



Our Daily Homily

By
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VOLUME Twelve
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.



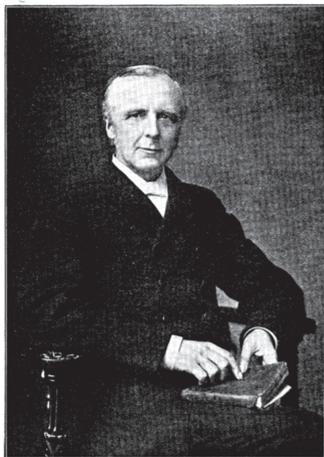


None of my books is dearer to me than this, or seems to contain more of my innermost thought; but at best it is only a handful of meal in the barrel, which may God multiply till He send rain on the earth.

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.



October 1

Isaiah 66:13

“As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”

THERE is the mother nature as well as that of the father in God. We are familiar with the thought of the Divine Fatherhood; let us not forget the Divine Motherhood. All the soft, gentle touches of mother’s hand, unlike any other hands; all the tender pleading, yearning affection; all the utter selflessness, that never wrecks what it expends for the objects of its solicitude, are equally in God. But as men get mad with drink and sin, and refuse the sweet mother-love which would gather them, until worn-out and weary they come back to it wrecked and forlorn, so we have drifted from God’s mother-heart, getting to ourselves pain and loss, and missing its exquisite solace. Fools that we are!

Come back to it, children! Like wayward runaway babes, at the end of the long summer’s day, who, shamefaced and sorrowful, with their torn clothes and grimy faces, hardly dare present themselves to those tender eyes, and yet have no alternative, and know that they may count on the most tender reception. So come back to Him. He will receive, forgive, cleanse, comfort.

A mother’s comfort! Estimate it at its full. Remember how your mother comforted you, as a little child; as a man at the death of your young wife; as a maiden when love had disappointed. How much more God! May we not then address to God’s tender heart those most exquisite words:—

“Neither love me for

Thine own dear pity’s wiping my cheeks dry,

Since one might well forget to weep who bore

Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby;

But love me for love’s sake, that evermore

Thou mayst love on through love’s eternity.”





Jeremiah 1:6

“Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.”

A SENSE of helplessness is of prime importance as a preparation for ministry. Those who count themselves able to speak will never become God’s mouthpiece; while those who have no words of their own will be surprised to find how forcible and perennial the stream of holy speech will become through their lips. Though you cannot, He can; and your sense of inability is the condition that the Spirit of your Father should speak through you. Learn to appropriate the Savior’s affirmation, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” (John 14:10)

How many of the greatest men have been broken under a sense of their insufficiency! That passage in the life of John Livingstone comes back to me as I write. He had spoken at the yearly communion at Kirk o’ Shotts on the Sabbath with marvelous power, and had been requested to preach on the following morning, which he promised to do on condition that his friends should spend the night in prayer. But as he awoke in the morning he was so overwhelmed with the sense of his incompetence that he went three and a-half miles out of the town, to be brought back, however, and to preach so marvelously that five hundred souls were converted.

The writer can never forget the comfort that this passage gave him in early boyhood, when he anxiously feared that he never would be able to exercise the ministry of the Gospel. One morning, years ago, when in great anxiety to learn whether his was a true vocation to the Christian ministry, the Bible opened to this page, and he can bear witness that God has been faithful.





October 3

Jeremiah 2:13

“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

IN yonder fruitful valley a fountain rises, full of living, sparkling, delicious water. But, see, all the able-bodied inhabitants have left their houses, climbing to the rugged rocks above their homes, and are engaged with incredible labor in hewing them out those rocky cisterns which travellers tell us abound in Eastern lands. The heights resound with the ringing notes of hammer and chisel; for months they labor at their assiduous toils; but when all is done, the cisterns are discovered to be broken by flaws, and to provide but brackish water at the best.

Such is the picture painted from life by Jeremiah; but how truly it represents the spirit of the world! Leaving God, in whom alone man's thirsty spirit can find satisfaction and thirst-quenching, he hath set himself, with infinite labor, to hew out cisterns of gold and silver, cisterns of splendid houses and reputable characters, and lavish alms deeds, cisterns of wisdom and ancient lore. From any of these the hewer thinks he will obtain sufficient supplies to last him for his life. At the best, however, the water is brackish, wanting the sparkle of oxygenated life; hot with the heat of the day.

Jehovah may well ask whether such a spectacle can be matched anywhere else in the world. Heathen peoples are notoriously true to their ancestral faiths and practices. For vast eras the worship of ancestors has been maintained in China, and of fire by the followers of Zoroaster. There is no change in the votive offerings which the poor Hindus of all ages have laid before their impassive deities. “Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.” (Jeremiah 2:11)





October 4

Jeremiah 3:16

“And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.”

THERE was a time in Israel when the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord was the symbol of the national hopes and deliverances. If Israel was smitten before her enemies, it was thither that the people turned for help. On one memorable occasion, they brought from Shiloh the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubim — and when it came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again; and even the Philistines were afraid. But Jeremiah says that this would never be done in the coming time. Why? Partly because the people would rely more on the spiritual presence than the material emblem, and partly because a new covenant would have been inaugurated, superseding the old.

In all true lives there is something of this. We outgrow our old experiences, and get as far beyond them as they were once beyond anything we had attained. It seems to you that you cannot look for higher heights, more heavenly experiences, or deeper insight than you have had. Beware lest you limit God. Your highest water-mark shall be overleapt when the tide comes in again. Wordsworth says Nature was ever singing to the child, a more exquisite song, and telling a more wonderful tale. And is not Nature's voice the voice of God? Are not the inexhaustible stores of Nature but an emblem of the still more inexhaustible stores of Grace? Dare to press on to the things that are before. There is more love than has ever ravished your heart; more joy than has ever shed its ecstasy through your emotions; more utter consecration, closer union; more rapturous insight into the oneness of the Holy Trinity, and our inclusion in its mystic circle.





October 5

Jeremiah 4:3

***“For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem,
Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.”***

GOD’S sowing times are often neutralized by the hardness of the soil of our hearts. Caked over by the heavy tread of the passing years, neglected opportunities, and worldly society, even by the beautiful feet of His messengers, they need to be broken up. We sometimes speak of the breaking *down* of a great convention; but such an experience ought to lead to a breaking *up* of fallow ground. If this does not accrue from the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, it must be effected by the ploughshare of pain. “Tribulation” is derived from the Latin word for a harrow, *tribulum*.

In Finney’s Revival Sermons there is a great discourse on this text at the beginning of the book. It was the evangelist’s wont to open a mission by enumerating the ways by which his hearers’ hearts could be laid open to receive the seed of the kingdom. When hearing the Gospel, it is specially necessary to guard our hearers and ourselves against all hardness of heart and contempt of God’s Word and commandment.

Our Lord clearly tells us what the thorns are. He says they are the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life (Luke 8:14). The cares of the poor are as inimical to true religion as the wealth of the rich; and the absorption of the heart in pleasure is as hurtful as either. There is no room on the soil of our nature for more than one absorbing passion. If that be for the glory of Christ, it includes all other desires and pursuits; but if our thoughts are diverted to things or persons apart from Him, there is but little energy left for a strong religious life. O God, fill our hearts with such good crops that there may be no room for thorns!





October 6

Jeremiah 5:22

“Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?”

WHAT an insignificant atom is a grain of sand! But God has chosen to arrest the advance of the mighty billows by a barrier of sand-grains. Let the ocean chafe as it will, it cannot pass its defined limits. It may destroy the solid masonry of human construction, but it is foiled by a bank of soft sand.

“What cannot his power accomplish for me,
Who makes of soft sand a strong bar to the sea!”

There are many illustrations of this in the history of the Church. The pride of the persecutor has been arrested by the prayers and tears of men, women, and children, who have had no more strength in themselves than a bank of sand-grains, but have succeeded in arresting the might of their foes. The persecutions of the Roman Empire were finally renounced because they actually promoted the cause they were intended to destroy. By the weak things of this world God brings to naught the things that are reckoned mighty.

What a picture of weak submission, of suffering patience, of unresisting gentleness is the sand! What a type of God’s hidden ones, whom the world knows not! Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He ordains strength: out of weakness He makes strong: out of the passive sufferers He makes His strongest ramparts.

“The race of God’s anointed priests shall never pass away;
Before his glorious face they stand, and serve Him night and day.
Though reason raves, and unbelief flows on a mighty flood,
There are, and shall be, till the end, the hidden priests of God.”





October 7

Jeremiah 6:14

“They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”

WE spare ourselves, and we are willing to be spared by others. The knife must not cut to the quick; the wound must not be probed to the bottom. We are glad to attend a ministry which is not too searching, dealing with the soul rather than with the spirit; with the intellect rather than with the heart. We are quite prepared that the root and core of our trouble should not be dealt with, if only we may be made presentable to our fellow-creatures as soon as possible. The corrupt matter may still be in the wound, certain to break out again; but we are not desirous that it should be driven forth, if only we may soon regain our comeliness.

In our dealings with God let us reverse all this, and ask that He will not spare us, or give us anything less than the best. The process may be painful and protracted, but it will be sure. The pressing of the putrid matter from the wound may distress and horrify; but it will make sure work in the end.

“Alas,” says Tersteegen, “some never arrive at a thorough knowledge of their inward corruption and their hidden self-love, nor of the perfect, holy, secluded, hidden life in Christ, which is the life of the new creature. Nor do they know the power of the Spirit of Christ, working in his own members, and bringing forth in them the outward life of holiness to God. For all these things are taught to the soul by God, and would never have entered into the thoughts of men; and they have limited themselves within themselves, and enclosed themselves, so to speak, within their own ideal.” Let us be warned by these words, and never heal up any wound which God would keep open, till all the evil it was intended to remove has left our system.





Jeremiah 7:4

“Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.”

WHEN Jeremiah threatened Israel with the coming of the king of Assyria, the false prophets minimized the terror of his utterances by pointing to the temple and assuring the people that there was no reason to anticipate the overthrow of their city, since it was the custodian of the holy shrine of Jehovah. “Ye have the temple in your midst, surely then you are a religious people. You cannot be as bad as this pessimistic prophet alleges, and God cannot very well dispense with you.”

But men may perform the most sacred rites, and yet perpetrate the grossest crimes. The presence of a temple with all its priests and rites does not necessarily denote holiness; but often the contrary. In Roman Catholic countries, brigands will seek the blessing of heaven on their plans of murder and plunder. Our safety lies, not in outward rites, but in amending our ways and doings. Not in having sprung from godly parents, nor in engagedness in holy things, nor in the practice of religious rites, will help come; but in being genuinely right with God. Real religion consists not in temple-rites, but in humility, unselfishness, and godliness. Saul of Tarsus is the type of many who are zealous for religion, but destitute of its power.

“Here on earth a temple stands,
Temple never built with hands;
There the Lord doth fill the place
With the glory of His grace.
Cleansed by Christ’s atoning Blood,
Thou art this fair house of God
Where the soul, a priest in white,
Singeth praises day and night;
Glory of the Love divine,
Filling all this heart of thine.”





October 9

Jeremiah 8:22

“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”

HOW many of God’s children are discouraged! They have mourned, confessed, and resolved; but they do not expect to see any great alteration in themselves. They have lost hope. Now, it is evident that as long as this spirit prevails, there is very little prospect of improvement. Discouragement can only bring defeat. One of the first objects of a physician is always to awaken hope, for otherwise he knows that his medicines can profit but little. Now, bethink you, what is the cause of your failure? Is it in God? Is there not balm in Gilead? Is there not a physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

O wounded, sorrowful soul, there is balm in Gilead, there is a Good Physician. No hurt He cannot heal, no bleeding He cannot staunch, no sickness He cannot cure! Why keep lamenting so bitterly, “My bad heart, my bad heart”? Why speak as though that temper, that predisposition to sin, that habit, were to be lost only in death? Why be uncomforted? Jesus can heal all sicknesses, all diseases, among the people. One touch of the King can heal the soul of whatsoever disease it has.

Why are you not in health? It is because you resort to quacks, and not to the Divine Physician; or because you do not bare your pain to its roots before Him; or because you refuse to abandon yourself wholly to His prescriptions and treatment. Dare to search out and know the cause of ill-health; for be sure it is on your side, not Christ’s. Then let Him treat you as He will. He will prescribe diet, exercise, fresh air, change of scene. He may use the knife. but He will do His work as dexterously and painlessly as possible. “Who healeth all thy diseases.” (Psalm 103:3)





October 10

Jeremiah 9:12

“Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?”

A SAINTLY soul has translated these words into music, which expresses their inner thought:—

“Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of thy tone:
As Thou hast sought, so let me seek
Thy erring children, lost and lone.

“O teach me, Lord, that I may teach
The precious things Thou dost impart:
And wing my words, that they may reach
The hidden depths of many a heart.”

With such expressions of the disciples of the Lord, we should couple his sublime words: “Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” (Matthew 10:19,20) And again He said: “What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.” (Matthew 10:27) Often we have run before we were sent. We have spoken our own message, and it has fallen flat and powerless. We have elaborated our sentences with careful art, but they have been lighter than vanity, for want of the King’s word, in which alone there is power.

Let us amend our ways, and wait on Him for His word, going forth to speak it with an authority which can only be obtained when one has the consciousness of the Lord. We may have to go into the darkness of pain and sorrow, or hide in the closet far from the rush of the world, and the clamour of human voices; but we shall hear Him speak, as the prophet Elijah did at Horeb, when the still, small voice filled the cave with its thrilling cadence.





October 11

Jeremiah 10:21

“For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.”

THIS is a very solemn indictment; but the pity of it is that it is true of many shepherds of flocks in our own land. We must avoid generalizing too widely; but, on the whole, it is incontestable that a dwindling flock and waning cause point to prayerlessness perhaps on the part of the members, but almost certainly on the part of the shepherd himself. And it becomes us to search our hearts to see how far our prayerlessness may not be hindering the work of God in our own church.

One of the most solemn sermons ever addressed to ministers is that of Dr. Binney's on this text; and he shows that the correlative must also be true, and that where we seek the Lord we shall prosper, our work, shall become successful, and our flock increased. The old Latin motto said that to pray is to labor; and some of the best work in the world has been done by simple prayer. You may be laboring quite as effectively when you are shut within your closet doors as when going to and fro in the world in active Christian endeavor. It is remarkable that whilst Philip was able to preach Jesus, and to bring many to Him, it was needful that the best results of the Gospel could not be realized till Peter and John had come down from Jerusalem to pray for the new converts (Acts 8:14). Let us ponder and practise the five simple rules given by our sainted brother, George Muller, for prevailing prayer:—(1) Not for our own worthiness. (2) Solely through Christ's merits, on the ground of His cross and resurrection. (3) For the glory of God. (4) No sin must be allowed, since this absolutely bars blessing. (5) Be patient: glorify God by waiting on Him.





Jeremiah 11:5

“That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD.”

WHEN God recapitulated His promises in the heart of Jeremiah, even though they involved a curse on those who neutralized His words, there arose from it a deep response. He answered and said, Amen, O Lord. What a remarkable example for us all! By life and lip, by deed and word, when we can understand and when we cannot, when the words are illuminated with blue and gold, when they are as black as the old black-lettered missals, always and everywhere, let us answer, and say, Amen, O Lord. We are irresistibly reminded of our Lord’s words, after He had been contemplating the doom of the cities that refused Him, and the mysterious refusal which the wise and prudent accorded to His message. He said solemnly and emphatically, “Yea, Father.”

It is an awful thing to read this context, and to remark the sentence to which Jeremiah said Amen. “Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant,” (Jeremiah 11:3) Is it lawful, think you, to infer that the saints will one day acquiesce in God’s verdict on the disobedient and ungodly! It may be that we shall be so fully convinced of the mercy of God, which sought the salvation of the lost, and shall see so clearly all the many efforts He made for their arrest, that we shall solemnly and sadly answer and say, Amen, O Lord, to their doom.

But if these words should be read by one who is resisting and disbelieving the love of God that would fain lead him into the land that floweth with milk and honey, let him beware lest his sinful refusal to be saved, his strife against the mercy of God, will one day be so patent that his dearest friend will answer and say, Amen, O Lord.





October 13

Jeremiah 12:1

“Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?”

“I WOULD reason with Thee.” Religion is often misrepresented as unreasonable. But there is nothing to warrant the charge. On the contrary, the perpetual note of the Scriptures is, “Come now, and let us reason together.” (Isaiah 1:18) Doubtless there are many things revealed which never could have been discovered by reason, but there is nothing which may not be apprehended and appreciated by it. Man’s reason was made in the image of God’s. At present, however, our reasoning faculties are probably in their earliest stage of development, and we are much as infants admitted to some scientific laboratory or library.

God demands that we should use our reason, not only on the facts of nature, but on those revealed in the Bible. He likes us to reason out things with Him. Much better this than to reason against Him. If instead of turning from Him to discuss with each other, men would only turn to Him, there would be given them either an insight into His ways, or grace to wait and trust. Job, Moses, Asaph, and Jeremiah did this; and with them all the same problem troubled them, *Why do the wicked prosper?*

But there is one fact which can never be questioned. We must always begin our reasoning by saying, “Righteous art Thou, O God.” This is a foundation fact which underlies His throne. We cannot question it. By the very conscience which He has put within us, and by the whole trend and drift of His Providence, He has put His Righteousness beyond question. As Abraham said, the Judge of all the earth must do right. But when we grant this, we may proceed to ask how certain facts which are permitted in the world are consistent with it. He may explain: or He may say, Not now, but presently.





October 14

Jeremiah 13:11

“For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.”

ISRAEL had the opportunity of becoming a people, a name, and a glory; but they would not. In their declension and refusal God has turned to the Church, largely chosen from among the Gentiles, and in which we by His grace have a part. To us their privileges are offered. Let us gladly avail ourselves of them, and become unto God the people of His inheritance, in whom He may find a welcome and a home. Oh to be a name to Him, so that men may understand and revere Him the better because of what we are! Oh to be a glory to Him, so that He may account it as His choice ornament and jewel! Oh to be as intimately united to Him as the girdle worn on the prophet's loins!

Our hearts misgive us as we write or read. How can such things be? Behold, like that same girdle we have become marred and profitless. Yet, there is one phrase here which is radiant with hope: “As the girdle cleaveth ... so have I *caused to cleave*.” “Caused to cleave.” We are not able to cleave; we have so often tried to, and failed; but now we come in humble eagerness before Him, and say, “Cause us to cleave, O God; cause us to walk in thy ways; cause us to do thy will; cause us to be a people, a name, and a glory unto Thyself.”

“O man,” Tersteegen said, “whoever you are, stand still for a moment, and think earnestly of the high dignity for which you were created and sent into the world by God. You were not made for time and for passing things, but for God and eternity, and to have your heart filled with God and with the things eternal. Yield yourself up fearlessly to His mighty working, and be still, and welcome Him in His gracious operation in the heart.”





October 15

Jeremiah 14:9

“Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.”

A STRONG man may be rendered powerless by a reel of cotton being wound around him. Each thread so brittle, yet all together is irresistible. So a large number of inconsistencies and insincerities may make God powerless to help you, or to work mightily through you to the salvation of others. He may be in the midst of you, and you may be called by His name; great issues for His kingdom and glory may seem at stake; mighty possibilities within your reach; and yet He is as a mighty man that cannot save.

There is might enough in God to save the weakest and sinfulest of His children; and you are unsaved because of the limitations you have placed upon Him. First, you are not absolutely willing to be delivered from your sins. Secondly, you do not entirely believe in His power and will. Thirdly, you have not definitely handed the whole matter over to Him, and believed that He has accepted the charge.

Or — and this is perhaps the deepest reason of all — you have formed your own ideas of Divine truth, and of the possible Christian life. And having formed your own conception of the true ideal of Christianity, you have thenceforth lived within the limitations of your ideal, which is bounded by human wisdom and human thought. And so you never come to a thorough knowledge of the indwelling of Christ, or what He is prepared to do for you; or, catching a glimpse of it from afar, you are not sufficiently delivered from the reasonings and workings of your mind to give Him that opportunity for which He waits and yearns. The Lord Jesus could do infinitely more in us, and through us, if we did not hinder. Be sure that the Kingdom of God is within; but you must let it possess you.





October 16

Jeremiah 15:19

“Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.”

WHAT a promise for backsliders is this! Here is a soul that had gone away from God’s presence, and had ceased to be as His mouth. How long it had been in this castaway condition we need not inquire. It is enough to know that it had dipped beneath the horizon, and been permitted to know the bitter anguish of seeing others do its chosen work. Have you known this? Then these words were written for you; eat them, and let them be unto you the joy and rejoicing of your heart.

Will you return to God? Do you want it to be as in the old time? Tell Him so, and He will bring you again. It will not take Him a second’s space to restore you to where you were wont to stand. Dare to believe that you are there again, forgiven, cleansed, sanctified. Live there. Go no more out for ever.

Will you leave what is vile, unworthy, and unholy, casting it away as so much dross, and take forth only the gold, silver, and precious stones, of a holy character? then God will make you His mouth, through which He will speak to saint and sinner. Is not this worth whatever it may cost you? Remember how Peter sinned; but within fifty days he was speaking as the mouth of the Holy Ghost to thousands.

It was thus, also, that Mark was brought again, who forsook the apostle, in his first missionary journey; but he was honored, as the mouth of the Holy Spirit, to write the Gospel that bears his name.

“I know not what I am, but only know
I have had glimpses tongue may never speak:
No more I balance human joy or woe,
But think of my transgressions, and am meek.
Savior! forgive the child who sinned so—
His proud heart yields — the tears are on his cheek.”





October 17

Jeremiah 16:19

“O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.”

ONE of the puritans was accustomed to describe prayer as the flight of the lonely man to the only God. There is such prayer here. This man is very lonely. He is like a speckled bird, set on by all the birds of the flock. He looks right and left, but there is no man to care for his soul; then he addresses himself to God in these touching words.

My strength. — The psalmist spoke of God as the strength of his life. The apostle of love said that little children could overcome the world, because He that was in them was greater and stronger than he that was in the world. “The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1)

My stronghold. — A stronghold is what holds strongly. A keep is that which keeps. We keep God’s deposit, which is His Gospel: God keeps our deposit, which is ourselves. And none, man nor devil, can snatch us away.

My refuge in the day of affliction. — The night darkening the sky drives the chicks to the hen’s wings; so affliction drives us to God. “In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.” (Psalm 57:1)

Do you wish to know Him thus? See that you do not burden yourself by your endeavors. God is a Spirit, and within your spirit. You need not ascend into heaven, nor descend into the deep. You need not weary yourself with the reasonings and reflections and questionings of your mind or heart. By these means you will wander further from Him and His knowledge. *Be still and know.* Enter into the still and peaceful land of inward spiritual fellowship. Commune with your own heart. Be a child before Him, innocent, unaffected, unrestrained.





Jeremiah 17:21

“Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;”

“TAKE heed to yourselves” may be rendered “take heed for your life’s sake,” as if the matter dealt with in this paragraph closely pertained to the conditions of the best life. And is it not so? Is it not a matter of vital importance that we should keep the eternal Sabbath in our hearts, and suffer no burden to be brought through the gates of the soul? Even if we consider this matter from the lowest aspect, how certain it is that absence of worry and fret promotes length of days! But in the deepest sense we must, like Jeremiah, set a guard at the city portals, and insist that no anxiety should cross our threshold. Do you ask what sentry is strong enough to arrest the intrusion of burden-bearing thoughts? I reply, let the peace of God *keep* your mind and heart. Meet every anxiety with the one short, strong, sweet answer — God; God will see to it; God will provide.

In Jeremiah 17:24 we are bidden diligently to hearken to God in this matter. It must therefore be within our power. The will can direct the thoughts to what object it chooses. Do not look down, but up; not backward or forward, but God-ward. It is right to think calmly and deliberately about the issues of things; but the allowance of foreboding anxiety is a positive sin against the love of God.

The result is beautiful. Obey God in this, and the King Himself shall enter the gates of your city (Jeremiah 17:25). Your life will be filled with burnt-offerings and frankincense and thanksgiving (Jeremiah 17:26). And from the perfect balance and rest of your nature you will be able to look out with equanimity on the storm and change around. We which have believed do enter into the Sabbatism which remaineth.





October 19

Jeremiah 18:4

“And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.”

GOD wants to make the very best He can of each of His children. He puts us on His wheel, and subjects us to the discipline which He deems most likely to secure our greatest blessedness and usefulness. But, alas! how often He finds a marred vessel left on His hands when He desired and sought perfect beauty and strength! This is through no failure on His part; but because some bubble of vanity or grit of self-will has hindered Him.

Alas, how many have marred His work! What might we not have been, if only we had perfectly yielded to Him! It is enough to break our hearts to recall all the wasted and misspent years, when He would, but we would not.

When this has been the case, He does not cast us utterly away; but puts us afresh upon the wheel, and “makes us again.” If He cannot do what He desired at the first, He will still make the best of us; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. Let God take your life which has hitherto proved a failure; He will make of what remains of it more than men could make with all earthly advantages on their side, and with nothing to hinder its regular development.

Yield yourself afresh to God. Confess that you have marred His work. Humbly ask that He should make you again, as He made again Jacob and Peter and John and Mark. Only be careful in all time to come — first, to give God sufficient opportunity by waiting before Him; and secondly, to be very prompt to obey all that He may impress upon you as being His holy will. There is simply no limit to the progress and development of the soul which is able to meet God with a never-faltering “Yes.” Let the lifelike clay in the potter’s hands be plastic to its Maker’s touch!





Jeremiah 19:11

“And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter’s vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury.”

THESSE words were spoken first of the inevitable judgments which were to befall Jerusalem. She who had been a chosen vessel was now to be broken beyond repair.

An earthen vessel is a true emblem of human life, so frail, so brittle. But there is something frailer yet in our resolutions and efforts after holiness. And when once these have failed us, we can never be again what we were. Always the crack, the rivets, the mark of the join.

In Gideon’s days there was a light within the earthen vessels; and when these were broken it shone forth. There is, therefore, a breaking of the vessel which is salutary and desirable. And it is of this that Miss Taylor sings:

“Oh to be nothing, nothing!
Only to lie at His feet,
A broken and emptied vessel,
For the Master’s use made meet.”

It reminds me of a piece of pottery I saw in the mountain burn, which was in the water and the water in it. If there be in any one of us a proud and evil disposition, a masterful self-will, which frets for its own way and makes itself strong against God, then indeed we may ask to be so broken as never to be whole again. “Take me — break me — make me,” is a very wholesome prayer for us all.

The apostle speaks of the heavenly treasure in the earthen vessel. How wonderful it is that God should put so much of His spiritual ointment into such common and ordinary receptacles! No one detects what is in the saints till they are broken by sickness, pain, trouble; then the house is filled with the odor of the ointment.





October 21

Jeremiah 20:9

“Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”

THE prophet had looked for marvelous results from his preaching. So great was his consciousness that God’s word was on his lips, and His power with him, that he expected by his ministry to arrest the decay of his people. And when, instead of the success he sought, he found himself in the stocks, he was tempted to feel that God had excited hopes which were not destined to be realized. He did not give sufficient weight to man’s awful power of resisting and neutralizing God’s best designs. We say this reverently, and use human methods of speech.

Yet, on the other hand, as he reviewed the steps by which he had come to act and speak as he did, he felt that he could not have done differently. And though he were suddenly to repress himself, the Divine inward impulse would sweep away all his constraints, and assert itself in irresistible might. It was of no use placing the bushel over the light, for the light would burn the bushel; useless to shut in the fire, for the fire would burn through every obstacle to its flames.

What a glorious state of heart to be in! We have sometimes been weary in God’s service; but oh, it would be a greater weariness if we were dismissed from it. To speak is an awful responsibility and weight; but not to speak would be impossible. Have you the burning heart? Do you know what it is to feel unable to contain yourself, since the love of Jesus constrains? If not, daily pray that God may light a burning fire in your bones.

“O God! make free

This barren, shackled earth, so deadly cold;

Breathe gently forth thy spring, till winter flees

In rude amazement!”





Jeremiah 21:2

“Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.”

IT was during the last extremity of the siege that Zedekiah sent this message to Jeremiah. His people and he had postponed their compliance with the warnings and invitations of God’s love till the last possible hour, and now they were more eager for immunity from the consequences of their sins than to repent and return to God. The answer was immediate — that matters must now be allowed to take their course. It was, however, added that even now all who dared to act in faith and go out to the besiegers would save their lives.

What a test of faith was here! It seemed as though it were worth while to risk everything and stay in the city rather than venture out to those terrible hosts that were gathered around. But there was no alternative. To stay in the city was certain death; to go forth into what seemed certain death would secure life. Men may reach a certain point in wrong-doing when the disasters their sins have courted are inevitable. As they have sown, they must reap. They have set the rocks rolling, and they must see the devastation wrought on their homes. Yet, even then, there is a way of escape.

Still God pleads with men, as in Jeremiah 21:8,9: “And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live,” This surely is the exact counterpart of the words which our Lord is recorded as having spoken on four different occasions: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” (Luke 9:24) There is a strange reversal of human imaginations at the cross of Christ!





October 23

Jeremiah 22:13

“Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;”

THIS denunciation was probably against the king himself. But it has a much fuller reference. He was the godless son of a godly father, whose character is sketched in three particulars. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; it was well with him; it was to know God. But the son had reversed all this. He built his palace of unrighteousness, his chambers of covetousness; but its width of space could not obliterate the memory of the forced and unpaid labor by which it had been reared. And God would plead and avenge the cause of those oppressed laborers.

When we see the splendid piles of business buildings reared by monopolists who thrive by making existence impossible to smaller but industrious tradesmen; when we hear of the vast fortunes made out of strong drink; or the manipulation of the market by millionaires, that make honest business impossible — we recur to these terrible words. God still arises to avenge the cause of the poor and needy. There is a God who judges in the earth.

In our vast cities it is not easy to trace the incidence of the Divine displeasure on a family of wrong-doers. Those who reside in our villages and country towns, and have long memories, could tell of many corroborations in their own knowledge. But there is another side to this. God’s children can afford to be generous and openhanded to their employees, because their Father is rich. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:” (2 Corinthians 9:8) Let us maintain His honor, and His family name, by fair dealing. They who know God, judge the cause of the poor and needy; and for those who do this it is well (Jeremiah 22:16).





Jeremiah 23:22

“But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.”

HERE is the cause of so much failure in Christian work — God’s servants do not stand in God’s council. The previous words explain what is meant by not standing in God’s council: “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.” (Jeremiah 23:21) Alas! these words write our own sentence. Too often we run without being sent, and prophesy because the hour has struck, rather than because the message of God has been given! We do not stand in God’s council.

“But if they had stood.” ... We gather, therefore, that the stream of prophetic teaching was not limited to Jeremiah alone. There was no necessary exclusiveness in the Divine arrangements. He was chosen, and used as God’s agent and medium, because he stood in his council. And the others might have had the same privilege if they had conformed to the same conditions.

Let us claim the positive assurance of this promise. We see where we have fallen short of God’s ideal, but we can retrace our steps; we can renounce our fussy activities; refrain from the desire to be always to the front; and wait more absolutely on God for His thoughts, and words, and messages. A Christian worker once complained to George Müller that he had not time enough for the study of the Word and prayer; and the veteran saint asked in reply, whether an hour’s less work, with the soul dwelling in the full light of God, and therefore actuated by his impulses, would not be more prosperous and effective than five hours spent under the perpetual fever of our own will and way. Be right with God, and the people *shall be caused to hear, and shall be turned.*





October 25

Jeremiah 24:7

“And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.”

AN heart to know! We know God with our heart, the seat of our moral life, and specially of our affections. As the apostle puts it, it is needful that the eyes of our heart should be opened that we should know. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. He that loveth knoweth God, and is known of Him. If there is anything unloving in your nature, it will blur your knowledge of God, as condensed breath on a window-pane will shut out the fairest landscape. But the heart which knows God is his dear gift. Be willing to have it; ask for it, and it shall be yours.

The special aspect in which we are led to know God is as Jehovah — that He is the I AM, the unchanging, ever-loving one; the God who comes down to deliver and save. This is the aspect that we need most. When overcome with failure and sin; when thoroughly discouraged with abortive efforts; when overtaken by some sudden gust of temptation — we need to know that our sin cannot surprise God, or staunch His love, or wear out His patience.

But what a word is this, that we shall be His people and He our God! Oh, infinite God, how canst Thou take such as we are — nay, I will not speak of others, but of myself — such as I am, to be thy own peculiar treasure! I dare not look back on my past, or in upon my heart, but only out and away to thy great mercy; for I am most weak and unworthy. But I will for ever adore Thee for choosing me — not because of aught in myself, but for thy love and mercy's sake. Moreover, Thou hast given me Thyself. What can I want beside Thee? Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.





Jeremiah 25:29

“For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.”

THIS is a terrible chapter, in which the disasters that were to befall all the surrounding nations are described as a potion presented to each for drinking. If any refuse, the answer is to be given in the words before us, which suggest those of Peter: “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17).

God always begins with His own people, because their sins traduce His character and bring it into contempt; and because sinners might otherwise establish a just charge of favoritism against Him. Besides, He loves them so dearly that He is eager to see them rid, as soon as may be, from the blight and parasitism of evil. It is a terrible thing to be an inconsistent child of God; for just in proportion to His love for you will God put forth the most strenuous and unremitting efforts to bring you back to Himself. This thought may arrest you, when you are being led into sinful ways. You will have to come out of them, sooner or later, if you are truly God’s child. But the anguish of your extrication will be in proportion to the sinful delight of your self-indulgence.

But if the righteous be scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Even though Babylon had done God service, as the instrument of His chastisement to His own people; yet, because in performing thus she had grossly sinned, she must drink the cup of His wrath. O disobedient and ungodly soul, thou mayest serve God’s purpose, yet He will not let thee be unpunished. Your condemnation now for a long time lingereth not.



Jeremiah 26:12–13

“Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.”

NATURALLY, Jeremiah was constituted with a very nervous and sensitive disposition. He compares himself to a child that cannot speak; he laments that he had been born into such troublous times. But at the moment of his call it was distinctly promised that he should be made from that day “a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.” Though they should fight against him, they should not prevail. (Jeremiah 1:18–19).

What an admirable comment on that promise is presented by this chapter! Here is this timid man standing alone for God against this surging multitude, in which priest and people are merged. Though his life is in the balance, and it might seem necessary to purchase it by absolute silence, he refuses to hold his peace; he insists that God has sent him, and calls on the maddened crowd to amend their ways and return unto Jehovah. Had John the Baptist spoken thus, or John Knox, we had not been surprised. But for this sensitive, retiring man to speak thus is due to the transforming power of the grace of God.

There is hope here for those who are naturally reticent and backward, reserved and timid. Take your nature to God, and ask Him to encrust it with iron and brass. Above all, seek a vivid realization that God is with you. Then open your mouth and speak. Greater is He that is in and with you, than he that is in the world. To have a conviction that God has sent; to know and feel His inspiration thrilling the soul — is utterly essential to strength of purpose and action. When we know that the living Father hath sent us, and is with us, we can stand as a brazen wall.



Jeremiah 27:8

“And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.”

IT may be that, like the people of Israel, you have grossly sinned and violated the bonds of holy fellowship and relationship with God. The result of this not improbably has been some form of chastisement and disaster, which lies heavily on your life. This is what the invasion of the king of Babylon was to Israel and the surrounding nations. Now learn from these striking words that your best attitude is one of humble and reverent submission. Put your neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon. When Samuel told Eli the inevitable results of his negligence to correct and restrain his son, the old man said, “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.” (1 Samuel 3:18) Through the infliction of his troubles he discerned the right-ordering and permissive providence of God.

So let it be with you. Accept the deserved chastisement, remembering that “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” (Hebrews 12:6) Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Look beyond the pride and cruelty of man to the permissive providence of your heavenly Father. Set yourself to learn and take well to heart the lessons of the present discipline. It is for a limited period. Do you feel that men meanwhile are going beyond their rights? Avenge not yourself; give place before their wrath; leave the matter with God; vengeance is his — He will recompense.

“To confess ignorance,” says a great preacher, “to confess wrong, to admit incapacity, to decline a reputation to which we have no right — these things, and others of the same kind, are often hard and painful, but they are always of the greatest possible value in bracing the character.”





October 29

Jeremiah 28:6–7

“Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD’S house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place. Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people;”

THE prophecy of Hananiah of the speedy return of the exiles and the break-up of the power of the king of Babylon was evidently dictated by a desire to win popularity with the people. He spoke in the name of Jehovah, and may even have supposed that his message was divinely given; but his soul was filled with human voices and reasonings, which made him unable to distinguish the still small voice of inspiration. Jeremiah was quite as anxious as he was that his country should be spared further suffering. He uttered a fervent Amen to Hananiah’s predictions. Nothing could have given him deeper pleasure than their realization; but standing as he did in the counsels of God, he knew it could not be.

So is it still. Men who follow simply their own thoughts, or are deeply dyed with the spirit of society around, are apt to prophesy smooth things to such as live selfish and worldly lives “There is no such place as the outer darkness; no such experience as the second death.” So they speak. But we know it cannot be. Earnestly as we might wish for it, and say Amen, we know, nevertheless, that it cannot be immaterial how men live, and that wickedness must bring infinite anguish and pain. How terrible will their position be at last, who cried Peace, Peace, when there was none, and encouraged rebellion against the Lord.

There are false prophets still who encourage men in their evil ways, as they paint roseate views of the future, and encourage them to believe that though they sin, the future will not be so dark as they have been led to fear. Hard as it will be for all who perish out of Christ, for these there will be an additional anguish. See Matthew 5:19.





Jeremiah 29:7

“And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.”

FOR seventy years the captives must make themselves at home and happy in Babylon. It was of no use to scheme and plot a speedier return. They must work out the predicted seventy years; and in the meanwhile let them seek the peace of the great heathen city to which they had been borne, and pray, not only for Jerusalem, but for it.

How many who read these lines are captives in positions against their will and choice. Servants and governesses in worldly homes; apprentices and clerks amid uncongenial associates; travellers in distant towns and commercial hotels; people in all kinds of positions in which they would not choose to be.

The natural tendency of all such is to fret, and begin endeavoring to secure their emancipation and removal. “Let me get away from this as soon as possible.” Or, at least, if unable to get free, they take as little interest as possible in their immediate associates, making themselves cold, and stiff, and inaccessible. This is not God’s way. Wherever you find yourself, seek the peace and comfort of those about you. Jesus bade us salute those who do not salute us, and lift our voices in intercessory prayer for our oppressors and persecutors.

God had a special purpose in allowing the captivity of His people into Babylon. It was to scatter synagogues and the Old Testament, in preparation for the Gospel. The transportation of Stundists to Siberia will affect the religious life of that great tract for all the future. You are carried into captivity to bring the Gospel to many who would otherwise never hear of it. Wherever God shall open the door, leave behind the bright and genial impression of a holy, loving personality.





October 31

Jeremiah 30:11

“For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.”

THERE is a great difference between the punishment of the ungodly and the chastisement of God’s children. In the former case there is destruction. The sirocco passes over the grass, and there is nought left but burnt and withered stubble. In the latter case there will be restoration and an aftermath.

Are you just now passing through a season of chastisement and pain? Take to heart these tender words: God will not make a full end of you. It may seem as though nothing will be left: the furnace is so hot; the stock is cut down so near to the ground. But God knows just how much you can bear, and will stay His hand. “I will not make a full end of thee.”

He will correct us with judgment. There is need for Him to correct us; so much requires pruning away, and refining. But if He were not to exercise great judgment, the soul would fail before Him. This is why we are told that the Father is the Husbandman. To no other hand could He entrust this delicate and sacred work: and while His eye and hand are full of eagerness to accomplish His purpose, they always move at the dictate of His judgment. His hand is always on our pulse.

Chastening also anticipates a blessed restoration. This chapter has many tender gleams of hope in it. “I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord.” (30:17) “I will bring again the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have compassion on his dwelling places.” (30:18) Look forward, poor suffering one! Beyond the dark clouds light is shining on the hills. When the discipline is over, the Lord will take you to His care, wash your stripes, restore comforts to you, and give harvests of joy.





November 1

Jeremiah 31:3

“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”

WE who by faith are the children of Abraham may claim and muse upon these sweet and tender words.

God’s love to us is not of today or yesterday. It did not originate in any movement of our heart towards Himself, or even on that day of days when Jesus died. You must go back beyond your birth, beyond Calvary and Bethlehem, beyond the fall of man and the Garden of Eden, and as you stand looking out into the immensity of eternity, dare to believe that you were loved and chosen in Christ, the object of God’s most tender solicitude and pity.

Does the thought overpower you? Notice the Divine asseveration. Yea, there can be no doubt about it. Beyond this Divine asseveration it is impossible for us to go. By word and oath God, who cannot lie, has given us strong assurance that it is even so.

But now see what comes out of this long, long love. God must have known the worst about us before He set His love on us; then He cannot be surprised as, in the work of education, He comes across evils that horrify and dismay us. He knew all this, and worse. Only let that love have its way. It is a universal and invincible solvent. It will yet rid you bit by bit of these hard and evil elements. The very rocks shall flow down at His presence.

The fountains of God’s love rise in eternity, and therefore cannot be exhausted by the demands of time. He will continue His loving-kindness. Resisted, disappointed, disregarded, His compassions will not fail until they have overcome and expelled our selfishness, and filled us with the love of God.





November 2

Jeremiah 32:9

“And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle’s son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.”

WHAT could better manifest the heroic audacity of faith? The Chaldeans infested the land, and Jeremiah knew by the word of the Lord that they were destined to hold both it and the city. And yet at the Divine command he bought a piece of land which was in possession of the foe, with as much formality as though he were at once to enter upon its possession.

He obeyed the Divine command, and then poured out his soul in prayer; nourishing his faith by the contemplation of the might of God in creation, for which nothing was too hard. Surely if God could make the heavens and the earth by his great power and by his stretched-out arm, He could easily bring it to pass that the Chaldeans should recede from the land, Israel again inhabit it, and the purchase and tenure of property be unhindered. Faith made the unseen visible, and the distant near; and enabled the prophet to take them into his calculations, and regulate his action in view of them. Herein the man of faith differs from others. They base their calculations and actions upon certain facts and considerations which are within view of their senses; while he takes into his estimate a number of other facts and considerations of which they have no knowledge, and which can only be recognized through the revelation of God’s Spirit.

As that land was purchased, though still in the enemy’s possession — so Israel is God’s possession, though under the bondage of unbelief; so the bodies of God’s saints are His purchased possession, though now under the reign of corruption; so does this world belong to Christ. O man of faith, count on these things as facts.





November 3

Jeremiah 33:3

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

WE must learn the sacred art of prayer. God says, “Call unto Me.” He likes us to address Him in prayer. We may surely believe that He will do the best, but this may degenerate into a subtle excuse for lethargy; and therefore we must be stirred by the invitation to call upon Him. There is no assurance that He will show us these great and difficult things, unless we obey the injunction of our text to call on Him. But be sure and wait before Him until He teaches you what to pray for. The prayer which is born of God rises to God from whom it came with the certainty of an answer.

God seeks intercessors. — He longs to dispense larger blessings. He longs to reveal His power and glory as God, His saving grace, His comfort and peace. But He is limited by the smallness and fewness of our prayers. He cannot do what He would for the Church in the world, because of our unbelief. He cries to us, Call unto Me, call unto Me. Little prayer, little blessing; more prayer, more blessing; much prayer, much blessing.

But what a promise is here! We long to see *great* things done for God in our churches and mission halls, in the hearts and lives of our friends. We long to see the *difficult* things unknotted, so that the crooked may be made straight, and the rough smooth. But all these things shall be. The impossibilities of your life are possible to God. The mysteries of your life can yield their secrets at the summons of God. The iron gates shall open, the sea divide, the sepulchres yield their dead. Only get right with God; only let God have unhindered way through your life; only dare to believe that you have already obtained your petition, and go forward in faith.





November 4

Jeremiah 34:18

“And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,”

T*HESE* are suggested, borrowed from an old saint's memoirs, as suitable words for a covenant before God. My Jesus,— I own myself to be thine, my only Savior and Bridegroom, Christ Jesus. I am thine, wholly and eternally. I renounce from my heart all right and authority that Satan unrighteously gave me over myself, from this day henceforward.

From this sacred hour, remembering how Thou through thy precious blood didst purchase me for Thyself, agonizing even unto death, and praying till thy blood fell as sweat to the ground, I desire that I may be thy treasure and thy bride.

From now and onward, I offer to Thee my heart and my love, my intellect and my thoughts, my choice and my purpose, my spirit, soul, and body, to be absolutely at thy disposal.

Let thy will henceforth be done in me. Command, rule, and reign in me. I yield myself up without reserve; and I desire, with thy help and power, rather to give up the last drop of this my blood, than knowingly and willingly, in my heart or life, to be untrue and disobedient to Thee. Behold, Thou hast me wholly and completely, sweet Friend of my soul. Thy Spirit be my keeper; thy death my assurance of salvation; thy life my inspiration.

I desire to hold my friendships, my possessions, my gifts and talents at thy disposal, accounting them thy gift to help me fulfill my life-course with better success. Accept me and them, and show how best all may be used in Thee and for Thee. Enable me by thy Holy Spirit to be true to this holy covenant while life shall last; and may I be presented at last faultless, in thy presence, with exceeding joy.





Jeremiah 35:19

“Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.”

THE point here is the contrast between the strict obedience of the Rechabites to the directions of their ancestors, and the disobedience of Israel to Jehovah. How often is this contrast repeated still! We find men so eager and devoted to the customs and traditions of their families, and so regardless of the yet higher claims of God. It is very wonderful! We should have thought that the temper of mind which bound men to their family traditions would have secured their allegiance to the Almighty. But it is not so, as daily experience proves.

Let us also notice the obvious inference from this chapter. If, because of their obedience to the regulations of Jonadab, the Rechabites should never want a man to stand before God, how much more will obedience to the promptings of God’s Spirit secure, through His mercy, a perpetual standing before His face; not only of ourselves, but of our children. Christian parents, you have a perfect right to go to God with this fair deduction from His own words, and say: Give us grace to obey thy commandments, and keep all thy precepts; and do according to all that Thou commandest; and then grant to us to stand before Thee for evermore in thy presence-chamber; and not us only, but our children and children’s children. Let them be a godly seed on earth, ever maintaining sweet recollections of our character and life; and let us be a united family in the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy. How blessed that man is who, like Elijah, stands before God!

“Jesus protects: my fears, be gone!

What can the Rock of Ages move?

Safe in thy arms I lay me down,

Thy everlasting arms of love.”





November 6

Jeremiah 36:23

“And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.”

IT was an audacious and foolish act. Only a fool or a madman could have trifled thus. He did not relish the prophet’s words, and so he cut them to pieces; but though he destroyed them, he could not in this way arrest the penalties which they foretold. Indeed, he increased them: “There were added besides unto them many like words.” (36:32) The criminal may tear up the warrant for his arrest; but it will not help his case. The captain may destroy the map which indicates the rocks in his course; but that will not rob them of the cruel fangs with which they will pierce the timbers of his ship. Men may deride and destroy the Bible; but this will not empty the future of hell, or hell of its bitter remorse.

We are all tempted to use the pen-knife to God’s Book. There are passages in it which we do not like; those that cross our favorite notions, our cherished sins. Practically, we eliminate them. We never read them, or we explain them away, or profess to doubt their inspiration. We have no right to set certain passages of Scripture aside because they conflict with our notions of truth or system of theology. The scientific man will not adopt a law while one fact refuses to be included in it. The commercial man will not close his books while a shilling is unaccounted for. Blessed as the habit is of listening for God’s voice within, we must never forget the absolute necessity of its corroboration from the words of Scripture.

It is wise, therefore, to read the Scriptures with an open and unbiased mind, not bringing our preconceptions, like pen-knives, to cut out what we do not agree with, but meekly inquiring what it may please the Lord our God to speak.





Jeremiah 37:21

“Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers’ street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.”

THIS was God’s way of caring for His child. His life was secured to Him from the hatred of his foes, and his daily bread, as long as there was any to be had. If you do God’s work, you may freely count on Him. He will not fail. In the most unlikely ways your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure.

But it may be objected that it is not always so, and that many of God’s children are at this very hour suffering the need of many things which are absolutely necessary. But, first, we should have to decide what is really necessary. We might all be deprived of many of the comforts and luxuries of life without detriment. Indeed, it might be better for all of us to undergo something of the weaning and detaching process. But Matthew 6:32–33 is always true.

And, moreover, we should have to inquire whether faith had been exercised to seek and obtain their contents. We have God’s promises; but we too often fail to plead them. We know that we can only receive the benefits of Christ’s Redemption by faith; but we do not see that the same faith is requisite to bring into our hands those other boons which are included in God’s guarantees to His children. You have not, child of God, either because you ask for things that would minister simply to appetite and sense; or because you do not exercise the child’s privilege of prayer. Perhaps your present privation is intended to teach you the blessedness of prayer. Ask and receive, that your joy may be full.

“Can it be true, the grace He is declaring?
Oh, let us trust Him, for His words are fair!
Man, what is this, and why art thou despairing?
God shall forgive thee all but thy despair.”





November 8

Jeremiah 38:20

“But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.”

OF many Christians it can hardly be said that their souls *live*; they exist, but do not thrive. The food of the soul is in part the Word of God; but in part it is obedience. As we obey we are fed; for our Master said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” (John 4:34). The same truth is suggested here; if we obey the voice of the Lord, it is well with us, and our soul thrives.

The voice of God speaks from the page of His Word. Let us not accept that to be His voice which does not come to us through Scripture, or is not corroborated by Scripture. But let us be very careful to obey God’s Word, so far as we know it, even when, as in Zedekiah’s case, it seems to contradict all the suggestions of prudence and common-sense. Better be with God in a minority of one, than have the plaudits of an immense host of godless men.

How well I remember, years ago now, entering the bed-chamber of an eminent saint, one autumn morning, whose diminishing candles told how long he had been feeding on the Word of God. I asked him what had been the subject of his study. He said he had been engaged since four o’clock in discovering all the Lord’s positive commandments, that he might be sure that he was not wittingly neglecting any one of them. It is very sad to find how many in the present day are neglecting to observe to do the Lord’s precepts — concerning His ordinances, concerning the laying-up of money, the evangelization of the world, and the manifestation of perfect love. They know the Lord’s will, and do it not. They appear to think that they are absolved from that “observing to do,” which was so characteristic of Deuteronomy. As though Love were not more inexorable than Law!





Jeremiah 39:18

“For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.”

WHAT will not trust do? It will draw out of God for us the most wonderful exhibitions of His tender and mighty provision on our behalf. Who can put a limit on what God will do for the man who trusts Him? Here was the whole city given up to bloodshed and fire. The utmost confusion prevailed. No quarter was shown to the hapless Jews, pursued from house to house, from street to street, by the brutal soldiery. Yet because Ebed-melech trusted in God, and because he evidenced his faith by his loving care for the prophet, he was not given into the hand of the men of whom he was afraid.

Some who read these words may be greatly afraid. They dwell among lions, among men whose words are a sharp sword. But let them trust in the living God; and, in the meanwhile, go on each day ministering as well as they can to God’s Jeremiahs. It is not enough to let down ropes to help them; it is a great sign of the love of God to put some rags to keep the ropes from chafing the tender skin. When God comes to help us, He always combines the strong rope with the old clout. Let us resemble Him in this.

Let us trust Him more. Too many resemble the stone-breaker who came into a vast estate, but was content to live in the lodge. When an old friend came to congratulate him, and see over the property, he said: “There! It is all in those parchments; but I have never been to see for myself what there is.” Let us possess our possessions, and learn how much God will do for those who trust Him.

“Oh, could I tell, ye surely would believe it!

Oh, could I only say what I have seen!

How should I tell, or how can ye receive it—

How, till He bringeth you where I have been?





November 10

Jeremiah 40:5

“Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.”

THIS captain seems to have had a remarkable insight into God’s dealings with Israel. In Jeremiah 40:3 he speaks quite prophetically; and in this treatment of the prophet he gives every sign of having been admitted into the secret councils of the Most High. He is a comrade of the centurions of the New Testament.

But the interesting matter is the care exercised by God over His servant. During the siege his bread had been given him, and his water had been sure. And now, in spite of all the plotting and devising against his life, he was the one man of Israel who was treated with respect and provided with an honorable maintenance.

God is able to supply the need of His servants in very remarkable ways; now through ravens, or a widow, and again through a captain of Nebuchadnezzar’s guard. If we will be all for God, God will be all for us. In the present instance the men who were so eager to save themselves perished in the capture of the city; whilst the one man who sought to do God’s will, with a single purpose, not only saved his life, but found all things else added to him.

God would have us live free from care. He made the spirit, and will see that it gets its allowance of sustenance. He made the soul, and knows how much love and culture it requires. He made the body, and will provide for its food and clothing. Do not fear the rough servants whom He employs as the distributors of His gifts. Under the mailed armor a warm heart is beating.

“Give me to trust Thee, Lord,
In the dark and stormy night,
When morning seems so slow to come,
And the stars are hid from sight.”





November 11

Jeremiah 41:2

“Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.”

THIS chapter is full of horrible atrocities. Blow on blow befell the already decimated remnant of Jews. Had it not been for Ishmael’s ruthless vandalism, the vine of Israel might yet have struck her roots downwards and borne fruit upwards.

We must ask for more of that profound faith which, through all blinding mystery, sees the Divine purpose, weaving events and men into its plans, and compelling all to work together for the discipline or aid of His children. “Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word:” “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” (Psalms 148:7–8; 76:10).

What a comfort it is to know that all things in heaven, earth, and hell; all demons and men; all Nebuchadnezzars and Ishmaels — are under the control of our heavenly Father! They may hate us with all the power of their evil natures, but they cannot hurt us beyond His permission; and as soon as they have fulfilled what He deemed necessary, they will be withdrawn. There are no second causes for us. We are always dealing first-hand with God, though He may employ many strange servants to bring us His messages.

“A God-inspired Expectation, a Holy Patience, has always been the mark of a true believer, at the most critical periods in the history of the Church and of the individual. She first made hope vocal in the soul of Isaiah; fasted and prayed with Anna in her long widowhood; was at the cross with the mother; at the grave with the Magdalene; and hired the room for Pentecost.”





November 12

Jeremiah 42:6

“Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.”

WHILE the people said this with their lips, they had already set their faces to go into the land of Egypt (Jeremiah 42:15, 17). It is useless to profess our desire to know God’s will, while in our secret heart we are determined to follow a certain course, come what may. Indeed it is worse than useless; it is blasphemous. How often do believers ask for prayer that their course may be made clear, when in point of fact they have already decided on it, and are secretly hoping to turn God to their own side!

But what a solemn responsibility devolves on those who are sent to and fro between God and man, as Jeremiah was. He realized that he was sent by the people unto the Lord, and that he was sent back again by the Lord unto the people (Jeremiah 42:21). He knew, too, that their faces were set on having their own evil way. But he never flinched from declaring the will of God, nor turned to the right or left, to curry favor from man. By nature very timid and sensitive, see how God made him a defenced city, an iron pillar, and brazen walls. Verily he stood in God’s council, and caused the people to hear his words. What a contrast to the false prophets of Jeremiah 23!

Compare this statement concerning Gerhard Tersteegen: “His service was always marked by a diffident and retiring spirit, though ever by a courageous valour for the truth. It is recorded that on one occasion, in going with a friend to a meeting where he was expected to give an address, he said, ‘I would rather hide myself from all the world than let myself be seen and heard.’ But he never swerved a hairbreadth when the honor of God and the testimony of the truth was concerned.”





Jeremiah 43:3

“But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon.”

WHEN men do not like the Word of God, they imagine that someone has set the speaker on against them. A poor woman came to us a few weeks ago, in a terrible condition. She had induced her husband to come to a service, and the address seemed so exactly adapted to him, dealing with his sins in the plainest terms, that nothing could convince him that she had not given the preacher a full and detailed account of his life, and had set the speaker on against him. When they got home he ill-treated her with great cruelty. But that service and her patient suffering were ultimately overruled to work a great change in him.

How strange it is that ungodly men always think the Word of God is against them, whereas *they* are set against it! The wind would not be so keen in their teeth, if they were not steaming so quickly against it.

But there is a solemn lesson here for us all. Whenever the Word of God makes us wince, or God’s messenger presses sorely on us, we are apt to turn aside the point by some superficial and unreasonable excuse. We catch up the first foil we can lay hands on, in order to ward off the missile. We find some excuse to blunt the edge of the sword. It is easy to impute a bad and personal motive. There is always a Baruch the son of Neriah in the question. It is not we who are wrong, but the prophet who is prejudiced against us. As Ahab said of Micaiah, “I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” (1 Kings 22:8) We can only grow in the divine life by exposing ourselves to the reproofs and searchings of the divine Word; and allowing them their due weight.





November 14

Jeremiah 44:4

“Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.”

THERE is a personal element in sin. It is not simply a violation of law, the law of the moral universe. It is against our own soul (Jeremiah 44:7), and, above all, it hurts the holy, loving nature of God, so that His Spirit cries out as in agony, “Oh, do it not!” There is something very pathetic in this cry, extorted by the sin of man from the heart of God. It reminds one of that cry of Jesus, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?” (Matthew 17:17)

If any one suffers very keenly from nervous exhaustion, it seems sometimes almost impossible for him to bear the noise of a child who persists in running heavily overhead. He will adopt a pleading rather than an angry tone: “My child, do not do this again; I cannot bear it.” Let us think of God’s holy nature as more sensitive to sin than the most highly strung nerves to noise, and hear Him saying, whenever we are on the point of committing sin, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.”

How greatly God hates sin is taught us in the Cross. In order to put it away He spared not his only-begotten Son, but yielded Him to the bitterness of Calvary.

And how greatly the blessed Son hates it is evident from the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, when the shadow of the great burden of a world’s guilt lay upon Him.

And how greatly must the Holy Spirit, whose temple is our body, hate any sin that defiles it! Thus the Holy Trinity, with one voice, pleads with thee, who meditates on evil. Beware of bringing pain into the heart of Infinite Love; but ask that some of God’s hate for sin may be yours.





November 15

Jeremiah 45:3, 5

“Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest. ... And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.”

TROUBLE is an inevitable part of human experience. “Man that is born of a woman,” we are told, “is of few days, and full of trouble.” (Job 14:1) In addition to their share in the common heritage of man, it often falls to the lot of God’s saints to suffer specially in connection with His kingdom and glory. They know the fellowship of his sufferings. They sigh and cry for all the abominations which are being wrought in their midst. The very association of Baruch with Jeremiah extorted the groan, “Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow;”

But out of our sorrow and pain, when born patiently and trustfully, comes the more abundant life. “Behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh; saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee.” Pain casts a vail on all our pleasant earthly things, so that we take no further interest in them, and turn our thoughts to the unseen and eternal. Sorrow drives us to the God of all comfort. By the fire our dross is consumed. Through travail of soul the characteristics of godliness are born. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” (John 12:24)

God often reveals ourselves to ourselves till we cry, Woe is me now! When God’s light discovers our sins of appetite, of avarice, meanness, and niggardliness; of temper, fretfulness, and peevishness; of lack of conscientiousness, the partial fulfillment of promises, unfaithfulness, and misunderstandings. When we think of the want of constancy, truth, prayer, faith, and love, we are plunged in despair. Woe is me now! But out of all this there springs abundant life, and we rejoice that the great Revealer did not spare.





November 16

Jeremiah 46:28

“Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.”

THIS chapter is full of the clash and crash of war. In the most graphic and stirring words, the prophet describes the tide of Egyptian invasion, as its waters toss themselves upon the iron phalanxes of Babylon, like a rock-bound coast; to recoil, defeated and broken, into myriads of foam-drops. The result to the great empire of Egypt is disastrous; her gods and kings are not able to save her from her justly deserved punishment; she drinks the cup of indignation and wrath to her destruction.

But, amid it all, God remembers His people. They, too, are suffering from the results of their sins. And as they hear of all that has befallen greater nations than themselves, they may well fear that their own fate will no less be irremediable and final. If the great kingdom of Egypt has received its death wound, from which it must slowly bleed to death, what hope can there be for Israel, captive in Babylon, while Canaan lies waste? To such fears God speaks words of tender comfort and reassurance. “But fear not thou, ... and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; ... Fear thou not, ... for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.” (v27, 28)

Oh, blessed words! If we have become the children of God by faith in Jesus; if God has ever entered into covenant with our souls; if He has taken us to be His and to give us His best — then, though we suffer chastisement, we shall not be overwhelmed by it though we are corrected, diminished, and brought low, God will not make a full end of us: though we are pruned, we shall not be cut down to the ground. We may even look out with a quiet mind on the irretrievable disasters which overtake the ungodly.





Jeremiah 47:6–7

“O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.”

O SWORD of the Lord; thou hast wounded us sore! Like a two-edged sword, the Word of God has pierced to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow. How deeply it has penetrated; how sharply it has cut! And even now it cannot rest. The work of discrimination and separation is still going on within us. We are constantly seeing new depths of our own utter worthlessness and evil. Possibilities of our own bad hearts, of which we had not dreamed, arise to confront us; and immediately the Divine sword sets itself to hack and hew and cut away the evil growth of selfishness, of which we have caught a glimpse.

There are times in our lives when we cry, “O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet: ... rest, and be still.” Will the process of purification and deliverance never be complete? Will not the destructive work of God soon end? The operation has lasted months and years; when will the Divine Surgeon lay down the knife? O knife of God, rest thee!

But how can it be quiet, seeing that the work is not done? We are not yet rid of the last remains of sin. The wound is not yet probed to the bottom. The roots of the cancerous growth of selfishness have not yet been entirely removed; and if any one of them remains, all the work will have to be done again. How can it be quiet, seeing that God loves us too well to allow us to bear with us into eternity aught that will hinder our perfect fruition of bliss? How can it be quiet, seeing that this is the only world where pain can reach His saints? and He must do His work quickly, ere we reach the land where the sword is placed in its scabbard, and stilled for ever.





November 18

Jeremiah 48:11

“Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.”

THIS beautiful and appropriate imagery, borrowed from the vineyard, speaks for itself. It would be readily appreciated by the peasant populations that toiled amid the terraced hills of Moab. To prevent scum and sediment, the newly-made wine was emptied from one vessel to another until it reached the condition of perfect fluidity. In Moab's case there had been nothing comparable to this, and therefore the raw, coarse taste remained in him, and he had settled on his lees.

What an insight this affords of God's method with the souls of men! Why these constant removals from town to town; from church to church; from situation to situation? Why this perpetual change and revolution in our plans? Why this incessant going into captivity to irksome and trying circumstances? All this is part of God's manufacture of the wine of life. We must be emptied from vessel to vessel, else we should settle on our lees, and become thick and raw and unpalatable. When the next change comes in your life, do not fear it. The blessed God will see to it that no drop of the precious fluid shall be spilt on the ground. With the tenderest care He conducts the whole operation.

Perhaps there is a counterpart to this incessant change from place to place in the perpetual flux of our emotions. We never feel the same for long together. We are constantly being emptied from one blessed frame into another, not quite so joyous or peaceful. We have to hold the most heavenly emotions with a light hand, not knowing how soon they may have passed. And it is well. Otherwise we should never lose the taste of our proud self-complacency.





Jeremiah 49:8

“Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him.”

AS originally spoken, these words summoned the people of Edom to seek the shadows of impenetrable forests, and retire into the secrecy of the caves and dens of the rocks. The deeper their hiding place, the better it would be when the storm of invasion swept across the land.

Dwell deep in the peace of God. — God’s peace is so deep and blessed that it cannot be fathomed or explained; the fugitive into its sacred secrets cannot be followed or dragged forth to perish by the merciless pack of the wolves of care. Men of the world cannot understand that mystery of peace; but the believer knows the way into it, and makes it his hiding-place and pavilion. He sleeps like his Master in the stern, while storms sweep the waters.

Dwell deep in communion with God. — Hide in God. Get away from the rush and strife around, and go alone into the clear, still depths of His nature. The Rhone loses all its silt in the deep, clear waters of Geneva’s lake. A few hasty words of prayer will not avail for this. A day’s climb is often necessary before one can reach the heart of the mountains.

Dwell deep in stillness of soul. — Do not live on the outside of life, in the outer courts of the temple of the soul. Get within. God awaits thee there. Center thyself. When the world is full of alarm and harassments, study to be quiet. The soul’s health cannot be maintained apart from the observance of times of waiting on God in solitude. The great importance of perseverance in the exercise of prayer and inward retirement may be sufficiently learned, says one, next to the experience of it, merely from the tempter’s artifices and endeavors to allure us from it, and make us neglect it.





November 20

Jeremiah 50:6

“My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place.”

THESSE words may often be said of us. A time of emergency arises; the necessity for instant and vigorous action seems overpowering; we fail to see what course to adopt — and immediately we get flurried and excited; we run from one to another; we lose our sleep. All our earnest resolutions to abide in Christ and live in His fellowship are forgotten. We have forgotten our resting-place.

Or we are in the midst of a great campaign of work. From morning to night we are plunged in a mass of calculations and activities. There is no time to take our meals, much less to obtain opportunities for prayer and fellowship with God. Our rooms without, our souls *within*, are littered with the symptoms of the many absorbing interests which are monopolizing our attention. We have forgotten our resting-place. Or, perhaps, it is a time of great temptation. Hour after hour the foe returns to the attack. We have done our best to withstand him; but have hit out without precision, have fired at random. Again, we have forgotten our resting-place.

The place where we lie down to rest is under the shadow of the Cross. Whilst we remain there, we are perfectly safe and blessed. Return unto thy rest, O straying sheep! Back to the arms of Jesus, where only such frail ones as thou art are safe.

I knew a man, who had to bear a thousand crosses belonging to others, and who grieved himself into an illness because others did not love God as He deserves, till all at once his own foolishness and sinfulness struck him to the heart. He could do nothing then but cast himself and them into the endless depths of the love of God; and he ended by having rest in his heart, and a song on his lips.





November 21

Jeremiah 51:5

“For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.”

YES, indeed, our life has been filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel. We see it now. As we look back upon the past with the light of the present reflected upon it, we see how every day has added its quota of transgression. How bitterly we must have grieved the Holy Ghost! How terribly we have made the Holy One suffer! Do you wonder that Jesus still appears in heaven as a Lamb as it had been slain!

But He has not forsaken! As again we review our life, how abundant is the evidence that we have not been forsaken. Forsaken! — Then God’s right hand would lose its cunning. Forsaken! — Then the tides that flow through the heart of God would have to leap backward. Forsaken! — Then the eternal purposes would have to be frustrated. Forsaken! — Then the Divine word would be forfeited, and the Divine Son would go without his meed (*reward*)! Sin is mighty; but there is one thing it cannot do, it cannot make God forsake those whom He has adopted into His family. Sin dragged the archangel to the pit; but it can never wrench the believer out of the hand of God. Sin brought Christ from the throne to the cross; but it can never cause God to leave, or cease to care for, His own.

Does this lead you to presumption? Do you say, Then I may do as I like? Ah, beware! Those that talk thus have not the mark of His children. The child loves with the love that fears to grieve God, more than to be forsaken of Him. “The love of Christ constrains me to forsake these things. I have long enough crucified my beloved Savior with my sins. His love constrains me to renounce all that grieves Him, and live for Him alone.”





November 22

Jeremiah 52:34

“And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.”

IF the King of Babylon did thus for a captive king, his prisoner, will your heavenly Father do less for you? He created you to need the daily portion, and cannot be oblivious of His own constitution of your nature. You wind up your watch each day, because you know that otherwise it will stop; and God will not be less thoughtful of your constant need of reinforcement. He knoweth that ye have need of all these things. His faithfulness guarantees that there always will be the portion of good for the body; always the portion of love and light for the soul; always the portion of Holy Spirit quickening for the spirit.

It is easier to die once than to live always. It is not easy to meet the continual demand of recurrent duty; not easy to live a full and strong life, that never dips below the horizon, or sinks in the fountain-basin. But it is possible, when the soul has learned to leave all care with God, waiting on Him for the supply of all its needs, and esteeming that He is the only really satisfactory portion we need.

“Neither prison-walls, nor locks, nor the cruelty of man,” said some imprisoned suffering souls, “can obstruct the issues of the Lord’s love nor the manifestation of His presence, which is our joy and comfort, and carries us above all sufferings, and makes days and hours and years pleasant to us; which pass away as a moment, because of the enjoyment of seeing Him with whom a thousand years is but as one day.”

Those who can trust God in these directions are not only abundantly satisfied of His great goodness, but are able to send portions to others. Like the disciples, they share out their slender supplies and get twelve baskets full in return.





Lamentations 1:18

“The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.”

IN these plaintive elegiacs, Jerusalem, by the mouth of the prophet, laments her fate. But the story of her desolation is mingled with confessions of her sin. She asks boldly if any sorrow could be compared to her sorrow, and then confesses that not one pang or stroke had been in excess of her sin. This is what sorrow does for us all.

Sorrow has been fitly called the mother of all joy. She alone creates the darkness, in which we can distinguish the real meaning of God’s dealings, and understand the true nature of our wild wanderings. Her neutral tints subdue the soul’s pride, and turn it away from the glare of human ambition. Beneath her teaching we learn to view aright the evanescence of all things human, and to see that the eternal is alone real amid a world of illusions.

“Sweet sorrow, who the earth has ever trod,
Dreaded and shunned, till, by thy burning kiss,
The heart was fired and flamed serene to God;
O kind stern friend, we leave thee on Time’s shore,
The only friend of earth whom we shall see no more.”

Perhaps your sorrow will be allowed to press on you more and more sorely till you have been led to self-examination, confession of sin, and acknowledgment of the rightness of God’s dealings with you. There is an alloy of pride in your nature that must be destroyed. If the fire is not hot enough, its heat must be raised till it suffices. Accept the lesson of your present pain, and rebel no longer.

The waves of unutterable grief may be breaking in succession against the beaten promontory of your faith, and will be followed by the great tenth wave of apparent desertion: but the return-tide of exultant joy is at hand.





November 24

Lamentations 2:14

“Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment.”

THE prophet is addressing Jerusalem — ruined, desolate, and afflicted — the city waste; her children in Babylon. Of course the main question was as to their return from captivity, and deliverance from their yoke. The false prophets were perpetually seeing visions of deliverance that were never fulfilled. Now this kingdom would come to their rescue. But they were empty dreams. The captivity would never be turned, until the iniquity which had led to it had been discovered and put away. But the prophets had no desire or ability to do this. Now this is true of yourself as an individual and as a Christian worker.

As an Individual: You are suffering in one way or another: in body, or relative, or circumstance. Your one thought is to obtain deliverance, and your mind is filled with vain dreams of how it is to come. It would be better far to ask God to discover to you any reason for the chastisement. If He says nothing, then believe that there is still some wise end in it for yourself or others. But He may indicate some reason for His strokes.

As a Christian Worker: Your earnest endeavors have failed. You suppose that some new method will bring success. There may be some reason in yourself which will account for all. Ask God to discover it. When you see it in His light, you will be surprised that you never saw it before; and you will cease to wonder that those over whom you have longed have never yielded to the love of God. It is useless to have visions of a lovely and holy life, unless you are willing to have your iniquity discovered and destroyed. Oh for faithful prophet-voices to do their office for us!





November 25

Lamentations 3:57

“Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.”

JEREMIAH is referring to his own experiences of the dungeon, into which the malice of his foes had plunged him. As he reached its lowest depths, he began to call upon God, and continued to call. His reliance was on the name (i.e., the nature) of God. This is the most potent argument that any soul can employ. Not our faith, but His faithfulness: not our trust, but His trustworthiness. “Act worthily of that great name, which Thou hast taken for Thyself, O God, we beseech Thee.”

No sooner was that appeal made than it was heard. “Thou hast heard my voice.” Notice that the very breathing of the persecuted soul was heard by the Most High. A mother listens for the breathing of her babe in the dark. It will tell her so much. The soft, measured breath, or the laboring, gasping breath. God never hides His ear from our breathing; or from those inarticulate cries, which express, as words could not do, the deep anguish and yearning of the heart. If you cannot speak, cry, sob, or groan, then be still. God can interpret all.

Then He draws nigh. Of course, He is ever nigh. “Nearer than breathing.” But He gives a sweet consciousness of His presence. The dark dungeon of bereavement, or sorrow, suddenly becomes luminous with the radiance of the Shekinah; the stillness is broken by the approaching footfall of the Almighty Friend, who is never so near as when lover and friend are unable to help. Oh, how tenderly He draws nigh! Solitude indeed hath charms, for it is our Savior’s opportunity; and the dungeon becomes desirable, for it is the ante-room to the presence-chamber of our King. Happy they who have learned to detect the secret of the Lord, and His whispered *Fear not!*





November 26

Lamentations 4:20

“The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.”

THE people tell the sad tale of the pursuit of their foes. Swifter than the eagles, they chased them on the mountains, and laid wait for them in the wilderness. Then they narrate how their king fell into the hands of them who sought his life. He was dear to them as the breath of their nostrils; his person was sacred as the anointed of the Lord; they had thought that even though they were carried into captivity they would find some alleviation to their hardships in dwelling under his protection; they said, “Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.” But even he was taken in their pits.

What a likeness and a contrast to our blessed Lord? There is LIKENESS. He is as the *breath* of our life. As we inhale the air around us, so we expand our souls to drink in of His most blessed nature. We open our mouths, and inhale Him as our vital element; His Spirit for our spirit; His blood for our souls; His resurrection strength for our bodies. He is the *Anointed* of the Father, who anoints us. Because He is the Christ (Anointed), we are Christians (anointed ones). His *shadow* is a most grateful and wide-spreading one, beneath which we may dwell in safety.

But how great the CONTRAST! Though He was once taken in the pit of Satanic malice and the shadow of death, yet now He liveth to be the shield and protector of His people wherever they are scattered among the nations. He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger and thirst no more, neither shall the sun strike them. However far our bodies are from one another, we all dwell beneath the shadow of the Lord, which is as a great rock in a weary land.





November 27

Lamentations 5:21

“Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.”

WEARY of chastening, and longing to have again all the blessed enjoyments and privileges of the past, the backslider desires to be right with God, as he used to be. But he is often met with great initial difficulties. He would pray, but cannot; he would feel broken and penitent, but his heart is as hard as the nether millstone; he would take the old pleasure in the service and worship of the Most High, but it evades his grasp. This perplexes and daunts him.

What should be our attitude under such circumstances? There is nothing better than to adopt the cry of the prophet, and ask God to turn the soul, and renew its blessed and holy experiences. There will be no doubt of our being turned, if He turns us.

It is not difficult to recover the attitude, emotions, and work of past days, when we have yielded ourselves absolutely to God, and have cast on Him the responsibility of making us all that He has taught us to desire. Let Him assign what standard He chooses, there will be no difficulty in our attaining it, if He fulfils in us all the good pleasure of His will, and the work of faith with power.

The happy life is that which does not need to ask for the olden days to be renewed, because it is ever anticipating that it will be better further on, and that the dawn will grow into the perfect day; but where the past was better than the present is, let us ask that God would restore the years that the caterpillar and cankerworm have eaten. Just because God abides for ever, and His throne is from generation to generation, He is able to renew the soul with new pulses of energy and life. Each spring He makes the world as fair as on the morning of creation. “Renew our days as of old.”





November 28

Ezekiel 1:19

“And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.”

THESSE living creatures, whom Ezekiel afterwards recognized as cherubim, represented the entire round of animate existence. The lion’s majestic strength, the patient strength and labor of the ox, the keen vision and aspiring flight of the eagle, combined in perfect proportion in their noble forms. The wheels may represent the round of Providence — what we would call the circle of nature. The point for us to notice is the perfect harmony between the spirit, the living creatures, and the wheels; and from this we learn the deep and sacred lesson, that those who live and walk in the Spirit may count on the co-operation of all animate creatures, and the concurrence of Divine providence. When we live consciously and voluntarily in the center of the Divine will, we are at the center of many concentric circles, and all things serve us. All things are ours.

If we would be Spirit-taught and guided, we must die to ourselves, to sin, and to the world; no longer seeking anything for ourselves in this world. If, says Pastor Stockmayer, we have treasure outside of Christ, our heart will hasten to where our treasure lies. Only those who account themselves set loose from the things of this world to serve Christ entirely, amid the things of this world, can distinguish the movements of the Spirit.

Each is guided in a way that he knows; and has the special name written on the white stone. God speaks in the depths of our being, far deeper than the region of our feelings, dispositions, or impressions; and He will make Himself heard, if only we are set to obey Him. Let surrender become the abiding habit of life, and the spiritual hearing will be more and more acute.





November 29

Ezekiel 2:6

“And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”

EZEKIEL'S lot was cast in difficult times. His people, to whom he was sent, whether by the Chebar in captivity, or still lingering around their doomed mother-city, were as briers, thorns, and scorpions. Embittered by their many sorrows; convicted by conscience of their guilt before God; compelled to trace a close connection between their sins and their punishment — it was inevitable that they would turn with peculiar dislike on any one who dared, like Ezekiel, to be an incarnate conscience to them, reminding them of their evil ways, remonstrating, exhorting, pleading.

Many readers of these words are in similar circumstances. Missionaries who are obliged to rebuke, not only the sins of the ungodly, but the inconsistencies of their own converts; ministers at home on whom the burden rests of protesting against popular and fashionable iniquity, or addressing stern words of rebuke to influential but worldly members of their churches; even young clerks or working-men whose life is thrown among the godless and profane, and who seem called upon to lodge their solemn warning against words and ways that are not good. Providing these enter their protest lovingly and tenderly, with no thought of their superiority, with no mere desire to wound and annoy, but to warn the sinner and to uphold the claims of Christ — their mission is a very salutary and necessary one. But it is sure to bring on them a storm of dislike.

At such times there is nothing for us but to abide in the presence of our Master Christ, weeping for the sins we rebuke, interceding for those who revile. Not fearful nor afraid, not flinching from our duty; but ever hearing His sweet reassuring voice.





November 30

Ezekiel 3:1

“Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.”

TO each of us a Hand is put forth; and therein is the roll of the Book. We must feed on it for ourselves. We must find God’s words and eat them; they must be the joy and rejoicing of our hearts. It is specially incumbent on those who have to go forth and speak, to open their mouths and eat the roll. There is no greater mistake than to suppose that, because we are constantly handling God’s Word for the purpose of teaching and exhorting others, we are therefore feeding on it for ourselves. It is possible to acquire an intellectual knowledge of the truth, while the heart is entirely unaffected. But how far removed is this from that spiritual consideration of God’s Word, by virtue of which it yields up its spiritual nutriment to our growth in the Divine life.

Sometimes the message we must acquire and give is, like this roll, written within and without with lamentations, and mourning, and woe. It can hardly be otherwise, when we are called to speak to people who are of a hard forehead and a stiff heart. It is very sweet to receive God’s messages; but it is bitter to have to deliver them when they proclaim, as they must, the inevitable and disastrous results of sin. Oh that we may not shrink to declare the whole counsel of God, whether rebellious men will hear or forbear. Perhaps there has not been enough of this element in our preaching. All sunshine, the Arabs say, makes the desert. The harvest will fail unless the frost of winter has thoroughly broken up the clods. But whenever we dwell on the sterner aspects of God’s truth it must be with bitter tears. “I tell you, even weeping,” the apostle said, “that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ.”





Ezekiel 4:14

“Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! behold, my soul hath not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth.”

THE prophet was bidden, in a series of striking and significant actions, to show the people the impending fate of their nation and city. Amongst other injunctions there was one so abhorrent to his soul that he craved its mitigation. “Ah, Lord God!” he said, “spare me from this.” And God was entreated, and reduced the pressure of the burden proposed to be laid on his servant.

May not the counterpart of this happen in our own experience? We may be feeling that certain trials are insupportable, or certain demands beyond our power to meet. At such hours of bitter anguish it is quite permissible for us to go into the secret place of the Most High and gasp out our complaint, saying, “Ah, Lord God!” God invites us to speak freely with Him thus, and sends gracious mitigations of our griefs. “Ah, Lord God,” we say, “let this cup pass from me”: and, lo! an angel is sent to strengthen us. “Ah, Lord God,” we cry, “this cross is too heavy; this thorn in the flesh too sharp; this diet too nauseous:” and immediately there is some response of greater grace or lightened burden.

Oh, suffering child of God, get alone with Him, and talk freely. Do not hesitate to tell Him all that is in thine heart. Remember that Jesus said that the Father Himself loves us. We may go to that Father-heart, confiding to it how much we are suffering, not for ourselves only, but for their sakes who are dearer to us than life. Oh that they were happy, satisfied, safe! Has the duty become lately more than ever difficult? Has the smart become like a cancer with its venom? Take it to God! It is a sublime moment when the soul dares to plead its cause with God, saying, “Ah, Lord God!”





December 2

Ezekiel 5:9

“And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.”

IT is an awful thing when those who have sinned against conspicuous privilege and opportunity come under the rod. Their punishment is infinitely heavier than that of such as have never known. The servant that knows his Lord’s will, and does it not, is condemned to be beaten with many stripes. It was because Capernaum had been exalted to heaven that she was cast down to Hades. If an archangel falls, it must be to hell.

The child of God, like Israel, is set in the midst of the nations to testify to pure and undefiled religion; but if he rebels against God’s judgments and statutes in doing wickedly, his chastisement is necessarily in proportion to the eminence of his former privileges. God cannot afford to deal lightly with the sin of His own people. Were He to do so, He might be accused of partiality, and they might presume. Well may the author of “Imitation” say, “Esteem not thyself better than others, lest perhaps in the sight of God, who knoweth what is in man, thou be accounted worse than they.”

It becomes us to search our hearts to see if we are rejecting any of God’s judgments, and refusing to walk in His will, or defiling His sanctuary with detestable things. A small black spot on a white ground is more noticeable than a larger one on a dark ground. A slight inconsistency in His child may lead to very heavy chastisements on the part of the Father in heaven. The nearer a pupil reaches towards perfection, the sterner is his master’s discipline. Judgment begins at the house of God. If thou wert not capable of a rich fruitage, He would not take such pains with thee. Humble thyself under His mighty hand. He will exalt thee in due time.





Ezekiel 6:9

“And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall lothe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.”

WE never realize what sin is till its passion is over, and we have time quietly to remember. Oh, the terror of those hours of remembrance and remorse! Sitting in the captivity of its prison, or serving in the heavy bondage of its fetters, the soul has time to review the bitter path by which it has come to such a pass, and the way it has broken the hearts of those who loved and trusted. But the most terrible element in remorse will be the personal one: “Shall remember Me.”

One of our great writers depicts a heartless, thoughtless husband standing beside the newly covered-in grave of his wife, and saying, “Ah, Milly, Milly; dost thou hear me? I was not tender enough to thee; but it is too late to alter it now.” The wife who has broken away from her husband, bringing desolation on a once happy home, and heart-break on the one she really loved, will have her time of remorse when she remembers him, and how he was broken by her sin. And she will loathe herself. The child who has given way to fits of ungovernable passion, which have broken up the home, and brought down grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, will loathe itself. Similarly, as we review our past life, and see how we must have grieved the tender Spirit of God, we fall at the feet of Jesus and cover them with tears and kisses.

What a marvelous word is this! — “I am broken.” Our sin can give God the heart-break, because He loves us so. Indeed, on the Cross the Lord died of a broken heart; of this the issuing stream of blood and water was the sign. O heart of stone, thou too must break and loathe thyself, when thou seest thy Lord broken by thy sin!





December 4

Ezekiel 7:19

“They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity.”

THIS chapter is full of alarms! An end: the end is come! (Ezekiel 7:2). An evil, an only evil: behold it cometh. An end is come; the end is come (Ezekiel 7:5–6). The time is come; the day is near (Ezekiel 7:7). Behold the day, behold it cometh; thy doom is gone forth (Ezekiel 7:10). The time is come (Ezekiel 7:12). At such a crisis, what can silver and gold do? Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn. None shall return. The sword is without; pestilence and famine within.

Generally silver and gold stand for much among the children of men; they are the keys to the unlocking of the treasures of life. But when the supreme crises come; when all hands are feeble, and all knees weak as water; when the day of the wrath of the Lord breaks — there is no help in silver and gold; they cannot satisfy or save.

Men forget that they are destined for immortality; and that God hath set Eternity in their hearts. How utterly impotent gold and silver, the things of earth, the abundance of goods which a man may store in his barn, to appease the conscience, or arrest the remorseless hunger of the soul for peace and purity and satisfaction! He is the happiest who is largely independent of these things, and lives a pilgrim life, reckoning that his enduring city is with God, whose treasures are heavenly and incorruptible. It is a great misfortune that professing Christians have failed to realize this. Too many of them are as eager to maintain and extend their establishments, as though life consisted in the abundance of what they possess. So missionary causes dwindle for want of funds; children are drawn into worldly alliances; and worldlings depreciate our holy religion.





Ezekiel 8:12

“Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.”

WHAT disclosures were these! In the entry to the Temple court stood the great idol, here described as an image of jealousy; because, speaking after the manner of men, it greatly provoked the Eternal Spouse of Israel! The seventy elders engaged in worshipping every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, portrayed on the walls of the secret chambers! The women weeping for Tammuz, whose yearly death and resurrection were celebrated with licentious orgies! The five-and-twenty men with their backs toward the Temple! Is it to be wondered at that God could not spare, nor have pity?

But are there no chambers of imagery in our natures, which were meant to be the sanctuary of the Eternal? Is it quite certain that evil thoughts and imaginations have not imprinted themselves on the walls of the heart? Ah, it may be so. What seems fair and beautiful in the eye of man may be concealing terrible secrets, open only to that of God. In the secret of our hearts, we permit unclean birds to brood; in the darkness of our soul, wild thoughts wander at will. What need there is to adopt the venerable and touching words: “Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee.”

There is deliverance from all this, by the grace and through the blood of the Lord Jesus. He can save and keep. He can so fill the soul with His presence that sin shall be utterly abhorrent. We may become so sensitive to the least approach of evil as to shelter ourselves in Him, before the first symptom of temptation shall have gained force and volume for its attack. Holy Spirit, keep thine own temple, we pray Thee!





December 6

Ezekiel 9:6

“Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.”

ALL these visions were given, as we learn from the first chapter, as Ezekiel was with the earlier groups of Hebrew captives in Babylon. His thoughts were greatly engrossed by what was transpiring in the beloved city among the remnant still residing there. The six men represented judgments yet impending, and the man clothed in linen with the inkhorn, the discriminating righteousness of God’s judgments.

Judgment begins with the house of God; with those of us who are called to teach and preach, and bear office in the Church. The six men who had the slaughter-weapons began at the elders, described in the previous chapter, who were before the house. If any such are living in sin, God’s judgment must fall first and more heavily on them, because they know better and profess more than others. But let it be remembered always that repentance and the putting away of sin will always avert the sword. “If thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.” (Jeremiah 4:1)

Amid scenes of judgment, whether in the Church or the world, there is always a remnant, upon whom is the mark; on Lot in Sodom; on Israel amid the plagues of Egypt; on Rahab in the fall of Jericho; on the 144,000 at the Great Tribulation. They are safe amid the fiery indignation which devours the adversaries. Have we been touched by the blood, sealed by the Spirit, and branded with the mark of the brand of Jesus? Without doubt we have, if we know what it is to sigh and cry for the abominations that are wrought around us, and of which our own nature is capable, except for the grace of God. These are the signs which indicate the humbling, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.





Ezekiel 10:18

“Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.”

THE gradual withdrawal of God from his house is described in vivid and awful minuteness. In Ezekiel 9:3, it had gone to the threshold; Ezekiel 10:4, it had mounted up; Ezekiel 10:15, the cherubim mounted up; Ezekiel 11:23, it passes from the city. It is well worth our while to ponder this deep and searching lesson. The light of other days fades but slowly: the year sinks by almost insensible gradations to the fall of the leaf; grey hairs besprinkle our heads without our knowing it; before ever we are aware of it, the train has borne us miles off the main line to the wrong station. So gradually our hearts may backslide. Satan is too knowing to lead us at a single leap into the precipice, but conducts us by a gradual incline. A little less Bible reading; a slight slackening in watchfulness and prayer; an imperceptible drift worldwards.

But turn to Ezekiel 43:2–4. The glory of the Lord returned to the renovated temple. Like the dawn of a new day; like the sound of many waters, it came, it came. “This,” God said, “is the place of my throne; ... and the house of Israel shall no more defile.” (Ezekiel 43:7) Ah, backslider, God will come back to thee again. Thy repentance may be most inadequate; but if it be genuine, if thou dost truly turn to Him from thy sin, thy heart shall again become irradiate with His most blessed of holy light.

Without forcing, these words are also applicable to that coming for which we wait and long; when He who ascended shall descend again to be in us and with us for ever:—

“Hark! What a sound, and too divine for hearing,
Stirs on the earth and trembles in the air!
It is the thunder of the Lord’s appearing!
It is the music of His peoples’ prayer!”





December 8

Ezekiel 11:16

“Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.”

AWAY from the outward ordinances and the material edifice, the exiles would find more than the equivalent in God Himself. He would give them the reality, of which there had been the outward and visible emblems. Amid all their justly-deserved sufferings they would find a deep fountain of spiritual blessing and comfort in God’s presence.

To those who are deprived of the means of grace. — Sufferers in sick rooms, travellers in lonely and distant places, missionaries amongst the heathen. How often to such comes the vision of the country church, when the summer air stole into the open window, bringing the breath of flowers; or of the great City church, with the well-known voice of a beloved minister. They long for these again. But God will be all and more.

To those who cannot derive benefit from the services they attend. — The clergyman is Ritualistic, or the Free-church minister is broad in his views, and unsympathetic with the deeper moods of the spirit. Still, it may be your duty to attend for example’s sake; but whilst waiting before the Lord, He will draw near and become your sanctuary.

To those who are exposed to danger and persecution. — In the olden time the sanctuary was a place of refuge. All who fled thither were in safeguard. So, let the driven soul haste to the folds of the Tabernacle of God’s presence. None can pursue it into that secret place. No weapon shall smite; and even envying voices shall die into subdued murmurs.

He that eateth the living bread — that confesseth Jesus to be the Christ — that keepeth His commandments — and that lives in love — dwells in God as his sanctuary, while God dwells in him as His.





Ezekiel 12:25, 28

“For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD. ... Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.”

IN various ways the people of Israel were endeavoring to minimize the effects of Ezekiel’s denunciations of judgment. They did not deny that he spoke the word of God; but comforted themselves with the reflection that it was not likely to be fulfilled for some time yet “The vision that he seeth is for many days to come.” (Ezekiel 12:27) God, on the other hand, said, “It shall be no more prolonged.”

We are all disposed to remove the wonder-working of God to the remote past or the distant future: either that He did miracles or will do them. Heaven touches the earth at this horizon or that; but it is remote from the place where we stand. This is the tendency of our mind; and for this reason we miss the manifestations of God’s grace and power, which wait to enrich our lives. Now is the accepted time; now the day of salvation. As Christ is, so are we. There is as much of Divine power and love throbbing around, and within our easy reach, as ever filled the upper room at Pentecost, or shall break on the world in the millennial days. Let us not postpone our appropriation of it. Let us never permit the thought that God is not prepared to fulfill His promises here and now. Let us not lament over the past as having been better than the present can ever be expected to be, nor predict greater days for our children.

It is here that the distinction between fact, faith, and feeling, will help us. We very seldom, indeed, never until Spirit-taught, put these three in their right order. We try to *feel* that spiritual facts are so, instead of accepting that *they are*, and daring to act as if they were patent to physical sensations. A spiritual fact is true, even when you do not believe or feel it. Believe! act! and you will come to feel.





December 10

Ezekiel 13:2

“Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;”

IT is a great temptation to those of us who are often called to speak for God, to prophesy out of our own heart, to follow our own spirit, and to profess to see what we have not seen. We are apt to say, “The Lord saith,” when the Lord hath not sent us. These words of ours always tend towards soothing and pacifying guilty consciences with assurances of peace, peace. You may always tell when a man is speaking from the vanity of his own heart. He glozes over sin, and speaks with bated breath of its consequences.

This is what the Word of God describes as daubing a slight wall with untempered mortar, and sewing pillows on elbows for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread. The daubing makes the wall look as strong as possible, but it cannot save it from collapsing before the overflowing shower of God’s judgment and the great hailstones of his wrath. The pillows may save the flesh from chafing, but cannot avert the blows of a broken law. Oh, take care, lest ye give men licence to sin, by the slight views ye circulate of its nature or penalty. Are not these lying divinations? Do they not grieve the heart of the righteous, and strengthen the hands of the wicked? Take care lest the fate of the daubing be the fate also of the false prophets: “The wall is no more; neither they that daubed it.” (Ezekiel 13:15)

It is not an easy thing to speak to the prophets. But how necessary that there should be a Prophet to prophets: for these get into the way of supposing that they must be right, whose least word is so revered by their people. “You are very fond of preaching,” said Dr. Andrew Bonar to one to whom he had been listening. “Yes, doctor; very.” “But are you as fond of lost souls?”





Ezekiel 14:22

“Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.”

THE sin of Jerusalem was so heinous that God was constrained to send on her His four sore judgments all at once and together. Each alone was so terrible that Noah, Daniel, and Job, had they been living, would only have succeeded in saving their own souls; but how much more when they befell the land unitedly! But, Jehovah says, ye shall come to know, when you review my work from the vantage-ground of the years, that I have not done without cause (or in vain) all that I have done (Ezekiel 14:23). Ye shall be comforted, when a remnant of sons and daughters escapes, who see and acknowledge their sinful ways and deeds.

Those words deserve to be carefully pondered. They seem to contain the very essence of God’s thoughts in His dealings with us during the present age. “Ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it,” (Ezekiel 14:23). We do not know the cause of so much that crushes us to the ground. But if we did know it as well as we shall know it some day, we should have no difficulty in reconciling God’s dealings with His perfect love.

Yes, some day we shall be comforted! Comforted as to God’s meaning in our sorrows and trials! Comforted as to His dealings with our dear ones! Comforted about His government of the whole universe, of which the world is part! We shall see that there was a cause or reason for all God’s stern discipline. We shall admit that it was wisely adapted to its end, and achieved it. We are too prone to judge God hastily and superficially, instead of waiting to see the “end of the Lord,” when all His reasons and purposes will be explained from the great white throne (see Revelation 15:3).





December 12

Ezekiel 15:2

“Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”

WHAT is the vine good for? Will it bear comparison with the trees of the forest? Do men make chairs, tables, house-roofs out of it? No, they will not make even a pin for hanging vessels on, out of the vine-wood. There is only one use for the vine — to bear fruit. If it fails to do that, it may as well be cast at once to the flames. Then it is still more useless; and as we gather the charred pieces together, we realize that they are hardly worth our care.

So with believers. Like Israel, they are God’s vine, created in Christ Jesus unto fruit-bearing. The one purpose and end of their redemption and salvation is that they should bring forth fruit unto God; and if they fail in this, after having been pruned and enriched in every way, they are cast forth as worthless and unprofitable, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. Savorless salt is good for nothing; fruitless vines are utterly useless: professors who bear no fruit are worse than useless, they cumber the ground. Let us abide in Christ, that He may bear fruit through us. Let us be willing for all the pruning and discipline which God is pleased to send us, that we may bring forth more fruit; but let it ever be borne in mind that fruitfulness does not always mean activity, but the bearing of the sweet fruits of the Spirit, which consist largely in temper and disposition.

Apart from Christ, how helpless and worthless we are! Let us often, and particularly when tempted to vanity, conceit, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, remember that we are only vine-branches, of no intrinsic worth, and only useful when the sap of the Vine is passing through us. “What hast thou, that thou didst not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7).





December 13

Ezekiel 16:14

“And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.”

HOW rich this chapter is in spiritual significance for ourselves! We, too, were born in the land of the Canaanite — our father the first Adam; our mother Eve. There was no beauty in us by nature, but everything to cause abhorrence to the Holy God. And if we are washed and clothed, decked with gold and silver, arrayed in fine linen, silk, and embroidered work, eating fine flour, and honey, and oil, exceedingly beautiful and arrayed in royal estate, it is all of grace — of the exceeding and eternal grace of God. There is nothing of it at all in which we can boast ourselves. Of Him are we in Christ Jesus, through whom we are what we are. We are perfect only through His comeliness which He has put upon us.

First, let us dare to believe that it is so. Accept and value your position. In Christ, we are more than tolerated; we are loved. We are more than forgiven; we are arrayed in fair garments. The King greatly delights in us. In His eyes, and because His beauty is upon us, we are all fair. The joy that the Father has in Jesus, He has in us who are in Him. We may be deeply conscious of our sinnership; but He doth not behold iniquity in Jacob, nor see perverseness in Israel. We need not shrink to take our place even among the holy ones of the Presence chamber, because we are accepted in the Beloved, and clad in His comeliness.

But, next, let us not presume. We have naught of our own. When the temptation tries us to pride ourselves on our goodness; to arrogate to ourselves a special position because of our superiority to others; to assume that we can be independent of our immortal Lover — then let us remember what we were.





December 14

Ezekiel 17:23

“In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.”

THE cedar is a royal tree. It thrives 6,000 feet above the level of the sea. The concentric rings of one tree showed that it was 3,500 years old. What a contrast between the long-lived, deep-rooted, broad-branched tree, and the little birds that nest among the leaves!

The text suggests that Christ is the cedar, and all kinds of people seek rest in Him, as birds of every wing. Young and old, rich and poor; men high-soaring as the eagle, fierce as the raven, gentle as the dove. The young, just learning to try their wings; the old, weary, and lonely; those who have kept all the commandments from their youth, and those who have broken them all.

It does not matter with what wing we come to Jesus, so long as we come. The practised eye can easily recognize the birds by their flight; each bird has its own wing; so every soul has its own disposition and temperament — one feverish, the other languid and lethargic; one impetuous, the other dilatory; one affectionate and warm, the other cool and shy. But the Lord Jesus knows our frame, and understands us afar off. He does not chide the dove because it cannot breast the storm and face the sun like the eagle. He does not expect the sustained flight of the seagull from the sparrow; or the song of the nightingale from the chaffinch.

Do not imitate another; be yourself. Do not go about the world counting that you are useless and a failure, because you cannot do what is done by others. Learn how to be abased, and how to abound. Only rest in Christ. Out of the windy storm and tempest, make for your roosting-place under the shelter of His wing.





Ezekiel 18:4

“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

THIS is bed-rock. Let us ever get down to the beginnings of things, when we state God’s claims on men. Instead of only pleading with them, let us boldly assert God’s claims upon them. All souls are His: of the African as of the European; of the heathen as well as of the Christian born; of the toiling, sorrowing, sinning, as of those that stand in the sunlit circle.

His by right of *creation*. He made us, and we are His. Has not a man a claim on all that his hands have made? and has God less? His by right of *redemption*. To any man we have the privilege of saying, “You have been purchased by the precious blood of Christ.” His by the right of His *own holy and glorious Nature*. Not to own Him and love Him supremely is a gross violation of the eternal fitness of things. The parent has a claim on his child.

Needest thou fear anything, fellow-Christian, since thou art His? Though thou goest forth alone into the wilderness, where there seems no spring, no food; though thou hast no visible means of sustenance through no fault of thine; though thou shalt be called to pass today out of this world into the unseen: since thou art God’s, is He not responsible for thee? Will an owner allow his house to fall out of repair, or his beasts to lack food and tendance? Will God not tend, maintain, nurture, and cherish thee? Would it not be to His discredit if He were careless of thee, His own? The fact of thy bearing His mark and stamp upon thee is guarantee enough of His obligation to be a God to thee. Let Him do with us as He please. Surely we can perfectly trust Him; He is well within His rights.





December 16

Ezekiel 19:1, 14

*“Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,
... And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath
devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre
to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.”*

THIS chapter is a dirge; first over two kings of the house of David, Jehoahaz and Jehoiachim, who, like wild beasts, had been carried off, the former to Egypt, the latter by the Chaldeans; and then over the whole royal family, described under the figure of a wasted vine, humbled and almost destroyed.

We, too, may lament for the sufferings and sorrows of our King. The Holy Spirit would not have us forget them; because our sin-laden and wounded hearts can only become healed by pressing against His wounds who was pierced by the nails and the spear. “Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself” (Hebrews 12:3) — the agony and bloody sweat; the cross and passion; the scorn and reviling; the contradiction of sinners; and the malice of Satan. And as the full measure of His sufferings is unfolded to us we shall weep and lament; not for Him, but for ourselves and for our children.

That our sins nailed Him to the cross; that our guilt extorted from His heart the cry that He was forsaken; that His prolonged agony was borne in our stead, and borne for nothing else than for love of us; that we have grieved Him so, torn open His wounds, and added to His pains, by our rebellion and ingratitude; that the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and that we have been healed only by His stripes. Here is subject for lamentation indeed!

But it is strange that the remembrance of all this brings strength, and solace, and peace. As Bunyan says, “He hath given us rest by His sorrow.” The bitterness of His sorrows alternately makes us sad and blessed. Sad that we brought Him such a heritage of woe: happy that since He has suffered, we are for ever emancipated from what had crushed us.





Ezekiel 20:32

“And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.”

THERE was a tendency among the chosen people to reason thus: Why should we be perpetually reminded of the claims of Jehovah? Why should we not do as we please? Why not do as other nations around, who select their own deities, and do not seem to suffer as we do? Nay, said the Most High, that cannot be. When once I have entered into covenant relations with any, they cannot lightly cast off those sacred bonds. My name and character are too deeply implicated. I must work for my holy Name’s sake, that it may not be polluted (Ezekiel 20:9, 14, 22).

It is a very solemn thing to have become God’s children. Sin is not the same in us as in others. In those it may be slightly passed over, but in us it will be visited with many stripes. We cannot sin with impunity, nor do as we list. As far as we go into sin, we shall have to come out of it. The more pleasure we may have had in forbidden paths, the more sharp the anguish through which we shall have to retrace our steps. We cannot be as the nations. We cannot serve wood and stone. We cannot go our own way.

But the thought cuts in two directions; if we are bound to God, He is also bound to us. We *may not* leave Him, but He **CANNOT** leave us! He will always be mindful of His covenant. There is one plea with God that never fails: “Do it for thy great Name’s sake.” He cannot deny Himself, or allow His honor to be trampled in the mud.

“Yes — howsoe’er I stray and range,
Whate’er I do, Thou dost not change;
I steadier step, when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.”





December 18

Ezekiel 21:27

“I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”

THIS prophecy was directed against Zedekiah and Jerusalem; and predicts the advance of Nebuchadnezzar, who is represented as considering an expedition against them and Ammon. Whatever the king of Judah thought to establish by his wit and power, God would overthrow. Nothing should stand, however carefully constructed, till the Messiah came to take up the kingdom and rule with meekness and righteousness.

I will overturn, overturn, overturn. Our King is always engaged in destruction, that He may the better occupy Himself with construction. He overthrows our cities of brick, that He may build them of marble. He removes the things that can be shaken, as things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. He destroyed the institutions of the Old Covenant, that He might substitute the New. This is the inner meaning of the earthquake that so often casts down our lofty towers.

That fortune which you had built up with so much care was overturned, that you might acquire the true riches. That reputation which you had established for integrity and self-restraint was overturned, that you might despair of yourself and avail yourself of the provision made for sinners in Jesus. That friendship was overturned, that you might come to the love of God.

“He took the silver and the gold,
To make me rich in grace;
He quenched earth’s lights that I might see
The shining of his Face.”

And God will go on with this overturning work until every high thing that exalts itself against the Lord Jesus is thrown down, and He is enthroned.





Ezekiel 22:15

“And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee.”

THE idea here, and in the following paragraph, is of the smelting furnace. *We are refined by fire.* Fire is pain. It is the symbol of all that our nature shrinks from. But affliction is all this. It may be anxiety about money-matters; or the chronic ill-temper of some member of your family; or a random word; or a telegraphic message; or a whispered secret; or anxiety about your health: but your soul is filled with fire — keen, strong, alive, devouring. Do not wonder at this; for only so can you be delivered from your dross and filth.

But God appoints it. As much as the process of refining implies the presence of the refiner, the afflictions of the believer imply the presence and purpose of the Lord. The process could not be carried on without Him. We are sure that in every sick chamber where His servant lies, besides the attendant wife or nurse, sits the Great Refiner of silver; closer than close; nearer than near; tenderer than the tenderest. You may not see Him now; but some day when you look back on your present sufferings, you will understand, and say: “I could not have lived through it had not the Master been with me.”

The trial is a sign of preciousness. You do not cast a stone into the crucible, or winnow chaff, or prune a bramble, or put a cinder in the lap-dog’s meal. So, when Jesus subjects us to trial, it is only because, amid all our dross His keen eye detects the precious gold which cost Him Calvary, and is capable of becoming His ornament of beauty for ever.

“Through the test of sharp distresses,
Those whom Heaven most richly blesses,
For its joys are purified.”





December 20

Ezekiel 23:22

“Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side;”

IT is one sign of the revolution that the teaching of Jesus has made, that the imagery of this chapter is foreign to our modes of thought.

Spiritual unfaithfulness is constantly described under metaphors borrowed from the marriage relationship. If the soul wanders from God, He is depicted as the husband in whose heart the fire of jealousy burns; while the soul is compared to a truant wife. In the text quoted above, the analogy is followed still further; and the prophet asserts that it is impossible for us to be always satisfied with the lovers that we have chosen, and that our chastisement for wandering will probably come through their agency.

There is no lack of practical illustration of this. If a Christian choose worldly prosperity, or his own reputation, or any earthly object apart from God, it is through this that he will suffer. The things that he has loved will be raised up against him, just as Israel, that had dallied with Babylon, was carried into captivity to Babylon. Of sinful and forbidden pleasure God will make whips of scorpions by which to drive us back to Himself.

What a light, by force of contrast, is cast on those rapturous words of the apostle, when he tells us that we may be married to that glorious Man, even to Him that was raised from the dead! The soul stands by to see Him die, bathed in tears; but as she beholds Him rise, she is divinely attracted to Him, conscious of a profound affinity, which engrosses and absorbs her being. Nothing will satisfy her then but union with His Spirit. She reckons herself dead to all the old lovers, through the body of Christ, but for ever alive unto Him.





December 21

Ezekiel 24:18

“So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.”

IT was a sudden stroke which befell the prophet's home. In the morning the desire of his eyes was present to care for him, and in the even she had passed away. It is the practice of the Eastern mourner to give vent to heart-rending cries; in his case these were forbidden. He might sigh, but not aloud. There was to be no mourning for the dead, neither tears, nor fasting, because his work was to engross him; the needs of the people preponderated over personal anguish; and he was called to set forth in his own reticence the solemn, tearless anguish with which Israel would go into captivity.

We are reminded of the words of the apostle in 1 Corinthians 7, that those who had wives should be as though they had none; those that wept as though they wept not; because the time was short, and the fashion of the world was passing away.

In every human experience there are times when the personal must be subordinated to the national and universal. We must choke back our sobs, crush down our almost uncontrollable emotion, preserve a calm and tranquil exterior, that we may devote ourselves more earnestly and continuously to the crying need of others. There is nothing nobler than the self-restraint which anoints the head and washes the face, that it may have leisure from itself to do its life-work, and to press to its bosom those who are suffering around. There was a pretty illustration of this in a recent railway accident, when a little girl, badly hurt, insisted on being cared for last.

“Yet not in solitude! if Christ anear me
Waketh Him workers for the great employ!
Oh, not in solitude! if souls that hear me
Catch from my joyance the surprise of joy.”



Ezekiel 25:8-9

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen; Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Bethjeshimoth, Baalmeon, and Kiriathaim,”

IT is a remarkable fact that the Hebrew prophets were such keen politicians in the best sense. They were always watching and interpreting the dealings of God in contemporary history. Mention of Moab and Seir is almost as frequent as of Jerusalem. I remember the saintly Professor Reynolds saying, as he opened the morning paper, “Let us see what our heavenly Father is doing in the world.”

As our enemies behold the children of God, they are apt to suppose that there is no difference between them and others. They cannot see the Divine environment within which they live, and they suppose that they can easily work their will. They say, Behold these people are like other people; we have but to stretch out our hand, and can spoil them as a boy the nests of spring. Then they discover that they have another to reckon with, and that God will arise to plead the cause of His people and to execute judgment upon their oppressors. Not in vain did He say to Abraham, and through him to all that believe: “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.” (Genesis 12:3) “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.” (Isaiah 54:17)

We must not presume on this. Strong as God is on our behalf towards our enemies, He is equally so within the circle of His household. He will not let others hurt us, but He will not spare His children. He may use others as His rod, just as at certain epochs of their national history He used Moab or Edom. But when the work of refining is done, He will lay the instruments aside, and even punish, if there has been an excess of malice. O child of God, thy privilege and responsibility are immeasurable. Thou art not as others.



Ezekiel 26:21

“I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord GOD.”

TYRE, to the world of her age, was what Venice was in the Middle Ages, and London today. She was strong in the sea; the carrying trade of the world was in her hands. Carthage, which was able to conflict with Rome, was her daughter; and the coasts of Cornwall were visited by her merchant vessels. In the days of Ezekiel she was a proud and populous city. But the prophet predicted her approaching fall. Her songs would cease; her walls would be overwhelmed in the floods of armed men; and the rocks on which she stood would be as bare as before a fisherman’s hut was built on them. And as the prophet anticipates the future, he says that her site would be sought in vain; a prediction so literally fulfilled that it is only of late years that careful research has been able to pronounce where Tyre stood.

This chapter seems to underlie the description given in the Apocalypse of the fall of Babylon, when the mighty angel shall take up a stone, like a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea; when all human voices shall cease from her vast solitudes, and the grinding of the mill-stone shall be for ever silent. So shall perish every false system; all mere traditionalism and ritualism; all that savours of human pride; all the blandishments and impurities of the unfaithful Church, which sought to turn men’s hearts from God.

What a contrast to this are the words of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 50:20): “In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” Refuse the love of God, and you are doomed; you will leave no enduring record. Trust in Him, and your sins will be blotted out as if they had never been.





December 24

Ezekiel 27:26

“Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.”

IN this splendid chapter the prophet describes Tyre under the image of one of her own merchant vessels. Looking at it simply as a piece of composition, what an extreme interest there is in this enumeration of the various races which were subject to this mighty city, and the lands from which she drew her supplies! We are reminded of the far-spreading colonies of the Anglo-Saxon race. We can almost hear the noise of her construction in the earlier verses, and see fine linen hoisted as her sail, whilst she is manned and piloted by her statesmen. Heavily laden with the choice merchandise of the East, she sails the seas, independent of the winds of heaven, because the galley slaves toil at treble banks of oars on either side. But their rowing brings her into great waters; she encounters the east wind, which breaks her in the heart of the sea; and in one day, pilots, rowers, men of war, and merchandise, are lost — all brought to silence in the midst of the sea. What a powerful conception of the great ship sinking in silence with all on board! One cry; the waves meet over her; and only a floating spar tells where she sank.

So is it with many a life. The whole world is laid under contribution for its outfit. Bashan, Chittim, Egypt, bring their quota; and to all appearance, as it glides from its stocks upon the sea of life, a fair voyage awaits it, and large exchange of the wares of human industry and thought. But where Christ is not the Pilot, and His Word not the chart, the rowers bring it into great waters, and it is broken by the east wind. O mariner! see to it that Christ is on board; for He only can still the tempest and speak peace, and guide thee out of the great waters.





Ezekiel 28:12

“Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.”

THE magnificent words of this chapter cannot be applicable merely to Tyre. Behind that mighty city the prophet beheld its Prince, the anointed cherub that covereth (Ezekiel 28:14); and on further investigation this can only be the prince of the power of the air, who, our Lord says, is also the prince of this world. When he was created he was perfect in his ways, till unrighteousness was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15). But he was cast out of heaven, when his heart was lifted up (Ezekiel 28:17). He said, I am God; but as he met in conflict the Son of Man, he learned his absolute inferiority.

This association of a comity with an evil spirit is not confined to this chapter only. It is a frequent allusion of the Scriptures. For instance, Daniel describes the Prince of Persia as hindering the advent of Gabriel to succor the chosen people: whilst the apostle Paul distinctly attributes the darkness of the world to the wicked spirits in the heavenlies. Without doubt, the same thought underlies the present magnificent apostrophe. And this is such an encouragement to prayer; because from our knees we may affect the balance of power in the heavenlies by the weight of our intercessions.

All through this chapter runs the contrast between the fallen cherub, the patron saint of Zidon, and Jehovah the God of Israel. In the collision between these two, the might of the devil was shown to be a shadow; and his votaries were ashamed and astonished at his impotence to defend them. For us there is blessed significance in this subject. Greater is He that is for us than he that is against us. The last Adam hath stood in the conflict in which the first Adam fell. None shall prevail against us in Him.





December 26

Ezekiel 29:20

“I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD.”

THE king of Babylon was sent against Tyre. The siege lasted long, and his army suffered great privations. Scorching heat above, and the heavy burdens on their shoulders, made every head bald and every shoulder peal. For this great service he was to be recompensed with the gift of the land of Egypt, because he had wrought God’s purpose.

The words quoted above suggest the thought, that though we do not merit anything of God by our service, yet He does not forget our work of faith and labor of love when it is wrought for Him. If He gave Egypt to a heathen king for his service in respect to Tyre, we may also expect Him to bestow a reward on those who have built gold, silver, and precious stones, into His holy temple. The servant who has made his five talents into ten, shall be rewarded with ten cities. Those who have watched and waited through the long night shall be rewarded with special honor in the bridal feast. God will give to us some guerdon for our toils, some prize for our conflict, some token of His favor, which will be all of grace and yet proportionate to the work wrought for Him.

The transference of countries from one sovereign power to another may appear to be only the result of political combinations, or superior armies. “Providence is on the side of the strongest battalions,” Napoleon said; and the remark is consistent with man’s ordinary way of thinking. But here the prophet withdraws the veil, and shows the fulfillment of the Divine purpose, as Egypt comes under the power of the king of Babylon. As we look over the world, how vast are the changes which are passing over it, preparing for Christ’s Gospel.





Ezekiel 30:25

“But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt.”

THE emphasis is on the word *my*. The punishment inflicted by the king of Babylon on Egypt was directly from God; it was *His* sword in the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 30:10). How little the historian of that time realized that there was anything more in the expedition of Babylon against Egypt than the natural rivalry of these two great nations. But the eye of the inspired seer saw that Babylon was the executor of the Divine decree.

Very often events and people carry the sword of God, or His rod, which to the natural eye seem to emanate by chance, or by the malice of men. God's chastisements are very real. It is probable that no child of God sins knowingly against the Divine order without being chastised. Sometimes the natural consequences of our sins, at other times misfortunes in our circumstances, or the alienation of our friends, make the scourge of small cords by which our souls are taught the bitterness of any way but God's.

Are you undergoing chastisement? Do not regard the human agent with any feeling but of love and pity; do not expend your strength in resistance and threatening; do not faint when you are rebuked but lie still at the feet of God, receiving meekly the strokes, and thankful that He loves you well enough to take such pains. Thus the bitter discipline will produce the fruits of righteousness which are to the praise and glory of God. Never forget to distinguish between chastisement and punishment. The one is for the child; the other for the rebel. Chastisement we may bear; but the punishment of our sin has been for ever borne by Jesus Christ. Oh, do not call your self *Marah*! If you only understood God's way, it would be *Naomi*.





December 28

Ezekiel 31:17

“They also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen.”

WHATEVER may be the primary meaning of these words, they have a very blessed application to those who have gone forth, from so many Christian families, into heathen lands. For no choice of their own, and simply in obedience to their King’s command, hundreds of our sons and daughters have gone forth to dwell in the midst of the heathen. They have taken up their home amid conditions which they would not have chosen, had it not been for the constraining love of Christ, and the imperative need of dying men; and as fond relatives and friends regard their lot from a distance, they are often filled with anxious forebodings. May they not be involved in some sudden riot and sacrificed to a frenzy of hate! May not the sanitary conditions and methods of life be seriously detrimental to their health or morals? “Oh, if only I could be there,” you sigh.

Hush! Christ is there; as near them as He is to you, casting over them the shadow of His presence, beckoning them to His secret place. He is the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land; or like the canopy of cloud that hovered over the camp of Israel by day, screening it from the torrid glare. Do not fear to trust your loved ones to the immortal Lover, who fainteth not, neither is weary. The hand that would harm is arrested and paralyzed when it attempts to penetrate that safe enclosure.

“God is never so far off as even to be near:

He is within! Our spirit is the home He holds most dear.

To think of Him as by our side, is almost as untrue

As to remove His throne beyond those skies of starry blue;

So all the while I thought myself homeless, forlorn, and weary,

Nursing my joy, I walked the earth — myself God’s sanctuary.”





December 29

Ezekiel 32:1, 17

“And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ... It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,”

WE often bring our words to God, without being equally eager to receive His to us. Probably His word often comes to us when we are too engaged to hear it, or because our ear is not anointed and purged. Tennyson used to boast of his power of detecting a bat’s shrill scream, which comparatively few can catch. So it is not every child of God that can be still or quick enough to detect the whisper of His small soft voice. When it does come, breaking in through the many voices that fill heart and life, we do well, as Ezekiel did, carefully to mark the days as memorable, writing on the tablet of our heart, “On this day God spake to my soul.”

We do well to observe special days in our diary of the years. The day of our conversion or consecration; the day of deliverance from overwhelming trouble; the day when He summoned us to some new duty; the day when Paradise shone around us with its golden sheen. Even Paul recorded, amid his busy life, that day when he was caught up into the third heaven.

Let us invite these Divine confidences. Let us fall on our face while God talks with us. Let us be on the outlook lest His invitations are not responded to. Let us address our heavenly Bridegroom in the words of the Song of Songs: “Let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice.” (Song of Solomon 2:14) Then, though we sleep, our heart will wake; and we shall recognize the voice of our Beloved, as He waits at the door, saying, “Open to Me, my sister, my love, my undefiled.” (Song of Solomon 5:2) Ah, who shall fathom the confidences that are exchanged when the word of the Lord thus comes to us? But be sure that it will cease, directly we hear, but fail to obey. Humility and obedience are essential.





December 30

Ezekiel 33:33

“And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.”

THE people looked on Ezekiel’s ministrations as a delightful diversion. They regarded him as one that had a pleasant voice, and could play well on an instrument, and gathered around him with apparent eagerness and devotion. With their mouth they were profuse in expressions of love and admiration; but they had no idea of the weight and worth of his words. They looked only on the beauty of his expressions, without penetrating to the spiritual depth and meaning they contained. But when once his warnings had taken effect, and his predictions had been fulfilled, they would know that he had been something more than a sweet singer, and that there had been a prophet among them.

We do not realize the true worth of God’s gifts till they are gone from us never to be recalled. That friendship was grateful and pleasing to the sense; but we did not gauge the true worth of our friend. That opportunity of hearing God’s word from the lips of an honored minister was frittered away in casual criticisms on his manners and gestures, instead of being employed for hearing God’s word from his lips. That incident in our life touched us by its outward features only; but we failed to receive the profound lesson it was intended to convey. Alas, so often when the prophet has gone, we realize what he was, and what we have missed!

Let us be more careful to look into the heart of the circumstances and people around us; to ponder deeply the meaning of all that God puts into our lives; to penetrate below the surface to the eternal and divine, which are not far beneath. The vail between us and the Eternal Presence-chamber is as thin and delicate as the walls of our hearts.





Ezekiel 34:15

“I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.”

IT is perfectly impossible to make sheep lie down unless they are satisfied or free from alarm. When the flocks lie deep in the rich pasture lands, it is because they have eaten to the full, and are quiet from fear of evil. When, therefore, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls promises that He will so deal with us as to cause us to lie down, He undertakes to fulfill in our life these two conditions.

The Lord Jesus brings us into a good pasture, and causes us to feed in a fat pasture upon the mountains of fellowship, transfiguration, and far-reaching vision. Listen as He cries, “eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” (Song of Solomon 5:1) Our restlessness arises from our refusal to obey His loving invitation to come and dine. We do not read our Bibles enough, or feed on His flesh, or drink His blood. Let us look at the Scriptures as the green pastures; and as we open them let us ask Him to be our guide, and to show us where the food appropriate to our need is to be found.

The Lord Jesus does more. He makes with us a covenant of peace; and even if the evil beasts do not cease out of the land, He so assures us that we can dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. He intends that we should be safe in Immanuel’s land; that the bonds of our yoke should be broken; and that we should be delivered out of the hands of those who serve themselves of us.

O child of God, be less dependent on people and circumstances! Deal more constantly at first hand with Jesus. Regard Him as your Shepherd; “He maketh to lie down.” Rejoice that He the Lord your God is with you, and that the shadowing woods, the mighty mountains, and the stream-watered vales are equally beneath his power and care.





INFORMATION ON THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS USED IN THIS DEVOTIONAL

JEREMIAH: Surrender to the Will of God

Writer: Jeremiah

Key Passage: Jeremiah 3:22,23

Remarks: When the book was written, Judah was under the domination of various world powers and was about to be taken into Captivity. Its message is that the destinies of all peoples and nations are not fulfilled outside the hand of God.

Outline:

1. Call of Jeremiah (1)
2. Concerning Judah (2-45)
3. Concerning the Nations (46-51)
4. Consummation of Judgment (52)

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LAMENTATIONS: The Faithfulness of God

Writer: Jeremiah

Key Passage: Lamentations 3:22,23

Remarks: It consists of five mournful poems, written to express sorrow over the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians which took place in 586 BC.





Outline:

1. Jerusalem Deserted (1)
2. Jerusalem Destroyed (2)
3. Jeremiah's Distress (3)
4. Jerusalem Defeated (4)
5. Jeremiah's Desire (5)

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EZEKIEL: The Glory of God

Writer: Ezekiel

Key Passage: Ezekiel 1:28

Remarks: Ezekiel's preaching reminded the Jewish exiles in Babylon of the sins which had brought God's judgment on them, and also assured them of God's future blessing in keeping with His Covenant.

Outline:

1. Ezekiel's Call (1-3)
2. Judah's Fall (4-24)
3. Judah's Foes (25-32)
4. Judah's Future (33-48)





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.

July 4 & 11 – Obedience to God

Psalm 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

Psalm 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.



