The dance, the game, the business relationship, monopolize our thought, and our friends are swept from us in the eddying whirl of life's battle, and are gone.

Busy here and there, and the knowledge of God is gone.— Remember how the birds caught away the seed of the Kingdom; and be sure that, in the same way, the cares and riches of this world, and the lusts of other things may enter in, and destroy the impression made on the heart. The ephemeral interests of life press hard on its real interests. Like boys, we squander in trifling the hours given to prepare for an examination on which all the future must turn.

1 Kings 21:20

*“And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?
And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold
thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.”*

AHAB got his garden of herbs, but he had Elijah withal, who stood at the gate like an incarnate conscience. Men may get the prize on which they have set their heart; but if they have obtained it wrongfully, the conscience of the wrong done will haunt them, and take away the pleasure on which they counted, and ultimately bring them like a quarry to the ground.

We turn our best friends into enemies, as Ahab did Elijah. The cloud that lights Israel is darkness to Pharaoh; the angel that protects Jerusalem, slays the host of Sennacherib; the gentle love which anoints the Savior, instigates in Judas a jealousy which ends in murder. The God who shows Himself merciful to the merciful is froward to the froward. The cause of the alteration is to be sought within ourselves. The sun that melts wax hardens clay, but the difference is in the clay. To the widow of Zarephath Elijah was an angel of light; whilst to Ahab he was an enemy. The difference lay in their hearts; the one being holy and loving, the other dark and turbid. What you are, determines whether Elijah will be your friend or your enemy.

This word “sold thyself” is very awful. It underlies Goethe’s tragedy of Faust, in which the soul sells itself to the devil for so many years of worldly pleasure. A few promises which are never kept; a mirage that is dissipated in thin air when we approach it; a bribe of gold or silver that burns the hands which receive it— such are the price for which men sell themselves. “They sell themselves for nought.” Truly the devil drives a hard bargain. When he gets the soul into his power, he laughs at his former promises, and pays as wages, *death*.

1 Kings 22:34

“And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.”

EVERY man we meet is clothed in armor; in other words, we all cover ourselves with plates on which to receive the thrust of accusation and reproach. “I only do as others.” “I do not see any special harm in it.” “My father did it before me.” “I cannot help it.” Such are some of the plates in the armor of the soul; and our work as Christian workers becomes abortive in so many instances, because we are content to belabor the plates, instead of striking home to the one place where the armor-joints are.

Successful soul-winning depends on discovering the vulnerable part of a man, and striking there. But all this demands a very special discernment of spirits, and anointing of the Holy Ghost. Only so can we detect where best to bring about conviction, and make men know their need of the Gospel of God’s grace. The great need of the present day is a sharper and more searching analysis of sin. Men need to be shown how *they* are violating the Laws of God. They assent generally to the Scriptural statements of what God requires, but fail to realize how greatly *they* have come short. You are almost sure to hit, if you begin to show the various ways in which respectably-living people are coming under the Divine sentence.

But several conditions must be fulfilled. (1) *Study well your own heart.* (2) *Be a deep student of the biographies of Scripture.* Because every type of human character is delineated in Holy Writ. (3) *Open your heart to the Holy Ghost,* through whom alone you can discern spirits. He is a discerner of the thoughts of the heart, and will teach you to cut to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.

2 Kings 1:9, 11, 13

“Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. ... Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. ... And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight.”

OH that thou and I might so live before God and men, that they should recognize us as men of God, as God’s men! See how these ungodly captains at once recognized this, in the case of Elijah. They fretted and chafed against his holiness; but they were forced to admit it. They tried to impose their orders, or those of their king; but they realized that Elijah was the servant of Him whom they set at nought, so far as their own lives were concerned.

If we are really men of God, we shall be the last to assume the title. Notice that Elijah puts an *if* before the title with which he was saluted “*If I be a man of God.*” Paul counted himself the least of all saints.

We must be of God.— All our goodness must originate in Him. We can no more boast of goodness than a chamber can boast of the light which irradiates each corner of its space. The faith that takes His grace, as well as the grace it takes, is His. We are absolutely His debtors; and happy are they who love to have it so, and lie always at the Beautiful Gate of God’s heart, expecting to receive alms at His hand.

We must be for God.— This is the only cure for self-consciousness, for that perpetual obtrusion of the self-life which is our bane and curse. Ask that the Holy Spirit may fill you with so absorbing a passion for the glory of Jesus, that there may be no room to think of your own reputation or emolument.

We must be in God, and God in us.— This is possible, when we love perfectly. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Oh, sea of light, may we lie spread out in thy translucent waves, as the sponges in southern sapphire seas, till every fiber of our being be permeated and infilled!

2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6

“And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel.

... And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. ... And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.”

THRIICE Elijah spoke thus to his friend and disciple, to test him. Perseverance, tenacity of purpose, a refusal to be content with anything short of the best, are indispensable conditions for the attainment of the highest possibilities of experience and service. And perpetually in our life's discipline these words come back on us, *Tarry here!* Not that God desires us to tarry, but because He desires each onward step to be the choice and act of His will.

Tarry here in Consecration.—“You have given so much; is it not time that you refrained from further sacrifices? Ungird your loins, sit down and rest, forbear from this strenuous following after. Spare thyself; this shall not come to thee.”

Tarry here in the Life of Prayer.—“It is waste time to spend so much time at the footstool of God. You have done more than most, desist from further intercession and supplication.”

Tarry here in the attainment of the likeness of Christ.—“It will cost you so much, if all that is not Christlike is to pass away from your life.”

Such voice's are perpetually speaking to us all. And if we heed them, we are at once shut out of that crossing the Jordan, that rapturous intercourse with heaven, that reception of the double portion of the Spirit, which await those who have successfully stood the test. The law of the Christian life is always *Advance*; always leaving that which is behind; always reckoning that you have not attained; always following on to know the Lord, growing in grace and in the knowledge of the blessed Savior, and saying to the Spirit of God, as Elisha to Elijah, *I will not leave thee.*

2 Kings 3:17

“For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.”

THIS is God’s way of fulfilling the desire of them that fear Him. We like to see the clouds blown forward through the sky, and hear the moan of the rising wind; in other words, we like to see God’s gifts on their way, or to have the sensible emotion of receiving them. Sometimes we have symptoms and signs that fill us with rapture; at other times, these are lacking; and we surrender ourselves to despair. Yet when we see neither wind nor rain, God may be most mightily at work.

It is so in Church work.— How often we make our valleys full of ditches! Our machinery is complicated and perfect; we have spread neither pains nor care. Then we ardently desire the signs of a powerful revival, and break our hearts if they are not apparent; while, all the time, if we only knew it, the Divine blessing is welling up in the ditches, doing more than would be the case if our highest wishes were gratified. Here and there tears are falling silently, hearts are being cleansed, lives are becoming yielded to God.

It is so in Christian experience.— We expect to have our Pentecost as the early Church received hers. We desire to see wind and rain, and to know that God is baptizing us; but this is not granted. There is no footfall of hurrying clouds, no coronet of flame, no gift of tongues. But, deep down, the ditches are being filled up, yearnings are being satisfied, the capacity for God within us is being met, though it grows apace. God be praised that the success of His work is not gauged by outward signs!

A well may be filled as completely by the percolation of water, a drop at a time, as by turning a river into it.

2 Kings 4:6

“And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.”

WHAT a sorrowful confession! There was no reason why it should stay. There was as much oil as ever, and the power which had made so much could have gone on without limit or exhaustion. The only reason for the ceasing of the oil was in the failure of the vessels. The widow and her sons had secured only a limited number of vessels, and therefore there was only a limited supply of the precious oil.

This is why so many of God’s promises are unfilled in your experience.— In former days you kept claiming their fulfillment; frequently you brought God’s promises to Him and said, “Do as Thou hast said.” Vessel after vessel of need was brought empty and taken away full. But of late years you have refrained, you have rested on your oars, you have ceased to bring the vessels of your need. Hence the dwindling supply.

This is why your life is not so productive of blessing as it might be.— You do not bring vessels enough. You think that God has wrought as much through you as He can or will. You do not expect Him to fill the latter years of your life as He did the former. You can trust Him for two sermons a week, but not the five or six.

This is why the blessing of a revival stays in its course.— As long as the missionary remains with us, we can look for the continuance of blessing. But after awhile we say, Let the services stop; they have run their course, and fulfilled their end. And forthwith the blessing stops in mid-flow. Let us go on pleading with the unsaved, and bringing the empty vessels of our poor effort for God to fill them up to the full measure of their capacity.

2 Kings 5:14

“Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

IS there any fabric woven on the loom of time to be compared in perfect beauty to the flesh of a little child, on which, as yet, no scar or blemish can be traced? So sweet, so pure, so clean. It was a wonderful combination, that the strong muscles and make of the mighty man of war should blend with the flesh of a child. But this may be ours also, if we will let the hand of Jesus pass over our leprous-smitten souls. At this moment, if you let Him, He will touch you and say, “Be clean,” and immediately the leprosy will depart, and you will return to the days of your youth—not forgiven only, but cleansed—not pardoned only, but clad in the beauty of the Lord your God, which He will put on you.

We do not count a little child to be free from the taint of sin. It is conceived in sin, and inherits the evil tendencies of our fallen race. Its innocence of evil is not holiness. Jesus gives us more than innocence, He makes us pure and holy. But there are other childlike qualities which our Savior gives. The *humility* of a little child, who is unconscious of itself, and who is not perpetually looking for admiration. The *unselfishness* of a little child, who seeks its companion to share its luxuries and games. The *trust* of a little child, which so naturally clings to a strong and loving heart, willing to follow anywhere, to believe in anything. The *love* of a little child, who responds to every endearment with sunny laughter and soft caresses.

There is a great difference between *childish* and *childlike*. The former is put away, as we grow up into Christ: the latter we grow into, as we become more like our Lord. The oldest angels are the youngest: the ripest saints are the most childlike.

2 Kings 6:17

“And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

SO it is with each of God’s saints. We cannot see, because of the imperfection of mortal vision, the harnessed squadrons of fire and light; but the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. If our eyes were opened, we should see the angel hosts as an encircling fence of fire; but, whether we see them or not, they are certainly there.

God is between us and temptation.— However strong the foe, God is stronger. However swift the descending blow, God is swifter to catch and ward off. However weak we are, through long habits of yielding, God is greater than our hearts, and can keep in perfect peace. “Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages.”

God is between us and the hate of man.— Dare to believe that there is an invisible wall of protection between you and all that men devise against you. What though the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing! No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise in judgment shall be condemned.

God is between you and the deluge of care.— What thousands are beset with that dark specter! They have no rest or peace either day or night, saying, “Where will the next rent, the next meal, come from?” How different the life of birds, and flowers, of children, of Jesus, and all holy souls. Oh, rest in the Lord, and put Him between you and black care.

God is between you and the pursuit of your past.— He is your reward; and as He intercepted the pursuit of Pharaoh, so He stands at Calvary between your past and you. The assayer of retribution is arrested by that Divine Victim— what more can we ask!

2 Kings 7:9

“Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.”

IT was indeed. The enemy that had so long hemmed them in had dispersed, leaving a great spoil behind. The famine which had driven the people to awful straits was at an end, and there was now plenty of everything. It was inhuman for these four lepers to be content with eating and drinking, and sharing out the spoil, when close by a city was in agony. Common humanity bade them give information of what had happened.

Let us take care lest some mischief befall us, if we withhold the blessed Gospel from a dying world. We know that Jesus has died and risen again, and that His unsearchable riches wait for appropriation. We have availed ourselves of the offer; but let us see to it that so far as we can, we are making known that the wine and milk may be obtained without money and without price.

Mischief always overtakes a selfish policy; whereas those who dare to share with others what they have received, not only keep what they have, but find the fragments enough for many days afterward.

Let us tell men that the Savior has overcome our foes, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who believe. Let us speak from a full heart of all that He has proved to be. Let us invite men to share with us the grace which hath neither shore nor bound.

One ounce of testimony is worth a ton weight of argument, and overpowers all objection. The Lord, on whom the king leaned, derided the possibility of the prophet’s prediction; and no doubt had plenty of adherents. But the leper’s report swept all His words to the winds. They had known, tasted, and handled. Let us remember that we are called to be witnesses of what God hath done for us.

2 Kings 8:11

*“And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed:
and the man of God wept.”*

ELISHA foresaw all the evil that Hazael would inflict on Israel, and it moved him to tears. Though he was a strong man, able to move kingdoms by his message and prayer, yet he was of a tender and compassionate disposition. This was he who one moment upbraided the king of Israel for his crimes, and the next called for a minstrel to calm his perturbed spirit with strains of music. The men that can move others are themselves very susceptible and easily moved.

The nearer we live to God, the more we deserve to be known as men and women of God, the more will our tears flow for the slain of the daughters of our people. Consider the ravages that drink, and impurity, and gambling, are making among our people; enumerate the homes that are desolate, the young life that is wrecked as it is leaving the harbor, the awful dishonor done to woman; and surely there must come times when tears well up for very humanity's sake, to say nothing of the pity which they acquire who look at things from God's standpoint.

Jesus beheld the city and wept over it. Give us this day, O Son of Man, Thy compassion, Thy love, Thy tears, that we may speak of Thy grace graciously, of Thy love tenderly, and even of Thy judgments with brimming eyes.

A broken heart, a fount of tears:
Ask, and it shall not be denied.

Wouldst thou avert such issues; begin with the cradled babes of your homes. Win them for God; teach them how to curb passion and subdue themselves. Tenderness and wisdom may arrest the making of Ben-hadads.

2 Kings 9:22

“And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?”

WE all want peace. Of every telegraph messenger, as he puts the buff-colored envelope into our hands, we ask almost instinctively, Is it peace? If there is a rumor of war, a depression in trade, a bad harvest, a sudden calamity in our neighborhood, we instantly consider the effect it may have on the tranquillity and prosperity of our life.

By peace we too often mean the absence of the disagreeable, the unbroken routine of outward prosperity, the serene passage of the years: not always eager for anything deeper. And if other and profounder questions intrude themselves, we instantly stifle or evade them. Like Herod, we shut up the Baptist in the dungeon. Like the Roman general, we make a desert and call it peace. Men will flee from a Gospel ministry which pursues them into close quarters, and arouses unwelcome questions that break the peace.

There cannot be true peace so long as we permit the infidelities and charms of some Jezebel of the soul-life to attract and affect us. Jezebel may stand for the painted world, with its wiles and snares, or for the flesh, or for some unholy association of the past life, like that which clung to Augustine. But there must be no quarter given to the unhallowed rival of our Lord. Whatever its charms, it must be flung out of the window before we can be at peace.

“Then, and not till then, we shall see Thee as Thou art;
Then, and not till then, in Thy glory bear a part;
Then, and not till then, Thou wilt satisfy each heart.”

If you are entirely surrendered to the Lord, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.”

2 Kings 10:31

“But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.”

JEHU was the Cromwell of his time. He swept away the symbols of idolatry with ruthless destruction. Nothing could withstand his iconoclastic enthusiasm. But he failed to keep his own heart, and therefore his dynasty lasted for but one generation. It is a deep lesson for us all.

We may keep other people's vineyards, and neglect our own. We may give good advice to our friends, but fall into the very faults against which we warn them. We may pose as infallible guides, but fall into the crevasses and precipices from which we had carefully warned our companions. Jehu avenged the idolatries of Ahab, but he departed not from Jeroboam's calves.

Before you rebuke another, be sure that you are free from the faults that you detect in him. When you hear of the failings of some erring brother, ask yourself whether you are perfectly free from them. And never attempt to cast out the mote from your neighbor's eye till you are sure that the beam has been taken from your own.

Take heed to your heart. Its complexion colors all the issues of life. Do not be content to be strong against evil; be eagerly ambitious of good. It is easier to be vehement against the abominations of others than to judge and put away your own secret sins. But while we keep our heart with all diligence, we cannot afford to be independent of the keeping power of God. We must yield ourselves to Him, reserving nothing. The King must have all. The light of His face must fill every nook and corner of the soul. And every power that opposes itself to His dominion, must be dragged beyond the barriers and ruthlessly slain.

2 Kings 11:12

“And he brought forth the king’s son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.”

THIS dexterous overthrow of Athaliah by the bringing of the youthful king, who had been hidden in the secret chambers of the Temple, accommodates itself so obviously to a reference to the inner life, that we must be pardoned for making it.

Is not the spiritual condition of too many children of God represented by the condition of the Temple, during the early years of the life of Joash? The king was within its precincts, the rightful heir of the crown and defender of the worship of Jehovah: but, as a matter of fact, the crown was on the head of the usurper Athaliah, who was exercising a cruel and sanguinary tyranny. The king was limited to a chamber, and the majority of the priests, with all the people, had not even heard of his existence. So, unless we are reprobates, Jesus is within the spirit, which has been regenerated by the Holy Ghost; but in too many cases He is limited to a very small corner of our nature, and exercises but a limited power over our life.

There needs to be an anointing, an enthroning, a determination that He shall exercise His power over the entire Temple of our Being; the *spirit*, which stands for the Holy of Holies; the *soul*, for the Holy Place; the *body*, for the outer court.

Holiness or Sanctification is not a quality or attribute which can be attributed to us apart from the indwelling of the Holy One. If we would be holy, we must be indwelt by Him who is holy. If we would have holiness, we must be infilled by the Holy One. But there must be no limiting of His power, no barrier to His control, no veiling or curtaining of His light. The veil, if such there be, must be rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

2 Kings 12:4

“And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man’s heart to bring into the house of the LORD,”

THE margin suggests that the thought of giving for God’s house would ascend in a man’s heart, till it became the royal and predominant thought, swaying the whole man to obedience. It is a beautiful conception!

For the reconstruction of the Temple there were two classes of revenue: the tribute money which each Israelite was bound to give, and the money which a man might feel prompted to give. Surely the latter was the more precious in the eye of God.

Does it ever come into your heart to bring some money into the house of God? Perhaps the suggestion comes, but you put it away, and refuse to consider it. The thought begins to ascend in your heart, but you thrust it down and back, saying, Why should I part with what has cost me so much to get! Beware of stifling these generous promptings. To yield to them would bring untold blessing into heart and life. Besides, the money is only yours as a stewardship; and the thought to give it to God is only the Master’s request for His own.

The great mistake with us all is, that we do not hold all our property at God’s disposal, seeking His directions for its administration; and that we forget how freely we have received that we may resemble our Father in heaven, and freely give. Too many, alas! are anxious to hoard up and keep for themselves that which God has given them, instead of counting themselves and all they have as purchased property, and using all things as His representatives and trustees. Let us make a complete surrender to our Lord, and from the heart sing,

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.

2 Kings 13:18

“And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.”

A STRIKING spectacle. The dying prophet, with his thin hands on the muscular hands of the young king, as he shoots his arrow through the eastern window; the exhortation to smite the remaining arrows on the ground; the bitter chiding that the king had struck thrice only, instead of five or six times! What lessons are here? The Lord Jesus put His hands upon ours. Here is the reverse to the incident referred to. Ours are weak, His are strong; ours would miss the mark, His will direct the arrows, if only we will allow Him, with unerring precision. We shoot, but the Lord directs the arrow's flight to the heart of His foes.

Our success is commensurate with our faith. If we strike but thrice, we conquer but thrice. If we strike seven times, we attain a perfect victory over the adversary. Is not this the cause of comparative failure in Gospel effort? Souls are not saved because we do not expect them to be saved. A few are saved, because we only believe for a few. It is one of the most radical laws in the universe of God, and one which our Lord repeatedly emphasized, that our faith determines the less or more in our own growth, and in the victories we win for Christ. Do not stay, O soul-winner, but smite again and yet again in the secret of thy chamber, that thou mayest smite Satan, and compel him to acknowledge thy mite.

Let us not stay, though the energy of earlier days may be ebbing fast. The sanctified spirit waxes only stronger and more heroic, as Elisha's and Paul's did, amid the decay of mortal power., The Lord will say to us, as He did to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

2 Kings 14:6

“But the children of the murderers he slew not: according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin.”

So ran the law of Moses. It forbade the imposition of punishment on the relatives of the wrong-doer, but it had no mercy on him. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die,” was the succinct and conclusive verdict of the older law, in this reflecting the spirit and letter of one yet older, which ran, “The day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

First, we were dead in our sins.—Ephesians 2:5 puts this beyond all doubt. In the sight of God, all who walk according to the course of this world, and obey the prince that now worketh in the children of this world, are dead in trespasses and sins. However much they may be alive as to their souls, they are dead as to their spirits, entirely destitute of the life of God.

Second, we have died for our sins.—2 Corinthians 5:14–15 establishes this fact, and shows that in Jesus, we who believe in Him, are reckoned to have died in Him when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. In God’s estimate, His death is imputed to us; so that we are reckoned as having satisfied, in Jesus, the demands of a broken law. It has no more to ask.

Third, we must die to our sin.—Romans 6:11. Reckon that you have died, and whenever sin arises, to menace or allure you, point back to the grave, and argue that since you died in Christ, you have passed altogether beyond its jurisdiction, for you have yielded your members as weapons of righteousness unto God. And having been crucified with Christ, you now no longer live, but Christ liveth in you. Let it become your daily habit to place the grave of Jesus between yourself and all allurements of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

2 Kings 15:9, 18, 24, 28

“And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. ... And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. ... And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. ... And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.”

THIS chapter anticipates the final overthrow of the kingdom of the tribes. It describes the corruption and disorganization of the people which made them the easy prey of Assyria. One puppet-king after another was set upon the throne to fall after a brief space of rule, and four times over it is said that they followed in the steps of Jeroboam, “who made Israel to sin.” The seed sown two hundred years before had at last come to maturity, issuing in the ruin of the nation. What a comment on the inspired words, “Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

Twelve times in the story of the kingdom of Israel, we are told that Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin. The institution of the calves on his part seemed to be a piece of political wisdom, but it was an infraction of the Divine law; and what is morally wrong can never be politically right. The house cannot stand unless the foundation can bear the test of the Divine plummet. The kingdom of Israel fell, to prove to all after-time that the disregard of God’s law is a foundation of sand, which can never resist the test of time.

Why is Jeroboam so frequently called “the son of Nebat”? Why should the father be forever pilloried with the son, except that he was in some way responsible for, and implicated in, his sins? There was a time when perhaps Nebat might have restrained the growing boy, or led him to the true worship of God; or perhaps his parental influence and example were deadly in their effect. How important that parents should leave no stone unturned to promote the godliness of their children, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

2 Kings 16:10

“And king Ahaz went to Damascusc to meet Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.”

THE fashion of this world passeth away like a fleeting dream; or like the panorama of clouds that constitutes a pavilion of the setting sun, but which, whilst we gaze, tumbles into a mass of red ruin. And yet we are always so prone to imitate King Ahaz, and visit Damascus with the intention of procuring the latest design, and introducing it, even into the service of the sanctuary.

Man naturally imitates. He must get the pattern of his work from above, or beneath; from God or the devil: hence the repeated injunction to us all, to make all things after the pattern shown on the mount. If we would be rid of the influence of worldly fashion, we must conform ourselves to the heavenly and divine. The pattern of the Body of Christ, of the position of each individual believer among its members, and of the work which each should accomplish, was fixed before the worlds were made. The best cure for worldliness is not unworldliness, but other-worldliness. The best way of resisting the trend of people around us is to cultivate the speech, thought, and behavior of that celestial world to which we are bound by the most sacred ties, and whither we are travelling at every heartthrob.

This introduction of the altar of a heathen shrine into the holy temple of Jerusalem, reminds us of the many rites in modern religious observances which have been borrowed from paganism, and warns us that the Church has no right to go to the world for its methods and principles. Let the world do as it may in its discussions about truth, its efforts to attract attention, and its organizations; our course is clear, not to build altars after its fashion, nor model our life on its maxims.

2 Kings 17:41

“So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children’s children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.”

IT was a curious mixture. These people had come from Babylon, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and were settled in the land from which Israel was deported. In their desire to propitiate the God of the country, they added His worship to that of their own gods (2 Kings 17:32), though they did not really fear Him (2 Kings 17:34). There was an outward recognition of the God of Israel, which was worse than useless. Are you sure this is not a true description of your own position? You pay an outward deference to God by attending His house, and acknowledging His day, whilst you are really prostrating yourself before other shrines. The one originates in a superstitious fear, a desire to stand well with your fellows; but it is in the direction of the other that your heart really goes. You come as His people come, sit as His people sit, kneel as His people kneel; but your heart is far apart, and you only do as you do that you may follow your own evil ways with less fear of discovery.

With all of us there is too much of this double worship; but let it be clearly understood that it is only apparent, not real. No man ever really serves two masters, or worships two gods. Whatever conflicts with God in heart or life is our chosen god. Whatever appears to share our heart with God really holds our heart. God will never be in competition with another. He must either be all or none.

The soul that endeavors to divide its service between Jehovah on the first day, and its graven images all the other days of the week, might as well discontinue its religious observances, for they count for nothing: except to blind it to its true condition.

2 Kings 18:20

“Thou sayest, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?”

IT was no small thing for Hezekiah to rebel against the proud King of Assyria. Hamath and Arpad, Samaria and Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivah, reduced to heaps of stones, were sufficient proofs of the might of his ruthless soldiers. How could Jerusalem hope to withstand? Rabshakeh could not comprehend the secret source of Hezekiah’s confidence. It was of no use for him to turn to Egypt. Pharaoh was a bruised reed. And as for Jehovah! Was there any likelihood that He could do for Israel more than the gods of the other nations had done for them? Not infrequently does the puzzled world ask the Church, “In whom dost thou trust?”

Our life must to a large extent be a mystery, our peace pass understanding, and our motives be hidden. The sources of our supply, the ground of our confidence, the reasons for our actions, must evade the most searching scrutiny of those who stand outside the charmed circle of the face of God; as it is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard . . . what God hath prepared.”

We all ought to have the secrets which the world cannot penetrate. Doubt your religion if it all lies on the surface, and if men are able to calculate to a nicety the considerations by which you are actuated. We must be prepared to be misunderstood and criticized, because our behavior is determined by facts which the princes of this world know not. We do not look up to the hills, because we look beyond them to God; we do not trust in silver or gold, or human resource, because God is our confidence. We cannot but seem eccentric to this world, because we have found another center, and are concentric with the Eternal Throne.

2 Kings 19:14

“And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.”

AMID the panic that reigned in Jerusalem, the king and the prophet alone kept level heads, for they alone had quiet, trustful hearts. We hardly realize the crisis unless we compare it with the march of 200,000 Kurds or Turkish soldiers upon some peaceful Armenian community. Israel had no earthly allies. Her only reinforcements could reach her from heaven, and it was the care of these two saintly men to implicate their cause with that of the living God (2 Kings 19:4). This is the faith that overcomes the world, which realizes that God lives here and now in our home and life and circumstances. His cause is implicated in our deliverance; His name will be disgraced if we are overwhelmed, and honored, if preserved. He is our judge, Lawgiver and King, and is therefore bound by the most solemn obligations to save us, or His name will be tarnished.

When therefore letters come to you, anonymous or otherwise, full of bitter reproach; when unkind and malignant stories are set on foot with respect to you; when all hope from man has perished, then take your complaint—the letter, the article, the speech, the rumor—and lay it before God. Let your requests be made known unto Him. Tell Him how absolutely you trust. Then malice and fear will pass from your heart, whilst peace and love will take their place: and presently there will come a swift message of comfort, like that which Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent to Hezekiah, saying on the behalf of God, “That which thou hast prayed to Me, I have heard.”

God knew the contents of the missive before you did; but He likes to read it again in the company of His child!

2 Kings 20:10

“And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.”

IT is impossible for us to understand how this could be. The shadow of the declining day waxes ever longer, and only a miracle could change its appearance on the dial. It may suggest some significant thoughts about shadows that may still go back.

The shadow of a wasted life.— Of course, there is a sense in which the wasted years will never come again; they have passed beyond recall. But the shadow may go back on the dial of our life when we truly repent, and turn again to God, for He hath promised: “I will never leave thee, neither forsake thee.” And “I will give back the years that the canker worm and caterpillar have eaten.”

The shadow of happier days.— These seem to have gone. For long you have noticed the growing twilight, and it has seemed impossible ever again to have the lightness and spring of one or two decades back. But be of good cheer, for when a man comes into that fellowship with God which sorrow and temptation teach, when with growing years he attains added grace, we are told that he shall return to the days of his youth.

The shadow of early affection.— Have you lost loved ones, so that your life is like a house the windows of which, one after another, have become shuttered and dark? But love is not forfeited forever. Those who forsake all for Christ’s sake shall get all back again in Him. His love comprehends all human love. The relationships of His kingdom surpass in tenderness and tenacity those of the warmest earthly ties. Thy brother shall rise again, and thou shalt hear him call thy name, and shalt sit with him in the Home of Life.

2 Kings 21:1

“Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Hephzibah.”

HEPHZI-BAH means, “My delight is in her” (Isaiah 62:4). How strange, supposing that her name was any indication of her character, that such a woman should have borne such a son; for “Manasseh did wickedly above all the Amorites did which were before him.” A godly ancestry, however, does not guarantee a holy seed. Hezekiahs and Hephzi-bahs may be the parents of Manassehs. Would that this may not be so!

Let us guard against the inconsistencies of our private life.—The child of religious parents becomes habituated to their use of expressions in public which betoken the highest degree of holiness, and is therefore quicker to notice any inconsistency in temper or walk. Is there not a subtle temptation also for those who work much for God in public to feel that a certain laxity is permissible in the home? Will not late after-meetings at night compensate for indolence in the morning, and will not protracted services be the equivalent for private prayer? May not irritability to servants or children be accounted for by the overstrain of our great work? Hence, inconsistency and failure to realize our lofty aims, which are quickly noticed, beget distaste for our religion.

Let us guard against absorption in public religious duty to the neglect of the home.—Does it never happen that the children of religious parents are put to bed by nurses who are heedless of their prayers, because their mothers have undertaken a mission? Do not boys sometimes grow up without the correcting influence of the father’s character, because he, good man, is so taken up with committees?

Let us guard against an austerity of manner, which prevents us being the companions, play-fellows, and associates of our children.

2 Kings 22:20

“Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.”

AS a matter of fact, Josiah’s death was not a peaceful one. He persisted in going into conflict with Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, against the latter’s earnest remonstrance (see 2 Chronicles 35:20–22); and, in consequence of his hardihood, met his death. His servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo (2 Kings 23:30). Is there, then, any real contradiction between the prophet’s prediction and this sad event?

Certainly not! The one tells us what God was prepared to do for His servant; the other what he brought on himself by his own folly. There are many instances of this change of purpose in the Word of God. One of them is known as “His breach of promise,” or “altering of purpose” (Numbers 14:34). He would have saved His people from the forty years’ wandering in the wilderness, but they made Him to serve with their sins and wearied Him with their iniquities. He would have gathered Jerusalem as a hen gathers her brood, but she would not.

Let us beware lest, a promise being left us, we should seem to come short of it; lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, and frustrating some blessed purpose of His heart. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him”; but we may limit the Holy One of Israel, and so restrain Him by our unbelief as to stay the mighty works which are in His plan for us. He may desire for us a prosperous life and a peaceful death; but we may close our dying eyes amid disaster and defeat, because we willfully chose our own way.

2 Kings 23:25

“And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.”

THIS chapter is a marvellous record of cleansing and purging. We are led from one item to another of drastic reform. Nothing was spared that savored of idolatry. Priests and altars, buildings and groves, came under the searching scrutiny of this true-hearted monarch; and, as the result, it was possible to keep such a Passover as had not been observed during the days of the judges or the kings (2 Kings 23:22).

How much our enjoyment of the solemn feast depends upon our previous efforts to put away from our lives all that is inconsistent with the law of God. We hardly realize how insidiously evils creep in. Before we are aware, we have fallen beneath God’s ideal, and adopted the customs of our neighbors, or of those with whom we come into daily contact. All such declension hinders our joy in keeping the Passover. It is needful, therefore, that there should be times when we turn to God with fresh devotion, and in the light of His holy truth pass the various departments of our life under review, testing everything by the Book of the Law. In Josiah’s case, the sacred volume was recovered from long neglect; in our case it needs to be re-read in the light of higher resolves. This would be like a new discovery. Our ultimate rule must always be the will of God, appreciated with growing clearness, and used as a standard by which to judge the habits and tenets of our life. We read the Bible for purposes of a truer knowledge of God and His ways, and for spiritual quickening; but let us also use it more frequently as the bath of the spirit. Let us bathe in it. Let us revel in it as the grimy children of the slums in the laughing wavelets of river and sea.

2 Kings 24:13

“And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king’s house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.”

AMONGST these departed treasures must have been much of the sacred furniture of the Temple, and the holy vessels; because, in the days of Belshazzar, we find them brought out to grace the royal banquet. Belshazzar drank wine from them with his lords, wives, and concubines, whilst they praised the gods of Babylon, who had given them victory over their foes. Amongst the rest was the golden candlestick, whose flame afterward illuminated the inscription of doom, written by God’s hand upon the palace wall. By the command of Cyrus these precious vessels were finally restored (Ezra 5:14), and carried back to Jerusalem, by a faithful band of priests (Ezra 8:33).

The whole story of the captivity is full of solemn lessons.— The Church of God must make her choice between one of two courses: either she must keep from all entangling alliances, and from vying for temporal power; or she must face the liability of being brought under the power with which she would fain assimilate. Israel wanted to be as the other nations around her, imitating their organization, and allying herself now with one, and then with another; in consequence she was swept into captivity to the very nation whose fashions she most affected (Isaiah 38).

Have we never tasted the bitters of captivity?— Borne away from our happy early homes to live among strangers, set to repugnant tasks, removed from all that made life worth living, we have known the exile’s lot. Alas! if it be so; yet, even in our captivity, where the Lord’s song is silenced, and our harps hang from the willows, if we repent, and put away our sins, and turn again to the Lord, He will not only have mercy, but abundantly pardon, and bring us again that we may be as we were in times past.

2 Kings 25:30

“And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.”

IS it to be supposed that the king of Babylon took more care of Jehoiachin than God will take of us! Jehoiachin had resisted his suzerain, and cost him a great expenditure of men and treasure; but nothing which had transpired in the past hindered this provision of a daily supply. Will God do less for you, His child? Would it not come as a relief if you were to be told that, from this moment till you die, you could always have a sufficient provision of all the necessaries of life? But if you are a child of God, that promise has already been made! Do not be anxious, but believe that God’s word is at least as sure and as efficient as man’s.

The allowance was continual.— It did not begin with plenty, and gradually dwindle to scraps. The supply was maintained year after year. Will God drop off your supplies, think you, because He forgets, or because His power is exhausted? You know that each supposition is alike untenable. What He has done, He will do. The storehouses of nature open to His key. His are the cattle on a thousand hills.

Every day a portion.— Jehoiachin had not the provisions of a year or a month put down at his door; but as each day broke he was sure of the day’s portion. It may be that God is dealing thus with you. Only manna for the day: daily strength for daily need.

All the days of His life.— Jesus is with us “all the days”; and He is the bread of God, in whom is every property necessary for life. All the days are included in God’s care for us, of birth and death, of sunshine and shadow. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever.

1 Chronicles 1:1
“Adam, Sheth, Enosh,”

THIS is an ancient graveyard. The names of past generations who were born and died, who loved and suffered, who stormed and fought through the world, are engraven on these solid slabs. But there is no inscription to record their worth or demerit. Just names, and nothing more.

How strange to think that if Christ tarry, our names will be treated with the same apathy as these! So far as this world is concerned, we and all our generations shall pass away. As the flowers of the field, so we shall perish from the earth.

But each of these lives fulfilled a necessary part in the progress of the race. Each was in turn father and son; each passed on the torch of life; each contributed something to the fabric of humanity rising like a coral island from unknown depths. The hilltops would not be possible but for their lower courses which touch the valleys. We could not have the somebodies without an immense number of nobodies. The flowers of the race were prepared for by the slow progress of the plant through years of growth.

But each was the object of the love of God. Each was included in the redemptive purpose of our Lord; each contributed some minute particle to His nature; each is living yet somewhere; each will have to stand before the judgment-bar of God; each is predestined to live in the unknown world that lies on the other side. It is a stupendous thought to imagine the whole race, rooted in Adam, like one vast far-spreading tree. Ah, reader, be sure that thou art taken out of the first Adam, and grafted into the second—the Lord Jesus; and abiding in Him, see that thou bring forth much fruit to His glory.

1 Chronicles 2:1

“These are the sons of Israel; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun,”

IT is noticeable how irrevocable the Divine sentence is on a human life. Of Er, the grave, impartial voice of Scripture says, he was “wicked in the sight of the Lord”; of Achan, he was the “troubler of Israel, and committed a trespass in the devoted thing.” These sentences are recorded with such precision as to admit of no dispute, no appeal; and they sum up the life.

But was there not much else in each of these men? Were there not tender or chivalrous moments? Did they never shine for a moment in some transfiguring ray? Was all their life dyed with these sad and somber hues? Ah, it may have been so— still the one thing that the Scripture tells of them is the sin in which all their life seemed to culminate and express itself. With unerring accuracy God can distinguish the one act or word by which the character is revealed. He may forgive it, but He holds it up as the epitome or summary of what the life was.

Let us see how we live, walking before God with reverent fear, watching and praying, because any moment may give birth to a word or act, which may characterize our life in all coming time. It must be remembered, however, that all these things emanate from the heart. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; but the issues of life proceed thence: it therefore must be watched with all diligence and care. What a man thinks, that he is. The chance word or act is a true indication of the inner life. Therefore it is preserved for all aftertime by the voice of God. See that your heart is perfect before God. There is forgiveness; but there is also the unerring verdict.

1 Chronicles 3:1

“Now these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron; the firstborn Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess:”

BUT how different they were to the Son of David! Contrast any one of these with our blessed Lord, and what an infinite chasm lies between them! Solomon was the most reputable of them, but a greater than Solomon was born in Bethlehem, and cradled in a manger. Surely the least earnest must be struck with the difference in these sons, and that Son. But in this difference, is there not the most conspicuous proof of His miraculous conception? Even though the story of His wondrous birth had never been preserved for us by the evangelists, we should have felt convinced that something like it must have happened, in virtue of which He should be the Man of men, the one absolutely flawless and perfect flower on the stem of humanity. With new emphasis we read the familiar words, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

We, too, who have been born once, need to be born again. To be born of a David does not ensure perfectness of heart and life. Though born of parents, who were after God’s own heart and are passed into the skies, we need to be born again, or we may repeat the sins of an Amnon, an Adonijah, an Absalom. It is a serious question to ask whether, like David, we have called his greater Son our Lord. This is the true mark of the new birth. Those who are born of the Holy Ghost call Jesus Lord, and none other. The recognition of the supreme lordship of Jesus is imperative for the peace and right ordering of the heart and life. So we pass to our true stature in Jesus.

1 Chronicles 4:9

“And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow.”

THE products of sorrow have been the rarest gifts to mankind. The books, hymns, discoveries, deeds, to which men and women have been urged by sorrow, or which have been born into the world amid heart-rending soul-travail, are those which will never be allowed to die, because of their perennial sources of inspiration and comfort. It was thus with the child of whom we have this brief record. We might becomingly weave the four petitions of the prayer of Jabez into the supplications of each new morning hour.

To be blessed indeed.— Not the lower springs only, but the upper ones also; not life alone, but life more abundantly; not those blessings only which pertain to the body or worldly circumstance, but those spiritual ones of the heavenlies, that are the best donation man can receive or God bestow.

A larger coast.— There is a godly ambition which may be reverently cherished for wider influence over men, not for its own sake, but for the Master's. You may feel that you have fulfilled the measure of your present possibilities, but have unexhausted powers and talents. Tell God so, and ask for a wider extent of territory to bring under cultivation for Him.

Thine hand with me.— The father puts his hand on the boy's hand as he draws back the bowstring, strengthening the thin arms of youth. So will the mighty God of Jacob do for you.

Keep me from evil.— You cannot keep your heart-door shut when a tumult of temptation or care assaults it from without; but God's peace and grace, like angel sentries, can avail you. Though tempted, you may be kept in the temptation and delivered from the evil. Thus your spirit, and the Holy Spirit, shall be ungrieved.

1 Chronicles 5:20

“And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him.”

WHETHER they cried to God before they went into the battle we are not told; but probably they did, because we read that the war was of God, and it is hardly likely that they would have prayed to Him in the midst of the fight, when the foemen’s blows fell like hail on their armor, if they had not prayed before they entered the bloody fray. Men often excuse themselves for neglecting their morning devotions by saying that they will surely look to God, as they may require His gracious help, in the midst of the day’s temptations and needs; but, as a matter of fact, when once they are plunged into its war they forget to look up. You must direct your prayer in the morning, and look up whilst the early shadows lie long on the dewy grass, if you would keep looking off to Jesus, amid the din of the fight.

It is very lovely to contract and preserve this habit of looking upward, and crying to God in the battle. When our feet are slipping, when the foe seems about to overmaster, when heart and flesh fail—how refreshing and strengthening to fling one eager look or cry to heaven, and say, I am thine, save me.” There can be no doubt as to the issue. God is always intreated of those who put their trust in Him. Sooner might a mother forget her sucking child than God be unmindful of one sigh, or tear, or upward glancing look from His own. Oh, child of God, put thou thy trust in God, and go through this tempestuous world as one who is confident of a Divine Ally. At any moment He will ride on the heavens to thy help. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

1 Chronicles 6:33

“And these are they that waited with their children. Of the sons of the Kohathites: Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Shemuel,”

THIS is a very brief record to put on a man’s grave, but a very expressive one. To decipher that epitaph about Herman is to learn a good deal about him. From this clue we might almost construct his entire personality and character. And it would be well if it could be said of us that we had ministered with song before the tabernacle of the Lord.

Would you be a singer; not on Sundays only, but always; not with your voice only, but in your heart; not only when the sunshine pours into the open casement through the swaying boughs of honeysuckle, but when the shutters tell of bereavement and removal— then remember these rules:— (1st) God must put the new song into your mouth; (2nd) You must be fully consecrated to Him; for the song of the Lord only begins when the burnt-offering is complete. (3rd) You must not go into a strange land, for it is impossible to sing the Lord’s song there.

Sing on, dear heart, sing on. There is nothing that scares off the devil so quickly as a hymn. Luther said, “Let us sing a hymn, and spite the devil.” There is nothing that so well beguiles the pilgrim’s step, and quickens his pace, when the miles are growing long and weary. There is nothing that brings so much of heaven into the heart. Singing makes every movement rhythmic, every service praise, every act thanksgiving. Sing when times are dark, you will make them bright; sing when the house of life is lonely, it will become peopled with unseen choristers; go down into the valley of shadow with a song, and you will find yourself singing the new song of Moses and the Lamb when you awake on the other side.

1 Chronicles 7:23

“And when he went in to his wife, she conceived, and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house.”

IT is an old-world tale, and those tears have long since been wiped away. What led to the death of so many of the stalwart sons of Ephraim is not quite clear; but apparently they made a raid from the hill-fastnesses on the men of Gath to lift their cattle, and were repelled with great disaster. At any rate, they were slain by men of Gath, that were born in the land. They were part of the early nations of Canaan, that should have been destroyed. This suggests a significant train of thought. We must beware of the tendencies and impulses which were born in us, which we have inherited.

They are strong in all of us. Parents transmit to an awful extent their own passions. What a reason this is for carefully curbing them! I have known the children of drunkards, grown to middle-life, who have confessed that they have never spent a day without the conscious craving for alcohol. These are the men of Gath, born in the land, who will slay us unless we are on our guard.

There will be irremediable sorrow if we yield to them. Many days of mourning will not avail to wipe out the sad and bitter memory of the disaster, when once they have wreaked their wild will on us. If permitted within, they will, like traitors, open the door to Satan without.

But faith is the victory. He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God; he in whom Jesus lives by the Holy Spirit; he who knows the Stronger than the strong man armed, shall be kept from falling, and preserved unto God's heavenly kingdom. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.”

1 Chronicles 8:33–34

“And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Eshbaal. And the son of Jonathan was Meribbaal; and Meribbaal begat Micah.”

BAAL was the idol-god of Zidon and of many surrounding nations. This idol, representing the sun in his productive force, was worshipped with impure and scandalous rites. The introduction of this name into the appellation of one of Saul’s sons indicates the secret root of the declension and consequent misfortunes of that ill-fated monarch. In the earlier part of his reign he was perfect in his allegiance to Jehovah— *Jonathan* means “Gift of Jehovah”— but as the years went on, he became proud and self-sufficient; he turned to Baal, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit rushed in to take His place, as wind rushes in to fill a vacuum.

The name which Jonathan gave his son had another significance. Merib-baal is one who opposes Baal. It is as though he would indelibly stamp upon his child an undying hatred and opposition to that idolatry which was undoing his father’s character and kingdom. In this choice of his child’s name we also gather the deep-seated piety and devotion of that noble soul, whose heart was true to God amid the darkening shadows of his father’s reign. It was this that probably drew David and him so closely in affinity.

How absolutely necessary it is for the peace of a household that there should be a oneness of devotion to God! Where that is the first consideration, there is peace and blessedness; and that it may be so, it is of the greatest importance that the parents should be constant in their godly allegiance. The ruin of Saul’s home, family, and realm, began in his personal disloyalty to God; and how far he influenced the nation for evil it is difficult to estimate.

1 Chronicles 9:22, 29, 31, 33

“All these which were chosen to be porters in the gates were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office. ... Some of them also were appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices. ... And Mattithiah, one of the Levites, who was the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, had the set office over the things that were made in the pans. ... And these are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the chambers were free: for they were employed in that work day and night.”

WHAT a busy scene is suggested in these words! When the morning broke, it called to duty first the porters who opened the House of God; and then, after due ablution, each band of white-robed Levites began its special service. There was no running to and fro in disorder, no intrusion on one another's office, no clashing in duty, no jealousy of each other's ministry. It was enough to know that each had been appointed to his task, and was asked to be faithful to it. The right ordering of the whole depended on the punctuality, fidelity, and conscientiousness of each.

So it is in the Church of Christ, each is specially gifted for some post to which he has been set apart. One to see to the gates, admitting souls to the kingdom; one to the baking in pans, attending to the feeding of the household of God; some are appointed to the furnishing and maintaining of the House of Prayer; others to the psalmody, as the hymn-writers of our praise and holy song. How beautiful it is when we dwell together in this unity, not envying one another, nor interfering in each other's ministry. “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Whatever is successfully done by the Church is accredited by Christ to each faithful servant, just as the impression produced on the audience by an orchestra is the result of each instrument, even to the piccolo, doing its part. Whatever is done by the whole, is done by each part of the whole. Be content with the position to which thy Master has assigned thee, and let thine eye be single unto Him. So shall each have praise of God.

1 Chronicles 10:13

“So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it;”

IT is suggestive to ponder the threefold analysis of Saul’s trespass as given here. He kept not the word of the Lord— this probably refers to his failure to execute the sentence on Amalek; he asked counsel of one that had a familiar spirit— this errand had taken him to Endor on the eve of the battle; he inquired not of the Lord— this was conspicuously the case in his persecution of David.

Do we sufficiently inquire of the Lord? We ask the advice of our friends and religious teachers; we sometimes use doubtful methods of ascertaining God’s will, as allowing the Bible to drop open, or interpreting some coincidence in the way we secretly desire to follow; besides which there is an increasing tendency in society to use the crystal, to consult spiritualistic mediums, to employ palmistry. These latter, of course, repeat the sin of Saul, in going to Endor; and the resort to them on the part of children of this world shows that the heart of man must have something exterior to itself for worship and trust; if it has forsaken God it will deal with the devil, rather than drift on alone. But let us all cultivate more carefully the blessed habit of waiting on God. If we ask Him for guidance, He will be sure to impart it; only we must put aside all selfish and personal ends, desiring to know His will, with a single purpose, and an unalloyed determination to follow it at any cost.

Christ has told us that willingness to do His will, is the sure organ of spiritual knowledge. “He that wills to do His will, shall know.” Be of good cheer, beloved, God hath chosen thee that thou shouldst know His will, and see that just One, and shouldst hear the voice of His mouth.

1 Chronicles 11:17

“And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!”

DAVID had often drunk of this well. As a boy he had gone with his mother to draw its clear, cold water. It was, therefore, associated with the happy days of childhood and youth that lay behind the haze of the years. In the sultry afternoon, as, from the cave in which he was hiding, he looked across the valley where his ancestress Ruth had gleaned in the fields of Boaz, to the long straggling town of his birth, it seemed as though nothing could stay his passionate longing for a draught of the water of the well of Bethlehem that was at the gate.

Sometimes longings like his take possession of us. We desire to drink again the waters of comparative innocence, of childlike trust and joy; to drink again of the fountains of human love; to have the bright, fresh rapture in God and nature, and home. But it is a mistake to look back. Here and now, within us, Jesus is waiting to open the well of living water which springs up to eternal life, of which if we drink we never thirst.

Purity is better than innocence; the blessedness which comes through suffering is richer than the gladness of childhood; the peace of the heart is more than peace of circumstances. We have solace in Jesus, which even the dear love of home could not equal; and before us lies the reunion with the blessed dead. How shall we thank Him who, at the cost of His own blood, broke through the hosts of our foes, and won for us the river of life; and who forevermore will lead us to the fountains, where life rises fresh from the heart of God? Listen to His voice as He bids us drink abundantly: “Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

1 Chronicles 12:38

“All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.”

THE crowning of David secured the unity of Israel. Because all these men of war converged on the chosen king, they met each other, and became one great nation. The enthroning of David was the uniting of the kingdom. Herein is the secret of the unity of the Church. We shall never secure it by endeavoring to bring about a unity in thought, or act, or organization. It is as each individual heart enthrones the Savior that each will become one with all kindred souls in the everlasting kingdom.

Is your heart perfect to make Christ king? We read in 1 Chronicles 12:33 of Zebulun, whose warriors were not of a double heart; the margin says they were “without a heart and a heart.” The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways; he is not to be relied upon in his loyalty or service to his king. The only blessed life is that of the man whose eye is single. It is only such a one that receives anything from the Lord. Let us ask that the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed by the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit, that our hearts may be perfect toward Him, and so perfect to all who hold Jesus as King and Head, though they differ from us in minor points. Different regiments, but one army, one movement, one king.

Let us learn to keep rank, shoulder to shoulder, and in step, with our brethren. Too many like to break the ranks, and do God’s work independently. Fifty men who act together will do greater execution than five hundred acting apart. There is too much of this guerilla fighting. Unity is strength; and in their efforts to overthrow the kingdom of Satan it is most essential that the soldiers of Christ move in rank and keep step.

1 Chronicles 13:12

“And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?”

THERE was no reason for David to be afraid of God, if he conformed to the rules laid down in Leviticus. There it was expressly ordained that the Ark should be carried on the shoulders of the priests, because the cause of God must proceed through the world by the means of consecrated men, rather than by mechanical instrumentality. David ignored this provision when he placed the Ark on the new cart. He disobeyed the distinct law of the Divine procedure. What wonder that Uzza was struck dead! Fire will burn if you persist in violating its law. Obed-edom, on the other hand, studiously obeyed, so far as he knew them, the Divine regulations, and to him the Ark was a source of blessing; just as fire will toil for us in our furnaces and grates, and be the greatest possible benediction to human life, if only we carefully conform to its ascertained and immutable law.

God is to us what we are to Him. To Pharaoh, blackness and darkness; to Israel, light and help. To the froward, He is froward; to the merciful man, merciful. To one of the thieves, the cross of Christ was the savor of death unto death, because his heart was impenitent; to the other, the savor of life unto life, because his heart was soft and believing. You need not fear God so long as you walk in His ways and do His will. He is to be feared only by those who violate His law. God is a consuming fire. He will make a breach on those who disobey Him. He will consume the evil of our inner life. But let Him be welcomed into your life and home; let the Ark, which is the symbol of His presence, dwell within; bring up your children to minister unto Him; and you will be blessed with all that you have.

1 Chronicles 14:15

“And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle: for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines.”

WHAT was this “going”? It was not merely a fitful breeze stealing through the leaves; it was not the going of the wind; but of angel squadrons who were proceeding against the enemies of Israel. This thought often occurs in Scripture— as when Jacob met God’s host; and the warrior-Savior told Joshua that He was captain of a host whom God had commissioned to take Jericho; so also the horses and chariots of fire surrounded Elisha. Harken to the measured footfall of God’s host, beneath which the mulberry trees sway, though no wind stirs the sultry air.

God’s hosts go forth against His foes and ours. Perhaps we should feel less oppressed with the burden of the fight if we realized this. The battle is not ours, but God’s. He will deliver the Philistines to us so that we shall have to do little else than fight and spoil. Oh, believe in the co-operation of the Holy Spirit. Lonely missionary in some distant station of the foreign field, listen for the moving in the tops of the mulberry trees! God is stirring for thy succor. Thou art a coworker with Him in making known His salvation; and He will prosper thee.

Let us wait for our instructions. David inquired of the Lord; let us not anticipate Him. It is useless to go up until He has gone out before us. We may as well save ourselves from disappointment by quietly waiting for the salvation of our God. But oh, be sure that for those who wait for God, it shall not be long before the God for whom they wait shall go forth before them to smite the host, whether it be the hosts of temptation that oppress the inner life, or the hosts of spiritual foes that oppose the progress of God’s work.

1 Chronicles 15:22

“And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful.”

THE carrying of the Ark to its right place was associated with every expression of gladness on the part of king and people; but there were some who were specially set apart as the exponents of the general joy. In the old time such were David, Heman, Asaph, Chenaniah; in our time, Watts and Doddridge, Wesley and Toplady, Keble, Havergal, and Bonar.

It is good to be for song. Many a heart that cannot rank as a musician or poet, may yet be susceptible to the joy of the Lord, which is ever passing through creation, catching up if so as to express it. As the Ark of the Lord comes to its place within you, sing.

Song is harmony with the life of God. The will of God sometimes enters life as a sigh, as David's first attempt to move the Ark; but afterward it becomes a song, as in the second attempt. Enshrine the Ark of God with its tables of stone, its mercy-seat of fellowship, its worshipping Cherubim in the Holy of Holies within; and you will find sighs turned to songs, tears to thanks, mourning to the garment of praise.

Worship the will of God. Conform your life to it. Draw on the ground a circle to represent God's will, and step into it, resolving never to step out of its blessed precincts again. Dare to believe and confess that Paradise lies within, though it may be veiled to sight and sense. According to your faith it shall be unto you. If you believe that heaven is there, you will find heaven. The Ark of God is ever a provocative of song. His statutes seem awful in the distance; but as soon as we begin to practice them, they turn to songs.

1 Chronicles 16:9

“Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.”

WE do not talk sufficiently about God. Why it is so may not be easy to explain; but there seems a too great reticence among Christian people about the best things. In the days of Malachi, “they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard.” We talk about sermons, details of worship and church organization, or the latest phase of Scripture criticism; we discuss men, methods, and churches; but our talk in the home, and in the gatherings of Christians for social purposes, is too seldom about the wonderful works of God. Better to speak less, and to talk more of Him.

But probably the real cause of our avoidance of this best of topics, is that our hearts are filled with so much which is not of God, and they speak out of their abundance. You may judge the contents of a shop by what is put in the windows, and you may judge the inner life of too many Christians by the subjects which are most familiar to their lips. The heart does not seek for God and His strength, nor His face continually; and therefore we find it hard to talk of all His wondrous works.

But go back in thought to the day of Pentecost. One of the first signs of the descent of the blessed Spirit was that the crowd heard every man speaking in his own tongue the wonderful works of God. What God has done in the past, as recorded on the page of Scripture; what He is doing day by day in the world around, and in our hearts; what He has promised to do on the horizon where heaven and earth shall blend in the Second Advent; yield fit themes on which His children may beamingly talk to each other, till He goes beside and talks with them till their hearts burn.

1 Chronicles 17:23–24

“Therefore now, LORD, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house be established for ever, and do as thou hast said. Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee.”

THIS is a most blessed phrase of true prayer. Many a time we ask for things which are not absolutely promised. We are not sure therefore until we have persevered for some time whether our petitions are in the line of God’s purpose or no. There are other occasions, and in the life of David this was one, when we are fully persuaded that what we ask is according to God’s will. We feel led to take up and plead some promise from the page of Scripture, under the special impression that it contains a message for us.

At such times, in confident faith, we say, “Do as Thou hast said.” There is hardly any position more utterly beautiful, strong, or safe, than to put the finger upon some promise of the Divine word, and claim it. There need be no anguish, or struggle, or wrestling; we simply present the check and ask for cash, produce the promise, and claim its fulfillment; nor can there be any doubt as to the issue. It would give much interest to prayer, if we were more definite. It is far better to claim a few things specifically than a score vaguely.

David’s argument was not simply that his house might be established, but that God’s name might be magnified forever. It is good when we can lose sight of our personal interests in our keen desire for His glory, when we are so delivered from egotism, that Christ is all and in all. Let the attitude of your soul be more toward the glory of God; and as you quote promise after promise for the enthroning of Christ, the saving of men, and the sanctification of your soul, dare in humble faith to say, Do as Thou hast said, that thy Name may be magnified forever.

1 Chronicles 18:13

“And he put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became David’s servants. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.”

EDOM and Israel were closely related, but there was constant rivalry and war between the two peoples. Sometimes Israel held the upper-hand for a little; but Edom soon broke loose again, and resumed the old independence, with the border forays (2 Chronicles 21:10; 25:11–14; Psalm 137:7). Now as Edom stands for the flesh, which hungers for the savory dish, and is willing to give even its birthright of spiritual power to secure it— this long feud is full of interest to us. It reminds us of the strife of Romans 7, between the will of the renewed man and the law of the members, ever striving for mastery.

We turn on the pages of our Bibles to Isaiah 63, where a mighty Conqueror is seen coming toward the southern frontier of Palestine, with His back on Bozrah and Edom. His garments are dyed with the blood of Israel’s foes; and behind Him cities are desolate and depopulated, territories are laid waste without inhabitant, and Edom’s hostility is forever quenched in blood. What a portraiture is here of Jesus “mighty to save,” who in His cross triumphed over principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. He has overcome the world, the flesh, and the prince of the power of darkness; and stands forevermore between us, and our former oppressors.

Let us resign the conflict wholly to Him. We have sought in vain for victory by resolutions and endeavors; by close attention to religious duties; by occupying our minds with various interests, so that we had no leisure to be tempted; by diet and exercise. Now, hand the conflict absolutely over to Jesus: do not even try to help Him: just let Him do all: be quite still, and when temptation comes, let Him meet it.

1 Chronicles 19:13

“Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God: and let the LORD do that which is good in his sight.”

THOSE were days in which rough soldiers, like Joab, did not hesitate to speak freely of God to their companions in arms. It is a sorry thing that it is considered a breach of etiquette to mention God’s name in polite society. “It is not good form!”

We are reminded in these words of Joab of Cromwell’s memorable advice to trust in God and keep the powder dry. David’s General felt that the ultimate issue of the battle must be left to God; but that nothing could absolve him and his soldiers from doing their best. They, at least, must make careful dispositions for the fight, and show themselves valiant.

This balance of statement and thought between God’s work and ours is an evidence of fine Christian sanity. We must believe that God is the ultimate arbiter, but we must ever speak and act as though the responsibility were entirely on ourselves. To believe that God will do all, and therefore to do nothing, is as bad as to believe that God leaves us to our unaided endeavors. We believe in the strength and sufficiency of God’s purpose; but we know that there is a link in the chain of causation which we must supply.

The servant of God who counts most absolutely on the communion and cooperation of the Divine Spirit will be most careful in making all needful disposition for the fight. He will leave no stone unturned to secure the victory, though he knows that the ultimate decision rests with God. The conquests of the cross recorded in the Acts of the Apostles were the result of the united action of the Holy Spirit and the men who were sent forth with the message of the gospel. “We are laborers together with God.”

1 Chronicles 20:1

“And it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out to battle, Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried at Jerusalem. And Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it.”

THERE are times and tides in the affairs of men. Favorable moments for doing and daring, for attempting and achieving. Hours when the ship must be launched, or it will have to wait for another spring tide. Days when the seed must be sown, or it will have to tarry till another autumn. Royal natures show their quality by taking advantage of times like these, when God and circumstances favor a great attempt.

Alas, if long-continued prosperity has robbed the kingly soul of its desire or power to use its sacred opportunity! Once missed, it may never recur; and the soul that has missed it condemns itself, and loses heart, and surrenders itself to lower and ever lower depths of temptation.

Beware of moments and hours of ease. It is in these that we most easily fall into the power of Satan. The sultriest summer days are most laden with blight. There is no such guard against temptation—next to the keeping power of Jesus, which is all-sufficient— as occupation to the full measure of time and capacity. If we cannot fill our days with our own matters, there is always plenty to be done for others. You think that no one has hired you, but it is not so; the Master has sent you into His vineyard. If you cannot do one thing, you can do another. There is the ministry of intercession for those who are in the field. There is the exercise of worship, in which you take your place amongst the priests. There is the ministry of comfort to some of the sad hearts within your own circle. Redeem the time, because the days are evil. Watch and pray in days of vacation and ease, even more than at other times.

1 Chronicles 21:8

“And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.”

HIS sin lay in the spirit of pride and display. He vaunted in the growing numbers of Israel, and credited them to himself, as the result of his own prowess and prudence. All such boasting is very abhorrent to the all-holy God, who will not give His glory to another. It was the sin of Nebuchadnezzar, when he said, “Is not this great Babylon which I have built?” It was the sin of Herod Agrippa when the people shouted, saying, “The voice of a god, and not of a man”; and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, “because he gave not God the glory.”

We are all tempted to it when we count up the number of our adherents and converts; when we unroll our securities and vouchers; when we count up our assets; when we display our jewels. All these are gifts entrusted to our care by our Father and Savior, to be held in trust as a matter for gratitude rather than for pride.

How greatly David had fallen from the level of his own sweet sonnet!— “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty.” Oh, let us ask our Master Christ to teach us how to be meek and lowly in heart, that we may find rest unto our souls; let us endeavor to be as little children, devoid of self-consciousness; and let us be careful, as we survey the growing treasures and power of our lives, to remember the Apostle’s words “Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? But if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

How well John the Baptist parried the temptation to jealousy, when he said, “A man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven.”

1 Chronicles 22:9–10

“Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.”

THE men of rest are the builders of the most lasting structures. Solomon builds the Temple, not David. Mary’s deed of anointing, learned in much sitting at the Lord’s feet, fills the world with its aroma. What is needed to make us men and women of rest?

First, a profound conviction that God is working.— Never despair of the world, said the late Mrs. Beecher Stowe, when you remember what God did with slavery: the best possible must happen. This serene faith, that all things are working out for the best— the best to God, the best to man— and that God is at the heart of all, will calm and still us in the most feverish days. There is a strong and an experienced Hand on the helm.

Next, an entire surrender to His will.— God’s will is certain to mean the destruction of the flesh, in whatever form He finds it; but it is our part to yield to Him; to will His will even to the cross; to follow our leader Christ in this, that He yielded Himself without reserve to execute His Father’s purpose.

Thirdly, a certain knowledge that He is working within to will and do of His good pleasure.— What a blessed peace possesses us when once we realize that we are not called on to originate or initiate, nor to make great far-reaching plans and try to execute them; but just to believe that God is prepared to work through our hands, speak by our life, dwell in our bodies, and fulfill in us the good purposes of His will. Be full of God’s rest. Let there be no hurry, precipitation, or fret; yield to God’s hands, that He may mould thee: hush thy quickly throbbing pulse! So shalt thou build to good and lasting purpose.

1 Chronicles 23:13

“The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever.”

THE threefold office of Aaron suggests our own. When we are prepared to follow Jesus, through the rent veil of His flesh, living a truly separated life, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, we also, as chosen priests, may exercise these functions of intercession, ministry, and blessing.

Intercession.— The fragrant incense stealing heavenward is a beautiful emblem of intercessory prayer. Let us pray more, not for ourselves so much as for others. This is the sign of growth in grace, when our prayers are fragrant with the names of friend and foe, and mingled with the coals of the golden altar. This is one of the best gifts; oh to exercise it more persistently!

Ministry.— We have many things to engage our attention, but they may be unified and elevated by the one threading purpose of doing all for the King. Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever else we do, we may do all to His glory. Go up and down in the Temple, O priests; engage in song, or sacrifice, or whatever ministry you will but be sure that all is of Him, and through Him, and to Him forever.

Blessing.— As Aaron came forth from the most Holy Place to bless the congregation that waited for him; so we should bless that little portion of the world in which our lot is cast. It is not enough to linger in soft prayer within the veil, we must come forth to bless mankind. He who is nearest God is closest man. Let our smile, our touch, our words, our life, be the greatest blessing possible to those who know us best.

Blessed Spirit, realize through each of us this threefold ideal, and separate us from sin and the world, that we may be prepared for it.

1 Chronicles 24:5

“Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar.”

IT is not enough for us to be in the sanctuary, we must be princes there. There must be the regal mien, which is a meek humility; the regal largesse, which is peace and blessing; and the regal might, which is self-restraint and self-control. None can be princes of the sanctuary without two things: *they must be priests*, come of the priestly line; and *kings*, royal not because of deeds of war, but because they are related to the King Himself, and are regal in their holy and blameless character.

There is only one power that can make us princes of the sanctuary—the hand of the exalted Lamb, who is Himself a Priest-King, after the order of Melchizedek. He it is who makes us kings and priests unto God his Father.

He makes us priests.— This is your position, not now to offer propitiatory sacrifices, but to present yourselves a living sacrifice; to have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way; to swing the censer of prayer between the living and the dead, so that plagues may be stayed; and to plead for the dark sad world, with its load of wretchedness, need, and sin. See that your garments are ever white and stainless.

He makes us kings.— We reign with Him. Sin and Satan, the world and the flesh, are beneath our feet. Ours is the life of overcoming power, of unbroken victory, of identification with Jesus in the glory that the Father has given Him. They that receive the abundance of His grace reign. It is there for us all, but many do not know, or knowing do not appreciate. It is on our reception by faith of God’s abundant grace, that we reign in this life, and the next.

1 Chronicles 25:5-6

“All these were the sons of Heman the king’s seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king’s order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.”

WHAT a glorious family was here! The household was a band of choristers! From morning to night their home must have been full of holy song and psalm, or talk about the order of the Temple service, in which they were all so deeply interested. Surely no jarring note, no unholy discord, would live in such an atmosphere! The common occupation and worship must have welded the brothers and sisters into the tenderest union.

How one would like to have seen Heman coming into the Temple with his children! It was largely owing to him and their mother that they were what they were. We shall read the Psalms ascribed to him with more interest, now that we know of the holy family life out of which they emanated. What interest there would be when the father had produced a new psalm to know what music would suit it best!

Parents! Be sure that you look on your children, as these Hebrews did on theirs, as the gifts of God; and remember that if He gives you many mouths to feed, He will send the where-withal to feed them. Be careful also that your own hearts and lives are full of praise and prayer; what you are, the children will become. Would that mothers especially realize how they transmit their characters. But remember that you must be obeyed in the home. Heman’s children were “under the hands of their father.” Young people must not get the upper hand.

But if you would rule well, you must obey. Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun were under the king (1 Chronicles 25:6). The man who is himself under authority, can say, Go, come, do this or that, with the calm assurance of being obeyed.

1 Chronicles 26:1

“Concerning the divisions of the porters: Of the Korhites was Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph.”

MIGHTY men of valor were needed for this, just as sweet singers were for the service of song. Entrance to the House of God was restricted to a privileged few. Gentiles were excluded from certain courts, and women from another. It was incumbent also to look out for those who, like the publican in the Lord's parable, might shrink from intruding, and encourage them to enter. Doorkeepers had to combine many qualities, which would be of the greatest service if they could be repeated in each church and chapel of our great cities, for welcoming old and young.

But chiefly we are concerned with the temple of the heart. We surely need the doorkeeper there, for in the history of the inner life there is so much going and coming; such troops of thoughts pour into the shrine of the soul, and pour out. And often, in the crowd, disloyal and evil thoughts intrude, which, before we know it, introduce a sense of distance and alienation from God, as though a cloud had veiled the shining of the Shekinah. Whenever the sky is overcast within, we should question whether some traitor, some excommunicate, has entered. Our native wit is not quick enough to detect, and our strength not mighty enough to withstand, the entrance of all these evil things. Hence the necessity is not only to live in the Spirit, but to walk in the Spirit, i. e., to submit everything to the Spirit's scrutiny.

It is necessary also that strict supervision should be exercised over those who unite with the visible Church, lest her holiness become diluted, and her fences broken down. Nothing is more important than the function of doorkeeping for the Church's purity.

1 Chronicles 27:31

“And over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagerite. All these were the rulers of the substance which was king David’s.”

THERE was great variety in office and gift. He who cared for the work of the field could not have known how to care for the flocks. The overseer of olive-yard and vineyard would have been a poor hand with the camels and asses. One sort of talent was needed for the herds, and another for the wine cellars; and yet there was unity in the common service of the king. We are reminded of the words of the Apostle, describing the variety in unity which must be obtained in every healthy church: “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord; diversities of operations, but the same God.”

Each of these different men had his distinct sphere for which he was doubtless specially qualified; and it was his duty— not to be jealous of others, nor eager to imitate them, but— to be faithful in his own province. How much happier we would all be if we recognized our specific work in God’s house, and kept to it, being content to serve the King as He has seen fit to determine, rendering Him the produce in due season.

How great an error it would have been had any of these begun to account the produce of cattle or ground as his own. He had nothing that he had not received, and whatever he controlled had been entrusted to his care for the emolument and advantage of his sovereign. Yet, how few of us realize that we are put in business with God’s capital, for God’s use. We take all and give Him a percentage, instead of using all for Him and keeping a percentage for ourselves. In this we rob God, and greatly err. We must acknowledge that both we and all we possess belong to Him.

1 Chronicles 28:20

“And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.”

IT is very comforting to take these words to our hearts; especially when we connect them with the foregoing ones about the pattern, and apply the whole passage to the temple-building of our own lives. For each of us, too, there is a pattern, an ideal, a design, based on the possibilities which God sees to be within our reach; for each, too, there is abundance of stored provision; but we are not always strong to do. In Jesus there is the complete ideal of human life; of the Child at Nazareth; of the Servant in the workshop; of the Lover in His affection for His church; of the Friend, the Sufferer, the Patriot, the Savior. Go forth and imitate Him!

Sometimes our heart and flesh fail us in the mid-passage of life. Once the energy and vigor of youth promised to sustain and carry us to the end of life, without fear or failure; but these die down, and we wonder how the remainder of the life-plan can be fulfilled. And the one sufficient answer is— God. He who helped our fathers to the very end will help *us*: He who did not fail or forsake them, will never leave nor forsake *us*, until *all* the work of life which He has planned, is finished.

It is probable that you will do better and more enduring work henceforth than you have ever done in the heyday and plenitude of youthful power, if you let God work through you to His own glory. You have no need for despondency, God is sufficient. Oh to write this down on the tablets of the heart— God is; God is here; God is all-sufficient; God has begun and will finish! God has promised that He will never leave nor forsake us; therefore we may boldly say, “God is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

1 Chronicles 29:15

“For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.”

ALL life has been compared to the shadow of a smoke-wreath; a gesture in the invisible air; a hieroglyph traced for an instant on the sand, and effaced a moment after by a breath of wind; an air-bubble vanishing on the river. Pilgrims and sojourners, as were all our fathers— such is the universal confession. But even such may do a work that will last for ages. David and the men of his time, though transitory their stay on our planet, left behind them a standing evidence that they had been here.

Our life is nothing, but it may be Divine: our days are as a breath, but they may affect unborn generations: the tent of the body is laid aside, but the soul, which had dwelt in it, is immortal in its touch: it leaves traces of its own immortality behind in its works, and it lives in them. In one sense, the answer to the ancient prayer is certain: “Establish Thou the works of our hands upon us.” But we may well ask, that they may be such that we shall have no need to be ashamed of.

But, for this, God must live mightily within us. Abide in Me, said our Lord.... I have appointed you that ye may bring forth fruit, and that your fruit may abide. It is impossible to be in true union with Christ without feeling the pulse of His glorious life; and where it enters like a tidal river, it can have but one result— it must manifest itself in fruit. It is only in proportion as our works are done in God, and God permeates our works, that they become sources of enduring blessing to the coming time. Pilgrims though we be, yet, if our lives are spent before Him, we may build temples which will outlast the wreck of matter.

2 Chronicles 1:11–12

“And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.”

SOLOMON had chosen wisdom and knowledge that he might honor God in the sight of his people. And in return God honored him, and supplemented his choice with abundant wealth.

This reminds one of the constant teachings of Jesus. He who seeks his life loses it; but to lose it is to save it in the best and deepest sense. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added.

The conception of life given in the Bible differs by a whole heaven from the maxims and practices of some good and earnest people. Their notion is that they must work for their living, “keep the wolf from the door,” educate their children for successfully meeting the demands of life. These objects are legitimate; but they were never meant by God to be the supreme aim of His servants.

His object in our creation, redemption, and regeneration, was that we might serve His redemptive purposes in the world, manifest His character, do His will, win souls for His kingdom, administer the gifts with which He has entrusted us. He asks us to rise to this high calling, and give our whole life to its realization. He will be responsible for all else. It is surely His will that we should give ourselves to useful trades, and fill our days with honest toil; but the main purpose should ever be His glory, and the exemplification in word and act of His holy character. If we ask for wisdom to do this well, we shall get all else into the bargain. God is a Being of perfect honor and integrity. And if we dare to make His service the main end of life, we shall find that no good thing will fail. He paves the streets of heaven with gold, and will not withhold it from His children, if they really need.

2 Chronicles 2:11

“Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the LORD hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them.”

HOW truly might these words be addressed to our blessed Lord! Because God loved the world, He gave His only-begotten Son, His well-beloved, to be both Prince and Savior. And it is in knowing, loving, and serving Him that we can realize our Supreme blessedness.

God’s loving appointment in making Jesus King will be apparent when we remember how beautiful He is in His personal character; how closely He is identified with our nature; the might of His arm with which He shields, the patience wherewith He bears, the redemption which He has wrought out and brought in for all who believe. What could God’s love have done better to approve itself?

Is He your King? Never till He is so, will you know the fullness of God’s love. Those who question or refuse His authority are always in doubt about the love of God to themselves and to the world. Those, on the other hand, who acknowledge His claims, and crown Him as King, suddenly find themselves admitted to a standpoint of vision in which doubts and disputations vanish, and the secret love of God is unfolded. Then they experience the wise and gentle care of the Divine love in its most entrancing characteristics. All is love where Jesus reigns.

Nothing is more indicative of God’s benevolence than His incessant appeal to men to make Jesus King. The demand may sometimes involve severe agony and suffering for those who have acknowledged other lords too long; but God persists in His demand, because only in serving Jesus can the human heart be truly blessed.

Go, spread your trophies at His feet,
And crown Him Lord of all!

2 Chronicles 3:17

“And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the right hand Jachin, and the name of that on the left Boaz.”

THE meaning of these names is significant— *He shall establish*, and *In it is strength*. Each speaks of Him of whom the whole temple was a type. The Lord Jesus has established the work of redemption so that it shall never be removed; has established the covenant, ordered in all things; has established His Church, so that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it; has established us before the face of His Father forevermore.

There is much in the New Testament about the *established* life. It is the desire of Peter that the scattered saints should be perfected, established, and strengthened. Paul desires to see the Roman Christians, that he may impart some spiritual gift so that they may be established: he desires that the Colossians may be built up in Christ, and established in the faith. The Epistle to the Hebrews says that it is good for the heart to be established with grace. Let us ask that Jesus should establish us in the Divine life, rooting and grounding us in love and faith, so that we may not be moved away from the Gospel, but abound therein with thanksgiving.

It is only as we abide in Jesus, that we shall become steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding.

But Christ is also our *strong* Helper. We have no strength of our own; but He is strong; and in Him we have righteousness and strength. Let us make our refuge in Him, as the conies, who are a feeble folk, do in the rock. They who abide in Jesus derive from Him fresh supplies of strength for each moment's need. They hear Him saying, “Fear not, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee”; and they learn to say with Paul: “I can do all things in Christ that strengtheneth me.”

2 Chronicles 4:18

“Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the weight of the brass could not be found out.”

THIS was as it should be. There was no attempt to keep an accurate account of what was given to the service of God. Even Solomon’s left hand did not know what his right hand did. There is a tendency in all of us to keep a strict account of what we give to God. We note it down in our ledgers; we rigorously observe the pact into which we have entered with Him; but the loftiest form of devotion overleaps such calculation.

This liberality of the people reminds us of Mary’s. She never thought of the great cost of the precious spikenard which she broke over the Master’s person. It was her joy to give her all; and it was only when Judas came on the scene, that we learn how many hundred pence it was worth. Thus the churches of Macedonia abounded from their deep poverty unto the riches of their liberality, so that, beyond their power, they gave to the cause of God.

This lavish generosity is the reflection of God’s. There is no measure in His bounty. It is heaped up, pressed down, and running over. He never says, I will give up to a certain amount, and hold my band; but He continues to give like the overflowings of the river of Egypt, or the abundance of the spring flowers, which cover the earth as with a carpet. Ah, what a God is ours, who loves with a love that passeth knowledge; and when He gives, exceeds abundance, however much we may have asked or thought. How truly may we say with the psalmist. “Many, O Lord my God, are the wonderful works that Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward. They cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.”

2 Chronicles 5:13

“It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD;”

THIS was the bright Shekinah cloud, the symbol of the Divine Presence, which had shone for Moses in the bush, and led the march through the desert. It was as though God had found a rest. And as it settled upon the Most Holy Place, it was as though God said, This is my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it.

The Most Holy Place is the symbol of our spirit, meant to be the abiding-place and home of God; and shall we not invite the blessed Shekinah cloud to enter thither, addressing it in the words of the Psalm, “Arise, O Lord, into thy resting-place, Thou and the ark of Thy strength.” Because where He comes to abide He abundantly blesses the provision, and satisfies the poor with bread; He clothes His priests with salvation, and makes His saints shout aloud for joy: He erects the horn of strength and prepares the lamp of light. What were the conditions of this incoming?—

First, Unity.— “The trumpeters and singers were as one.” We must put away strife, division, variance, and evil-speaking. Our heart and life must be full of love. When the disciples were with one accord, in one place, the Spirit descended.

Second, Heartiness.— “They lifted up their voice.” There was every symptom of sincerity and fervor.

Third, Thanksgiving and Praise.— “They praised the Lord, saying, He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.” No refrain occurs more often in the Bible than this. It is an exquisite expression of the heart’s joy and rest in God. Let us sing it in our darkest, as well as gladdest hours, full of trust, thanksgiving, and praise.

2 Chronicles 6:27

“Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance.”

THIS sentence is exactly parallel with the previous one, *When Thou dost afflict them*. The obvious meaning then is, that God sometimes taught Israel the good way wherein they should walk, by afflicting them and shutting up the heaven so that there was no rain. This was notably the case in the days of Elijah. Possibly, these words were in his heart, when he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not for the space of three years and six mouths. Perhaps the prophet felt that in no other way could the people be brought back to their senses, and reconciled to God, except by learning the futility of idol-worship. So he asked God to teach them the good way, by shutting up the bad one.

What a lesson for ourselves: God often teaches us by bitter disappointment and pain. Our familiar paths are barricaded by thorns, our familiar hiding-places are blocked up, our fountains are poisoned, and all our pleasant things are laid waste. We sometimes suppose that this is in wrath; may it not rather be in love? God is teaching us the good by showing us the evil: He is urging us to tread in the pleasant ways of wisdom, by allowing us to prove the sharp flints and thorns of transgression. Then Ephraim bemoans himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a calf unaccustomed to the yoke; turn Thou me, and I shall be turned. Then the soul cries, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.

Sit in God's school, and learn from His Word and Spirit, that He may not be compelled to have recourse to such severe measures as these. Why shouldst thou be afflicted, when He is willing to instruct and teach thee in the way that thou shouldst go!

2 Chronicles 7:1

“Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.”

IT was a very gracious and immediate response to the prayer of the King and his people. If we make room for God, He always comes and fills. If we seek Him, He is instantly with us. Directly the soul confesses, it is forgiven; or consecrates itself, it is accepted; or claims deliverance from the power of sin, it is cleansed. Do you really want the Lord to come to you? His glory has even now begun to shine in on you, to grow and enlighten you forevermore.

The fire stands for the *Divine Presence*. Oh to have always a consciousness of it! Nothing would so soon arrest and destroy the impurity and evil within; as sunshine does fungus-growth. We are told that the fire was to be kept burning on the altar: it was never to go out. Thus, we should always perpetuate and practice the presence of God, feeding the fire with the fuel of prayer and meditation.

Fire also stands for the *Divine Purity*. As the Plague of London was stamped out by the Great Fire which destroyed the nests where it had bred; and as the furnace rids the ore of dross— so the Holy Spirit in thy heart and mine is a guarantee of holiness and righteousness all our days.

Fire also stands for *Divine Fellowship*. It consumed that part of the offering which was placed on the altar; and it seemed as if the Divine nature was therefore feeding upon the sacrifice, whilst the remainder of it was consumed by the offerer. Thus, also, we have communion with God, as we eat the bread and drink the wine in the Lord's supper. We feed on Christ in adoration, faith, and identification. *God* feeds on the completeness of Christ's obedience, and the glory of His character. Thus we have fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the Holy Ghost.

2 Chronicles 8:11

“And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come.”

ON this account Solomon said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel. What a fatal admission! She was the daughter of Pharaoh, and therefore it was no doubt considered a splendid match for the young king; and yet she could not dwell within the precincts of the old city of David, hallowed by the presence of the Ark. “He brought her out of the city of David, into the house that he had built for her.” So from the very outset there was division of interests, making way no doubt for much of the waywardness of Solomon’s character in after life, so that we are told “his wives turned away his heart.”

One of the first questions that youth and maiden should put in considering the question of marriage is, whether there can be perfect sympathy in the best and deepest things; for how can two walk together except they be in agreement?

The blessedness of the marriage tie depends on whether the two are one in spirit, in a common love for Christ, and endeavor for His glory. Nothing is more terrible than when either admits in the secrecy of the heart, concerning the other, My husband or my wife cannot accompany me into the holy places where I was reared, and in which my best life finds its home.

All friendship should follow the same law. We must abide together in the secret place of the Most High, if our friends and we are to be friends indeed. All places may be made holy where the Ark of God’s covenant comes. Where it goes, love may safely follow; but woe to the love that cannot! Its inability proves its lack of elements of permanence and perfect satisfaction.

2 Chronicles 9:1

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.”

SHE came to the *right place*, for Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in wisdom; and all the kings of the earth sought his presence, to hear the wisdom that God had put into his heart. Bring your hard questions to Christ; He is greater than Solomon. To Him is given riches and wisdom, and He is made unto us wisdom. Before the touch of His light the darkest perplexities must resolve themselves. Though He speaks no audible word, the hardest questions are answered to the eyes and ears of such who wait before Him.

She came in the *right spirit*, bringing him gold and spices and precious stones. Those who would receive from Christ must be willing to give to Him. There must be reciprocity; and if we hope to receive from Him from those infinite stores for which He has the key, we must count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and must be prepared to count them as refuse if only we may will in Him.

She came to a *right conclusion*. He answered all her questions, and she returned congratulating his servants and blessing God. To each of us, life is full of perplexities, to which we can find no solution, however much we strain our eyes and weary our minds. But away there in the light Christ stands, with the perfect plan of every maze in His possession, with a key for every riddle, and solution for every enigma. Wait patiently. Each tough knot will be untied; and there will come into our hearts a radiance, a bounding joy like that with which the Queen of Sheba turned to go to her own home. The half of the greatness of thy wisdom, O Word of God, can never be told!

2 Chronicles 10:15

“So the king hearkened not unto the people: for the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.”

THIS revolt must have seemed to be the result of an unfortunate mistake on the part of the ill-advised young king. He and the young men who gathered around him thought that the best way to rule people was by showing a strong hand, and adopting a policy of non-compliance; with their very natural requests. But as the result, the Ten Tribes, never very closely bound to David’s line, sprang away from it, leaving, as Ahijah had foretold, only two out of the twelve pieces of the rent garment. Here, however, a deeper explanation is given: “It was brought about of God.” It seemed to be altogether a piece of human folly and passion; but now we are suddenly brought into the presence of God, and told that beneath the plottings and plannings of man He was carrying out His eternal purpose.

To detect this Divine purpose lying beneath the cross-currents of human affairs is the prerogative of the saints. In a recent book, the Duke of Argyll has argued from the *purpose* of nature. With as much certainty we may apply that word to history, politics, the course of current events. All is under law. God doeth according to His will among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Without contravening the action of man’s free choice He carries out His great designs and works His sovereign will. Let us trust in this Almighty Providence, which underlies all events and catastrophes, and pursues its beneficent objects undeterred by our sins. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and weaves the malignant work of Satan into His plans.

2 Chronicles 11:16

“And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers.”

ALL the tribes were represented in those great convocations around the Temple and Ark of God. The territory of the northern tribes was now under Jeroboam; the gulf between the two kingdoms was marked and distinct. Everything was done by the son of Nebat to make it difficult for his people to cross the frontier; but their spiritual affinities prevailed. They were stronger than the antipathy which Rehoboam's haughty behavior had excited; stronger than the fear of incurring odium with their own king; stronger than the inconvenience of the long journey. In spite of everything, those whose hearts were set on seeking the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers.

Does not this foreshadow the unity of the Church of Christ? Territorial distinctions, the risk of incurring disfavor, the necessity of making a sacrifice, these things are as nothing compared with the attraction of our common Lord. Amid wide disunion and disparity of every kind, there is one mighty bond which draws believers of every nation, kindred, tribe, and people together. Each morning we all ascend the steps of the same temple of prayer; each evening we join in one great hymn of praise; at each Lord's Supper we sit at the same table. Eating of one Bread, we know that we are one Loaf; drinking of one Cup, we profess our indebtedness to the same precious Blood for our hope and ground of acceptance (1 Corinthians 10:17).

We must set our hearts, if we desire to execute any great purpose in our life: otherwise we shall be daunted and checkmated by the strong opposition of men and things.

2 Chronicles 12:14

“And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.”

IN the margin of the A. V. for *prepared* the alternative rendering *fixed* is suggested. This is very true of all of us. Before temptation comes we almost always have a warning of some kind. The barometer falls; the sea birds come in to the shore; the leaves of the trees are bent back. The Spirit of God contrives to give the soul some signal that at any moment it may expect an assault. The question always is at such a time, Is the heart set on seeking and doing the will of God? If it be, if without reserve the whole nature is determined to do God’s will at any cost, there is no fear of the enemy effecting an entrance. All day the thunder of its artillery may boom around, but from every side the foe will be repelled, until presently the storm will roll far down the wind.

If, on the other hand, there is any vacillation; if, whilst ostensibly avowing our determination to do the right thing, we secretly whisper in our deepest consciousness that we intend to go as far as we can in self-indulgence, and would be almost thankful if circumstances compelled us to yield— we are almost certain to fall. The will must be whole in its resolves; the heart must be consecrated in its most secret determinations; no traitor may be harbored, who may open the postern gate. Oh to say with David, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed”! But this steadfastness is one of those preparations of the heart which can only be obtained through the gracious indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Hence we pray with David, “Renew a steadfast spirit within me.” And while we pray, we must never forget our Lord’s command to watch also.

INFORMATION ON THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS USED IN THIS DEVOTIONAL

2 SAMUEL: David, the Greatest King of Israel

Writer: Probably Samuel, Nathan and Gad

Key Passage: “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.” (2 Samuel 7:16)

Remarks: It shows how the monarchy becomes effectively consolidated in Israel under its greatest king, David.

Outline:

1. King David’s Triumphs (ch. 1-10)
2. King David’s Transgression (ch. 11-12)
3. King David’s Troubles (ch. 13-20)
4. King David’s Testimonies (ch. 21-24)

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Scripture Memory Programme 2009

The Fruit-Bearing Christian

One sure sign of spiritual health is fruitfulness. Just as a farmer rejoices at the appearance of good fruit on his plants, our heavenly Father rejoices when our lives bear fruits for His glory. The fruits we should bear include disciple-making, godly living, victorious living and our close walk with Him. May you experience the blessedness of bearing these fruits in your life as you memorise and meditate on the passages of Scripture found below.

April 5 & 12 – Our Mediator

1 Timothy 2:5-6 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

April 19 & 26 – Christian Living

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

May 3 & 10 – Honouring Parents

Ephesians 6:2-3 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth..

May 17 & 24 – Godliness & Contentment

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

May 31 – Gospel

Hebrews 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

June 7 & 14 – Bearing Reproach

1 Peter 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

June 21 & 28 – Parenting

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

July 5 & 12 – The Word of God

Psalms 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

July 19 & 26 – The Spirit-Filled Life

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

August 2 & 9 – Faith for Victory

1 John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

August 16 & 23 – Spiritual Renewal

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

August 30 – Gospel

Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

September 6 & 13 – Victorious Living

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

September 20 & 27 – Persevering in Faith

Hebrews 12:1 - Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

October 4 & 11 – Faith in God

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

October 18 & 25 – Guidance from God

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

November 1 & 8 – Wisdom from God

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

November 15 & 22 – Help for Prayer

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

November 29 – Gospel

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

December 6 & 13 – Hindrance to Prayer

Psalms 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

December 20 & 27 – Christ's Birth

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.