

Our Daily Walk by F B Meyer - April

Index to Our Daily Walk by F B Meyer

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

April 1

THE CHOICE OF A LIFE-WORK

"I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in...Give Thy servant an understanding heart."-- 1Ki 3:7-9.

WE SHALL never rightly choose our life-course until we are determined to put first things first. Wealth, honour, fame, the surpassing of our rivals, are not the chief things to be considered, or our judgment will be impaired and our vision distorted. It was because Solomon desired and sought the kingdom and glory of God, that He gave him also the things for which he did not ask (1Ki 3:13; Mat 6:33).

Impressed by the greatness of his responsibilities, the young king had gone to Gibeon to worship God. He wished to fulfil his opportunities to their highest measure, and to serve his fatherland, but he realized his inefficiency. Do you feel like this? You realize the wonderful opportunities and responsibilities of life in this marvellous age, and long to be of service to God and your fellows, but what can you do? You are but as a little child, and "know not how to go out or come in." "Going out" stands for the active life in the world of men; "coming in" for the hours spent in the home, in recreation and society. It is like the systole and diastole of the heart's action, which should be alike consecrated to God and of service to man.

Solomon asked for an understanding heart, that he might discern between good and bad. We all need this faculty, that we may discriminate between things that look very much alike, but are different in nature and direction (Heb 5:14; Phi 1:9-10; marg. R.V.). It is not an endowment of intellectual power, but of moral taste and discernment. It has been said, that the difficulty in life is not to discriminate between white and black, but to choose between the different shades of grey. In our fellowships, recreations, literature, business--we are in urgent need of the understanding heart, which listens for and heeds the voice of God.

Solomon offered a thousand burnt-offerings upon the altar (1Ki 3:4). We are required to present our bodies as living sacrifices unto God, which is our reasonable service. Our career is often determined by our circumstances, or by our special gifts and talents, and, on the whole, we succeed best in doing what we like best. But if we yield ourselves to do God's will, He will direct our paths.

PRAYER

O God, make us diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. May we prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good.
AMEN.

April 2

GOD'S REQUIREMENTS

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."-- Mic 6:8.

MICAH WAS a man of the people, and a true patriot. In his day, the political outlook was dark in the extreme, and the prophet felt that one thing only could save his country, and that was a deep and widespread revival of religion. To the inquiry of the people as to whether Jehovah desired the sacrifice of animals, or little children, who were immolated by the heathen people around in order to rid their consciences from sin, the answer came that God required something more spiritual and searching: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, etc."

Let us make this threefold message our own. To do justly, giving not a fraction less than can be rightly claimed from us. Every one of us must acknowledge the righteous claims of our home-circle, and of our neighbors, and we must adjust these claims, giving each his due.

Let us love mercy. There are some who have perhaps forfeited all claim on our mercy--the prisoner, the fallen, the helpless, our enemies--we must help all these not grudgingly, but cheerfully and willingly. Do not try to love mercy till you begin to show it. Dare to step out into a life of unselfish beneficence, and as you do so, you will come to love it. St. James insists that pure religion as much consists in visiting the widow and fatherless in their affliction as in keeping oneself unspotted from the world.

Let us also walk humbly with God, not lagging behind, nor running before, but walking with Him, hand in hand. All down the ages, from Enoch onward, there have been those who walked with God in unstained robes. It is not in sacrifices, or rites, or church-going, or almsgiving, though these will follow afterwards, but in holy and humble living, that the heart of true religion is realized.

Is that all? No! What is to be done for those who have tried and failed, who are conscious of guilt and sin? In the closing verses of this book is the answer. There we learn that God will not only forgive, but will subdue our iniquities. He will turn again and have compassion upon us, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. He delighteth in mercy! Who is a God like unto Thee?

PRAYER

O Lord, may Thy all-powerful grace make me as perfect as Thou hast commanded me to be. AMEN.

April 3

THE DIVIDED HEART

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."-- Mt 6:21-22.

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."-- Jas 1:8.

THE CLOSING paragraphs of Matthew 6 are full of instances of a divided heart. The Greek word for care means that which divides.

Some are divided by anxiety. The anxious soul cannot take a strong straight course, any more than a man can sleep who is wondering whether he has bolted the front door or wound up his watch. Some are divided by contrariness--a most difficult and complicated disposition of soul. We would like to be pleasant, helpful, agreeable, and amiable, but are conscious of cross-currents that restrain and make us awkward and disagreeable, and we find ourselves rent between two strong influences, the one to be Christlike and gracious, the other to be distant and angular. Others are divided by fitful and passionate impulses. Happy are they who can hold them well in check. Even St. Paul tells us that he was conscious of these two wills--the better self which longed to do the will of God, and the lower, selfish, passionate self, which brought him into subjection. St. Augustine tells us that, though the prayers of Monica, his mother, greatly affected him, he was constantly swept back from his ideal by an outbreak of passion.

Bunyan also illustrates the same condition, saying that two selves were at war within him. The Devil came and said, "Sell Him!" But he resisted, even to blood, saying, "I won't!" But, as the Tempter continued urging, "Sell Him!" Bunyan finally yielded, and suffered an agony of remorse, as, on the one hand, he accepted Christ as his only Hope, and on the other, was prepared to barter Him away.

A divided heart lacks the first element of strength--it is unstable. The men who leave their mark on the world are those who can say: "This one thing I do." But we need more than concentration, we need consecration. We must not only be united in ourselves, we must be united in God. Let us make the prayer of Psalms 86:11, our own: "O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy name." Yield yourself to God that He may disunite you from the world, and weave you into His own life.

PRAYER

O Faithful Lord, grant to us, we pray Thee, faithful hearts devoted to Thee, and to the service of all men for Thy sake. AMEN.

April 4

THE CHILD HEART

"He called to Him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."-- Mat 18:2, 3 (R.V.).

OUR LORD bids us seek the child-heart! Not to be childish, but childlike! It is recorded of the illustrious soldier, Naaman, that after he had washed in the Jordan waters, his flesh came to him as that of a little child. It is a noble combination--the stature and strength of the full-grown man united with the winsome purity and sweetness of a little child. It is not possible for any one of us to attain these two qualities unless we are prepared to pay the price. The orders of rank in the Kingdom of Heaven are diametrically opposed to those of our earthly kingdoms. Here men are ever striving to rise above their fellows; but in Christ's Kingdom they stoop to serve, and in stooping become crowned!

The King of Glory girded Himself with a towel, and kneeling down washed the feet of His disciples, and the nobles in His Kingdom are those who have become willing to be the servants of all!

Simplicity, humility, and freedom from self-consciousness are the natural traits of early childhood; alas! that they so quickly learn from us to seek for notice, patronage, and the first place! How happy that little one was as he nestled to the Saviour's heart! Three times over in this chapter the Master speaks about "these little ones." How dearly He loved the children, and each time must have pressed the child closer to Himself! It was thus that like came to like!

It is the childlike hearts that agree on earth in the symphony of prayer. One may go East and the other West, but beneath the touch of the Spirit of Love, they will be of one accord, i.e. in attuned fellowship with each other and with Christ (Mat 18:19, 20). The child-spirit, also, will be willing to forgive and forget (Mat 18:15, Mat 18:21, Mat 18:22).

PRAYER

Grant, O Lord, that I may become as a little child in Thy kingdom. May my heart be filled with Thy love, my lips with gentle, helpful words, and my hands with kind, unselfish deeds. AMEN.

April 5

THE CRY OF THE HEART FOR FORGIVENESS

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."-- Psa 51:1.

"I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee."-- Isa 44:22.

THIS STAIRCASE has been trodden by myriads of penitent souls. Few of God's elect saints have passed through life without having painfully climbed its stairs. On the wall opposite the pallet in the cell where St. Augustine died, this first verse was set out where his eyes could constantly see it.

The Psalmist uses three words for the Forgiveness he craves--that his transgressions might be blotted out, like the legends scribbled over the ancient Gospels of the palimpsest; that his iniquity should be washed away, as the soil from linen; and that all traces of his past sin should be forgiven and cleansed away, even as leprosy in the case of Naaman was so obliterated that his flesh became as a little child. How tenderly Jesus responded to the agonized cry of the leper for cleansing: "I will, be thou clean!"

How wonderfully these petitions of the soul burdened with the sense of sin are answered! Do you ask to be purged with hyssop? Listen to the voice of God saying: "I even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember thy sins." He purges us with the Blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. Do you ask to be made white as snow? "These are they who have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." Do you ask to hear joy and gladness? "It is meet to make merry and be glad, for this, my child was lost and is found." Do you desire to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God? Give Him your broken and contrite heart; think not that He will despise it! The fragrance of a broken box of alabaster fills Heaven and earth to this day!

PRAYER

Let there be no doubt with any one of us that Thou dost forgive, even to the uttermost, all those who draw nigh in penitence to Thee; that so, those of us who are sad because sinful, may have this day the joy of the Lord. AMEN.

April 6

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CLEANSED SOUL

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."-- Psa 51:2.

"Blessed are they that wash their robes."-- Rev 22:14 (R.V.)

IN THE last chapter of the Book of Revelation there is a very interesting change from the Authorized to the Revised Version, which accentuates a line of thought which cannot be too often emphasized. The A.V. reads: "Blessed are they that keep His commandments, that they may have the right to the Tree of Life." The R.V. reads: "Blessed are they that wash their robes." May we not be thankful that this is the condition, rather than the absolute keeping of His commandments, which might induce legalism and Pharisaism into our character and experience. We are very conscious of our sin day by day, but as we wash our robes and make them white through the Blood of the Lamb, we may approach the Tree of Life and eat of its fruit.

There are two other references to the Tree of Life in this wonderful chapter. In Rev 22:2, we are told that it yields each month the food appropriate for the month; in Rev 22:19, we learn that each of us has a distinct and individual part in that tree. Its leaves are for our healing, and its fruit is suited to every phase of human experience. The Tree of Life was originally planted in Paradise together with the Tree of Knowledge (Gen 2:9). As the latter fed the soul-life of our first parents, with knowledge of good and evil, so the former stood for the life of the spirit nurtured and fed by the Spirit of God.

When we learn of its monthly yield, are we not reminded that whatever each passing experience of human life may require, it will be met out of the fullness of the Divine supplies. January days with their new resolves and hopes! February days with storms and frosts! May days with the flowers of Hope! June days with warmth and light. September days of fruition! December days of sickness or old age! But whatever month or day there is always a supply of adequate and suitable grace to be obtained from the fellowship of our dear Lord. He is the completement of every need, and perhaps we are led through these varying experiences in order to give the opportunity of learning phases and utilizing resources in our Saviour, of which, otherwise, we should have known nothing.

PRAYER

Give us grace, O Lord, to come to Thee for daily cleansing, and for all our needs in the various circumstances through which we are called to pass, that by our holy living we may glorify Thee in our daily life. AMEN.

April 7

THE BIBLE AS A SAFEGUARD

"Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee."-- Psa 119:11.

THE PRAYER: "Teach me Thy statutes" occurs eight times in this wonderful Psalm. It may be said to be its keynote. God's statutes are the path of purity. If a young man will take heed to them, his way will be cleansed. The passage of the Word of God through the heart, like the running of clean water through a pipe, will purify it. Constant study of the Bible is the condition of soul-health.

Consecration is closely associated with Bible study (Psa 119:10). Holiness is wholeness--that is, the whole-hearted devotion of a whole nature to God, the consecration of every power to His service. This leads us to lean hard on God, and to seek His companionship and fellowship. Psa 119:11 tells us of a good thing laid up in a good place, and the result. In the midst of a London season, and amid the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, William Wilberforce wrote in his diary: "Walked from Hyde Park Comer, repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort"; John Ruskin said: "It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which to my child's mind was most repulsive, the 119th Psalm, has now become, of all, the most precious to me in-its glorious passion for the law of God."

The study of the Bible enables us to bear witness for God (Psa 119:13). An inspector on one of our railways once told me that he had a vision of God whilst studying his Bible and kneeling in prayer. From this he went to his duties on the station platform. At one end of the train, a man offered him some whisky, but he was able to answer, "I have had a better drink than that," and pointed him to the Water of Life (Jn 4:14; Rev 22:17). At the other end of the train, another man asked him for a Testament, the slang phrase for a pack of cards, and my friend was able to pass on to him a Pocket Testament! It is when the Word of God fills the heart that it overflows through the lips and actions, and it is what flows over from us that really helps and blesses our fellow-men. "Out of him shall flow rivers of living water." Let us live in fellowship with God through His Word. This will light up our life with gladness, amid many sorrows. Wait not for Heaven, but here and now, day by day, be joyful in heart and life (Psa 119:14-16).

PRAYER

Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. AMEN.

April 8

THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."-- Rom 10:9.

SALVATION IS a great word. It is conjugated in three tenses: The Past Tense. We saved at the moment when we first trusted Christ.

This salvation is a distinct and definite matter, which is ours at the moment we exercise simple faith in Jesus. "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom 5:9).

The Present Tense. "To us who are being saved, Christ is the power of God," such is the accurate rendering of 1Co 1:18. We are being saved perpetually from the love and power of sin. The disinfectant of Christ's Presence is ever warding off the germs of deadly temptation. The mighty arm of the Divine Keeper is always holding the door against the attempts of the adversary. The water is always flowing over the eye to remove the tiny grit or mote that may alight. "We are being saved by His life" (Rom 5:10).

The Future Tense. We are being kept by the power of God unto a salvation which waits to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. 1.). Salvation is a great word. It includes the forgiveness that remembers our sin no more; deliverance from the curse and penalty of our evil ways; emancipation from the thrall of evil habit; the growing conformity of the soul to the image of Christ, and the final resurrection of the body in spiritual beauty and energy, to be for ever the companion and vehicle of the redeemed spirit.

PRAYER

Oh blessed Spirit of God, we pray Thee to give us the assurance of being the children of God, the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty; and so prepare us for the glory to be revealed to us, and for that great hour when the whole creation, which now groans and travails in pain, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. AMEN.

April 9

OUR GLORIOUS STANDING!

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."-- Rom 8:1.

THE CHARACTERISTICS of this glorious standing. It is present: "Now."

If we are in Christ, we need not wait in doubts and fears for the verdict of the great white Throne. Its decisions cannot make our standing more clear, or our acceptance more sure, but we shall learn there the meaning of God's dealings with mankind, and triumph in the successful vindication of His ways. We can never be more free from the condemnation of God's righteous law than we are at this present.

It is certain: "There is no condemnation." You must catch this accent of conviction, and be able to speak with no faltering voice of your assured acceptance with God, if you would enter upon the rich inheritance of this chapter, to which these opening words stand as the door of passage. The shadow of a peradventure cannot live in the light of that certainty of which the Apostle speaks.

It is invariable. There are Some who live on a sliding scale between condemnation and acceptance. If health is buoyant and the heart is full of song, they are sure of their acceptance with God; but if the sun is darkened and the clouds return; when the heart is dull and sad, they imagine that they are under the ban of God's displeasure. They forget that our standing in Christ Jesus is one thing; our appreciation and enjoyment of it quite another. Your own heart may condemn you; memory, the recorder of the soul, may summon from the past evidence against you; the great Accuser of souls may lay against you grievous and well-founded charges; your tides of feeling may ebb far down the beach; your faith may become weak and lose its power and grip; your sense of unworthiness may become increasingly oppressive--none of these things can touch your acceptance with God if you are complying with His one all-inclusive condition--"no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This mystic union with the Son of God is only possible to faith working by love (1Jo 3:23-24).

PRAYER

We commit ourselves to Thy care and keeping this day; let Thy grace be mighty in us, and sufficient for us, and let it work in us both to will and to do of Thine own good pleasure, and grant us strength for all the duties of the day. AMEN.

April 10

THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT

"Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."-- Rom 8:9.

IT IS of the utmost importance to know that we have been born from above of the incorruptible seed of God's implanted nature. How can we be quite sure that we are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty? The beloved Apostle gives us many assurances in the first Epistle of St. John. If we are the children of God we shall be content to be unknown of the world (1Jo 3:1). The leaders and rulers of society may view us with contempt, as they did our Lord, but we shall refuse to enter into any alliance with the children of the world, and shall lose our taste for the things that used to appeal to us.

We shall be very sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, as Philip was when he tore himself away from the revival in Samaria, to go to a lonely spot in the desert, and there await the arrival of the Ethiopian statesman. There was no hesitation in his obedience to the command: "Arise, and go toward the south.., and he arose and went" (Act 8:26-40). Are we being obedient to the call and command of our Lord to tell the good tidings of the Gospel to those who have never heard? Or do we make all sorts of excuses for our apathy?

We shall certainly love the brethren (1Jo 3:14). We may begin by loving them with our strength, and by sacrificing ourselves on their behalf, but we shall pass through the different phases of self-sacrifice until at last we come to love with the Spirit of Christ. We shall be very sensitive for the honour of our Lord, and when men speak ill of Him we shall hasten to avow our discipleship and devotion.

We shall be very sensitive about sin. Directly we have offended against the law of Love, we shall be restless and unhappy until we have confessed and been forgiven and cleansed. We shall hasten at once to our merciful and faithful High Priest that He may remove the stain. An old Puritan once said that a sow and a sheep might fall into the same miry pit; the one would wallow in it, whilst the other would never rest until it was extricated and cleansed!

PRAYER

O God, make me increasingly conscious of the indwelling of Thy Holy Spirit; may He witness with my spirit that in spite of all my sins and shortcomings, I am still Thy child. AMEN.

April 11

THE SEVENFOLD WORK OF GOD'S SPIRIT

"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord."-- Isa 11:2.

WE HAVE in this chapter a wonderful forecast of our Saviour's person and Work; and probably no other single paragraph in the Old Testament seems to sum up so perfectly the sevenfold work of God's Holy Spirit. The stock of Jesse might seem to be cut down to its roots, but it would yield the Messiah. The Mother of our Lord was so poor that she could only offer the two pigeons of the humblest and poorest, as the expression of her thanksgiving at His birth, but He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and in His baptism was anointed and empowered for service by the same Spirit.

Notice the beautiful alternative rendering of Isa 11:3 in the Revised Version. "His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord." In the margin the literal meaning of delight is scent! The phrase might be translated: "He shall draw His breath in the fear of the Lord." Our Saviour, though living in this world, was never infected by evil surroundings. Let us seek to live like this--in the world, but not of it! We know instinctively when we inhale the foetid air of certain places and society. What a difference there is in the pure ozone of the ocean or the breath of the hills! If our lot is cast amid the murky atmosphere of the great city, let us be more careful to inbreathe the pure air of Holy Scripture and prayer.

The Holy Spirit of God anoints for service by descending upon us, and then builds up within us His sixfold grace. We all need wisdom in the spirit, and understanding in the intellect; we all need counsel and direction as to our life purpose, and might to execute the divinely-given plan; we all need to become students in the knowledge of God, and in devout reverence. Why should we not make each of these the subject of our special dealing with the Paraclete, who gives freely to all who will yield their wills, minds, and lives to His control (Gal 5:22). Then all creation will respond to us; there will be a new beauty in heaven above and earth beneath, the preface and augury of that new creation which shall emerge when our Saviour returns to bring in the millennium of blessedness and peace.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, tenant of our hearts; fill us with Thy Holy Spirit, and fit us for that new life when all evil passions shall be subdued, and the knowledge of Thy Redeeming Love shall flow over the worm as the waters cover the ocean-bed! AMEN.

April 12

GOD'S CHALLENGE TO MAN

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding."-- Job 38:4.

IN This mighty chapter, God seems to draw near to the perplexed and stricken soul, who sits brooding over the problems of human life, and points out that mysteries equally insoluble are above his head and under his feet; that he lives and moves amongst them. Man frets and despairs over a mystery forced upon him by sorrow and loss. He cannot interpret it, and is shaken to the heart; but the whole universe teems with mystery. Man cannot explain the creation of the world, the separation of sky and earth, the reflex influences of the one on the other. Light and darkness, wind and rain, snow and ice, storm and sunshine; the instincts of the animal creation these defy man's absolute understanding.

But who frets at the inscrutable mystery which enshrouds these natural phenomena! We use all of them, and make them serve our purpose.

We cannot be surprised, therefore, if we discover similar mysteries in God's dealings with ourselves. He does not answer our questions by always telling us His secret reasonings. His thoughts and ways are as much higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth, and we could not more understand His reasons than tiny children can the mysteries of human life. But behind all mystery the Father's heart is beating, and a Father's voice is pleading, that we should trust Him. Little children, you cannot understand, but you are infinitely dear to Me; I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; "what I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Trust me, and "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

PRAYER

O God, there are so many mysteries in the world, and in human life, and our eyes grow tired with straining into the darkness. Help us to believe in Thy unchanging love, and to trust where we cannot see or understand. AMEN.

April 13

GOD'S HERITAGE IN HUMANITY

"The Lord's portion is His people."-- Deu 32:9.

"According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."-- Eph 1:4.

WE DO not become God's property when we consecrate ourselves to Him, but only awake to see that we are already His, and assume that manner of life which they should live who are not their own, but have been bought with a price (1Co 6:19-20). The three symbols of God's care of His own, as enumerated by Moses in his Song, are exquisitely beautiful.

"He kept him as the apple of his eye" (Deu 32:10). Almost instinctively we raise our hand to protect the eyes if anything threatens us, and it is thus with God's care to us. How carefully the eye is preserved from impurity and evil by the strong bony socket in which it is set, by the eyebrows and lashes which catch the dust and grit, by the eyelid closing over, and the tear-water washing it. Thus the soul which God loves may pass through the evil of the world without taint or soil, because of His gracious keeping power.

"As an eagle" (Deu 32:11). When the young eaglets are able to fly, but hover about their nest, unwilling to venture from the cliff, the mother-bird breaks up their eerie home, drives the fledglings forth on to the air, compels them to use their wings, flutters beneath to catch them if they are inclined to fall, and bears them up on her strong wings until they can fly alone. So it is in life that sometimes God has to break up the happy conditions to which we have been accustomed from our birth, and drive us forth. But it is for our good since only so can we acquire the glorious powers of sustained flight on the wings of the wind.

Divine leading (Deu 32:12). God teaches us to go as a mother her little child; His hand leads and guides our tottering steps (Hos 11:3-4).

The Epistle to the Ephesians gives us a list of the blessings, like a string of pearls, which God our Father, the Owner and Lover of our souls, heaps upon us, and is waiting for us to appropriate and use (Deu 1:3). His love to us is no passing fancy, but the carrying out of an eternal purpose. He redeems us from the love and power of sin; He abounds towards us with the riches of His grace; we are kept and sealed by the Holy Spirit; and ultimately shall be presented before Him, without blemish, to the praise of His glory.

PRAYER

What can I lack if I have Thee, Who art all Good? Verily, the heart is restless, until it rest in Thee alone. AMEN.

April 14

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES

"O Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"-- Mat 23:37.

OUR LORD'S ministry began with an octave of Blessedness, but it ended with a sevenfold woe, which He pronounced on the religious leaders of His time. He did not threaten, but pronounced the inevitable outworking of their evil ways.

Men often quote the punishment that follows sin as indicating some harsh or vindictive sentiment on the part of the Divine Being. They do not understand that, whereas human sentences are often arbitrary, God's judgments are natural, i.e. they are the inevitable result of wrong-doing. The penalty is part of the constitution of the universe. The final judgment of the great White Throne will only announce the penalty which man's sin has produced.

God is merciful as well as just, but if a man will tamper with explosives, He does not save his face or limbs. Our Lord was not animated by personal invective when He pronounced the terrible judgments of this chapter. There were tears of sorrow in His voice as He said, this temple is no longer My Father's House, but "your house which is left unto you desolate."

We read of the "Wrath of the Lamb," but it is the counterpart of Love; not vindictive wrath, but the bitterness of disappointed Love! Notice the gleam of light at the end of this chapter. Jesus seemed to hear the welcome which would be accorded to Him in that day when He shall finally appear to vindicate and save His brethren according to the flesh (Mat 23:39).

PRAYER

O Lord, make us, we implore Thee, so to love Thee that Thou mayest be to us a Fire of Love, purifying and not destroying. AMEN.

April 15

MY GUEST-CHAMBER

"The Master saith, Where is my guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?"-- Mar 14:14 (R.V.).

THERE HAD evidently been a previous understanding between our Lord and the good man of the house, who was probably a devoted friend and follower. Jesus knew that His death was being plotted by the chief priests, and that Judas desired to betray Him that very night. He wanted to take part in the Passover Supper, and therefore did not tell the two disciples, whom He sent to prepare the supper where it was to be held, lest any should overhear, and His arrest should take place. The locality of that last gathering with His disciples was revealed to the two by the sign of the man bearing the pitcher of water when they reached Jerusalem, and only to the remainder of the party when they actually arrived.

Our Lord knew what treachery meant in the home-circle. You may be experiencing this. Your familiar friend, in whom you trust, may be absolutely unreliable---a sieve through which your secret confidences filter, or an adder waiting to sting! But Christ experienced this also, and suffered as we all do, from the feeling of restraint in the presence of one who is unsympathetic and critical (Joh 13:31).

Jesus knew what devoted friendship means. What He could not confide to the band of apostles He was able to make known to the good man of this house. They had evidently conferred together and arranged that this room should be at the Master's disposal, furnished and prepared for His reception.

Our Lord asks us for the use of our guest-chamber. He still stands at the door and knocks, saying: "If any will open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me." There is a room in each heart, which He covets for Himself. The Revised Version inserts the word "My". We are His by right of creation and redemption; let us be His by choice. Having given the guest-chamber of our heart to Him, may we not go on to give our spare room to His disciples, and our loving hospitality to those who go forth for the sake of His Name (3Jo 1:5-8).

PRAYER

Is there a thing beneath the sun

That strives with Thee my heart to share?

He, tear it thence, and reign alone,

The Lord of every motion there. AMEN.

April 16

KEEPING STEP!

"Come unto Me; Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."-- Mat 11:28-30.

A YOKE--for two! All through His earthly life Jesus was saying: take My yoke. What was His yoke. It was surely His desire to do the Father's will. This was the watchword of His life (Joh 5:30; Joh 6:38). So persuasive was His appeal, that the sons of Zebedee left their father and boat; Andrew and Simon their fishing-nets; and Matthew his toll-booth to become His disciples. Women forsook their sins, and men their ambitions, in order to become His humble friends, and followers. Saul, the proud young Pharisee, heard His appeal, and abandoning everything that might lead to high honour and worldly success, counted it his highest glory to be associated with Christ in redeeming a lost world. But this association or fellowship requires agreement, identity of purpose. "Can two talk together except they be agreed?" (Amo 3:3). Hence there can be no fellowship between light and darkness; between the Christian soul and the unbeliever (2Co 6:14-18; 1Jo 1:6-7). The Yoke means subsoil ploughing. The salvation of a lost world, or of one human soul is no child's-play. Christ saw before Him the hard surface of mankind, the spirit of man caked over by long years of neglect and resistance. Before salvation can be effected the subsoil has to be turned up, and the thoughts of many hearts revealed (Jer 17:9-10). The Yoke means fellowship. The Divine and the human united in feeding the five thousand; in turning the water into wine; in the raising of Lazarus! There has never been an island redeemed from cannibalism to service for Christ, or a paralytic cleansed and healed apart from the co-operation of the Divine and Human. Yoke-bearing anticipates the Harvest. So we plough the furrow in Hope, knowing that one day the Harvest will be ripe, and One like unto the Son of Man will thrust in His sharp sickle and reap. What joy to share in that Harvest-Home!

PRAYER

The fetters Thou imposest, O Lord, are wings of freedom. Put round about my heart the cord of Thy captivating love. Bind me to Thyself as Thou bindest the planets to the sun, that it may become the law of my nature to be led by Thee. AMEN.

April 17

OUR RESOURCES

"Be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."-- Heb 13:5.

SUCH THINGS as ye have, plus! The Greek literally means that there is within us an undeveloped power only awaiting the call, and there will be enough. I may be speaking to people who wish that they had more money, or more brains, or more influence. They dream of the lives they would live, of the deeds they would do, if only they were better circumstanced. But God says No! You have present within the narrow confines of your own reach the qualities that the world is wanting. Use them, and be content with the things that you have. You have never explored the resources of your own soul.

"Such things as ye have"--Moses had only a rod, but a rod with God can open the Red Sea. David had only five pebbles, but these with God brought down Goliath. The woman had only a little pot of oil, but that pot of oil with God paid all her debts. The poor widow was scraping the bottom of the barrel, but with God the handful of meal kept her child, herself, and the prophet until the rain came. The boy had only five tiny loaves and two small fish, but with Jesus they were enough for five thousand men, beside women and children. Estimate what you have got, and then count God into the bargain! He never lets go your hand. He will never leave nor forsake those that trust in Him!

Therefore be content! The most glorious deeds that have blessed and enriched the world have not been done by wealthy men. Our Lord had none of this world's goods; the apostles had neither silver nor gold; Carey was only a poor cobbler; Bunyan a travelling tinker; Wesley left two silver spoons. It is not money, but human love and God that is needed. Therefore do not be covetous; do not hoard, but give! Be strong and content. With good courage say: "The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear"--for life or death, for sorrow or joy!

PRAYER

The soul that to Jesus has fled for repose,

He cannot, He will not, desert to its foes.

That soul, though all hell should endeavour to take,

He'll never, no never, no never forsake! AMEN.

April 18

PRAISE AND PRAYER

"Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Sion; and unto Thee shall the vow be performed. O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come."-- Psa 65:1-2.

WHAT RAPTURES there are here! It reminds one of a lark at dawn filling regions of air with music which threatens to rend its tiny throat. The Psalmist is in fellowship with God. He is enjoying his prayer and praise so much that it seemed to him as though all flesh must wake up to enjoy it also. His iniquities and transgressions are purged away. He feels that God is causing him to approach into His secret place, and all nature takes on a new radiance and beauty.

The personal pronouns for God--Thou, Thee, Thy, occur at least twenty times in thirteen verses! We remember that Wordsworth speaks of a Presence that rolls through all things: "A sense sublime of something deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the blue sky--a motion and a spirit." The poet was a lover of the meadows, and the woods, and mountains!

To many of us, also, Nature seems but the slight covering or garment, which only partially, conceals the glory and beauty of God's Presence. The bush still burns with fire. The mountain-heights are filled with the horses and chariots of angelic guardians. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." There is no voice or language that the ordinary sense of man can detect, but when our hearts are clean, and our ears open, we realize that we are in touch with Him whom some day we shall see face to face, but who even now reveals Himself to the pure in heart (Mat 5:8).

PRAYER

O God our Heavenly Father, renew in us the sense of Thy gracious Presence, and let it be a constant impulse within us to peace, trustfulness, and courage on our pilgrimage. AMEN.

April 19

LOVE'S CONFIDENCE!

"His sisters sent unto Him saying, Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick."-- Jn11:3.

THE LAPSE of years made it possible for the Apostle to draw aside the veil which curtained the happy friendship and fellowship of Christ in the home at Bethany. It was the one green oasis in the rugged wilderness through which He passed to the Cross!

There were diversities in that home, Martha, practical, energetic, and thoughtful for all that could affect the comfort of those she loved and served; Mary, gifted with spiritual insight and tender sympathy; Lazarus, probably a man of few words, quiet and unobtrusive, but Jesus loved each one (Jn11:5).

The sisters never doubted that Christ would speed at all hazards to save Lazarus after the breathless messenger had brought the tidings of his sickness. Anything less than infinite Love would have rushed instantly to the relief of those troubled hearts; Divine Love alone could hold back the impetuosity of the Saviour's tender heart until the Angel of Pain had finished her work. He wanted to teach His disciples never-to-be-forgotten lessons, and also He was eager for the spiritual growth of the faith of the sisters.

This chapter might be more truly known as "The Raising of Martha," for our Lord enabled her, matter-of-fact and practical as she was, to realize that He was the Resurrection and the Life. He insisted that her faith was an essential condition in the raising of her brother to life. The emphasis is on the word "thou" (Jn11:40). Our Lord always needs the co-operating faith of some true heart to be with Him when He works a miracle, and He chose the least likely of the two sisters to supply the pivot on which He could rest the lever of His Divine help. As she withdrew her objection to the removal of the stone, her faith suddenly became capable of claiming the greatest of Christ's miracles.

He calls to us also to help our brethren. In many cases those who have received life from Christ are still bound about with grave-clothes, old habits and evil associations cling to them and impede their progress, and He bids us "Loose him and let him go." He asks for our co-operation in the emancipation of those who have been held fast in the power of the Evil One.

PRAYER

O God, we rejoice that we can turn to Thee in the midst of great anxiety, and commit all our troubles to Thy sure help. As Thou art with us in the sunlight, be Thou with us in the cloud. Sustain us by Thy near presence and let the comforts which are in Jesus Christ fill our hearts with peace. AMEN.

April 20

LIFE ABUNDANT: GRACE ABOUNDING

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ."-- Rom 5:17.

NOTICE THAT word Receive! We first receive forgiveness, or reconciliation, then abundance of grace (Rom 5:11-17). We cannot merit or earn either one or the other; all that we have to do is to take what God offers, by an act of the will which accepts and appropriates. If men are lost, it is because they refuse to receive the grace and love of God, secured to us, in spite of our failure and sin, through the second Adam. We must believe that we have received, even when we are not conscious of any new experience (Jn 1:12). It is a blessed thing, when our emotional life is at a low ebb, and we feel out of sorts, to receive, to inbreathe, to drink in the "abundance of grace," and to know that He is working in us in power.

There is no limit to the abundance of God's supply--it abounds! The Apostle keeps using that word, which really means "running over " (Rom 5:15, Rom 5:17, Rom 5:20). And the result of receiving more and more out of God's fullness, is that we reign, not in the future life, but in this. Ours becomes a royal, a regnant, a triumphant life.

This glorious life in which we are daily victorious over sin, daily using and scattering the unsearchable riches of Christ, daily helping others up to the throne-life, is within the reach of every reader of these words. God wants you to enter upon it; He has made every provision for it, and is at this moment urging you to enter upon it. The only thing for you to do is to receive the abundance of His grace and of the gift of righteousness. Open your heart and life and He will fill it; dare to believe that He has filled it, even though you don't feel it; and go forth to live a royal life, distributing the largess of His royal bounty!

But we must pour out as God pours in! Only so will He be able to trust us with His fullness. Our love to others, our willingness to help them, our forgivingness and patience must go to the point of self-exhaustion, if we would know the abundant life and the grace that flows over.

PRAYER

For souls redeemed, for sins forgiven; For means of grace, and hopes of heaven, Father, what can to Thee be given, Who givest all? AMEN.

April 21

OUR PRAYER LIFE

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before His God, as he did aforetime."-- Dan 6:10

THE CHOSEN hour. It was at the time when Daniel's enemies appeared to have accomplished his downfall and death--"when the writing was signed"--that this heroic statesman knelt down and prayed, and gave thanks to God. These are times when prayer is the only way out of our perplexities. George Muller said: "Our very weakness gives opportunity for the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to be manifested. That blessed One never leaves and never forsakes us. The greater the weakness, the nearer He is to manifest His strength; the greater our necessities, the more have we ground to rely on it that He will prove Himself our Friend. This has been my experience for more than seventy years; the greater the trial, the greater the difficulty, the nearer the Lord's help. Often the appearance was as if I must be overwhelmed, but it never came to it, and it never will. More prayer, more faith, more exercise of patience, will bring the blessing. Therefore our business is just to pour out our hearts before Him; and help in His own time and way is sure to come."

The chosen direction. "His windows open towards Jerusalem." There the Holy Temple had stood, and the Altar of Incense; there God had promised to put His Name and meet His people. When we pray, our windows must be open towards our blessed Lord, who ministers for us in Heaven, mingling the much incense of His intercession with the prayers of all saints (Heb 7:25; Rev 8:3).

The chosen attitude. "He kneeled upon his knees." It is most appropriate to kneel before God in homage and worship. St. Paul bowed his knees, even though his hands were chained, to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 3:14). But we can pray also as we walk, or sit, or ride. Nehemiah flashed a prayer to the God of Heaven before he answered the king's question, but he also prayed before God day and night. Let us contract the habit of praying and giving thanks three times a day. At even, morning, and noon, let God hear your voice.

PRAYER

Thee we would be always blessing,

Serve Thee as Thy hosts above;

Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing

Glory in Thy perfect love. AMEN.

April 22

THE MIDNIGHT WRESTLE

"Jacob went on his way, and the Angels of God met him....And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."-- Gen 32:1, Gen 32:24.

SUCH IS our mortal life! We meet angels before we encounter our Esaus! Their unseen squadrons must be counted on as one of our permanent assets.

"Oh purblind souls! We may not see our helpers in their downward flight, nor hear the sound of silver wings, slow beating through the hush of night?" But they are surely present (Psa 34:7; Heb 1:14). If we accustom ourselves to their presence and help, we may presently come, like Jacob, to an experience of the Eternal, before which all else will dwindle into insignificance. When our Rachels and Leash, the babble of the children, the lowing of the herds are away; when the only sound is the low murmur of the brook, or the sigh of the night wind; when the sense of loneliness steals over the spirit, and the starry hosts expand overhead, it is then that we may come into personal contact with One, whose delights from of old were with the sons of men. He is the Word of God, but He is also the Saviour, the Lover and Friend of man.

In our first meeting, He will wrestle with us to break down our stubbornness; He will touch the sinew of our strength till we can hold out no more; He will withdraw from us till we insist that we cannot let Him go; He will awaken a mysterious longing and urgency within us, which He alone can satisfy. And as the memorable interview ends, He will have taught us that we prevail best when we are at our weakest, and will have whispered in our ear, in response to our entreaty, His own sublime Name, Shiloh, the Giver of Eternal Peace!

Why should you not meet that Angel, and let Him make you a prince?

PRAYER

Be not weary of me, Good Lord. I am all weakness, but Thou art Almighty, and canst put forth Thy strength perfectly in my weakness. Make me truly to hate all which Thou hatest, fervently to love all which Thou lovest--through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

April 23

THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"They assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There was a man of Macedonia, standing beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."-- Act 16:7-10.

THE SPIRIT of Jesus often shuts doors in the long corridors of life. We pass along, trying one after another, but find that they are all locked, in order that we may enter the one that He has opened for us (Rev 3:7-8). Sometimes in following the Spirit's guidance we seem to come to a blank wall. The little missionary band found themselves facing the sea. They had not contemplated crossing to Europe, but there seemed no other course open. They walked to and fro on the sea-wall or landing-stage, looking over the restless waves, and noticing the strange costumes of sailors and travellers who had gathered in the thriving sea-port, which bore the name famous to all the world for the Siege of Troy.

It was with such thoughts in his heart that St. Paul slept that night in his humble lodging, and in his dreams, a man from Macedonia, like one he had seen on the quay, stood and beckoned to him (Act 16:10, R.V.).

Where it is possible for the judgment to arrive at a right conclusion, on the suggestions that may be supplied by the Divine Spirit, we are left to think out the problems of our career. Within your reach are the materials needed for formulating a correct judgment; use them, balance the pros and cons, and looking up to God to prevent you from making a mistake, act. When once you have come to a decision, in faith and prayer, go forward, not doubting or looking back.

A small door may lead to a vast opportunity. St. Paul might have been discouraged by his reception in Europe. He looked for the man whom he had seen in the vision, but the only trace they could find of the worship of God was the gathering together of a few women. How startled they must have been by the sudden appearance of these missionaries, but a mighty work for God began in the life of at least one of them "whose heart the Lord opened." Let us not despise the smallest opening, for we can never tell into what a wide place it may conduct us.

PRAYER

O God, since we know not what a day may bring forth, but only that the hour for serving Thee is always present, may we wake to the instant claims of Thy holy Will; not waiting for to-morrow, but yielding today. Consecrate with Thy presence the way our feet may go; and the humblest work will shine, and the roughest places be made plain. AMEN.

April 24

SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

"And the city lieth foursquare, the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal."-- Rev 21:16.

THE CUBE was evidently a favourite unit of Hebrew measurement. The Holy of Holies was a cube, and so was the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, which St. John saw in a vision, "coming down from God out of heaven." We are reminded of the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge (Eph 3:18). Ought not this to be the measurement of every well-ordered life?

There must be Length i.e. the issuing forth of the soul as it leaves the things that are behind and reaches forth to those that are before. We must never be satisfied with that whereunto we have already attained, or think that we are perfect.

But with length there must be Breadth. Our life must reach out on the right and left to help others. The Cross stands for unselfishness, and those who claim to have been crucified with Christ must live, not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and through Him for all that He cares and loves. The world is full of lonely, weary, and desolate lives, to whom Christ would send us if we were ready for His use.

There must also be Depth. We must dwell deep! The Apostle says rooted--i.e, we must strike our roots into the subsoil; grounded--we must have our foundations in the very depths of a life hidden with Christ. From His life we must arise as fountains spring from the depths of the hills. Tree roots need to spread as far underground as the branches above.

There must be Height. Our ideals should always be rising. We must fix our affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Let us by thought and prayer thither ascend and dwell where Christ sits on the right hand of God (Col 3:1-4).

PRAYER

O Eternal God, sanctify my body and soul, my thoughts and my intentions, my words and actions; let my body be a servant of my spirit, and both body and spirit servants of Jesus; that doing all things for Thy glory here, I may be partaker of Thy glory hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

April 25

CULTIVATING CHEERFULNESS

"A merry heart is a good medicine (causeth good healing); but a broken spirit drieth up the bones."-- Pro 17:22.

"Rejoice alway; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks."-- 1Th 5:16-17 (R.V.).

A HAPPY AND cheerful heart is a matter of cultivation. We cannot afford to abandon ourselves entirely to our moods. There are times when we feel depressed and sad, for no special reason, except that a mood is on us! It is at such times that we need to anoint our heads, and wash our faces, that we may not be consumed by our fretfulness, or impose our depression upon others, for nothing is worse than to be a wet blanket! (Mat 6:16-18.)

On the other hand, there is nothing more objectionable than to be always in the presence of a comic person who thinks that every occasion must serve for frolic. After a time one gets as tired of funny stories and perpetual punning as of gloom, but while avoiding this extreme, we must not fall into the other of wearing a lugubrious expression and giving way to a moodiness of spirit, which cannot be accounted for.

We may alter our dispositions and moods by a resolute action of the will. We can refuse to look miserable, to speak mournfully, to be pessimistic, to pass on depression. In a spirit of unselfishness we can put on a cheerful courage, array ourselves in the garments of joy, anoint ourselves with the spirit of praise and thankfulness, and go forth into the world to shed sunbeams rather than shadows on the path of life. Do not nurse your sorrow of heart, lest your spirit and the spirits of others be broken.

We can promote a cheerful heart by dwelling on the bright things of our lot; by counting up the mercies which are left, rather than dwelling on what we have lost. When the heart is full of the light and love of God, can it be other than cheerful? How can this be obtained except by a living union with Jesus Christ. In Him there is an infinitude of supply of peace and joy, sunshine and light. Let us open our hearts to him, and put on these things as we array ourselves each morning in our garments (Isa 61:3-10).

PRAYER

Through all the changing scenes of life,

In trouble and in joy,

The praises of my God shall still

My heart and tongue employ. AMEN.

April 26

THE DAYS OF NOAH

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."-- Heb 11:7.

WE DO well to give heed to the description given of the "days of Noah, for our Lord said, that as it was in those days, so shall it be in the days that close the present age (Mat 24:37-39). The world of that time had made great progress in the arts and civilization of life. But, as it has happened repeatedly all through human history, great luxury produced infamous immorality, cruelty, and widespread indifference to the claims of God. Things took place in those olden times which have their counterpart in the great cities of our time. In its feverish atmosphere sin of every kind abounded, and in mercy to the race, there was no alternative than to bring that wicked generation to an end. "They ate, they drank; they married, and were given in marriage, and knew not, till the flood came and carried them all away."

Amidst all this, Noah lived an unblemished and righteous life. He walked in daily converse with God (Gen 6:8-9). His Almighty Friend was able to reveal to him His intentions. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

Keep near to God, that you may hear the accents of His still small voice. Our happiest experience is when we walk with Him in unbroken fellowship, and He takes us into covenant with Himself. Through any one individual, whose heart is perfect toward Him, God will save others. We too shall cross the Flood of Death and enter the new life of Resurrection, but we must be quick to detect His voice, and our hands deft to fulfil the revelations of our Divine Teacher and Friend.

PRAYER

Lead me, O Lord, in a straight way unto Thyself, and keep me in Thy grace unto the end. AMEN.

April 27

LOVE OF HOSPITALITY

"Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Heb 13:1-2.

OUR TEXT refers to that memorable scene when Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent, probably inclined to slumber in the heat of noon. Suddenly he saw three men apparently waiting for alms and help. Plenty of travellers had come to his door before, seeking help and hospitality which he had given freely. But though the heat was great, though he may have been disappointed again and again in the recipients of his bounty, he felt it better to be disappointed a hundred times than to miss the chance of showing hospitality and welcome. Therefore he sprang to his feet, called to Sarah for help, and the two of them quickly ministered to the three unknown men. How thankful he must have been that he had not refused to entertain them, for two of them were angels, and the third was the Son of God!

In our crowded lives, where room is scarce, it is less easy for us to care for the people who may be cast as strangers amongst us, but there is a hospitality of the mind that we can all exercise, when we open our hearts to some story of sorrow. None of us are quite aware, except we have suffered in that way, how much it helps some people to be able to pour out their burdens and sorrows. It is much to have a hospitable mind, to have a sympathetic ear, and to make room in our heart for the story of human pain, sorrow, and loneliness, which some, who are comparative strangers, may want to confide in us. We may rebuke ourselves that our hearts do not more nearly represent the hostel or inn into which sad or weary souls may creep for shelter. Although you cannot say much, there may always be the open door of your heart where the lonely and desolate may enter and find in you a fire of sympathy, kindness, and good-will.

April 28

A CHANGED OCCUPATION

"He went forth, and beheld a publican, named Levi, sitting at the place of toll, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he forsook all, and rose up and followed Him."-- Luk 5:27-28.

THE TRADE between the Orient and the vast populations on the Mediterranean, passed through the Lake of Galilee, making a highly profitable trade for Capernaum, and the smaller cities and towns. The custom-house in which this man, Levi, held a lucrative position was probably quite near the lake, which was much frequented by our Lord, and thus he may have had opportunities of listening to His teaching. On the other hand, it is possible that the Saviour's summons to him was absolutely unexpected, though it

elicited an instant response, for he rose up, left all, and followed Jesus. No doubt he returned later to make up his books, and hand in the balance that may have been in his charge.

Our Lord called him Matthew--which means "a gift." He was a great addition to the band of disciples, and the gift of his Gospel to the Church has made the whole world his debtor. Matthew conceals, with beautiful modesty, the fact that he prepared a great feast for the Master, which was perhaps partly to signalize his adherence to his new calling, and partly as an opportunity to introduce his new-found Friend to the publicans and sinners--i.e, the excommunicated persons of the city (Luk 5:29-30). That feast may have been the first step to the foundation of the Christian Church. Our Lord gladly availed himself of the opportunity to declare His purpose to seek and save the lost, to create a new society on that principle, and to make possible the enclosure of these lost sheep with the flock.

If Zacchaeus happened to be in the party that day, it is likely that for him it was the inauguration of a new life, and as he sat there under the fascination of Christ, he resolved to make reparation to any whom he had cheated and over-charged!

Let us see to it that there is more joy in our religious life. Let us seek the people who think themselves for ever excommunicated from the Church. It may be that we shall find Matthew, or Augustine, or John Bunyan among them!

PRAYER

O God, wherever Thou leadest we would go, for Thy ways are perfect wisdom and love. Blend our wills with Thine, and then we need fear no evil nor death itself, for all things must work together for our good. AMEN.

Thus cold hands may find warmth, and souls that are frozen for want of love and sympathy may be sheltered and refreshed, and we shall find that in showing love to a stranger we have been ministering to our dear Lord Himself, who said: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me."

PRAYER

Help me, Blessed Lord, to bear the infirmities of the weak, to succour those that are over-borne in the fight of life, and to bear the burdens of others. AMEN.

April 29

THE WITNESS OF CONSCIENCE

"They shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them."-- Rom 2:15 (R.V.).

CONSCIENCE HOLDS the mirror to the inner life, and shows us just what we are in the light of God's infinite purity and righteousness. The word is derived from the Latin con, with; scio, I know. Conscience is what a man knows with or against himself.

Sometimes we can meet ourselves with a smile; this is what we term a good conscience; at other times we do not like to meet ourselves, but feel ashamed--we cannot deceive ourselves, or hoodwink conscience. We know, and we know that we know, that this is right and that wrong; this is good, and that evil. Conscience is an ill bed-fellow, says the old proverb, and when we are troubled with evil dreams, turning, tossing, starting up in fear, rest becomes impossible. It is very necessary to keep on good terms with your conscience, and we do not wonder that the Apostle made it his aim to preserve a conscience void of offence towards God and man (Act 24:16).

All men have a conscience, else God could not judge them; there would be no standard by which to try or convict, but in most cases conscience is uninstructed. It judges rightly, so far as it knows, but its knowledge is scant, and its power of making accurate distinctions is limited. The Christian conscience is illumined and instructed by the light that falls on it from the face of Christ. See to it that your conscience is constantly corrected by Christ's standard. Never tamper with conscience, nor gag her protestations, nor drown her voice. Never say it does not matter for once in a way. Never dare to let her voice wear itself out. To behave thus is to tamper with the most delicate moral machinery in the universe. Let us see that our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience in the blood of Jesus, so that we may draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Heb 10:19-23).

PRAYER

O Lord, give me Thy Holy Spirit in greater measure, that His saving presence may cleanse my conscience, and His holy inspiration enlighten my heart. AMEN.

April 30

CO-OPERATION IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE

"They beckoned unto their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats."-- Luk 5:7 (R.V.).

WE ALL want to fill our nets and boats with the fish that we have caught for Christ. How shall we do it? There are certain conditions for successful Christian service which must be observed. Our nets must be clean. They were "washing their nets." It was a good thing that this necessary work had been performed; otherwise they would have been unable to sail at a moment's notice, and to let down their nets at the Master's command (Luk 5:4). "If a man shall cleanse himself., he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use." Let us see to it that we are always ready to respond at Christ's call.

We must be prepared to obey Christ in little things. Our Lord first asked Peter to put out his boat a little from the land. He knew what He was going to do afterwards in making great demands on Peter's obedience and faith; but first, He made this slight request. With alacrity the Master's wishes were complied with, and the floating pulpit, rising and falling with the ripple of the water, was at the Lord's service as He sat down and taught the people. Remember that whenever you lend your empty boat to Jesus, He will pay for it by giving it back to you filled with fish.

Christ's will must be obeyed even against our own judgment. Peter had spent the whole of his life apprenticed to the lake, and knew everything of the art of fishing. When our Lord bade him: "launch out into the deep, and let down your nets," it was against all his knowledge and practical experience to let down his nets in the daytime, especially as he had toiled all night in vain! Happily for him, he said: "At Thy word I will let down the nets!"

We must be willing to share with others. He might have kept the haul for himself, but he longed that the others should share in the Master's bounty, "and they came and filled both the boats."

PRAYER

O God, Thou hast committed our work to us, and we would commit our cares to Thee. May we feel that we are not our own, and that Thou wilt heed our wants while we are intent upon Thy will. AMEN.