

Our Daily Homily

By
F.B. Meyer
VOLUME Ten
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.

Psalm 84:11

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

HOW God suits Himself to our need! In darkness, He is a Sun; in the sultry noon, a Shield; in our earthly pilgrimage He gives grace; when the morning of heaven breaks, He will give glory. He suits Himself to every varying circumstance in life. He becomes what the exigency of the moment requires. And as the psalmist well says, He withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly. Learn the art of extracting from God the special form of help of which you stand in need.

The Sun is the source of light and life. With impartial beneficence He scatters His beams on palace and cottage, mountain summit and lowland vale. He is ever pouring out His beams. It is our part only to stand in them, or to open casement or door. God is shining, dear heart. Get out of thyself, and sun thy shivering frame in His untiring love.

A Shield may be the shadow of a great rock in the scorching desert, or the canopy of a gourd's growth. Put God between yourself and the sirocco of temptation. Is the noon with its burning heat too much for thee? Hide in the Lord God. The heat shall not smite thee by day, nor the frost by night.

Dost thou need *Grace*? He is full of it. His grace is sufficient. With both hands He will give and give again; only practise the habit of taking. Grace is the bud of which *Glory* is the flower. If He has given this, He will not withhold that. If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst be sure that Glory in germ is within thee, waiting only for the summer of Eternity to develop in perfect beauty. “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the *glory* of God.” (Romans 5:2)

Psalm 85:10

“Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

THIS has been fitly called “the bridal of the earth and sky.” *Mercy* is the love that finds its reason in itself, its measure in helplessness and ill-desert. But in God it is always blended with *Truth*. God must be faithful to His covenant relations, to His Son, to Himself, and to the law which He has instituted. Any display of mercy must be consistent with truth. These are heavenly twins. Where you meet one you will be sure of the other. Jesus was full of grace and truth. The love He brings is consistent with the highest considerations; and by His death it is so arranged that God acts consistently with His holy law in loving and saving the meanest and weakest believer.

Righteousness has for her twin sister *Peace*. “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” (Isaiah 32:17) The King of Righteousness is after that the King of Peace. If you want peace, you must be right with God; and if you would be right with God, you must come to Jesus and become united to Him, who is made unto us the righteousness of God. At the cross these two kissed. The righteousness of God was satisfied, and the peace of man secured.

What a wondrous cross is that on which the Prince of Glory died! The question was — How could God be just, and yet justify the ungodly? How could He uphold the majesty of the moral law, and yet take sinners to His heart? But the answer came clear and satisfying, when the Maker of man took on Himself our sin and gave justice its due. Now see that perfect blending of the Divine attributes, and that God is “just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Romans 3:26) Oh that truth might spring up as the response and echo of our hearts!

Psalm 86:5

“For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.”

WE are blinded by sin, and cannot believe that God is *ready to forgive*. We think that we must induce Him to forgive, by tears, promises of amendment, religious observances. There is in every heart such difficulty in understanding the unwearying patience and ever-yearning love of our Heavenly Father. Oh, clasp this word to your heart! Say it over and over again — “Ready to forgive, ready to forgive!” At any moment of the sad history of the prodigal, had he returned, he would have found his old father as ready to forgive as on the day, too long delayed, when he did return. The only pity was that he had not come long before.

You have fallen a hundred times, and are ashamed to come to God again; it seems too much to expect that He will receive you again. But He will, for He is *ready to forgive*. You feel that your sin is aggravated, because you knew so much better; but it makes no difference to Him, He is as *ready to forgive* you now, as when first you came. You are disposed to wait a little, till your sin has become more remote, till passion has subsided, till the inscription has faded from the wall; but you might as well go at once, God is as *ready to forgive* at this moment as at any future time. You are wounding Him greatly by doubting Him. He is ready, waiting, eager to forgive. You have only to call upon Him, and you would discover the plenteousness of His mercy. How ready Jesus ever was to forgive sinners, herein revealing God’s heart!

“O Love, Thou deep eternal tide,
How dear are men to Thee!
The Father’s heart in opened wide
By Jesus blood to me.”

Psalm 87:7

*“As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there:
all my springs are in thee.”*

“**A**LL my fresh springs,” the Prayer-book version has it. Perennial freshness! This is our portion. We have only to abide in Christ in daily, hourly faith, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, for where that is secured there need be no further effort; naturally, perennially, plentifully, there will arise in us the fountains whose source is God, and the ultimate destination of whose waters are the wildernesses and deserts around.

Do you want freshness in *your love*? The vintages of other years cannot provide you with the ruddy clusters and the wine of sacrifice required for present day needs. You want new enthusiasm, tenderness, and interest in those around you. Deepen your union with God by faith and prayer. Your fresh springs are in Him; He will Himself be in you a spring of living water, rising up to everlasting life and love.

Do you want freshness in *your views of truth*? There are such constant demands made on your teaching powers, that you are sometimes fearful of exhaustion. But if you keep your heart open to God, and your soul perpetually nourished by Scripture, you will find that God’s thoughts will come freshly and brightly to you — new as each morning, fresh as spring.

Do you want freshness in *your religious life*? This, too, is His gift, because the life we live in the flesh is, after all, not our own life, but His. Jesus is in us, the Hope and Fount of the true life. All He wants is to have orifices, channels, openings in the rocky soil, and He will arise in us heavenward and God-ward, as fountains in the sunny air. Rise up in us, Thou Blessed One, who art evermore the resurrection and the life!

Psalm 88:2,3

*“Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry;
For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the
grave.”*

THE psalmist has found the quickest argument before his God. There is nothing that so quickly makes the bell ring in heaven as the touch of a troubled hand. When a man is full of the interests of life, of prosperity, and self-content; when the voices of applause resound on every side; when his house is full of children, and his barn of sheaves, his prayer halts, and God seems far away. But let trouble come — let the waters, swollen by many confluent streams, begin to rise within his soul, so that lover and friend are far away, and he compassed with terror (Psalm 88:16, 18), then God bends his ear and heart.

O child of sorrow, do not count that you are cast away! It is true that your Lord cried from His Cross, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46) but even Him, though laden with the sins of the world, the Father held near His heart. And He has not left you, neither can He.

“The earth and every vassal star,
All space beyond the soar of angel wings,
Wait on his word; and yet He stays his ear
For every sigh a suppliant sinner brings.”

Try and think of trouble as storing your heart with seeds of joy; as acting upon you as the fire upon the primeval earth, scattering jewels through its crust; or as the glaciers that brought the rich soil into the valleys; or as the husbandman who buries the seeds of spring in the autumn fields. A veiled angel, nothing else!

“But if, impatient, thou let slip thy cross,
Thou wilt not find it in this world again,
Nor in another; here, and here alone,
Is given thee to suffer for God’s sake.”

Psalm 89:32–33

“Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.”

I WAS asked the other day if I believed, as an increasing number were said to do, that each man bears his own sin, and that there is no such thing as the vicarious imputation of the sins of the world to the Lamb of God. I said at once that this idea, so growingly prevalent, would not avail to help men and women like many of those with whom I come in contact, and are deeply dyed. Tell them that they must bear their own sin, and they turn from you in despair. This is what conscience has been reading to them hourly from the stony book of the law. The soul dreads to have to bear its sin, and cries out for propitiation and covering. A dying man said recently, “I have been into the valley of death, and where is my covering?” Men need a covering. It is requisite that help should be laid upon One that is mighty (Psalm 89:19).

We need to distinguish between guilt and secondary consequences of sin. For guilt we must have the transference of the black load of sin to our Savior. But it is also perfectly true that the nervous or physical system of the drunkard will never be what it might have been. The consequences of wrongdoing must be reaped. God will forgive you, and His loving-kindness will not depart; but He will visit your transgression with the rod, and your iniquity with stripes. But even here His mercy will avail to transform the curse into a blessing, and make myrtles bloom where thistles had flourished. God’s love can so transmute these results of sin, that where sin reigned unto death, grace shall reign unto eternal life. But never forget that, when once God has entered into covenant with a soul, He will stand to it, till the heavens be no more.

Psalm 90:14

“O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.”

IT was towards the close of the desert wandering that Moses wrote this sublime psalm, all the imagery of which is borrowed from the wilderness. The watch around the camp-fire at night; the rush of the mountain flood; the grass that sprouts so quickly after the rain, and is as quickly scorched; the sigh of the wearied pilgrim (Psalm 90:9). As the old man looks back on life, he gives it as his experience that the heart which is satisfied with mercy in the morning, never fails to rejoice and be glad all its days.

There is no hour like that of morning prime for fellowship with God. If we would dare to wait before Him for satisfaction *then*, the filling of that hour would overflow into all other hours. A bright Christian lad, giving his brief testimony for Jesus recently, told his secret when he said that at his conversion he trusted the Lord with his morning hour; and the way he spoke of it indicated the radiancy of the light that shone for him then.

Perhaps the morning of life was rather in Moses' thought. If so, the old man has prepared a prayer in which successive generations of bright children may join. Young ones, do you want a glad and rejoicing life? Do you want to live by the well that will never dry up or freeze? Seek God's mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord, and the day will never dawn when you will regret having made that choice: nay every day will be full of rejoicing gladness. I like that record of the holy Columba, at the end of his saintly life, "Angelic in appearance, graceful in speech, holy in work, beloved by all — for a holy joy ever beaming on his face revealed the joy and gladness with which the Holy Spirit filled his inmost soul."

Psalm 91:9

“Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;”

THE structure of this psalm is often obscured. It begins with the announcement on the part of the chorus of the general truth that to dwell in the inner place of fellowship is to abide under the protection of Divine Power.

Twice the psalmist speaks. In the second verse we hear him saying:—

“I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress:
My God; in him will I trust.”

In the ninth verse he breaks in again:—

“Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge.”

And each profession on his part is followed by the outburst of the chorus with an enunciation of all the blessings which most certainly will accrue.

In the last three verses (Psalm 91:14–16) God Himself is introduced, assuring His child of all that He is prepared to do and be. Have you ever said definitely, “O Lord, Thou art my refuge”? Fleeing from all other, have you sheltered in Him from the windy storm and tempest, from the harrow by day, and pestilence by night, from man and devil? You must avow it. Do not only think it, but say it. Keep saying it because it *is* true, rather than because you *feel* it to be true. Not only in the midst of sympathizing friends, but in hours of loneliness, desertion, and opposition.

In a farm, in which I am interested, we have an incubator, the artificial heat of which hatches hundreds of little chickens; but there always seems a great lack in their lives — no mother’s call or wing. They invariably remind me of those who have not sheltered under the wing of God.

Psalm 92:10

“But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

THERE is perennial freshness in God — in the works of nature, in His love, and in the renewal of the soul. Does the eye ever tire of the changeful beauty of the clouds? Though we look out from childhood to old age on the same landscape, there is always something fresh to captivate the roving eye. Think of the unfailing freshness in love — love of woman to man, of mother to child. Think of the freshness of each returning day, of earth in her springtime robe, with the myriads of sweet children, whose laughter is as ringing and their eyes as bright as if the earth were young, instead of being old and weary. And if God can do this for the works of His hands, is there any limit in the freshness which He will communicate to His children?

Each morning bend your heads, ye priests of the Most High, for the fresh anointing for the new ministries that await you. The former grace and strength will not suffice; old texts must be rejuvenated and reminted; old vows must be respoken; the infilling of the Holy Spirit must be as vivid, and may be as definite, as at the first. See to it that you do not rise from your knees till you can say, “I have been, and am, anointed with the fresh oil.” And the anointing that ye receive from Him shall abide on you, teaching you how to abide in Him. So you shall bring forth fruit in old age, and in life’s winter be full of sap and fervor.

Pastor Harms used to say: Pray diligently. I do not mean your common prayer alone; but pray diligently in your room daily for the Holy Spirit. How their faces shine, who receive this daily unguent!

Psalm 93:3

“The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.”

HOW often a man says these words over to himself as he paces the deck of the steamer in mid-Atlantic! There is no commentary to this psalm like that supplied by the break of the waves. Sometimes the voice of the floods is deafening; you cannot hear yourself speak; at other times all night, through the port-hole, you hear their musical break beneath. The lifted up voice of the sea gives many notes in the great organ of nature, sometimes the deep bass, at other times the silvery treble. One says to one’s self—

“What are the wild waves saying?”

They may be inciting one another to a work of destruction and devastation, roaring in their rage, fretting for supremacy. Why should they endure the presence of man in their wild waste? He is an intruder. The sea-gulls are welcome; they are at home as in their native element, but man has no right.

So do the waves of trouble roar wildly around the bark of our life. There are times when billowing surge rolls in upon the soul, and breaks with boom and roar; but always there floats upon the soul the refrain of this sublime canticle, “The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” (Psalm 93:4) He sits as King, higher than the spray is tossed, deeper than the fathomless depths, mightier than the strongest billow. Let Him but say, “Peace, be still”! (Mark 4:39) and the greatest storm that ever swept the waves with wild fury sinks into the tranquil sleep of childhood. Or, if we sink beneath the wave, we shall but fall into the hollow of God’s hand, where the oceans are cradled.

Psalm 94:12–13

*“Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and
teachest him out of thy law; That thou mayest give him rest from
the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.”*

THE reason of chastening is rest-giving. God chastens us that He may give its rest from the days of adversity. In sorrow we learn lessons which serve us in good stead when others suffer without remedy. In trial-times the child of God falls back upon the lessons his Father taught him out of the black letter-book of pain, and he knows how to comport himself. Thus he finds rest to his soul, rest in the will of God, rest in humble submission to his lot, rest in the wisdom that cannot err, in the love that cannot forget.

God teaches all the scholars in His school. He dares entrust none to an usher. Enter thyself as a scholar in the academy of grace, and thou shalt at once be taught, as all His children are, of God.

There is but one text-book for the whole school. It is always the Law of God. We learn from it when we are babes. In mature life we resort to it at every emergency. In old age we feel we never understood before its meaning or beauty. It is God’s “horn-book.”

Those who have sat longest under God’s tuition profess they know least. Instead of beginning at the lowest class and working up, we begin at the highest, and work down. The grey-heads sit on the infants’ forms, and the simplest are the wisest. There is blessedness, not in roaming the fields, but in sitting on the bench and learning what God teaches each soul that will give heed.

Some day, the lessons will be done, the doors thrown open, and the scholars will be dismissed, never to return to the hard bare forms, but to go for holy-days of never-ending gladness in the Father’s home.

Psalm 95:11

“Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.”

GOD’S Rest has been waiting for man’s entrance, since He rested from all the work that He created and made. To all other days there were evening and morning, but not to this. It does not consist in circumstances, or conditions of existence, but in disposition. It does not lie, as sacred poets have too often suggested, beyond the confines of this world — it is now, and here. Canaan is not primarily a type of heaven; but of that blessed experience which is ours when we have passed the Jordan of death to natural impulse or selfish choice, and have elected for evermore to accept, and delight in, the will of God.

Will you not take up this position today? *Today!* Oh that ye would hear His voice! To hear His voice speaking in the heart, in circumstances, and in nature, and to obey promptly, gladly, blithely, — this would bring the soul into the rest that remains unexhausted for the people of God. Are you hardening your heart against some evident duty to which you are called, but which you are evading? Are you hardening your heart to some appeal which comes to you through the ties of kinship and nature? Are you saying, Can God subdue these Canaanites, instead of *God can?* Beware, for this is the sin of Massah and Meribah, which, being interpreted, means *strife*. Woe to those that strive with their Maker; let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth.

Every one comes in the Christian life, once at least, to Kadesh-Barnea. On the one hand the land of rest and victory; on the other the desert wastes. The balance, quivering between the two, is turned this way by faith; that by unbelief. Trust God, and rest. Mistrust Him, and the door closes on rest, to open to wanderings, failure, and defeat.

Psalm 96:10

“Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.”

TELL it out! The message is too good to warrant silence. That the Lord is King is the secret of jubilation and blessing for all the world.

Nature is glad, because his rule will emancipate her from the thralldom under which she has groaned too long. When the kingdom is established in the hand of the Son of Man, the long travail of creation will be over; the new heavens and earth will have emerged. Therefore the psalmist depicts the outburst of thanksgiving from seas, and fields, and trees. The world of men may be glad also, because the reign of Jesus means equity for the oppressed, equal-handed justice for the poor, peace among the nations.

But, above all, gladness becomes the saints. If the Lord Jesus has become King of your heart, and has brought blessing to you, do not hesitate to give voice to your allegiance. In private, sing unto Him a new song; in public, show forth His salvation, and declare His glory. Tell it out, tell it out! Have you ever seriously considered whether it may be God’s will for you to give up your life to go forth to distant lands, to tell it out that God has made Jesus King, and that He must reign, and that His reign is blessedness?

Probably but a very brief interval remains, during which we can tell it out. Human history has well-nigh fulfilled its six working-days, and approaches its millennial rest; the times of the Gentiles, according to every computation, are nearly fulfilled; the lawlessness, which was to mark the last days, is conspicuously manifest; the bride is rapidly completing her preparation for the marriage-feast — haste then, O heralds of Salvation, prepare in the deserts a highway for our God!

Psalm 97:11

“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”

LIGHT means recognition, joy, song. These await such as are clad about with the righteousness of Christ, and are following the paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake. Never swerve from the path of the righteous; however trying and dark your present experience may be, it leads to a harvest-home of joy beyond the years.

Sowing is sad work. It is a casting away of precious seed; the flinging far and wide of the treasured stores of the barn; an expenditure of the present for the future. The sower’s heart might fail if it pictured the field mice, the rotting rains, the blighting mildew, which have ruined so many hopes, and lie in wait. So the present is your sowing-time; but every moment of trial, each stab of pain, nobly borne, is a seed-germ cast into the furrows, which will certainly bring a blessed recompense of light. You do not realize it, but you are sowing light. Each act of self-denial, in which you cast yourself into the ground to die, is a seed-germ of the harvest of gladness.

Coal is sown light. When the forests in all the glory of their foliage were hurled into the bosom of the primeval earth, and desolation reigned, it seemed a sad waste of the Creator’s work. Who could have realized then that God was really sowing the light of winter nights, the fires of factory and forge? Do not be too sad. Harvest will come, though the weeks move slowly.

“All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of Good shall exist:
Not its semblance, but itself; no Beauty, nor Good, nor Power,
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist,
When Eternity affirms the conception of an hour.”

Psalm 98:1

“O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.”

COME, my soul, thou must awake to sing a new song. Thou hast dwelt long enough on those old, sad, minor chords of loss and disappointment, of regret for the withered past, of bitter remorse. Surely there is something better, nobler, worthier of thee and thy great Lord. Has He not done, is He not doing, marvellous new things in thy daily experience? Are not His mercies new every morning, and His faithfulness every night? Is not His love always at work spreading thy table for new meals, making thy bed for new slumber, contriving new alleviations and delights? Look out for these till meditation induces thanksgiving.

There is always a new song in heaven, because there is ever a fresh and deepening appreciation of God. The exploring parties are continually bringing back some fresh and wonderful produce of God's wisdom and grace; and as they hold it up to the admiration of kindred spirits, the exhibition elicits new songs. Through the Church is made known to the principalities and powers of the heavenlies the manifold wisdom of God. The song of redeeming grace can never grow old, even though the same words recur; they resemble the banks of the stream through which waters are passing that never passed before. My soul, listen to the bursting harmonies of creation, seas, floods, hills; they chide thee. Cast off the spirit of heaviness, and don the garment of praise. Perchance thy soul is sluggish and dull. But it should not master thee. The psalmist was master of his soul; and when he bade it bless the Lord, all that was within him broke forth into melodious thanksgiving. Let thy spirit, energized by the Holy Spirit, be regnant over the entire realm of thy inner life.

Psalm 99:6

“Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.”

EVIDENTLY those that call upon the name of God compose a separate class. There are classes of prophets, pastors, teachers; and there are the mighty wrestlers with God, whose voices are familiar sounds in the Divine presence chamber. It is a high honour to be included among them that call upon His name. If you cannot find your place in any other class, perhaps it is here. Possibly you have great gifts of prayer and intercession, which you have never rightly employed, to your own great loss, and the loss of others. Do not wait for God’s Angel of Providence to shut you forcibly into a lonely chamber, and compel you to use your great gift.

Samuel’s prayers are frequently referred to. At times he would cry unto God all night. He counted it a sin to cease to pray for the people. His prayers secured the defeat of the Philistines; and the nation sheltered itself in his intercessions. We can never estimate the worth of a good man’s prayers; and they lift a man like Samuel, destitute of commanding genius, to stand side by side with Moses in the estimate of Eternity.

In a memorable interview with the late George Muller, he told me some of his wonderful experiences in dealing with a prayer-answering God. Just before he died he heard of the conversion of an old man, for whom he had prayed during fifty years. May not he, and such as he, be remembered in this holy category? Oh to be remembered among those that call on God’s name! But always bear in mind the thrice accentuated message of this Psalm (Psalm 99:3, 5, 9), that God is holy. It is only as we are cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, that we can prevail in intercessory prayer.

Psalm 100:3

“Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”

THE sense of God’s proprietorship is the true basis of our consecration. We must realize His rights over us before we can freely give Him His due. Those rights are manifold in their sweet reasonableness; but amongst them all, this of creation is one of the chief. God has a right to us because He has made us.

He made us, as the potter fashions the clay, for a distinct purpose; and surely He has a right to use the vessels of His workmanship for the purpose unto which He has designed them.

He made us, as the builder erects a house for the purpose of inhabiting it; and surely He has a right to occupy every distinct room, and go to and fro in it as He may please.

He made us, as the hand of the weaver makes some textile fabric for wearing; and surely He must not be debarred from the free and unquestioned disposal of that on which He has expended anxiety and time.

We are Christ’s by creation, by purchase, by toils and tears, by the gift of the Father. The Good Shepherd owns us, though we do not always acknowledge His ownership, or repay His pains and wounds on our behalf. Look up into His face and say, “I am thine by a myriad ties, and am bound to Thee for evermore. Lead me where Thou wilt; guide me whither Thou chooseth; count me as one of thy people; feed me on thy pasture-lands; make as much of me as Thou canst, this aide of heaven; number me with thy saints in glory everlasting.”

“With bowed heads and open hearts,” says Dr. Westcott, “may we offer ourselves. We can do no more, and we dare do no less.”

Psalm 101:2

“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”

THIS is the hardest place to walk in perfectly. It seems easier to walk perfectly among strangers than in one’s own house. But you may rest assured that a man is really no better than he is to his own. You must not gauge your worth by what the outside world thinks and says, but by the estimate of those that see you in the ordinary intercourse of the home.

To be perfectly courteous to those whom you are meeting at every meal; to hold yourself under perfect control when worried by tiny insidious jars, and stung by almost invisible gnats; to maintain always the perfect girding of the loins; to have the head always anointed and the face always washed; to realize God’s ideal, love’s ideal, and your own. Ah, me! this requires the utmost grace that God can give. To die once is easy; to live always with an undivided heart, this is hard.

Understand that in the home-life God is educating and training you for the greatest victories. There you are learning the deepest lessons in sanctification. You need not run to conventions, sermons, and holiness meetings; if you would resolve to walk in your house with a perfect heart, you would discover how far from perfect you are, and how you are the least of His saints. Seek the perfect heart in your home-life; for then God will come unto you, and dwell beneath your roof, and the story of Bethany would be reduplicated for your household and yourself.

“Perhaps ‘a single heart’ is never known,
Save in the yielded life that lives for God alone;
And that is therefore doubted as a dream
By those who know not the tremendous power
Of all-constraining love.”

Psalm 102:27

“But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.”

THIS psalm is by an anonymous singer. All we know of him is that he was overwhelmed, and poured out his complaint before God. But that lonely, sorrowful heart caught glimpses of God, which it has transmitted to all the world, enriching it forever more. Sometimes we are led to wander alone in desolate places to catch new visions of the Eternal, bidden from ordinary souls; thus ardent artists are indifferent to peril and privation if they can catch a mountain from some fresh point of vision, and transfer a passing glimpse to their immortal canvas.

This psalm is despairful enough in its earlier passages. The smoke-wreath dissipated in the breeze, the withered grass of the desert, the declining shadow, the chirrup of a lonely sparrow — such are the images that occur naturally enough. But as he sings the man’s vision clears. He looks away from the earth-mists to the Eternal God. Here, at least, is the permanent and unchanging. Did He make all things? Then He can unmake them, and be Himself evermore the same. Let the earth vanish like a dream; let the time-sphere be ended; let the very heavens wear out like a moth-eaten garment; let the nearest and dearest pass from our embrace. Thou art the same; Thou art left; Thou remainest. “All that is transitory forsaketh us; but Christ’s seal of recognition forsaketh us not even in death, but bringeth us to the joyful heavenly host, unto our eternal fatherland.”

The writer to the Hebrews attributes these words to Him who was the brightness of the Father’s glory (Hebrews 1). We should read the psalm again with this reference in our mind. Our Savior is God, and He is the unchanging Rock of Ages in whom we may shelter.

Psalm 103:17

“But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children;”

NOTE the contrast. Man’s frailty against the everlastingness of God’s mercy. We are frail as the flower of the field. Each generation of man comes forth like the grass and flowers, which clothe the meadows in spring only to meet the remorseless scythe. But frail as is our physical life, our resolutions and intentions are still more so. One day our soul is covered by the laughing beauty of hope, and faith, and love, kindly thoughts, heavenly aspirations, gracious deeds — the next the whole crop lies smitten and withered.

But God’s love does not alter with our altering, or change with our changes. Does the mother’s love fluctuate with the moods of her sick babe? God loves constantly, with an ardent, intense affection, which delivers from dross the heart that is yielded to Him, and secures at last its transformation into his own likeness. If you will let Him, God will yet love you right. Love will make even your tough nature a miracle of beauty. But the friction of the lapidary’s wheel and the diamond dust may hurt you a little. Never mind, love is behind it all. There never was a time when He did not love you — His mercy is from everlasting; nor a time when He will love you less — it is to everlasting.

When at last you have found your centre in God’s love, a joy will arise within you, which will pour itself forth in blessing, and you will find yourself but one chorister among myriads in heaven and earth. It will appear to you as though angels and hosts in heaven, together with the saints of all the dispensations on earth, compose one vast choir. But none has any right to presume on this mercy, unless the condition of godly fear has been fulfilled.

Psalm 104:3

“Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:”

AS I write these words on the bosom of the broad Atlantic, there is little for the eye to rest on but the heaving waters through which we are swiftly cutting our path, and the expanse of sky through which float the great piles of cloud. It is pleasant to think of them as the chariots of God; the heavens beyond are the curtains of His tent; this wind is His swift-stepping messenger; this exquisite light glancing on sky and sea is His garment, hardly dense enough to veil His visible Presence. O Nature, how can we do other than love thee, since the Being of our God is so closely mingled with thy hues and forms!

How often God visits us in a chariot of cloud! We look up and see the looming darkness, and forebode evil. But if we could look down, as from a seat in the heavenlies, we should behold our God sitting within, radiant with golden glory, and hastening to bless. In dry, waterless lands, the rain-bearing clouds are signally the chariots of blessing.

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”

When the soul, says one, is born again into the Divine light, she becometh a humble, loving, winning creature, that beareth every cross and reproach, that regardeth no insult, either from man or devil, that places her love and confidence in the heart of God, full of joy, fed by the Word of God, bathed in a smile of heavenly triumph. But the reason for this is in the absolute confidence that God is in all our life, and that

“The cloud which spreads above,
And veileth love
Itself is Love,”

*Psalm 105:18**“Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:”*

ANOTHER rendering suggests “His soul entered into the iron.” May we not yet again turn the sentence round, and say that the iron entered into his soul? When we first meet him, Joseph is a tender, yielding lad, with dreams of rule, but no conspicuous power. Yet he emerges from his captivity well qualified to take the helm of Egypt, just then sore driven and tossed by tempest. How can this striking transformation be accounted for, save that he had taken iron into his moral nature through his painful experiences?

The physician often prescribes an iron tonic for anemic patients: and what iron is to the outer man that also the captivity of circumstances, deferred hope, and anguish of soul are to the inner. You have been fickle and uncertain of late; dreaming of power, but powerless; yearning for the only good, but greedy of trifles; you must have a course of iron. God wants Iron Dukes, and Iron souls. And there is a process also by which He can turn Iron to Steel. It means high temperature, sudden transitions, and blasts of heavenly air.

“If call’d, like Abraham’s child, to climb
The hill of sacrifice,
Some angel may be there in time—
Deliverance shall arise!

“Or if some darker lot be good,
Oh, teach us to endure
The sorrow, pain, or solitude
That make the spirit pure!”

Life is very mysterious. Indeed, it would be inexplicable unless we believed that God was preparing us for scenes and ministries that lie beyond the veil of sense in the eternal world, where highly-tempered spirits will be required for special service.

Psalm 106:15

“And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.”

ISRAEL insisted on being fed, not with manna only, but with flesh. The people complained of their heaven-sent food as too light and unsatisfying. Their gross appetite demanded some heavier diet. So the wind brought down quails, flying a few feet from the ground, within easy reach of club or stick. These they ate ravenously, voraciously, greedily. “And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails.” (Numbers 11:32) Their pampered bodies were gorged with food. They had their desire, but their souls were starved. “And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.” (Numbers 11:33) They were buried in the graves of lust.

Generally speaking, the soul and body fare inversely. When the body is pampered with every luxury, the soul starves. The soul thrives best when the body cries out. Probably we all have to choose, not once or twice, in life, whether we will have the full satisfaction of our appetites, and lean souls; or be lean as to our circumstances, while the spirit is keen, alert, and full of vigorous life.

It seems as though the shadow of the eternal were perpetually hiding from us the eternal itself. Those that snatch at the shadow miss the eternal; those who refuse to be satisfied with the shadow, reach the satisfying vision of God; and to find God is to find all in and with Him. Oh, do not seek to impose your will on God; do not insist on anything with too great vehemence; let God choose. Whenever you make request for things which are not definitely promised, ask God not to grant them, except it be up for the very best.

Psalm 107:43

“Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.”

THE Harvest of a Quiet Eye” is the fascinating title of a fascinating book. When the heart is quiet in God, the eye looks out on the scenes of nature and life around it, and detects everywhere, even where to ordinary men every appearance seems in the contrary direction, the loving-kindness of the Lord. As life advances, and one climbs the hill, one is able to review the path by which life has been directed and controlled. We observe with the wisdom which we have obtained by long experience, and we understand God’s reasons for many rebuffs, denials, and bitter disappointments. I believe that we shall one day turn to Him, and say, when we know all, “Thou couldst not have done otherwise. We would not have wished otherwise.”

Consider the successive vignettes of this psalm. Love broods over the weary caravan that faints in the desert; visits the prison-house with its captives; watches by our beds of pain; notices each lurch of the tempest-driven vessel; brings the weary hosts from the wilderness into the fruitful soil.

Love is quick to appreciate love. It is natural to a loving heart to find love everywhere. We view all things in hues borrowed from the heart. “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” (1 John 4:8) Ask therefore for a baptism unto the love of God — this will make you quick to perceive and understand His loving-kindness, where others miss it. Be patient also to await the end of the Lord. And when still the vision tarries, dare to believe that one day, when you know as you are known, you shall understand the loving-kindness that underlay your darkest experiences.

Psalm 108:13

“Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.”

THIS is the best way to fight. Keep quietly in fellowship with God; and when the enemy draws nigh, look up to your ever-present Friend, and say, “Now, Lord, now tread down this adversary.” When we are observing the conditions which the psalmist enumerates in this psalm, it is easy to do this. Notice what they are.

The heart must be fixed in an attitude of consecration and devotion. We must be awake right early for fellowship with God, putting on the armour before entering into the battle. We must exalt God in our life and by our lips. Then God will speak in His holiness in our behalf; and when He is for us, who can be against us? Hark to the exultation of the saint. Shechem, Gilead, Manasseh, were famous for their luxuriant fertility, and typify the heavenly graces appropriated by faith. Moab, Edom, Philistia, are synonyms for fierce hostility, and recall our besetting sins, our virulent foes, which fall before us when we are in alliance with the Almighty.

Micah caught sight of this truth, when he said, “The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.” (Micah 2:13) Yes, the Shepherd goes before His flock, but the flock must follow Him. We must not be content with the knowledge that all things are ours in Christ, but must enter on their possession and enjoyment. Of what use is it to know that mines of precious ore lie under the broad acres of an estate, unless they are brought to the surface and prepared for the service of man? And we must not let ourselves be robbed of our heritage in Christ, through the hatred of our spiritual foes, when He waits to tread them under His feet and ours.

Psalm 109:28

“Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice.”

THIS is the Iscariotic psalm. The Apostle Peter quoted it, as applying to Judas, on the occasion of electing a successor to the traitor; but the Church has no desire to appropriate against him or any of her foes the awful anathemas of the psalmist. In reading them we must remember — first, that they may be treated as predictions rather than imprecations, not *let*, but *shall*; secondly, that those earlier days had much of the thunder of Sinai and little enough of the tender accents of Calvary; thirdly, that it seemed to the lovers of God all important that wickedness should be punished in this life, as they had very dim conceptions of the next, and it might appear, otherwise, that God was indifferent to moral distinctions.

Men still curse us. It is one of the badges that we belong to the Lord’s household, that they call us Beelzebub. The offence of the Cross has not ceased; and if none curse us, we may seriously question whether we are following in the footsteps of the Crucified. We must be baptized into our Savior’s death, and die with Him to all fear of man. Until we are willing to be counted the offscouring of all things, we have not entered into the true significance of baptism into His death, and participation in His risen life. The late George Müller said that he made no progress till he came to this. But when we are willing to forfeit our character, to die to our reputation, to be fools for Christ’s sake, then God begins to bless. When men revile, and persecute, and say all manner of evil against us falsely for Christ’s sake, God whispers in our heart, “Great is your reward in heaven.” You never will know how near and tender God can be till you are cast out by your kind.

Psalm 110:3

“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.”

THE literal rendering of the Hebrew is preferable: “Thy people shall be free-will offerings in the day of thy power.” When we recall the quotations of the first verse of this psalm in the New Testament, we have no difficulty in understanding what is meant by the day of His power. It is beyond doubt the day of His ascension, of His enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and of the advent of the Holy Spirit.

Whensoever the Holy Spirit is supreme in a church there will be a free-will offering of young hearts and lives. Clad in the priestly garb of stainless purity, pouring forth from the womb of life’s young morning, they will scatter themselves over the weary earth like myriads of dewdrops on withered vegetation. The Priest-King has a wonderful fascination for youthful volunteers; and as He is so are they.

Have you become a free-will offering? There is every claim for your entire and devoted service. You have been already included in the Father’s gift to the Son; but you must come to Him for yourself. The world has yet to learn what God can do with a soul that is entirely given up to Him. Let Him have your life to shape and mould it, to inspire and infill, to send forth on His errands, to commission for His service. There are no pressed men in our Master’s army — all are volunteers. Offer your will to God; say you are willing to be made willing: He can make you willing in this day of His power, as iron is bent in the fierce flame.

“In full and glad surrender we give ourselves to Thee,
Thine utterly, and only, and evermore to be!
O Son of God, who lovest us, we will be Thine alone,
And all we are, and all we have, shalt henceforth be thine own!”

Psalm 111:2

“The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.”

THE merchant goes forth to seek goodly pearls. Go forth, O Christian heart, to discover fresh jewels in thy Savior’s character. You will find them in meditation, in converse with other souls, but mainly in the reverent investigation of Scripture.

The theme of the Bible is — the works of the Lord. Its constant affirmation is that they are great; that His work is honor and majesty; that He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered; that He shows His people the power of His works; and that the works of His hands are truth and judgment. Where better could we study or seek them out?

Consider God’s works in Creation, as scene after scene is unfolded in the first chapter of Genesis; in, destruction, as when the Deluge swept the earth; in redemption, when He led His people out of Egypt; in judgment, when He handed His people over to their enemies; in the holy Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection of Jesus, and in the coming of the Paraclete. Seek out these great and wonderful works; trace the references made to them in every part of Scripture; find a holy pleasure in reviewing them in all their wealth of significance.

Kepler, when he first turned his telescope to clustered worlds, exclaimed, “I am thinking over again the first thoughts of God.” Oh that the ecstasy of the ardent student of nature might fill our hearts as we direct our thought to the great works of our Savior-God! But our attitude, like his, must be one of reverence, patience, and dependence, on the revealing Spirit. Probably this will be our employment in eternity; ever passing into deeper and fuller appreciation of the works of God, and breaking; into more rapturous songs.

Psalm 112:7

“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.”

THERE cannot be evil tidings to the soul which has fixed its trust in the Lord. Every messenger that comes post-haste into its presence with dispatches brings tidings of what has been permitted or done by our Father; and nothing which is of His ordering or permitting can really injure us. Tidings! Tidings! they are always pouring in, by letter, postcard, and telegram. They are presented in the contents bills of every newspaper, and cried by the newsboys in the streets. But the child of God opens each buff-coloured envelope with untrembling hands, and scans the newspaper columns with unblenching eyes. No tidings can be evil to him; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

But does not the Christian suffer anguish and pain, as others do? Is he stoical and unimpassioned, dull in his emotions, unsympathetic in his affections? Not so; but he refuses to judge things by their appearances. He knows that all things must be working for good on his behalf: in the hieroglyphics he detects his Father’s handwriting; in the mysterious figure standing on the shore, veiled in morning mist, he beholds the Lord who died for him. If tidings were to come to you today of disease, loss, bereavement, death, they could not be evil if your heart dares to maintain a fixed trust in God; for such trust robs death of its sting, and the grave of its victory. I cannot understand, but I can trust Him. Like the fabled philosopher’s stone, faith turns all metals to gold.

“Know well, my soul, God’s hand controls

Whate’er thou fearest;

Round Him in calmest music rolls

whate’er thou hearest.”

Psalm 113:9

“He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.”

THIS is an evident reference to Hannah’s psalm of thanksgiving, when she had borne Samuel, and God had taken away her reproach. Her story, and these words, should be a great comfort to those who have never been used in soul-winning. Remember, too, how Sarah received strength by faith to bear a child, because she counted Him faithful that promised. God can make barren souls authors of life to thousands. These are the conditions:—

Be content, like Hannah, to cherish a sorrowful spirit. Weep before the Lord. Let your request be poured out before God at Shiloh, with the moving lips, though the voice be inaudible. Ask of God with strong crying and tears, that He would still the taunts of your adversary. Souls are only born to those who cannot live without them.

Next, look away from all creature help to God’s faithful promise, and believe that He can make you to become spiritually productive. Claim this of Him. Believe that of stones He can raise up children. Hold Him to His own word. Remind Him of His promise, “I will make thee exceeding fruitful.” (Genesis 17:6)

Hannah promised that her child should be given to the Lord; and Samuel, when old enough, was brought to the Temple in pursuance of her vow. We are too apt to take the glory and credit of soul-winning, instead of acknowledging that, as we could not bear them apart from God, so we may not keep them when they are given. Those who, like Hannah, give their Samuels to God, like her can also break forth and sing, “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord; ... because I rejoice in thy salvation.” (1 Samuel 2:1)

Psalm 114:8

“Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.”

THIS is a miracle which we all need to have wrought in our experience. Our heart is flint, our eyes are dry, our souls fail to respond with tears and regrets to the love of the Pierced One, and to the indictment that charges us with His death. There is little brokenness of heart among God’s children; and it is a sad fact that conviction of sin is a comparatively rare experience among the ungodly. This used not to be so. We have read of whole communities being swept with paroxysms of grief and compunction under the preaching of a Finney. His look on one occasion at a scoffing girl smote her to the soul, and led to so deep a work of grace that a whole factory, and then a village, were filled with mourning. I was told of a revival breaking out in a church, and many hearts being made soft because a band of godly elders confessed their unfaithfulness and shortcomings.

Moses *struck* the rock of flint at the commencement of the wanderings; and was to *speak* to it, at their close. But in either case the effect was identical; the water gushed from its heart of rock. Use thy cross, O Son of God, Lord of the House in which Moses was but a servant, and smite these hard hearts, that tears may flow freely forth; or speak the word. It is said that every building has a chord, to strike which makes it tremble to its base. Surely there is a chord, a note, a tone, before which our hearts would rend, giving Him tears for His sorrow, anguish for His pain!

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” (Psalm 51:17)

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

Psalm 115:8

“They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.”

THAT men become like their ideals is a common-place; and that the heathen resemble their deities is notorious. Men first impute to their deities their own vices, as the Greeks and Romans to the gods and goddesses of their Pantheon; and then endeavor to honour them by imitation.

But, in another sense, this is gloriously true of our relation to the Lord Jesus. If we make Him our ideal, and trust Him with all our hearts, His beauty shall dawn upon our face, and we shall be changed into His image, from glory to glory. We know that when He shall be manifested finally we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; and, in a measure, this process of transformation is taking place in those who see Him by the eye of faith, and are becoming like Him.

We are doing more by our life than by our words. We cannot always speak for Jesus, but we may always live for Him. Of a young girl, lately gone forth as a missionary, who cannot speak a word of the language of the foreign land to which she has gone, I was told the other day that her life, or rather the life of Jesus in her, was exerting a far wider influence than she knew. This is the Divine method: look and live; trust and be transfigured; abide in Him, and He shall abide in you.

Auskar, a missionary to the Scandinavians in the ninth century when asked if he could perform miracles, replied: “If God were indeed to grant that power to me, I would only ask that I might exhibit the miracle of a holy life.” But this is the most difficult of all. It is easier to die once for Jesus, than to live always for Him. Yet God’s grace is sufficient. He will keep us as stars in His right hand.

Psalm 116:4

“Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.”

WHAT could we do without the resource of prayer? When compassed with the cords of death, and held by trouble and sorrow, what help would there be for us who eschew the methods of self-deliverance which the men of the world do not scruple to employ, if we might not betake ourselves to our knees?

“Nay, but much rather let me late returning,
Bruised of my brethren, wounded from within,
Stoop with sad countenance and blushes burning,
Bitter with weariness and sick with sin.

“Straight to thy presence get me and reveal it,
Nothing ashamed of tears upon thy feet;
Show the sore wound, and beg thine hand to heal it;
Pour Thee the bitter, pray Thee for the sweet.”

Only let us never forget the immense importance of those five great “ifs”:—

John 15:7, which touches our life in Him, and His in us, in unremitting fellowship.

Matthew 18:19, which touches our life with others, that must be clear as crystal.

Matthew 17:20, which concerns the vigor and health of our own soul-life.

1 John 5:14–15, which demands that we know God well.

John 14:14, which winnows out from prayer all that is inconsistent with the name of Jesus.

Oh for the deep-dwelling life, spent in the secret place, where earth’s voices grow faint, and God’s clear. Such a life is a perpetual appeal to God’s nature for succor — an appeal which awakens an instant response. “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” (Jeremiah 33:3)

Psalm 117:1

“O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.”

THIS is an unwonted summons from Jewish lips. For the most part the Jews looked with little sympathy on their Gentile neighbors, and had no desire that they should laud Jehovah, save as they became proselytes of Judaism. But where the love of God is strong in the heart, it overleaps the bounds of custom and racial prejudice, and yearns that all the world should know and love the Savior.

“If all the world my Savior knew,
Sure all the world would love Him too.”

We all need more of the emancipating power of the love of Christ, to thaw the icy chains that hang around us, and bid words flow freely from our lips to those whom we had been accustomed to look on as outside the range of our influence. Oh for the passionate desire that God should be universally praised and loved! Oh to be willing to be accounted fools and enthusiasts, if only we may start to praise, lips that otherwise had remained sealed and dumb! Are we doing all we can to kindle the nations to praise? They cannot praise Him whom they do not know. It is mere hypocrisy to bid them praise Him, if we have never sought to spread, by lip or gift, the mercy and truth revealed in Jesus our Lord. Oh that each might ponder the paradox!—

“Christ, alone, can save this world;
But Christ cannot save this world, alone.”

What a lesson is given us by Lough Fook, a Chinese Christian, who, fifteen years ago, was so touched with the condition of the coolies in Demerara, as to sell himself into slavery that he might win them for Christ! He was the means of two hundred joining the Church before he died, five years afterwards.

Psalm 118:27

“God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.”

IS not this altar His Cross? Shall we not ask to be *bound* to it, that we may never be able to start back from our attitude of consecration? There are times when life is full of roseate light, and we choose the Cross; at other times, when the sky is grey, we shrink from it. It is well to be *bound*. Wilt Thou bind us, most blessed Spirit, and enamor us with the Cross, and let us never leave it? Bind us with the scarlet cord of redemption, and the golden cord of love, and the silver cord of Advent-hope: so will we not go back from it, or wish for another lot, than to be the humble partners with our Lord in His pain and sorrow.

The horns of the altar invite thee. Wilt thou come? Wilt thou desist from the thinking, speaking, and willing of thine own selfhood? Wilt thou place the Cross between thyself and the world that entices thee? Wilt thou dwell ever in a spirit of resigned humility, and give thyself to continual repentance and tears? Wilt thou love the Cross of our Lord Jesus and the contempt of the world, and take them as thy meat and drink? Then thou shalt know the life that passes through death, and is life indeed.

How precious are the last lines that David Livingstone penned in his diary, before his boys found him kneeling beside his bed, dead, though in the attitude of prayer, the candle burning beside him: “My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All; to Thee I again dedicate myself.” So bind each of us with the cords of love, and the bands of a man.

Remember Tholuck’s motto, which was adopted by Count Zinzendorf: “I have one passion, and it is He — only He.”

Psalm 119:12

“Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.”

THIS petition occurs many times in the course of this psalm. It is urged on many pleas: because God is blessed, and therefore must want to lift us to share His blessedness; because the suppliant desires to complete the declaration of God’s ways to others; because he is eager to turn them into songs; because the earth is so full of Divine mercy; because God is good, and does good. Take this petition as your guide, and follow it through the psalm, and especially trace that recurring word statutes, and you will see how the whole of this splendid ode crystallizes around it.

There is a heavenly wisdom, which can only be acquired from the lips of the Greatest of Teachers, at whose feet Mary sat. It is not to be acquired by the intellect, but by the heart. It will never come by emulation, ambition, or pride; but to those who live a life of perfect love, of deep humility, and of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Sometimes the pupil wearies of the lesson. Winsome as the Teacher is, the bench is hard, and the horn-book difficult. Outside, the summer land attracts with scent of flower, hum of bee, and frisking squirrel. Yet God loves us too well to let us off till our lesson is learnt. He often turns it back. But some day these statutes shall become our songs in the house of our pilgrimage.

When Elizabeth Fry died at sixty-five, after such a life of Christian philanthropy as few have ever known — for half a century she had been able to affirm that she had never awakened from her sleep, in sickness or in health, by day or by night, without her first waking thought being, “How best may I serve my Lord?”

Psalm 120:5

“Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!”

IT is a bitter experience to have to live where there is no sympathy, but carping criticism and incessant innuendo. A pure-minded friend was recounting to me the other day the anguish he suffered perpetually, because his associates, knowing how acutely he suffered from the least suggestions of impurity, chose to assault his ears continually with abominable expressions. There are souls which have long had their dwelling with those that hate peace. To their least sigh war is the immediate response.

O lily among thorns, this is no new experience! Thy Lord hath been through these paths before thee; see the bent twigs which prove that He has passed this way. But thy loneliness can never be quite as sorrowful as His, for thou hast always Him. And remember, there is a compensation, in that the strict scrutiny of thy foes makes thee ever so much more watchful and prayerful, and drives thee oftener to the bosom of God. One declared to me lately that he had found it easier to live a holy life in a City warehouse than in a Divinity college. Perhaps we gain much more than we know from jealous opposition and criticism.

“Oft in Life’s stillest shade reclining,
In desolation unrepining,
Without a hope on earth to find
A mirror in an answering mind,
Meek souls there are who little deem
Their daily strife an Angel’s theme.”

But as the saintly Samuel Rutherford wrote: “The Cross of Christ is the sweetest burden that I ever bore: it is such a burden as are wings to a bird, and sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my desired haven.”

Psalm 121:1

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.”

IT is not high enough to look to mountains. They are deeply rooted and permanent in their sockets. They rise like the pillars of heaven. Rivulets gush from their sides, vineyards drape their terraced slopes, eternal snows cap them with crowns of unsullied purity. The ancients thought that the gods had chosen them for their home, as on Parnassus or Olympus. To their towering steeps the eyes of their votaries were frequently directed to catch the first symptoms of descending help.

But the psalmist forbears to look to soaring mountains for his help. He lifts his eyes above and beyond, to the Lord which made heaven and earth. Thence shall his help come.

We are all tempted to look at the mountains, to the creature rather than the Creator; to wealth, talent, or influence; to things and people beneath the heavens, instead of to Him who dwells above the heavens, in His infinite majesty, and to whom all power is given in heaven and earth.

O unslumbering Keeper! O sleepless Watcher! Shade from heat, shelter from cold, protector from assault, transformer of ill to good, escort when we go out, home when we return! Thou art the complement of our need. We are content to suffer the loss of all things, to find them all in Thee. And therefore we betake ourselves to thy shadow till life's calamities be overpast.

“Nor can the vain toil cease,
Till in the shadowy maze of life we meet
One who can guide our aching, wayward feet
To find Himself, our Way, our Life, our Peace!
In Him the long Unrest is soothed and stilled;
Our hearts are filled!”

Psalm 122:8

“For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.”

WHAT the earthly Jerusalem was to the Jews, that the holy Church, the Bride of the Lamb, the heavenly Jerusalem, which descends from God out of heaven, and includes within its limits all holy events, is to us. Let us pray for its peace and prosperity; let us esteem them above our own good, and let us be glad if our feet stand within its gates.

When the tribes of the Lord go up to give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness, let us go with them. We may be alone in wane distant land, or traversing the ocean to the swift steamer, bearing us from the land of religious observances, or confined to the sick chamber; but let us never forget that we belong to the holy mystical Church; let us ascend the staircases of prayer and praise; let us mingle our rivulet of adoring love to the mighty torrent that is setting in towards the throne of God and the Lamb; for we are come to the City of God, to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of just men made perfect and to the bond of sprinkling that speaketh better things than Abel’s. Wherever my brethren meet, in whatever section of the Church on earth, so long as they belong to the one Church, the Body of Christ, nothing shall stay me from wishing them prosperity and peace. They may not recognize me here, but five minutes in Heaven will do away with all these earthly estrangements.

When the Church is at peace within herself she flourishes best. “So the Church,” we are told, “throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, had peace, and was edified.” Peace is the condition of up-building and multiplication; but it is only consistent with Truth and Righteousness. First Righteousness, then Peace, then Prosperity.

Psalm 123:1

“Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.”

THESE exquisite Songs of Ascents, prepared for the bands of worshippers as they went up from distant parts of the land to the great annual festivals, are very precious to pilgrim-souls, as from many lands and ages they are gathering home to the throne of the exalted Lamb, who sits at the right hand of God the Father in the highest heavens. And as we journey, we lift up our eyes to His dear face — the face that once was wet with tears and dewed with bloody sweat, but which ere long will shine as the morning when He is anointed with the oil of joy above His fellows. Here is the Old Testament counterpart of the New Testament attitude — looking off unto Jesus.

The slave at the table kept the eye steadfastly fixed on the hand of master or mistress, to obey its least sign and to make it needless to speak. Keep your eye on the pierced hand, child of God; watch its smallest indication; wait patiently until it give some sign. We have too long acted on our own initiative; let us wait on our exalted Lord for the Indication of His will. Let us not look askance at the proud, with their contempt, or on the heaving billows of the world's restless strife; but away to those azure depths and beyond, far above all principality, power, might, and dominion, where God hath exalted Him to be a Prince and a Savior. Let His least gesture be our law.

One day we shall follow the direction of our eyes. Whilst we gaze, we shall be changed; and as we are changed we shall arise to sit with Him on His throne.

“Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far
Through all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride — a glittering star
In raiment white and clean!”

Psalm 124:1

*“If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may
Israel say;”*

HERE is an If which cannot be an *if*. It is never a matter of uncertainty whether the Lord will be on our side or not. For the Lord Jesus in His incarnation and death has taken His place beside us for evermore. He is always on our side, so long as we keep His paths and walk in His ways.

“Though unperceived by mortal sense,

Faith sees Him always near,

A Guide, a Guardian, a Defence;

Then what have you to fear?”

There are in all human lives hours of overpowering anxiety, when we feel as though it were impossible to live another moment — exposed to danger, separated from dear ones, not knowing what an hour may bring forth. Then, as you look up, you find that the Lord is beside you, sharing your anxieties, and affording you His inviolable protection. You cannot descry Him by the eye of sense, but you know Him to be there, and neither man nor devil can prevail against you.

When we look back on life, as the psalmist does here, we become aware of the myriad instances of Divine protection. We were not so vividly conscious at the time; we might even have had fits of depression and counted ourselves bereft. But if we narrowly consider the perils from which we have been rescued, when we were about to be swallowed up quick, we become convinced that He was there. In life and death and judgment, Jesus, your Advocate, will ever stand at your side and “silence all who would condemn”. So that with good courage you may say, “The Lord is my helper; and I will not fear what man shall do unto me!” (Hebrews 13:6)

“Cast all your care on God! That anchor holds!”

Psalm 125:2

“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.”

IT is a beautiful conception. Around the chosen city the mountains stood like sentinels, leaving no part without its barrier. So is God around us; and this enables us to understand how His permissions may become His appointments. It is easy to accept pain and disappointment which come to us direct from His hand; but not so when they approach us from the plotting and malevolence of a Judas or Shimei. It is impossible, however, to arrive at a settled peace, so long as we make a distinction between the afflictions which come to us from the Divine, and those which visit us from the human; and, indeed, the distinction is untenable. For the assaults of our foes are at least permitted by God, and His permissions are His appointments.

This will become evident, if we clearly apprehend that God is round about us, as a rampart to the city, as an envelope to a letter, as the atmosphere to the configuration of our bodies. If then He chooses, He can pass off from us any arrow that might harm us; but if He opens His environing protection, so as to let it pass through to us, by the time it has traversed the atmosphere of His care, it has become His will for us. Put God between yourself and everything. Many put their anxieties between them and God, and see God as the sun through a fog; mind that you put God between yourself and the entire world of men and things.

In a city on the Continent the custodians keep the regalia without iron bars, on what seems to be an open table — but none would dare to touch one jewel, for all around a powerful stream of electricity is perpetually being poured. Invisible, but potent! Such is the encompassing presence of God.

Psalm 126:5

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

SOME husbandmen steep their seeds before they sow them. It is well when Christian workers steep their lessons and addresses with their prayers and tears. It is not enough to sow; we may do that lavishly and constantly, but we must add passion, emotion, tender pity, strong crying and tears, if the second half of the text is to be fulfilled, and we reap in joy.

But what a promise is here! You have sown long and patiently among young or old, sometimes to the point of giving all up in despair; but to give up now would be to miss the harvest and guerdon of all your toils. Be patient, persevere a little longer. God guarantees the harvest. He says, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Psalm 126:6) Even though you were to die, without reaping, yet in another world you would come again, bringing your sheaves.

We are all sowing tears — tears over our darling Absaloms, tears over our failures and mistakes, tears over our disappointed hopes. But each tear overflowing from a consecrated soul is a seed-germ dropped into God’s keeping, and it shall have its reward. He carefully gathers up our tears for His bottle. God is not unrighteous to forget. He guards the buried seed, and stands sponsor for the harvest. No sigh, no tear, no prayer, inspired by the Spirit of God can positively be lost or unproductive. Like your Lord, you shall yet see of the travail of your soul, and be satisfied.

“For while the tired wavelets, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.”

Psalm 127:2

“It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.”

ALL day long we may have been fretting and fuming, running hither and thither, and doing our little best to build the house and keep the city. Sometimes we have turned to look to our faith, to see if that were in good condition, and sometimes to our friends. But we have not done much to forward matters. The weight of our anxiety is unrelieved, the heavy load presses still. Finally we can hold up no longer; with one last helpless look to God we fall back on His everlasting arms, and sleep. We rest long and deeply, till morning taps at the window. We spring up relieved; the storm has ceased, and there, beside us, given whilst we slept, is the boon we had craved and yearned for. It has been given unto His beloved in sleep.

What an emblem of death! We may have been fretting and worrying all our life, have attempted much and done little, have questioned God’s love and care; then, tired and heartbroken, we shall fall asleep on the bosom of Christ, and awake to find the house built, the New Jerusalem set up, with her gates of pearl and walls of jasper, and the kingdom of God come.

Be gone, dull, worrying care! let me rest; sweet Faith and Hope, close mine eyes and still my heart; Jesus, give me sleep, and in sleeping give me my heart’s desire, that I may awake and be satisfied. Curtained by eternal mysteries, guarded by angel watchers, resting on the lap of mother earth, our bodies (though not our souls) shall sleep until the sounding of the Archangel’s trump announce the advent of the new heavens and earth, and we shall awake, like belated sleepers, to find that God has been bringing redemption as we slept.

Psalm 128:1

“Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.”

THE special phase of blessedness here, is that of the home life. The Jews have always been distinguished for this. A recent writer, describing the Jews of the middle ages, says: “The sanctity of the home was an affectionate tradition, linking them with a golden chain to their fathers before them; and amidst the degradation heaped on them, they were emancipated in at least one spot on earth, and learned from their domestic peace to look with pitiful rather than vindictive eyes upon their persecutors.”

Our religious life, when it is genuine, will always cast a halo of blessedness on the home. Not lightly does Wordsworth blend “the kindred points of heaven and home,” for the man who fears God brings heaven into his home. We must not be sullen or self-absorbed there. We must divest ourselves of business cares and anxieties; of irritation and fretfulness; of the brooding clouds that have gathered on our faces; we must carefully maintain the courtesies of home, and be our sweetest, gladdest, loveliest selves.

What a charming cluster of images! The wife as a vine twining round the carved trellis work of the inner court of the Oriental home — as though the woman gives the rich wine of life, which is love, as well as shadowing fertility and graceful beauty; whilst children as olive plants are sources of perennial joy. Would you have such a home? Its key-stone is the fear of grieving the Spirit of God.

“The work and watching will be very sweet

Even in an earthly home,

And in such an hour as you think not

He will come.”

Psalm 129:1–2

“Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.”

WHAT a wonder it is that Satan and man do not prevail against the saint! There is no way of accounting for it, except in God’s election because God has chosen us for Himself, and redeemed us at great cost, He cannot afford to hand us over to the will of our enemies. He may allow our backs to be furrowed by the heavy scourge, because the servant must be as his Lord; but He will cut our cords in the day selected for our execution, and let us go free from the hand of our foes. So it was with Peter, and many a time with Paul.

Let us then walk with God. Fellowship with Him should be the daily bread of our souls. If we cultivate the fresh sense of fellowship with Him, we shall not yield to fear, be our foes never so venomous and their plans never so insidious. A close walk with God is the sure way of escaping them. “And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.” (2 Kings 6:9,10)

This daily fellowship is only possible through the blood of Jesus, by which we draw nigh unto God; and it only be maintained, by constant watchfulness in little things. Let us be very zealous over ourselves for the Lord, watching against the least shyness between the soul and Himself. Where there is much love between friends, a cold look is a matter of complaint.” When least inclined to pray, we need to pray the more. When least conscious of Christ’s nearness, we need to be most eager, like the old covenanter, to wrestle for access. If the King have not sent for thee these many days, await Him in His court.

Psalm 130:4

“But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

YES, thank God, there is forgiveness, because at His right hand *He* liveth for evermore who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Forgiveness at any moment for the sins of a life; repeated forgiveness for the sins of every hour; forgiveness instantaneously upon confession. He pardoneth and absolveth all those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe in Him of whom the Gospel speaks. And when God once speaks forgiveness, it can never be unspoken. Fear and doubt and misgiving may question, but cannot revoke it. Based on the Blood of the Covenant, on promises ratified by the most solemn assurances, there is irrevocable forgiveness with God. Weary, sinning, ashamed soul, the fountain of God’s forgiveness springs perennially from his heart; as clear and full as when that fountain was first opened for sin and uncleanness. Take it and go your way. Even if there be no rush of emotion, or sense of pardon, yet dare to believe that your cries and tears and confessions have been heard and answered.

Just because God is so ready to forgive, there is wrought within our hearts an ever-deepening dread of giving Him pain. There is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared. There is a greater fear in the heart of the true child of God of grieving his Father than there is in the unregenerate of the penalty of transgression. The element of fear comes back into our nature, refined and purified through the fires of love. There is no fear in love; and yet love fears with a perpetual dread of giving needless pain. Because God is a consuming fire of tender love, let us serve Him with godly fear.

“What is *thy* fear, O soul? The fear of that dark place,
Or fear to lose the joy of thy Creator’s face?”

Psalm 131:2

“Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.”

HOW much the greatest teachers of the world have learnt from little children! Jesus has for evermore set a little child in the midst of us to teach us. It is from the nursery that David got this tender, exquisite conception.

A tender babe has been brought up by the breast, and has loved to nestle to its mother. But the weaning time has come. With Orientals it is often greatly deferred. The little one is impatient of the change, and highly resents the spoon with which he is fed. Vehemently he cries, and fights, and struggles with hand and foot, little knowing that he is resisting a change which is to make him independent, which shall advance his truest life, and shall ultimately bring him back to that mother again, as her stay and blessing. Finally, however, the passion subsides, the sobs die down to little whimpers, a tear still lies upon the cheek to show where the storm had raged; but on the whole the babe is stilled and quieted.

So with us, we have been clinging to the breast of some human help and comfort. Presently the strong, wise hand of God puts us gently from it, and turns us to other sources of consolation. At first we passionately resist with outcry and strife. But the Comforter comes and hushes us as on the very lap of God. He shows us the love which cannot mistake, and, at last, the soul calms, becomes stilled and quieted; with chastened hope it turns to the Lord; it thrives on stronger meat; it leaves behind the life of dependence, and is strengthened with all might unto patience and long-suffering with joy. No longer satisfied with milk, it partakes of strong meat, with exercised sense (Hebrews 5:11–14).

Psalm 132:1

“LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions:”

THIS psalm commemorates the removal of the Ark to the Temple, newly prepared for its reception by Solomon. David had been dead some years; but as they prepared to fulfil the project on which he had set his heart, the men of the new generation could not forget how he was aware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob. They remembered David. Throughout this psalm his name often recurs. “For thy servant David’s sake.” (Psalm 132:10) “The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David.” (Psalm 132:11) “There will I make the horn of David to bud:” (Psalm 132:17)

“Shall man remember, and shall God forget?” He would be unrighteous if He were to forget the work of faith and labour of love of His saints. It was in pursuance of His covenant with David that Solomon’s Temple at last stood complete. Thus God still bends over the scenes of the life-work of His children. The chapel where a McCheyne pleaded with his congregation; the South Sea Island, where a Williams poured out his blood; the dark forests in which a Brainerd wrestled for his Indians; the great Continent where a Moffat, a Livingstone, a Hannington wrought, prayed, and suffered. He remembers David and all his afflictions. He recalls the prayers, and tears, and travail of soul; and the time comes when the finished structure stands on the site which to them was waste and void. No effort, nor cry, nor prayer of thine goes unheeded. All that thou hast truly desired, purposed, lived for, prepared for, shall yet take shape, and greet thee. There can never be one lost for good. Some day a perfect realization of thy dream, which thou shalt descry from heaven’s standpoint of vision, will satisfy thee.

Psalm 133:2

“It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;”

BROTHERLY love binding together kindred hearts is here compared to oil, the chosen symbol of the Holy Spirit, because it is only through His grace that it is possible to love. The love of the brethren is the earthly manifestation of love to God. We have just as much to Him as we have to them; and such love, whether to them or Him, can only be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. Is love wanting to seek a baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost meant the most wonderful manifestation of love which the world had ever seen.

The Holy Spirit, as oil, was poured upon the head of our great Aaron as He arose from the waters of baptism, and again when He ascended into the presence of His Father; and it has been descending ever since upon us who are as the skirts of His garments. To the Jew it seemed as though the Hermon range overtopped the land and was able to drop its dews across the intervening distance upon the mountains of Zion. Thus, from the glory of His exaltation, Jesus drops the dew of the Holy Spirit as blessing upon the lowlands of our life — that blessing which is life for evermore. Our response to it should be the fertility of our heart’s and life’s activities.

“But ye have,” said the apostle, “an unction (anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” (John 2:20) Could that assertion be made of us? If not, let us seek it. “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.” (2 Corinthians 1:21) “Serve your God day and night faithfully,” says Dr. Goodwin; “walk humbly, and there is a promise of the Holy Ghost to come and fill your hearts. Sue (to make an appeal to) this promise out; wait for it. Rest not in believing only, there is a further assurance to be had.”

Psalm 134:1

“Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.”

THIS hymn was composed for the night-watch of the Temple, for those that had gone to relieve the Levites who had been in charge during the day. It is to be noticed that these were specially summoned to bless the Lord and lift up their hands. For, after all, is it not they that stand in the house of God *by night* who are most in need of these exhortations? It seems to us that the sleepless sufferers among us are God’s night-watch. When the busy workers are slumbering, they come on duty to bless the Lord, and to seek His blessing on the work of the past day, and the coming one.

It is comparatively easy to bless the Lord in the daytime, when sunshine lies like His smile on nature, and all the world is full of music, and our lives flow on quietly and peacefully. It does not take much grace to bless the Lord then. But when night has draped the earth and hushed the homes of men to solitude, and we stand amid the shadows that lurk around us in the sanctuary, facing the inexplicable mysteries of Providence, of history, of life and death; then the song falters on our lips, and chokes our utterance.

No sooner, however, do we dare to formulate the words of blessing, pursing our lips in the effort, daring to say, by the strong effort of will, what we may not say gladly and easily, there comes back to us, as to this ancient singer, the assurance that the Lord which made heaven and earth shall bless. Is it possible for Him to have made heaven and earth, and not to be able to bless the soul whom He has not created only, but redeemed! He cannot fail to bless those that bless. Indeed, their hearts, like sounding boards, but reflect to Him His own.

Psalm 135:1

“Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise him, O ye servants of the LORD.”

HERE is an appeal to all of us. *We* are his servants, we stand in His courts; let us praise Him. There is a distinction between thanksgiving and praise. In that, we render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at His hands; in this, we adore God for all that He is in Himself. Forgetting our own petty interests and concerns, our *me* and *my* and *mine*, we take our stand with angels and archangels and all the host of heaven in crying, Thou art worthy, O holy, holy, holy Lord! Heaven and earth are full of thy great glory. Glory be unto Thee, O God Most High!

We praise Him with our ascriptions of loyal affection, but we praise Him no less when we suffer silently according to the will of God; when we do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word; and when we wait for Him to indicate His will, or lead us by a right way.

Oh that life might be one long psalm of praise! Awake my soul, awake psaltery and harp, awake all that is within me! Shall angels praise Thee, my God, and shall I be dumb! Shall song awake to Thee from every copse (a thicket of small trees or shrubs) and bower, from woodland and grove, from the heart of awakening nature, and shall I hold my peace! I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I worship Thee, I magnify Thee, most loving, most holy, most blessed God; my Father, my Redeemer, my Comforter! Every whit of my nature cries, Glory! That thy hand seems to lie heavily on me, and that my soul is pressed and straitened from without, shall not stay me. Yea, if it should be my lot to go from the courts of thy house to the nethermost abyss, I would still ask for grace to fill its unaccustomed spaces with adoring songs!

Psalm 136:26

“O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

TWENTY-SIX times in this Psalm we are told that God’s mercy endureth for ever. The psalmist had been reviewing the history of the past. As far back as the Creation his eye had travelled, and all through the stormy, troublous days he could detect the silver thread of mercy. Oh that we had his eyes to see always the love of God! Amid the murky gloom of chaos there is a silver gleam; it is His mercy. When sun and moon appear, there is a brighter light than theirs; it is His mercy. Above the roar of the Red Sea and the rattle of the thunder-storms, are the flute-like notes of His mercy. Through all the strife and horror of the conquest of Canaan there glides the white-robed angel of His mercy. Deeper than the darkest shades of sin, higher than the highest floods of transgression, is the love of God, in the hand of which the round world and all its inhabitants lie, as a drop on the palm. Look back on your life, and say whether you cannot see the thread of mercy linking all its beads.

“A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy we sing.”

And do you suppose that such mercy is going to fail you? It endureth for ever! You fret and chafe like a restless little child; but you cannot fall out of the arms of God’s mercy. Lie still, it canopies you like a mother’s face; it breathes about you as a mother’s embrace. O love that will not let us go! O mercy that hath neither beginning nor end! O God, who hast loved, who lovest, and who wilt love, when the sun is no more, and the things that are now shall have passed away as a dream! O grace of God, exceeding in thy abundance the highest mountains of our sin!

*Psalm 137:4**“How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land?”*

THE Hebrew singers were famous far beyond the limits of Israel. It is not surprising, therefore, that their captors asked of them the songs of Zion, little knowing that there was an insuperable incongruity between those holy songs which were associated with the Temple service, and the strange surroundings of idolatrous Babylon. The Lord’s song does not befit the strange land. How true this is of the minstrelsy of the heart! Chide it though you may for its silence, it must remain dumb so long as you are carried captive by the powers of evil.

You have ceased singing lately. The joy of your religious life has vanished. You pass through the old routine, but without the exhilaration of former days. Can you not tell the reason? It is not because your circumstances are depressed, though they may be; for Paul and Silas sang praises to God in their prison. Is not disobedience at the root of your songlessness? You have allowed some little rift to come within the lute of your life, which has been slowly widening, and now threatens to silence all. And you never will be able to resume that song until you have put away the evil of your doing, and have returned from the land of the enemy.

The return from Babylon has its duplicate in many a life. In answer to prayer our captivity is turned again as the stream from the south. Delivered out of the land of strangers, we again take up the harp of praise. “The Lord’s song” is often more in the heart than on the lips. Remember Jonathan Edwards’ description of the lady who afterwards became his wife, whose mind was filled with exceeding sweet delight, and seemed to have someone invisible always communing with her.

Psalm 138:8

“The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.”

WHAT a comfortable assurance! We often despair of ourselves. We awake to see that much on which we have prided ourselves, instead of being gold, silver, and precious stones, was mere wood, hay and stubble. We discover, as Saul of Tarsus did, that the structure of righteousness which we have been raising is but as dross in the holy eye of God. We find ourselves falling through a bottomless pit of self-despair. Finally, we turn to the Lord Jesus, and say, What we cannot do for ourselves, and what no one can do for us, Thou must undertake. And there steals upon us the comfortable assurance that we have only to be faithful and true to His least prompting, and He will perfect.

What an argument! First, we plead the mercy of God, the patience that endures for ever, never surprised, never surrendering its cherished purpose, never renouncing heart and hope, but always enduring amid rebuffs of neglect and the proud rebellion of self-will. Because thy love is without measure or end, we believe that Thou wilt yet be conqueror, O Christ! Thou wilt have thy way. We despair of ourselves. We hope infinitely in thy mercy.

Secondly, we plead that we are the work of His own hands. Has He done so much, and will He not finish? Has He implanted a hunger that He will not satisfy? Has He led to the point of Pisgah vision, and will He not give the land? A mother might forsake her child, but God cannot forsake those whom He has made the subjects of His thought and care. He cannot have created within us longings and desires that reach to the Infinite, merely to tantalize. “... If it were not so, I would have told you. ...” (John 14:2) Yes, we shall be perfected, some day, somewhere.

Psalm 139:24

“And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

“**WICKED** way” may be rendered “way of grief.” We may be in a way that causes God grief, even though it is not what men might term a way of wickedness. We may be grieving our blessed Lord more than we know, substituting an ideal religious standard, or absorption in His work, or the conception which our friends persist in holding concerning us, for that direct personal fellowship with Himself, which alone is religion. Ah! how much we may have grieved the Spirit of Christ! Not always consciously. Often in pleading for us, the Lord must needs say, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke 22:34) But we are unwilling that His tender heart should suffer, or His face be overcast with grief, because of our waywardness; therefore we say, “Search us and know us; try us and show us the ways of grief.” Be prepared for His revelations, searching and startling.

Lord, that is what we want! We have been going in ways of grief. We desire to go in the way everlasting — the way of eternal life; the way which we shall never need to retrace; the way that touches the deepest life possible to the creature. But we cannot find it for ourselves, nor even see the next step; therefore we stretch our poor, groping hands and cry, “Lead us, as a woman may lead her blind child. We do not ask to see the distant way. Show us the next thing, and the next, and the next, till thy grief is turned to gladness.” May I venture to hope that God will answer my prayer, and lead me in the way everlasting? Certainly! Not only may you hope, you must hope. It is as much your duty to hope always, and for the best things, as to look for forgiveness and grace to help in your time of need.

Psalm 140:7

“O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.”

ALL day long the fight has waxed fierce against the hardly-pressed soldier. The very sky has seemed darkened with flights of arrows, and the enemy has raged like a tornado amid the reeds on the river's brink. The fiery darts of venomous sarcasm have been like a storm of hail, and yet the lonely warrior has not succumbed. To himself, and to all others, his escape has been marvellous. How could it be accounted for, except that an unseen shield had been around him, covering his head in the day of battle.

Ah, beloved soul, God is not only the strength of thy salvation, but He is also the covert, the panoply, the shield on which the malice of the foe expends itself in vain. Be quiet. Let not thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. There is but one matter for which thou needest to care. Always be sure that you are ranged on God's side.

As David anticipated the mischief of violent men who gathered themselves together for war, and sharpened their tongues like a serpent, it was a consolation to look back upon past deliverances. What God had done He would do again, so that the righteous might give thanks, and the upright dwell in His presence. God's covering in the day of battle makes a temple amid its tumult, and the soul dwells there as in the Divine Presence Chamber.

“O Holy Lord, who with the children three
Didst walk the piercing flame,
Help! in these trial hours, which, save to Thee,
I dare not name;
Nor let these quivering eyes and sickening heart
Crumble to dust beneath the tempter's dart!”

Psalm 141:5

“Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.”

DAVID confessed his indebtedness to those who had reproved him. He realized how much he owed them. We ought to consider one another and have a care for each other's growth in grace. It is the duty of every true-hearted child of God to arrest another if he be erring in some way which is inconsistent with the honour of the family. We have to wash one another's feet; and may perform an inestimable benefit in graciously indicating some fly in the ointment of our religious profession.

But perhaps there is nothing which needs greater grace. We are so apt to be censorious, to lord it over the one whom we rebuke, to pride ourselves on our superiority, to be so taken up with another's life, as to miss God's best for ourselves. It is said that some persons wash the saints' feet in scalding water. David says, “Let the *righteous* smite me.” You cannot lift a man higher than you are. You must take the beam out of your eye before you can take the mote out of your brother's.

It needs some amount of grace also to accept reproof. The head is rather inclined to refuse it, and to take itself out of the way of the well-meaning adjusting hand. We resent interference. We do not care to be found out. But if, by God's grace, we can and do accept the smiting and reproof, we shall find that they become as fragrant oil. The fresh anointing which you seek in the morning may come not in rapt emotional experiences, but in the straight dealing of some fellow-disciple. Whenever anything is said which finds fault with you and blames you, receive it humbly and tenderly, asking whether it may not contain a message from your Father.

Psalm 142:3

“When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.”

OF course, God knows our path. We were created unto good works which God before prepared that we should walk in them. There is no step in your path which has not been anticipated and ordained by your Heavenly Father. See that path lying across the plain of life, now traversing deserts of sand, or climbing steeps of difficulty, or reaching across lonely steppes. Your heart faints: you say, I cannot take this track; — I cannot go through that experience; I cannot bear that strain. Heart and flesh fail. Then it is an infinite solace to look up into the face of the Father, and say, Before I was born, or took the first steps on this path, or essayed to meet its manifold vicissitudes, Thou knewest it; and Thou must have known that it was not too hard, and that there were resources of strength in Thyself sufficient for my day, which the emergency would bring out in a clearer manifestation.

We all have our times of being overwhelmed when the full realization of our grief, and pain, and loneliness rushes over us. The love we can never retrieve; the opportunity we can never recall. Then there is heart-break. But in such dark hours Jesus knows — knows the difficulties which you cannot explain to the dearest; the grave perplexities which you cannot share with your wisest confidant. He can allow for a hesitance, a trepidation, a shrinking back, which to others are unaccountable. He can give credit for the resolution that is sorely tested, and the faith which nearly gives out. He can take into account matters which evade the scrutiny of those who have the best opportunity of judging. What a relief to turn from them to Him, and say, I cannot tell them, but Thou knowest.

Psalm 143:2

“And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”

THIS is an admission which each must make for himself. Man by nature is very willing to justify himself. The essence of the Pharisees' sin consisted in justifying themselves in the sight of men. But God knows our hearts, and that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. We need to have a deeper sense of God's holiness, and of His requirements as set forth in His holy law. We need more particular preaching and teaching. I was interested recently to hear of one who said she did not want to know of God because she did not want to know her own sinfulness. If men did know God, they would be compelled to admit their inability to be just with Him. It is our duty to force the knowledge of God on the unwilling conscience of men.

But probably what we all need as preachers and teachers is to get a glimpse of God's nature, to know what holiness is, and purity, and righteousness, as they exist in the Divine nature. We do not know the sinfulness of sin, and cannot enforce it, because we have not come in contact with the burning bliss of the Great White Throne.

We are justified by faith. Directly we are joined to Christ, we stand before the law of God clothed in His righteousness, and accepted not only as forgiven sinners, but as righteous. We know that God will never enter into judgment with us, since we were judged in our Substitute. There will be a judgment of our works, but there can be no condemnation of our persons. It is God that justifies. Who shall condemn? The Master said that the publican who only cried with downcast eyes, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” (Luke 18:13) went down to his house justified.

Psalm 144:1–2

“Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.”

NOTICE that repeated *My*. David had learned that nothing can take the place of personal dealings with God. Surely he had realized the fulfillment of his own thoughts about dwelling in the House of the Lord all the days of his life, and beholding His beauty. There is a great fear lest many of God’s most earnest and devoted children may be losing sight of Jesus in these active days. We allow our work for Christ, our doctrines about Him, and our rules for becoming like Him, to intercept our view of Him. Too seldom do we get so near Him as to be able to talk to Him face to face; or pile word on word in our ineffectual effort to tell Him what we think of Him. One who loved much sang:—

“Jesus, Jesus, dearest Lord,
Forgive me if I say
For very love, thy dearest name,
A thousand times a day.”

After all, it is not thoughts about Christ, but Christ Himself that we all need. To know Him in all the various aspects of His character, as Loving kindness, Fortress, Shield, and Conqueror! Jesus can be the supply of your every need; and as the days pass, you will probably find yourself put into situations which will force you to discover in Him some new aspect, some fresh characteristics, something that would never have appeared to view, till the awful exigency had arisen. Then put out your hand and say *My*.

Always distinguish between the words *attain* and *obtain*. We can never earn His gracious help, either by prayer, or service; but we may claim, appropriate, and take. Learn to put your hand on all spiritual blessings in Christ, and say, *Mine*.

Psalm 145:13

“Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.”

THESSE words are engraven on the door of a mosque in Damascus, which was formerly a Christian church. Originally they were plastered over by stucco; but this has dropped away, and the words stand out clearly defined. They seem to be contradicted by centuries of Mohammedanism; but they are essentially true. Just now the kingdom is in mystery; but soon it will be manifested.

Jesus is gone to the Father to be invested with the kingdom, as a Roman official might have gone from the provinces to Rome for his investiture on the part of the emperor as pro-consul or governor. And Daniel tells us that when He comes to the Ancient of Days, He will receive from Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him; and His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed. It shall break in pieces, and consume all other kingdoms. The iron, clay, brass, silver, and gold, shall be broken in pieces, and become like the chaff of summer threshing-floors; but it shall become a great mountain and fill the earth.

We are called to receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Each faithful servant is to rule over his allotted cities. We are to reign with Christ for a thousand years in this world, sharing His throne and empire. We have been made kings unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever.

“Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss

With an individual kiss;

Then all this earthly grossness quit,

Attir’d with stars, we shall for ever sit,

Triumphing over Death, and chance, and Thee, O Time!”

Psalm 146:4

“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”

AND surely we all have had reason to notice the vacillation and infirmity of purpose which characterize too many of the sons of men. They promise to visit us every week, in our sickness or bereavement, but after a few months drop off. They pledge themselves to perform certain functions, but get lax, and ultimately the grass grows thick where their feet should have kept it down.

But we have most to complain of ourselves. Who among us has not bitterly to reproach himself for the evanescence of noble resolution — the dying down of earnest purpose? Too often they have been like the early dew and the morning cloud. In the day in which we made them, our purposes have perished.

What is the remedy? It is suggested in those memorable words of Jesus, “But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:14) When once Jesus has been allowed to do His chosen work in the soul, He opens a subterranean passage to the reservoirs of eternity, along and through which the supplies from God’s own heart begin to enter and rise up within the soul. Abide in Him, and the sap of His life will suggest, renew, and reinforce, the purposes of the holy life. Rise up, O well, for ever rise, within hearts that desire a fixed purpose to love God! Infirm of purpose we need never be, whilst God waits to create in us a steadfast spirit (Psalm 51:10). We must be rooted and grounded in Him. Then will be manifest in us the fruit of the Spirit, which is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”. (Galatians 5:22–23).

Psalm 147:3–4

*“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.
He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their
names.”*

HOW wonderful that these two qualities should blend in one Being! That God tells the number of the stars is only what we should expect of Him. They are His flock, lying down on the fields of the heavens; and as a shepherd has a name for each of his charge, so has God for the stars. But that He should be able to bend over one broken heart and bind it with His sympathy and heal its flowing wounds, this is wonderful, amazing, divine.

It is said that in a healthy man the clenched fist is about the size of the heart. So in God, His might is the gauge of His mercy: His hand of His heart. The mountains of His strength show the valleys of His tenderness.

Yet surely it must be so. The stars are after all only things, great masses of matter; whilst hearts are those of living, sentient beings which He made, redeemed, and loves. *They* are the adornments of His House, whilst broken hearts are His children. Shall He have names for the one and no care for the other! This text is exquisitely illustrated in Jesus. Through Him God made the worlds; and by His pierced hands tears have been wiped and stifling sobs silenced all through the ages. Is your heart bleeding? He knows, He cares, He loves, He bends over and heals with exquisite sensitiveness and skill. Yea, the stars may fall from heaven as untimely figs; the sun burn out as an extinct volcano; but He will never cease to tend and comfort His own.

“There is no sorrow, Lord, too light
To bring to prayer to Thee;
There is no anxious care too slight
To wake thy sympathy!”

Psalm 148:8

“ Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word:”

AS it rushes through the forest, the hurricane tears down the rotten branches, and makes way for the new shoots of the spring; and as it searches out the intricacies of the crowded alleys and courts, it bears away the fever germs, and changes the atmosphere. Do not dread it, if you meet it rushing across the ocean and churning up the mighty billows on its way; know it to be your Father’s strong servant, intent on fulfilling some errand on which it has been sent.

Stormy winds not unseldom invade our lives. All had been so fair and blessed with us. The south wind, blowing softly, had led us to suppose that we might make for another harbor. But not long afterwards the tempestuous Euroclydon beat down on us, bearing us far out of our course, and threatening us with destruction. But even under those circumstances, dare to trust. That stormy wind cannot separate you from God; for through its mad fury His angels will visit you, His care will surround you, His purpose will be fulfilled of bearing you onward, as the Apostle was borne toward Rome, with its opportunities of witness-bearing (Acts 27).

The great matter to remember is to run before the wind. Let its course be yours. Yield your will to God’s will; and even though it bears you far out of your course, dare to believe that it is the quickest and best way of attaining the harbour which God has prepared. There is nothing terrible in fire, or hail, or stormy wind, when we see God behind them.

“O man! hold thee on in courage of soul

Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way,

And the billows of cloud that around thee roll

Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day!”

Psalm 149:4

“For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.”

THE Lord watches us more closely than we realize. At each turn, His eye is upon us; and when we manifest some trait of obedience or devotion, it sends a thrill of pleasure through His heart. Of course our standing is always in His grace. We love only because He first loved. Our comeliness is placed on us by our King. And when we are at our best we always need the sprinkling of the precious blood. But still it is the constant teaching of Scripture that we may please God. This was the testimony borne of Enoch before his translation, and the apostle exhorts us to walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing. He tells us not to entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life, that we may please Him who hath chosen us to be His soldiers.

How well it would be if this were the aim of every day, the purpose of every sermon, the motive of every act. It were easy to be baptized in the waters of death, if only on emerging we might stand beneath the open heavens, whilst a voice said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17) Let us strive for this. Let our eye be ever fixed on that beloved face, checking any act that might threaten to bedim it, prosecuting all that might bring over it a smile of loving appreciation and thankfulness.

And see how the verse closes: “He will beautify the meek with salvation”. Not only does God take a personal interest in each step of the obedient soul, but He makes it beautiful, and leads it from victory to victory. This combination is very significant. The victorious are not always meek, and the meek do not generally seem victorious. But it is otherwise when God takes pleasure.

Psalm 150:6

“Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”

THE Psalter begins with “Blessed,” and ends with “Hallelujah.” Obedience in walk and conduct leads to blessedness, and this culminates in rapture. The heart that does God’s will in the world may not be always happy, but it is always blessed; and when patience has had her perfect work, it will break into such rapture as to need all creation to help its song to perfect and complete expression.

Your life may resemble the Psalter with its varying moods, its light and shadow, its sob and smile; but it will end with hallelujahs, if only you will keep true to the will and way and work of the Most Holy.

Your estimate of the world is often pessimistic to the last point; but if you will be still, and let God finish His work perfectly, you will hear all things that have breath joining in the Hallelujah Chorus, and saying, The kingdoms of the world have become those of the Lord and of His Christ.

God is preparing the whole universe to be an orchestra of praise and adoration to His Son. On one occasion a great conductor, amidst the burst of five hundred instruments, is said to have missed the piccolo; and he stayed the entire performance till it chimed in. Nothing can satisfy God till creation’s groans are changed to rapture, and the curse, which restrains her songs, is lifted from the face of all nature; but He wants to hear your voice. If you cannot praise Him in the church, praise Him in Nature, “the firmament of his power.” (Psalm 150:1) If you cannot praise Him for His acts, do so for His excellent greatness. If not with the blare of trumpet, then with the softer lute. If not with the realization of the senses, then in the assurance of faith. Only be sure to praise Him.

Proverbs 1:33

“But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

“WHOSO.” This promise is to us all. To the man in the street, as much as for those of us who have been nurtured in Christian homes.

The evil is taken out of things for those whose hearts are full of God. Nothing which God allows to come to us is really evil, except sin. Put away sin from your heart, and let it be filled with Love and Faith, and behold all things will become new. They will lose their evil semblance, because you will look at them with new eyes. Men talk against the March wind; but when they understand that it is cleansing fetid dens of fever-germs, they regard it as a blessing. Men dread change, anything unwonted or unaccustomed; but when they find that, like the transplanted fruit-tree, they will often attain a greater maturity than when left to one spot of soil, they welcome it. If you look at things apart from God, especially if you anticipate the future without Him, you have good cause for fear; but if you hearken to and obey Him, if you know and love Him, if you abide in God and God in you, you will see that the evil is not in the things or events, but in yourself. Give yourself as alms to God, and lo, all things will become clean to you.

Death shall lose its terrors, and become the Father’s servant, ushering you into His presence. *Pain* and *suffering* shall but cast into relief the stars of Divine promise. *Poverty* will have no pangs, and storm no alarms. You shall become so habituated to find the rarest blessings associated with what men often dread most, that you will be quiet from all fear of evil, and able to look out, with serene and untroubled heart, on a sea of troubles. In fact, it is very doubtful if anything is really evil for those who love God.

Proverbs 2:4–5

“If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”

THERE is a beautiful illustration of the truth of these words in the life of Justin the Martyr, who died for the Gospel in the second century. As a young man he earnestly sought for truth, specially that which would arm him with self-control. He took up one system of philosophy after another, trying them as a man might explore mine after mine for silver. Finally, he found that every effort was futile.

“All at last did faithless prove,
And, late or soon, betrayed my love.”

At length, wandering in despair on the seashore, he met an aged man, a Christian, who spake as none had ever done to his heart, and pointed him to God in Christ. Beneath those words, that afternoon, he understood the fear of the Lord, and found the knowledge of God.

Thomas longed for evidences of the Resurrection, and Christ came to him. The Chamberlain, as he sat in his chariot reading the book of Esaias the Prophet at Isaiah 53, was desirous to know the truth, and Philip was sent to him. To Saul of Tarsus, groping in the midnight, there came fuller revelations than ever Gamaliel gave, through Stephen and Ananias, led by the Spirit of God.

But you must be prepared to sacrifice all. He who seeks diamonds, or pearls, or gold, will leave his native land, and what other men hold dear, and centre his whole attention on his quest. Not otherwise must it be with those who would understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. They must be willing to count all things but loss, to sell all they have, in order to buy the field with its treasure-trove.

Proverbs 3:6

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

THY paths! Then, every man’s path is distinct for him, and for no other. The paths may lie side by side, but they are different. They have converged; they may diverge. When Peter had been told of the rugged nature of the predestined path which was marked out for him in the Providence of God, he turned towards John, his companion and friend, and said to Jesus, “What shall this man do?” The Lord instantly replied, in effect: “That is a matter in which I can brook no interference; it is entirely a matter for my choice and will; *if I will*, that he tarry till I come.” (John 21:21)

We need to be divinely directed. — The man who stands above the maze can direct you through all its labyrinth by the readiest path. God who made thee for thy life, and thy life for thee, can direct thee, and He only.

First: *Lean not to thine own understanding.* — One is apt to pride oneself on one’s far-sighted judgment. We consult our maps and guides and the opinions of fellow-travellers, to find ourselves at fault. We have to learn that our own understanding is not keen enough or wise enough to direct; we must abjure and renounce all dependence on it.

Second: *In all thy ways acknowledge Him.* — Let thine eye be single; thy one aim to please Him; thy sole motive, His glory. It is marvellous how certainly and delightfully our way opens before us when we no longer look down on it, or around at others, but simply upwards into the face of Christ. “It is a universal law, unalterable as the nature of God, that no created being can be truly holy, useful, or happy, who is knowingly and deliberately out of the Divine fellowship, *for a single moment.*”

Proverbs 4:18

“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

THIS may be referred to the work of God in the heart. He who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. A little glimmering ray at first, God’s light in the soul grows ever from less to more, revealing Himself and manifesting ourselves, so that we are growingly attracted from the self-life to circle around Him.

But probably it is true also of the graciousness of the believer’s life. At first it shows itself in little acts of blessing on children and the poor; but the range of influence is always apt to increase, till what was a glimmer of helpfulness becomes as the sun shining in strength. The Sunday-school teacher becomes the preacher; the visitor among the poor becomes the philanthropist; the witness to the Gospel in the factory is called to witness in the great theatre of the world. See to it that there is a steady obedience to God’s least promptings and monitions. Follow on to know the Lord, and to be conformed to His all-wise purpose.

Once again, notice the comparison in its exquisite beauty. Light is so gentle, noiseless, and tender. There is no sound; its voice is not heard. So is the influence of the holy soul. Its life becomes the light of men. As with the angel over the plain of Bethlehem, it sheds a light around those whom it will presently address. Like the Gulf Stream, which changes our climate from northern rigour to the temperate zone, so a holy life gently and irresistibly influences and blesses the world. The world is no worse than it is, not because of the holy words spoken on the Lord’s Day, but for the holy lives of obscure saints.

Proverbs 5:6, 21

“Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them. ... For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.”

IT is a remarkable expression, “the level path of life”; and there is great comfort in knowing that God is ever before us, leveling our pathway, taking insurmountable obstacles out of the way, so that our feet do not stumble.

It may be that you are facing a great mountain range of difficulty. Before you, obstacles, apparently insuperable, rear themselves like a giant wall to heaven. When you cross the Jordan there is always a Jericho which appears to bar all further advance, and your heart fails. But you are bidden to believe that there is a level path right through those mighty barriers; a pass, as it is called, in mountainous districts. The walking there is easy and pleasant if only you will let yourself be led to it. God has made it, but you must take it. How we dread the thought of those steep cliffs! It seems as though we could never climb them; but if we would only look at the Lord instead of at the hills, if we would look above the hills to Jehovah, we should be able to rest in sure faith that He will show us the level path of life.

Your path is not level, but full of boulders which have rolled down upon and choked it. But may this not be partly due to your mistakes or sins — to your willfulness and self-dependence? There are sorrows and trials in all lives; but these need not obstruct our progress. The text surely refers to those difficulties which threaten us with their arrest, putting barriers in our way. When Peter reached the iron gate he found it open; when the women reached the sepulchre door they found the stone gone. What an awful indictment against the child of sensual pleasure, “She findeth not the level path of life!”

Proverbs 6:21

“Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.”

IF the son addressed here is bidden to thus care for the words of his parents, how much more should we ponder those of God as given us in God’s blessed Book.

When thou walkest, it shall lead thee. — There is a little circle of friends whom I know of who read this book of Proverbs through every month for practical direction on the path of life. A West-countryman said of this collection of wise words, “If any man shall maister the Book of Proverbs, no man shall maister he.” Take for instance the weighty counsels of the first five verses. How many lives would have been saved from bitter anguish and disappointment if only they had been ruled by them! Let every young man also ponder the closing verses. Let us all meditate more constantly on the Word of God.

When thou sleepest, it shall watch thee. — The man who meditates on the Word of God by day will not be troubled by evil dreams at night. Whatever unholy spirits may prowl around his bed, they will be restrained from molesting him whose head is pillowed on some holy word of God. And on awakening, the Angel of Revelation will whisper words of encouragement and love.

And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. — The heart is accustomed to commune with itself about many things, but when the mind is full of God through His Word, it seems as though the monologue becomes a dialogue. To all our wonderings, fears, questionings, answers come back from the infinite glory in words of Scripture. Some wear amulets about their necks to preserve them; but the Word of God is both a safeguard and choice treasure.

Proverbs 7:4

“Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman:”

THIS wisdom might seem to be too unearthly and ethereal to engage our passionate devotion, unless we remember that she was incarnated in Jesus Christ, who, throughout this book, seems forthshadowed in the majestic conception of wisdom. And who shall deny that the most attractive and lovable traits blended in His matchless character as Son of Man and exalted Redeemer.

With what sensitive purity He bent His face to the ground and wrote on the dust, when her accusers brought to Him a woman taken in the act of sin! With what thoughtfulness He sent word to Peter that He was risen, and provided the meal for His weary and wave-drenched sailor friends on the shores of the lake! With what quick intuition He read Mary's desire to anoint Him for the burying!

It was this combination of what is sweet in woman and strong in man, which so deeply satisfied men like Bernard, Rutherford, Fénelon, and thousands more, who have been shut out from the delights of human love, but have found in Jesus the complement of their need, the satisfaction of their hunger and thirst. In Him, for them, was restored the vision of the sweet mother of early childhood; of the angel sister who went to be with God; of the early love that was never destined to be realized.

Women find in Jesus strength on which to lean their weakness; and men find in Him the tender; thoughtful sympathy to which they can confidently, entrust themselves. We are born for the infinity and Divine; earthly loves, at their best, are only patterns of things in the heavens. They are priceless; but let us look into them and through them, to behold the unseen and eternal that lie beneath.

Proverbs 8:22

“The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.”

THIS wisdom is not an abstract attribute or quality, but a Person. Whether the ancient writer of these glowing paragraphs realized fully what deep things he was saying when he so depicted her — as one who was brought up with the Father before the world was, as rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth with the children of men — we cannot positively determine; but we at least may lift the curtain, and see here Christ, who is both the Power and the Wisdom of God. Is not His chosen name the Word of God?

There, in that divine Man, in His gentle love, in His deep and weighty words, in His power to give life to them that find Him, we have the highest embodiment of the wisdom of God, which was before all worlds, and yet stoops to each lowly and obedient heart. It is not enough then for us to seek knowledge and get understanding apart from Jesus; but to seek Him diligently and early, as we are bidden in Proverbs 8:17, sure that when we win Him, we shall possess all the wealth of truth and knowledge that we require for this life and the next. He is the Truth and the Life. Truth apart from Him neither nourishes nor inspires.

Would you know the wisdom of God, then be still in heart, wait before God, quieting all your soul before Him; remember that Jesus is near, waiting, longing to impart Himself. Be not content till you have pressed through the words to the Word, through the Scriptures to Him of whom they testify. His delights are with the sons of men. Nothing will fill Him with greater joy than that we should hear Him, watching daily at His gates, and waiting at the posts of His doors.

Proverbs 9:4, 16.

“Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, ... Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,”

TWICE over this invitation is given — first by wisdom, and secondly by the foolish woman. To every young life, in its first setting forth, many voices and inducements speak. Wise, grave voices mingle with siren songs. The strait gate into the narrow way stands side by side with the wide gate that leads into the broad way. The counsels of the father’s lips, the tears and prayers of the mother, amid the enticements of sinners, and the blandishments of the world. Here the true Shepherd, there the hireling; here the true Bride, there the apostate Church; here that which condemns the flesh, there that which takes its side.

Life is full of choices. There is no day without them. We are perpetually being reminded of the way in which the Creator introduced lines of division into His earliest work. For it is thus that He proceeds with the work of the new creation within. Repeatedly we hear His voice as He divides the light from the darkness, calling the one Day and the other Night. Would that we ever acted as children of the Light and of the Day, choosing the one and refusing the other! We are always being exercised in this, and our beat life depends on the keenness and quickness with which we refuse the evil and choose the good

Wisdom appeals to conscience. She says nothing at the outset of the sweetness of her service, or the pleasantness of her paths; but bases her appeal on whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Yet she has rich rewards to those that choose her. Length of days, honour, a heart at leisure from itself, sure satisfaction, the assurance of the favour of God, a sure and certain hope of blessedness for evermore.

Proverbs 10:17

“He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth.”

IT is a wise prayer, “Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment.” Happy is the man whom God correcteth; for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth. Sometimes God corrects us with rebukes, making our beauty to consume away as a moth before the stroke of illness or physical weakness. At other times we are corrected by the faithful rebuke of a friend, or the question of a little child. And yet again, correction comes to us through the sore discipline of having to reap the results of our sins. Some heed correction; others resist and refuse it. Many get weary of it, and for their sakes it is written, “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” (Hebrews 12:9)

Do not be weary of God’s correction, my chastened friend. He does not expose you to the searching trial for His pleasure; but for your profit, and that you may be a partaker of His holiness. Heed correction. Ask why it has come, and what it is designed to teach. Set yourself to learn the lesson quickly. Above all, let us heed more carefully God’s Holy Word, which is profitable for correction, as well as for teaching, reproof, and instruction. How often might we have been spared the searching correction of trouble if we had allowed our lives to be pruned by God’s Word!

Our behavior under correction will show whether we are in the Way of Life or not. If the Life of God be truly within us, we will meekly accept and profit by the correction, from whatever source it comes. Otherwise we will murmur and fret, till the wine becomes vinegar, and the milk sour.

Proverbs 11:24

“There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.”

THIS scattering is a conception borrowed from the husbandman. From out of his barns he takes the precious seed, and scatters it broadcast. The child of the city might wonder at his prodigality, little knowing that each of the scattered seeds may live in a hundred more, and perpetuate itself for successive autumns.

We are bidden to measure our life by its losses rather than by its gains; by the blood poured out, rather than by its storage in the arteries of life; by its sacrifices, rather than its self-preservation; by its gifts, rather than its accumulations. He is the richest man in the esteem of the world who has gotten most; he is richest in the esteem of heaven who has given most.

And it is so ordered that as we give we get. If we miserly hoard the grain, it is eaten by weevils; if we cast it away it returns to us multiplied. Stagnant water is covered with scum; flowing water is fresh and living. He who gives his five barley loaves and two small fishes into the hands of Jesus sees the people fed and gets twelve baskets over. Tell out all you know, and you will have enough for another meal, and yet another. Set no limit to your gifts of money, time, energy; in the act of giving, the whole that you have expended will return to you, and more also. Freely ye have received, freely give; freely give, and freely ye will receive. “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” (2 Corinthians 9:6) “Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:10,11)

Proverbs 12:13

“The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.”

IT has been well remarked that God has set many snares in the very constitution and order of the world for the detection and punishment of evil-doers. Amongst others, is the liar’s own tongue. Watch a criminal trial, and you will find abundant illustrations of this in the detection of a false witness, who makes statement after statement, which are not only inconsistent with truth, but with each other. Presently he comes to a point, where he falls into one of his own lies, which he had forgotten, and lies, floundering like a wild beast in a snare. It is impossible for a liar to imitate the severe and inflexible majesty of truth. In his endeavour to appear true, he will fall into a trap of his own setting.

But whilst the wicked goes into a snare, the righteous shall come out of trouble. It is not said that he will always escape it. Our Master clearly foretold that all lives which were molded on the example of His own would pass through similar experiences. For them also the bitter hatred of the world, the title Beelzebub, and at last the cross. “But the just shall come out of trouble.” It is not possible that we should be holden by it. We belong to Him who has come out of the great tribulation. Just now we may be following the serried ranks down into the heart of the sea, on either hand the heaped-up billows, and the stars bidden by the pale of thundercloud. But He who led us in will lead us out. On yonder bank we shall stand among the victors. That weary hand shall wave the victor’s palm; that tired head shall be crowned with light. Listen to the voices that come from that radiant shore: Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world: and, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Proverbs 13:3

“He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.”

WHAT we say influences others, but it has a reflex influence on ourselves. When we speak unadvisedly and impurely, we sow seeds of ill harvests not in others only, but in ourselves, and the very utterance injures us. When, on the other hand, we refuse to give expression to a wrong or unkind thought, we choke and strangle it.

Will each reader and hearer of these words carefully bear this in mind. If you express what is uncharitable or wrong, you gratify the evil nature that is in you, and you strengthen it. If, on the contrary, you refuse to express it, you strike a death-blow at the cursed thing itself. When you guard your mouth you keep your life, because you weaken that which is gnawing insidiously at the root of your life. If there is fire in a room, be sure not to open door or window; for air is its fuel and food. And if a fire is burning within you, be sure not to give it vent. What goes forth from you defiles you. Would you see good days? Refrain your lips from evil.

Perhaps you find yourself unable to guard your mouth. You are only discovering the truth of those terrible words: “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. ... But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” (James 3:6, 8) If man cannot tame it, the Savior can. Cry to Him then, saying, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” (Psalm 141:3) The fire of God’s love will burn out the fire of hell. Hand the bridle, or rudder, as the apostle James calls it, over to Him.

“Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.”

Proverbs 14:30

“A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.”

IF we would have a tranquil heart, we must resolutely put from us the ambition to get name and reputation among men, to exert wider influence for its own sake, and to amass large accumulation of money. Directly we begin to vie with others, to emulate them, or compare our position and influence with theirs; directly we allow strong desires to roam unchecked through our nature; directly we live on the breath of popular applause, we are like those who step from the pier on a rocking boat — all hope of tranquillity is at an end.

“In God’s will,” Dante said, “is our peace.” When the government is on His shoulder, of its increase and of our peace there is no end. Would you have your peace flow as a river? — then rest in the Lord, be silent unto Him; fret not thyself; turn away from the things that are seen and temporal; set thy face to those that are unseen and eternal. Live in the secret place of the Most High, and hide under the shadow of the Almighty. Say of the Lord that He is thy fortress and high tower. Put God between thyself and everything. Let the one aim of thy life be to please Him, and do the one small piece of work He has entrusted thee with. Look away from all others to Him alone. And learn to look out on others with a tender sympathetic gaze, turning to prayer about them and all things else that might ruffle and sadden. Let all thy requests be made known unto God, so shall His peace keep heart and mind.

“Draw me to Thee, till far within thy rest,
In stillness of thy peace, thy voice I hear—
For ever quieted upon thy breast,
So loved, so near.”

Proverbs 15:3

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.”

WE too seldom consider the pleasure that the prayer of His people gives to God. Often we go to Him with no other thought than to find relief from the pressure of anxiety or sin. We hardly realize that He is looking for our coming because He loves us. Thus nothing delights Him more than the time we consecrate for heartfelt fellowship with Him. Think, O child of God, when next the hour of prayer comes round, that God is waiting for you. Would you cause Him disappointment by curtailing it, and by passing cursorily through a form, when He looks for the fellowship of the soul? Remember how Jesus said, “For the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” (John 4:23)

The prayer which gives God delight is one which is characterized thus:— (1) It must be an identification with the prayer of the Lord Jesus. In Him alone can the Father take delight, and in us only as far as we are in the Beloved, and He in us. (2) We must come in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our lives rid of all known inconsistency and impurity. (3) We must give time for God to speak to us. Rev. Andrew Murray says, “Bow quietly before Him in humble faith and adoration. God is near. God is love, longing to make Himself known.” (4) Lie very low before God. Sink down before Him in the lowest dust of self-abasement, reckoning yourself to be nothing. (5) Present yourself to God that He may fulfil through you His own loving purposes.

In the Book of Revelation, we are bidden to behold the Angel of the Covenant mingling much incense with the prayers of all the saints. That incense is the merit of Jesus, which makes our prayers delightful (Revelation 8:3–5).

Proverbs 16:3

“Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.”

THERE are four matters which we are to roll upon God — ourselves, as the Messiah in Psalm 22; our burden; our way; and here our works. The genesis of Christian work is on this wise. We become conscious of the uprising of a noble purpose. We are not sure at first whether it is of God or not, till we have taken time to subject it to the winnowing fan of His good Spirit. It is always wise to subject it to the fire of His criticism before it takes shape. Even then, however, all is not done. We must submit our plans before they are executed, our methods by which they are being executed, and the results of the execution, to the infinite wisdom of our Heavenly Father.

What a comfort it is to roll our works upon God! That servant of God who is carrying the responsibilities of a vast missionary enterprise! That preacher with his church and organizations! That promoter of philanthropic and ameliorative agencies! Let them roll their works upon God, and be content to take the subordinate place of acting as His agents and executors. The heart will be light, and the hands free, if only we can learn the blessed secret of imposing the responsibility and anxiety of our efficiency, finance, and success on Jehovah. Roll thy works, and see that they do not roll back again. Put on the arrest of faith to make them keep their position. Reckon that God takes what you give; and when you have let your works go, be sure to cast yourself after them on His patient carefulness. Remember that He desires to work in us to will and to work of His good pleasure. Do not worry, nor fret, nor be always looking for results. Do your best, and leave the rest to Him, who is our rearward. He will follow up your efforts and establish the work of your hands.

Proverbs 17:27

“He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.”

IT is a wise thing to say as little as possible to man, and as much as possible to God. The ultimate test of friendship has always seemed to me to be in the ability of true friends to be silent in each other's presence. In silence we best may open the heart to receive the infillings of the Divine Spirit. When people are always talking to one another, even though they talk about God, they are liable to lose the first fresh sense of God's presence.

Ordinary conversation greatly weakens character. It is like the perpetual running of a tap which inevitably empties the cistern. It seems to me disastrous when the whole of a summer holiday is spent in contact with friends, however dear, who leave no time for the communing of the soul with itself, nature, and God. We cannot be perpetually in society, speaking to the nearest and dearest, without saying things which will afterwards cause us regret. We shall have spoken too much of ourselves, or too little of Christ, or too much about others; or we shall have allowed the things of the world and sense to bulk too largely. Besides, it is only in silence and thought that our deepest life matures, or the impressions of eternity are realized. If we are always talking, we give no opportunity for the ripening of the soul. Nothing makes the soul more fruitful than to leave it fallow. Who would pick a crop of fruit when first it began to appear on the trees? Live deep. Speak as little as you may. Be slow to speak, and swift to hear.

“Not seldom ceases outward speech awhile,

That the inner, isled in calm, may clearer sound.

Proverbs 18:17

“He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.”

IT is easy to boast of what we are or are not; but the real question is as to what others think of us. A Christian lady told me that a little time ago she went to a meeting where one after another arose to say how long they had been without sin. When an opportunity was given, she asked simply if they might be allowed to hear something from those who had lived with the persons that had been so loudly expressing themselves; because she said that she had observed that the opinions of those who shared the same room or home as Christian professors were apt to vary greatly from those of the professors themselves.

It is a grave question for us all — what do our neighbors and associates think of us? Would they credit us with the highest attainments in Christian living? Would they concede the reality and beauty of our characters? After all, may not we be mistaking our ideals for our attainments, and judging ourselves by a lower standard than we apply to others? Might not our wives and sisters, our husbands and brothers, search us! It is so much easier to plead our own cause in a meeting than to stand clear in the searching scrutiny of the home.

And if our neighbors search us, what does God think of us as the fierce light of His eyes scans us and reads our deepest secrets? What should we do were it not for the Blood of Christ? I used to hesitate once to call myself a miserable sinner; but as I know myself better, I begin to feel that it is a reasonable designation. That is what we are by nature, though we have been made by divine grace, children, heirs, joint-heirs with Christ. Job, the righteous man, confessed himself vile when God's light revealed him.

Proverbs 19:17

“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”

WHAT a revolution would be wrought among us if we really believed this! We are glad to lend to our friends in a temporary strait, especially when we know that our money is safe and will come back to us with a substantial increase. To have an I O U is quite sufficient. But in the light of this test we are taught to look on God as the great Borrower. He comes to us, asking that we will lend to Him. In every needy one who deserves our aid the request of the Almighty may be heard asking a loan.

What mistakes we make! We think we keep what we hold and invest well. But we really keep what we give away. The best investments are the heavenly shares and stocks, which are found in the needs and sorrows of the poor. Will you not, my reader, resolve that you will begin to lend to the Lord in the person of those who need your help, whether for their personal necessities or the work in which they are interested? You are called to be a steward of God's free gifts to you. You must be ready, as His almoner, to deal out His wealth. He will pay you for doing it, by giving you your own present maintenance; and one day He will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:” (Matthew 25:34,35)

Just ponder the magnificence of this promise: “And that which he hath given will he pay him again.” God will never be in your debt. He is exact and punctilious in his repayment. No man ever dared to do his bidding in respect to any case of need, and found himself the poorer. “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.” (Luke 6:38) Was not Ruth's love to Naomi well compensated?

Proverbs 20:27

“The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.”

SEE that row of unlighted candles, standing in silver sockets, chased and wrought with wondrous skill — such are the souls of men by nature, rich in attainments and generous impulses, highly educated, perhaps, apparently fit for high and glorious work, but they have no light. They are a puzzle to themselves and others. Whilst another, who has none of their powers or advantages, casts a glow on his age, which lingers long after he has gone. He is like a common candle, but lit. The spark from God has ignited his soul.

But remember that while the candle shines with the light of God, it wastes. The slowly-dwindling length shows the amount of the inevitable expenditure. Our Lord said of the Baptist, “He was a burning and a shining light.” (John 5:35) There must be burning before there can be shining; we must suffer in order to serve. It is good to know this, for it gives purpose to pain. “I cried to Thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made supplication. *What profit* is there in my blood?” (Psalm 30:8,9) What profit! If we only knew that, the pain might be borne proudly and lightly. Oh, never dare to think of blessing men, except at a cost of blood and tears, that may seem to thee as a guttering candle, the wax of which is flowing down in trickling streams, or curling up in rugged contortions!

“Therefore, O Lord, I will not fail nor falter.
Nay, but I ask it; nay, but I desire—
Lay on my lips thine embers of the altar,
Seal with the sting, and furnish with the fire.

“Quick in a moment, infinite for ever,
Send an arousal better than I pray;
Give me a grace upon the faint endeavour,
Souls for my hire, and Pentecost to-day.”

Proverbs 21:1

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

MADAME Guyon says that there are three classes of souls that may be compared to rivers flowing towards God as their ocean.

1. Some move on sluggishly and feebly. These are often discouraged, dwell much in the outer and emotional, and fail to seek God with their whole strength.

2. Some proceed decidedly and rapidly. These have large hearts, and are quick in their responses to God’s Spirit.

3. Some press on in headlong impetuosity.

This comparison of our hearts to watercourses filled with torrents from the hills is a very beautiful one, and is capable of great expansion.

Watercourses need fresh supplies of water from the hills: and our hearts are in constant need of freshets from the everlasting fountain of God’s nature.

Watercourses must fulfil their ministry in all weathers: and we must continue patiently in faith and well-doing, whatever be our circumstances or emotions. If we fail, the whole land will be smitten with drought.

Watercourses end in merging their waters with the ocean tides: so God will one day be all in all.

Will you let God lead your heart whither He will? Just as a husbandman will cut watercourses in different directions to conduct the flow of the water, so will you not let God lead your life? You can be a watercourse: He must give the water. Only be content, like the river-bed, to lie deep hidden beneath the waters; not noticed or thanked by those that stoop to drink the refreshing draughts. It is impossible for the water to pass through you without nourishing your own soul.

Proverbs 22:5

“Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.”

THIS is due to the love of God, shown in the constitution of the world. It would have been malignity indeed to have placed us in the world without the warning signal of pain to show us where we are wrong, and to sting us when we go astray. By the pitiful mercy of our Creator, pain is the inevitable consequence of the breach of physical and moral law; thus men are shown that they are on the wrong path, and driven back in repentance and rectitude. The Greek motto said: “Pain is therefore gain.”

You say that there are many who suffer, who are among the holiest and meekest of mankind; and you wonder how it is that those snares have come so plentifully to their share. But you must remember that though an individual may not have broken the law himself in any special sense, yet he inherits broken law. By virtue of his union with a sinful race he reaps a harvest sown by others' sins; and by bearing it meekly and lovingly he enters into union with some aspects of the death of Christ, and fills up that which is behind of his sufferings. When wrong is borne sweetly and uncomplainingly, some froward deed that started long before, and had been cursing the world, is for ever arrested and cancelled; as a cannon ball in a bank of sand.

But, in addition, there are some who suffer according to the will of God. Pain, beneath the touch of the Spirit of God, is in the highest degree disciplinary. As the angels watch the result on a soul of God's sharp ordeal of suffering, they say:

“The keen sanctity,

Which with its effluence, like a glory, clothed

And circled round the Crucified, has seized

And scorched, and shrivelled it”

Proverbs 23:17

“Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.”

I ASKED a working man the other day how he fared. His wife, the partner of many years, has died, and there is no one to welcome him on his return from work and prepare for him. His fellow-workmen, younger men, delight in tormenting him and increasing his arduous toils, because they hate his simple godliness. A physical weakness grows upon him distressingly. But he said that he was very happy, because he lived in God. All the way along it was Jesus — Jesus when he woke in the morning; Jesus when he went to bed at night; Jesus when he wrote a letter; Jesus when he went to the butcher’s shop to buy his little piece of meat for Sunday — said he, “He made the beasts; He must know what is good to eat.” And when I asked how he managed to maintain this life, he said, “I always ask Him to rouse me up early enough to have a good time in fellowship with the Master.” From the way he spoke, he reminded me of the priest’s portion of the shoulder and breast as symbolizing the strength and love of the Lord Jesus.

If we are in the love of God we shall be in His fear; for though perfect love casts out fear that hath torment, it introduces the fear that dares not cause needless pain to the Infinite Lover of souls. We fear to tear open His wounds again, to expose His heart to the spear-thrust, or to miss aught of His gracious pains to make us what He wants us to become.

“If ye keep my commandments,” the Master said, “ye shall abide in my love.” (John 15:10) To abide in His fear is equivalent to abiding in His love. They are two sides of the same coin. Only they love who fear. The woman feared Solomon’s sword, because the babe was her own.

Proverbs 24:11–12

“If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?”

CHRI**S**T has greatly added to the convicting power of truth. Before His time men were taught that it was wrong to do wrong; but He taught that it was wrong not to do right. In the Christian church we confess that we have done the things that we ought not to have done — we do this in common with all men that acknowledge the rule of conscience. But we are taught by our Lord, and by such passages as this, to go farther, and confess that we have not done the things that we ought to have done. This is our great and damning crime.

The priest and Levite that did not go to the help of the wounded traveller; the servant who simply did not use the Lord’s money; the nations that did not feed, clothe, or visit Him in the persons of the distressed; the virgins who had not oil in their vessels; the trees that did not bear — these Christ held up to shame and everlasting contempt. We cannot ignore the evil around us, and say we are not responsible for it. We cannot shut our eyes and avert our faces from wrong-doing, and tyranny, and oppression. We cannot profess that it is not our business, whosoever else’s it may be, without it becoming known to the Searcher of all hearts, who will certainly reckon it against us on the day of account. Not to do is to incur Christ’s displeasure.

What a striking illustration is afforded to these words in the Book of Esther! When the young queen was hesitating, Mordecai said very truly: “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)

INFORMATION ON THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS USED IN THIS DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS: Book of Worship

Writer: David and others

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

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

Outline:

1. Man’s Fall and Redemption (1-41)
2. Israel’s Ruin and Redeemer (42-72)
3. Worship and the Sanctuary (73-89)
4. Our Journey on Earth (90-106)
5. Praise and the Word of God (107-150)

* * *

PROVERBS: Book of Wisdom

Writer: Mostly Solomon

Key Passage: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7)

Remarks: Proverbs are short sayings about conduct and character, primarily in the spiritual, moral and social realms. They form a library of instruction on how to live a godly life here on earth.

Outline:

1. The Value of Wisdom (1-9)
2. The Applications of Wisdom (10-31)

Scripture Memory Programme 2010

Living For Jesus

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

January 3 & 10 – Surrender all for Christ

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

January 17 & 24 – Repentance

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

January 31 – Repentance

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

February 7 & 14 – Living for Christ

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

February 21 & 28 – Strength in Weakness

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

March 7 & 14 – Desiring God

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

March 21 & 28 – Sufficiency of Christ

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

April 4 & 11 – New Life in Christ

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

April 18 & 25 – Family Responsibility

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

May 2 & 9 – Family Responsibility

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

May 16 & 23 – Inward Beauty

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

May 30 – Salvation

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

June 6 & 13 – Family Responsibility

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

June 20 & 27 – Family Relationships

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

July 4 & 11 – Obedience to God

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

July 18 & 25 – Sanctification

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

August 1 & 8 – Obedience to Authority

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

August 15 & 22 – Sanctification

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

August 29 – Salvation

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

September 5 & 12 – Wisdom for Living

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

September 19 & 26 – Humility

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

October 3 & 10 – Marriage

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

October 17 & 24 – Sins of the Heart

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

October 31 – Salvation

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

November 7 & 14 – Spiritual Vigilance

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

November 21 & 28 – Acquisition of Wealth

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

December 5 & 12 – Wonderfully Made

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

December 19 & 26 – End of the World

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