

J H Jowett-Daily Meditation 5

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MY DAILY MEDITATION for the Circling Year

by John Henry Jowett

MAY

MAY 1

THE CONDITIONS OF SERENITY

Psalms 124:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

IF I would be like the Psalmist, I must clearly recognize my perils. He sees the "waters," the "proud waters." He beholds the "enemy," and his "wrath," and his "teeth." He sees "the fowler" with his snare! I must not shut my eyes, and "make my judgment blind." One of the gifts of grace is the spirit of discernment, the eyes which not only detect hidden treasure, but hidden foes. The devil is an expert in mimicry; he can make himself look like an angel of light. And so must I be able to discover his snares, even when they appear as the most seductive food.

And if I would be like the Psalmist, I must clearly recognize my great Ally. "If it has not been the Lord, who was on our side!" To see the Ally on the perilous field, and to see Him on my side, gives birth to holy confidence and song. "The Lord is on my side, whom shall I fear?" I must make sure of the Ally, and "victory is secure."

And if I would be like the Psalmist, I must not omit the doxology of praise. When the prayer is answered, I am apt to forget the praise. My thanksgivings are not so ready as my requests. And so the apparently conquered enemy steals in again at the door of an ungrateful heart.

May 2

THE HAPPY WARRIOR

Ephesians 6:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

HERE is a portrait of the happy warrior! Let me first look at the warrior, and then at the implements with which he fights.

"You cannot fight the French merely with red uniforms; there must be men inside them!" So said Thomas Carlyle. Well, look at this man. "Strengthened in the Lord, and in the power of His might." There is a secret communion with the Almighty, and he draws his resources from the Infinite. The water in my home comes from the Welsh hills; every drop was gathered on those grand and expansive uplands. And this man's soldierly strength is drawn from the hills of God; every ounce of his fighting blood comes from the veins of the Lord.

And mark the nature of his armoury. His weapons are dispositions. He fights with "truth," and "righteousness," and "peace," and "faith," and "prayer"! There are no implements like these. A sword will fail where a courtesy will prevail. We can kill our enemies by kindness. And as for the devil himself there is nothing like a grace-filled disposition for putting him to flight! A prayerful disposition can drive him off any field, at any hour of the day or night. "Put on the whole armour of God."

May 3

OTHER GODS!

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

Exodus 20:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

IF we kept that commandment all the other commandments would be obeyed. If we secure this queen-bee we are given the swarm. To put nothing "before" God! What is left in the circle of obedience? God first, always and everywhere. Nothing allowed to usurp His throne for an hour! I was once allowed to sit on an earthly throne for a few seconds, but even that is not to be allowed with the throne of God. Nothing is to share His sovereignty, even for a moment. His dominion is to be unconditional and unbroken. "Thou shalt have no other gods beside Me."

But we have many gods we set upon His throne. We put money there, and fame, and pleasure, and ease. Yes, we sometimes usurp God's throne, and we ourselves dare to sit there for days, and weeks, and years, at a time. Self is the idol, and we enthrone it, and we fall down and worship it. But no peace comes from such sovereignty, and no deep and vital joy. For the real King is not dead, and He is out and about, and our poor little monarchy is as the reign of the midge on a summer's night. Our real kingship is in the acknowledgment of the King of kings. When we worship Him, and Him only, He will ask us to sit on His throne.

MAY 4

A HEALTHY PALATE

"How sweet are Thy words unto my taste."

Psalms 119:97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104.

SOME people like one thing, and some another. Some people appreciate the bitter olive; others feel it to be nauseous. Some delight in the sweetest grapes; others feel the sweetness to be sickly. It is all a matter of palate. Some people love the Word of the Lord; to others the reading of it is a dreary task. To some the Bible is like a vineyard; to others it is like a dry and tasteless meal. One takes the word of the Master, and it is "as honey to the mouth"; to another the same word is as unwelcome as a bitter drug. It is all a matter of palate.

But what is a man to do who has got a perverted palate, and who calls sweet things bitter and bitter things sweet? He must get a new mouth! And where is he to get it? Not by any ministry of his own creation; his own endeavours will be impotent. A healthy moral palate depends upon the purity of the heart. Our spiritual discernments are all determined by the state of the soul. If the heart be pure, the mouth will be clean, and we shall love God's law. If the soul-appetite be healthy, God's words will be sweet unto our taste. And so does the good Lord give us new palates by giving us new hearts. "Create within us clean hearts, O God, and renew right spirits within us."

MAY 5

HEALTHY LISTENING

"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only."

James 1:21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

WHEN we hear the word, but do not do it, there has been a defect in our hearing. We may listen to the word for mere entertainment. Or we may attach a virtue to the mere act of listening to the word. We may assume that some magical efficacy belongs to the mere reading of the word. And all this is perverse and delusive. No listening is healthy which is not mentally referred to obedience. We are to listen with a view to obedience, with our eyes upon the very road where the obedient feet will travel. That is to say, we are to listen with purpose, as though we were Ambassadors receiving instructions from the King concerning some momentous mission. Yes, we must listen with an eye on the road.

"Doing" makes a new thing of "hearing." The statute obeyed becomes a song. The commandment is found to be a beatitude. The decree discloses riches of grace. The hidden things of God are not discovered until we are treading the path of obedience. "And it came to pass that as he went he received his sight." In the way of obedience the blind man found a new world. God has wonderful treasures for the dutiful. The faithful discover the "hidden manna."

MAY 6

THE PERFECTING OF LOVE

"Herein is our love made perfect."

1 John 4:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

HOW? By dwelling in God and God in us. Love is not a manufacture; it is a fruit. It is not born of certain works; it springs out of

certain relations. It does not come from doing something; it comes from living with Somebody. "Abide in Me." That is how love is born, for "love is of God, and God is love."

How many people are striving who are not abiding. They live in a manufactory, they do not live in a home. They are trying to make something instead of to know Somebody. "This is life, to know Thee." When I am related to the Lord Jesus, when I dwell with Him, love is as surely born as beauty and fragrance are born when my garden and the spring-time dwell together. If we would only wisely cultivate the fellowship of Jesus, everything else would follow in its train—all that gracious succession of beautiful things which are called "the fruits of the Spirit."

And "herein is our love made perfect." It is always growing richer, because it is always drawing riches from the inexhaustible love of God. How could it be otherwise? Endless resource must mean endless growth. "Our life is hid with Christ in God," and hence our love will "grow in all wisdom and discernment."

MAY 7

IN THE WAYS OF OBEDIENCE

Psalm 19:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

LET me listen to the exquisite chimes of this wonderful psalm as they ring out the blessedness of the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. What shall he find in the ways of obedience?

He shall find restoration. "Restoring the soul." He shall find new stores of food along the way. In every emergency he shall find fresh provision; every new need shall discover new supplies. When one store is spent, another shall take its place. "Thou re-storest my soul." In the ways of righteousness the good Lord has appointed ample stores for the provision of all His faithful pilgrims.

He shall find joy. "Rejoicing the heart." In the way of obedience there shall be springs of delight as well as stores of provision. "With joy shall ye draw waters out of the wells of salvation." Fountains of delicious satisfaction rise in the realm of duty, the satisfaction of being right with God, and in union with the eternal will. There is no day without its spring, and "the joy of the Lord is our strength."

He shall find vision. "Enlightening the eyes." The eyes of the obedient are anointed with the eye-salve of grace, and wondrous panoramas break upon the sight. Visions of grace! Visions of love! Visions of glory!

MAY 8

HOW NOT TO FORGET

Deuteronomy 11:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

IF we wish to retain "the word of the Lord" everything depends upon where we keep it. If we just keep it in the mind, a leaky memory may waste the treasure. A Chinese convert declared that he found the best way to remember the word was to do it! The engraved word became character, written upon the fleshy tables of the heart. He incarnated the word, and it became a vital part of his own personality. He lived it and it lived in him. The word became flesh. This is the only really vital "way of remembrance," to convert the word into the primary stuff of the life.

There is a secondary way by which we may help our apprehension of God's word. "Ye shall teach them." Our hold upon a truth is increased while we impart it to others. The gospel becomes more vivid as we proclaim it to our fellow-men. We see it while we explain it. It grips us the more firmly as we use it to grip our children. This is a great law in life. In these matters it is literally true that memory best retains what she gives away. A truth that is never shared is never really possessed. The word that we teach becomes rooted in our own mind.

MAY 9

LOVING THE LORD

Luke 10:21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

THE secret of life is to love the Lord our God, and our neighbours as ourselves. But how are we to love the Lord? We cannot manufacture love. We cannot love to order. We cannot by an act of will command its appearing. No, not in these ways is love created. Love is not a work, it is a fruit. It grows in suitable soils, and it is our part to prepare the soils. When the conditions are congenial, love appears, just as the crocus and the snowdrop appear in the congenial air of the spring.

What, then, can we do? We can seek the Lord's society. We can think about Him. We can read about Him. We can fill our

imaginations with the grace of His life and service. We can be much with Him, talking to Him in prayer, singing to Him in praise, telling Him our yearnings and confessing to Him our defeats. And love will be quietly born. For this is how love is born between heart and heart. Two people are “much together,” and love is born! And when we are much with the Lord, we are with One who already loves us with an everlasting love. We are with One who yearns for our love and who seeks in every way to win it. “We love Him because He first loved us.” And when we truly love God, every other kind of holy love will follow. Given the fountain, the rivers are sure.

MAY 10

GOD’S USE OF MEN

“I have surely seen the affliction of My people ... come now, therefore, I will send thee.”

Exodus 3:1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

DOES that seem a weak ending to a powerful beginning? The Lord God looks upon terrible affliction and He sends a weak man to deal with it. Could He not have sent fire from heaven? Could He not have rent the heavens and sent His ministers of calamity and disasters? Why choose a man when the arch-angel Gabriel stands ready at obedience?

This is the way of the Lord. He uses human means to divine ends. He works through man to the emancipation of men. He pours His strength into a worm, and it becomes “an instrument with teeth.” He stiffens a frail reed and it becomes as an iron pillar.

And this mighty God will use thee and me. On every side there are Egypts where affliction abounds, there are homes where ignorance breeds, there are workshops where tyranny reigns, there are lands where oppression is rampant. “Come now, therefore, I will send thee.” Thus saith the Lord, and He who gives the command will also give the equipment.

MAY 11

BUT——!

“And Moses answered and said, But——”

Exodus 4:1, 2, 3,4 ,5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

WE know that “but.” God has heard it from our lips a thousand times. It is the response of unbelief to the divine call. It is the reply of fear to the divine command. It is the suggestion that the resources are inadequate. It is a hint that God may not have looked all round. He has overlooked something which our own eyes have seen. The human “buts” in the Scriptural stories make an appalling record.

“Lord, I will follow Thee, but——” There is something else to be attended to before discipleship can begin. Obedience is not primary: it must wait for something else. And so our obedience is not a straight line: it is crooked and circuitous; it takes the way of by-path meadow instead of the highway of the Lord. We do not wait upon the Lord’s pleasure; we make Him wait upon ours.

There need be no “buts” in our relationship to the King’s will. Everything has been foreseen. Nothing will take the Lord by surprise. The entire field has been surveyed, and the preparations are complete. When the Lord says to thee or me, “I will send thee,” every provision has been made for the appointed task. “I will not fail thee.”

MAY 12

MOUTH AND MATTER

“Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth.”

Exodus 4:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

AND what a promise that is for anyone who is commissioned to proclaim the King’s decrees. Here can teachers and preachers find their strength. God will be with their mouths. He will control their speech, and order their words like troops. He does not promise to make us eloquent, but to endow our words with the “demonstration of power.”

“And I will teach thee what thou shall say.” The Lord will not only be with our mouths, but with our minds. He will guide our thoughts as well as our words. He will be as sentinel at the lips. He will be our guide in our processes of meditation and judgment, and He will bring us to enlightened ends. All of which is just this: He will give us mouth and matter.

This does not put a premium upon idleness. The Lord guides when men are honestly groping. He gives us fire when we have built the altar. He works His miracle when we have provided the five loaves. He sends His light through diligent thinking. The divine

power is given through the consecrated strength.

MAY 13

COMMONPLACE FIDELITIES

Exodus 2:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

GOD prepares us for the greater crusades by more commonplace fidelities. Through the practice of common kindnesses God leads us to chivalrous tasks. Little courtesies feed nobler reverences. No man can despise smaller duties and do the larger duties well. Our strength is sapped by small disobediences. Our discourtesies to one another impair our worship of God. The neglect of the "pointing" of a house may lead to dampness and fatal disease.

And thus the only way to live is by filling every moment with fidelity. We are ready for anything when we have been faithful in everything. "Because thou hast been faithful in that which is least!" That is the order in moral and spiritual progress, and that is the road by which we climb to the seats of the mighty. When every stone in life is "well and truly laid" we are sure of a solid, holy temple in which the Lord will delight to dwell. The quality of our greatness depends upon what we do with "that which is least."

MAY 14

CALAMITY AS REVEALER

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord."

Isaiah 6:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

WE lost a hero, and he found the Lord. He feared because a great pillar had fallen: and he found the Pillar of the universe. He thought everything would topple into disaster, and lo! he felt the strength of the everlasting arms. When Uzziah lived Isaiah had forgotten his Lord. He so depended on the earthly that he had overlooked the heavenly. Uzziah concealed his Lord as a thick veil can hide a face. And when Uzziah died, when the earthly king passed away, the eternal King was revealed; as when by the passing of an earth-born cloud the moon reigns radiant in the open sky.

And thus it is that apparent calamity is often the minister of revelation. The great storm clears the air, and luminous vistas come into view. The howling wind of adversity drives away the earth-born clouds and we see the face of God. Our sorrows prove the occasion of our visions. We see new panoramas through our tears. Bereavement gives us spiritual surprises, and death becomes the servant of life. And so it happens that days which began in gloom end in revelation, and we keep their recurring anniversary with deepening praise.

MAY 15

GOD IS WIDE-AWAKE

"Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree."

Jeremiah 1:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.

AND through the almond tree the Lord gave the trembling young prophet the strength of assurance. The almond tree is the first to awake from its wintry sleep. When all other trees are held in frozen slumber the almond blossoms are looking out on the barren world. And God is like that, awake and vigilant. Nobody anticipates Him. Wherever Jeremiah was sent on his prophetic mission the Lord would be there before him. Before the prophet's enemies could get to work the Lord was on the field. In the wintriest circumstances of a prophet's life God is wide awake: "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

And still the almond tree has its heartening significance for thee and me. Our God is wide-awake. He looks out upon our wintry circumstances, and nothing is hid from His sight. There is no unrecognized and uncounted factor which may steal in furtively and take Him by surprise. Everything is open. He is wide-awake on the far-off field where the isolated missionary is ploughing his lonely furrow. He is wide-awake on the field of common labour where some young disciple finds it hard to keep clean hands while he earns his daily bread.

MAY 16

THE DETAILS OF PROVIDENCE

"The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Matthew 10:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

PROVIDENCE goes into details. Sometimes, in our human intercourse, we cannot see the trees for the wood. We cannot see the individual sheep for the flock. We cannot see the personal soul for the masses. We are blinded by the bigness of things; we cannot

see the individual blades of grass because of the field.

Now God's vision is not general, it is particular. There are no "masses" to the Infinite. "He calleth His own sheep by name." The single one is seen as though he alone possessed the earth. When God looks at the wood He sees every tree. When He looks at the race He sees every man.

And, therefore, I need not fear that "my way is overlooked by my God." He knows every turning. He knows just where the strain begins at the hill. He knows the perils of every descent. He knows every happening along the road. He knows every letter that came to me by this morning's post. He knows every visitor who knocks at the door of my life, whether the visitor come at the high noon or at the midnight. "There is nothing hid." "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

MAY 17

MY BODILY INFIRMITIES

John 9:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

AN infirmity becomes doubly burdensome when we give it a false interpretation. The weight of a thing is determined by our conception of it. If I look upon my ailment as the stroke of an offended God, I wear it like the chains of a slave. If I look upon it as the fire of the gracious Refiner, I can calmly await the beneficent issue. It is my Lord, engaged in chastening His jewels!

And so our Master first of all relieves the blind man of the false interpretation of his infirmity. "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents." That lifts the sorrow out of the winter into the spring. It sets it in the warm, sweet light of grace. It becomes transfigured. It wears a new face, placed there in "the light of His countenance."

And then our Lord relieves the blind man of the infirmity itself. The ministry of blindness was accomplished, and sight was given. No man is kept in the darkness a moment longer than infinite love deems good. Our Lord does not overlook the prison-house, and leave us there forgotten. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." So cheer thee, my soul! The Lord is on thy side! The Miracle-worker knows His time and "the dreariest path, the darkest way, shall issue out in heavenly day."

MAY 18

BLINDED JUDGMENTS

John 9:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

HERE is a ceremonialism which is blind to the humane. Its scrupulous ritualisms have dried up its philanthropy. It thinks more of etiquette than equity. It esteems genuflections more than generosity. It values the husk more than the kernel. It is Sabbatarian but not humanitarian. My God, deliver me from all pious conventionalities which make me indifferent to the ailments and cries of my fellow-men!

And here is a dense prejudice which is blind to the evident. "They did not believe that he had been blind." A prejudice can deflect the judgment, as subtle magnetic currents can deflect the needle. The film of an ecclesiastical prejudice can be so opaque as to make us "blind to facts." We do not "see things as they are." Our perverted eyes give us a crooked world.

And here is a bitter violence which is blind to the glory of the Lord. "We know that this man is a sinner!" And so it comes to that. Our judgments can become so warped that when we look upon Him, "who is the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely," "there is no beauty that we should desire Him!" And therefore let this be my daily prayer, "Lord, that I might receive my sight!"

MAY 19

THE ROCK OF EXPERIENCE

John 9:26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41.

THE Lord gains a witness, and a stalwart witness too! First, he stood upon his own inalienable experience. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Second, he drew his own firm inferences from the beneficence of the work. And, in the third place, he reached his grand conclusion. "If this man were not of God, He could do nothing." A grand testimony, and given by one who "dared to stand alone!"

And the witness gained a Friend. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when He had found him..." Our Lord is always seeking the outcasts. He never abandons the abandoned. When the faithful witness is driven into the wilderness he finds "a table spread" before him "in the presence of his enemies." The man who had recovered his sight was cast out, but on the threshold he

met his Lord!

And further sight was given. By the first sight he could see his parents, by the second sight he saw the Son of God. The film was first removed from his eyes, and then from his soul, and he saw “the glory of the Lord.” “And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.”

MAY 20

THE LONE CRY IN THE BIG CROWD

Mark 10:46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52.

OUR Lord hears the cry of need even when it rises from the midst of the tumultuous crowd. A mother can hear the faint cry of her child in the chamber above, even when the room resounds with the talk and laughter of her guests. And our Lord heard the wail of poor Bartimaeus! That lone, sorrowful cry pierced the clamour, “and Jesus stood still.” My soul, cry to Him! “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.”

And Bartimaeus knew what he wanted. He merged all his petitions in one. “Lord, that I might receive my sight!” And let me, too, come to my Saviour with some great, dominant, all-commanding request. I trifle with my Master. I ask Him for toys, for petty things, while all the time He is waiting to give me “unsearchable wealth,” “sight, riches, healing of the mind.” “The Lord is great”; and shall I add, “and greatly to be prayed!”

And how delicately gracious it is that our Lord should attribute the miracle to Bartimæus himself. “Thy faith hath made thee whole!” As though the Lord had had no share in the ministry! He makes so much of our faith, and our endeavour, and our obedience. “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed!” That’s all He wants, and miracles are accomplished.

MAY 21

HUMAN FRAILTIES

Isaiah 42:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

WHAT a winsome revelation of the delicate gentleness of the Lord! “The bruised reed”—is it the impaired musical reed, that cannot now emit a musical sound, and can only be thrown away? He will not snap it and cast it to the void. The discordant life can be made tuneful again: He will put “a new song in my mouth.”

“And the smoking flax”—the life that has lost its fire, and therefore its light, its enthusiasm, and therefore its ideals; the life that is smouldering into the cold ashes of moral and spiritual death! He will not stamp it out with His foot. The smouldering fire can be rekindled, a spent enthusiasm can be revived. “He shall baptize you ... with fire!”

And so He comes to minister to the infirm. He comes to restore injured faculty; “to open blind eyes.” He comes to give vision to restored sight: “to be a light of the Gentiles.” And He comes to endow the restored life with a rich and gracious freedom: “to bring out the prisoners from the prison.” Sight, and light, and freedom! And my Lord is at the gate, and these gifts are in His hand.

MAY 22

THE LIGHT AS DARKNESS

Matthew 13:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

THE condition of the heart determines the quality of my discernment. If “the heart is waxed gross,” the ears will be “dull of hearing,” and the eyes will be “closed.” My spiritual senses gain their acuteness or obtuseness from my affections. If my love is muddy my sight will be dim. If my love be “clear as crystal” the spiritual realm will be like a gloriously transparent air.

And the awful nemesis of sin-created blindness is this, that it interprets itself as sight. “The light that is in thee is darkness.” We think we see, and all the time we are the children of the night. We think it is “the dawn of God’s sweet morning,” and behold! it is the perverse flare of the evil one. He has given us a will-o’-the-wisp, and we boastfully proclaim it to be “the morning star.”

But there is hope for any man, however blind he be, who will humbly lay himself at Jesus’ feet. Let this be my prayer, O Lord, “Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.” Deliver me from self-deception, save me from confusing the fixed light of heaven with the wandering beacon-lights of hell. And again and again will I pray, “Lord, that I might receive my sight!”

MAY 23

WIND AND FIRE

Acts 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

THE Holy Spirit will minister to me as a wind. He will create an atmosphere in my life which will quicken all sweet and beautiful growth. And this shall be my native air. Gracious seeds, which have never awaked, shall now unfold themselves, and "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." It was a saying of Huxley, that if our little island were to be invaded by tropical airs, tropical seeds which are now lying dormant in English gardens and fields would troop out of their graves in bewildering wealth and beauty! "Breathe on me, breath of God!"

And the Holy Spirit will minister to me as a fire. And fire is our supreme minister of cleansing. Fire can purify when water is impotent. The great fire burnt out the great plague. There are evil germs which cannot be dealt with except by the searching ministry of the flame. "He shall baptize you ... with fire." He will create a holy enthusiasm in my soul, an intense and sacred love, which will burn up all evil intruders, but in which all beautiful things shall walk unhurt.

"Kindle a flame of sacred love
On these cold hearts of ours."

MAY 24

CALVARY AND PENTECOST

Acts 2:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36.

THE Apostle Peter traces the stream of Pentecostal blessing to a tomb. This "river of water of life" has its "rise" in a death of transcendent sacrifice. And I must never forget these dark beginnings of my eternal hope. It is well that I should frequently visit the sources of my blessedness, and kneel on "the green hill far away."

It will save me from having a cheap religion. I shall never handle the gifts of grace as though they had cost nothing. There will always be the marks of blood upon them, the crimson stain of incomparable sacrifice.

And it will save me from all flippancy in my religious life. When I visit the cross and the tomb, life is transformed from a picnic into a crusade. For that is ever my peril, to picnic on the banks of the river and to spend my days in emotional loitering.

After all, my Pentecost is purposed to prepare me for my own Gethsemane and Calvary! Life is given me in order that I may spend it again in ready and fruitful sacrifice.

MAY 25

VISIONS AND DREAMS

Joel 2:21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

AND this old-world promise is good for me to-day. It is like some weather-stained well, whose waters have continued flowing throughout the generations, right down to my own time. Let me drink!

Holy inspiration will give me insight into the mind of my God. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." The breath of God creates an atmosphere in which spiritual realities are clearly seen. It is like the Sabbath air in some busy city, when the fumes and smoke of commerce have been blown away. "Thou shalt behold the land that is very far off."

And so in my younger days holy inspiration will give me visions. "Your young men shall see visions." I shall be an idealist, and I shall see things as they exist in God's idea, even though at present they be maimed and imperfect. I shall see them "according to the pattern on the Mount."

And in my later days holy inspiration will give me dreams. "Your old men shall dream dreams." And what shall they dream about? Not like the Chinese, of a golden age in a distant past, but of a golden age to be. Their dreams shall have a "forward-looking eye." They shall see "the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God."

MAY 26

THE UNITING OF SUNDERED PEOPLES

"On the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Acts 10:34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48.

AND this is ever the issue of a true outpouring of the Spirit: sundered peoples become one. At “low tide” there are multitudes of separated pools along the shore: at “high tide” they flow together, and the little distinctions are lost in a splendid union.

It is so racially. “Jew and Gentile!” Peter and Cornelius lose their prejudices in the emancipating ministry of the Spirit. And so shall it be with English and Irish, with French and German, with Asiatic and European: they shall be “all one” in Christ.

It is so socially. “Bond and free!” The master and the servant shall discover a glorious intimacy and union. And so shall rich and poor, the learned and the illiterate, the many-talented and the obscure. The pools shall flow together.

It is so ecclesiastically. Our sectarianisms are always most frowning and obtrusive when spiritually we are at “low tide.” When the tide rises, it is amazing how the ramparts are submerged. It is not round-table conferences that we need, but seasons of communion when together we shall await the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

MAY 27

RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST

Acts 23, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47.

THE sacred process by which the Holy Spirit is received is the same throughout all the years.

First there is repentance. And repentance is not a flow of emotion, but a certain direction of mind. I may repent with dry eyes. It is not a matter of feeling, but of willing. It is to lay hold of the aimless, drifting thought, and steer it toward God! It is a change of mind.

Second, there is a definite and avowed choice of my new Goal, my new Lord and King. The Christian life cannot be a subterfuge. It cannot be lived incognito. I cannot be the Christ’s and wear the livery of an alien power. There must be confession, a bold and clarion-like avowal that henceforth I am a soldier of the Lord.

And the spiritual experiences will be sure, as sure as the law-governed processes of the material world. There will be “remission of sins.” The old guilt will fall away from my soul as the chains fell from Peter’s limbs when the angel touched them. And there will be “the gift of the Holy Ghost.” A new dynamic is mine! I enter into fellowship with the power of the ascended Lord.

MAY 28

THE SONS OF GOD

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God.”

Romans 8:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

AND how unspeakably wealthy are the implications of the great word!

If a son, then what holy freedom is mine! Mine is not “the spirit of bondage.” The son has “the run of the house.” That is the great contrast between lodgings and home. And I am to be at home with the Lord.

And if a son, then heir! “All things are yours.” Samuel Rutherford used to counsel his friends to “take a turn” round their estate. And truly it is an inspiring exercise! The Spirit shall lead me over my estate, and I will survey, with the sense of ownership, “the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

I wonder if I have the manner of a king’s son? I wonder if there is anything in my very “walk” which indicates distinguished lineage and royal blood? Or am I like a vagrant who has no possessions and no heartening expectations?

“Lord, I would serve, and be a son!”

MAY 29

MANY GIFTS—ONE SPIRIT

1Corinthians 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

HERE is no monotony in the workmanship of my God. The multitude of His thoughts is like the sound of the sea, and every thought commands a new creation. When He thinks upon me, the result is a creative touch never again to be repeated on land or sea. And so, when the Holy Spirit is given to the people, the ministry does not work in the suppression of individualities, but rather in their refinement and enrichment.

Our gifts will be manifold, and we must not allow the difference to breed a spirit of suspicion. Because my brother’s gift is not mine I

must not suspect his calling. To one man is given a trumpet, to another a lamp, and to another a spade. And they are all the holy gifts of grace.

And thus the gifts are manifold in order that every man may find his completeness in his brother. One man is like an eye—he is a seer of visions! Another man is like a hand—he has the genius of practicality! He is “a handy man”! One is the architect, the other is the builder. And each requires the other, if either is to be perfected. And so, by God’s gracious Spirit, the individual man is only a bit, a portion, and he is intended to fit into the other bits, and so make the complete man of the race.

MAY 30

FINDING THE DEEP THINGS

“The Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

1Corinthians 2:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

THE deep things of God cannot be discovered by unaided reason. “Eye hath not seen:” they are not to be apprehended by the artistic vision. “Ear hath not heard:” they are not unveiled amid the discussion of the philosophic schools. “Neither hath entered into the heart of man:” even poetic insight cannot discern them. All the common lights fail in this realm. We need another illumination, even that provided by the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit is offered unto us “that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

And here we have the reason why so many uncultured people are spiritually wiser than many who are learned. They lack talent, but they have grace. They lack accomplishments, but they have the Holy Ghost. They lack the telescope, but they have the sunlight. They are not scholars, but they are saints. They may not be theologians, but they have true religion. And so they have “the open vision.” They “walk with God,” and “the deep things of God” are made known to their souls.

We must put first things first. We may be busy polishing our lenses when our primary and fundamental need is light. It is not a gift that we require, but a Friend.

MAY 31

CONNECTION AND CONCORD

“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”

1Corinthians 12:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.

IT is only in the spirit that real union is born. Every other kind of union is artificial, and mechanical, and dead. We can dovetail many pieces of wood together and make the unity of an article of furniture, but we cannot dovetail items together and make a tree. And it is the union of a tree that we require, a union born of indwelling life. We may join many people together in a fellowship by the bonds of a formal creed, but the result is only a piece of social furniture, it is not a vital communion. There is a vast difference between a connection and a concord.

Many members of a family may bear the same name, may share the same blood, may sit and eat at the same table, and yet may have no more vital union than a handful of marbles in a boy’s pocket. But let the spirit of a common love dwell in all their hearts and there is a family bound together in glorious union.

And so it is in the spirit, and there alone, that vital union is to be found. And here is the secret of such spiritual union. “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” The Spirit of God, dwelling in all our spirits, attunes them into glorious harmony. Our lives blend with one another in the very music of the spheres.