

1 Kings Devotionals

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Our Daily Bread

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

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Updated 11/23/13

1 Kings 1:15-31 1:15-31

Power Struggle

The Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. Daniel 5:21

The president of a company in Michigan had suffered a minor stroke, and he was not spending much time at the office. He didn't know that one of his sons, with the help of two vice presidents, was scheming to take over the firm. He learned of their plot just in time, though, and was able to retain control.

In some parts of the world, power struggles result in assassinations, bloody coups, or civil wars. We see power struggles in politics all the time. They also occur in neighborhoods, families, and even in churches.

Adonijah made a power move to grab the throne of Israel (1 Kings 1:5-10). But God had other plans. Bathsheba (David's wife) and Nathan the prophet were able to stop the takeover (1 Kings 1:11-31), and God's appointed leader, Solomon, soon became king (1 Kings 1:38-40; 2:12).

We need to remember that God rules over the kingdoms of earth (Dan. 5:21). He raises up leaders and brings them down, whether in politics or in the church. Sometimes it's necessary to replace an ineffective leader, but we must pursue that option only after careful thought and earnest prayer for God's direction. We should never become part of a move that serves the ambition of some power-hungry person instead of honoring the Lord who rules over all. –D C Egnor

The Most High still rules over kingdoms of men,
He gives the control to whomever He will;
All people must bow to His sovereign plan,
And know that His purposes He will fulfill. –Hess

The most powerful position on earth is kneeling before the Lord of the universe.

[How Much Does God Control?](#)

[What Do We Owe The Government?](#)

1 Kings 3:5-10 3:5-10

Growing Wise

Give to Your servant an understanding heart. -1 Kings 3:9

Solomon was a young man charged with the responsibility of governing one of the most prosperous kingdoms in the ancient Near East. Israel was a significant power then, her domain extending from the Euphrates River to the border of Egypt. Responsible for so much, Solomon knew he needed help. So when God asked the young king what He could do for him, Solomon did not ask to be healthy or wealthy. He asked to be wise (1 Kings 3:9). This request pleased the Lord.

God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing, ... I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart" (1 Kings 3:11-12).

The word translated "understanding" in Solomon's request (v.9) actually means "hearing." God gave Solomon a hearing heart so he could judge the people, and "discern between good and evil."

Wise men and women hear God through His Book. They read other books, of course, but they judge them all by the Word of God. There is no greater wisdom.

If you want wisdom, ask God for it. The apostle James said, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). -D H R

I scanned God's teachings thoughtlessly,
In haste I did not hear Him;
Then prayerfully I read once more,
This time my heart drew near Him. -Gustafson

God opens the door of His wisdom to those who open their Bibles

[Knowing God Through The Whole Bible](#)

[Knowing God Through Proverbs](#)

1 Kings 4:29-34; 11:4-6 4:29-3

WHAT DOES HE WANT?

His heart was not loyal to the Lord his God. - 1 Kings 11:4

After 10 years of being a parent, I think I think what I value most about my children: our relationship.

Sure, it's nice when they score baskets or play beautiful music on the piano. I like it when they bring home good grades or write something profound for a school paper. And it's rewarding when people comment how nice they look or act in public.

But what really keeps a tired dad going - after working all day, fixing a leaking sink, reading Green Eggs and Ham for the hundredth time, and helping with a grammar assignment - is a loving smile, a big hug, and four choice words: "I love you, Dad."

If another day has passed and my kids have maintained a loving, caring, mutually admiring relationship with me, I'm a glad dad.

It's something like what goes on between God and us. He wants us to work at keeping our relationship with Him strong - even more than He wants us to do anything else. That's why it's so sad to read about Solomon. He had it all. Yet he shut off the relationship with God by being disloyal to Him. He was a king with wisdom, power, and riches, but when he forsook God those things meant nothing.

What does God want most from you and me? A loving relationship. - J D Brannon

Spirit of God, descent upon my heart:
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move.
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love. - Croly

If you're not as close to God as you used to be, guess who moved.

1 KINGS 8:54-61 8:54-61

"Blessed be the Lord... There has not failed one word of all His good promise" (1 Kings 8:56).

A man who lived in northern Michigan went for a walk in a dense forest so immense that a person could easily get lost. When darkness began to settle in, he decided it was time to head home. He was used to being in the woods and had a keen sense of direction, so he didn't bother to look at his compass. After walking for a long time, however, he decided he'd better check to make sure he was going in the right direction. He was surprised when the compass indicated he was going west-not east as he had thought. But the man was so sure of his own sense of direction that he thought there must be something wrong with the compass. He was about to throw it away in disgust when the thought came to him:

My compass has never lied to me yet-maybe I should believe it. The man eventually found his way out of the woods and arrived home safely because he trusted his compass and didn't rely on himself.

Solomon told the congregation of Israel that not "one word of all His good promise" had failed. That assurance still stands. What God promises, He performs. His instructions are always trustworthy. He will never lead us astray. If we think so highly of our own judgment that we refuse to rely on God's sure word, we are asking for trouble and will only become more confused. His words have never failed, and they never will. -R W De Haan

The Bible always points the believer in the right direction.

1 Kings 8:56 8:56

A Promise Kept

"Blessed be the Lord... There has not failed one word of all His good promise." --1 Kings 8:56

A close, longtime friend died after a 6-year battle with Alzheimer's disease. A few days after her death, my wife and I attended a wedding. As the bride and groom exchanged their vows, I pondered the whole matter of promising. It was beautiful to witness two excited young people in their twenties pledging their lives to each other. But it was profound to remember the faithfulness of our recently departed friend. She and her husband had kept their wedding vows for more than half a century, even when the final years were darkened by her memory loss and decline.

Lewis Smedes wrote, "Some people still make promises and keep those they make. When they do, they help make life around them more stably human. Promise-keeping is a powerful means of grace in a time when people hardly depend on each other to remember and live by their word."

Psalm 15 proclaims the qualities of the steadfast, God-honoring person who enjoys fellowship with our promise-keeping Lord (1 Kings 8:56). This individual keeps his promises even when it hurts (Ps. 15:4).

Our most important commitments are fulfilled one day at a time. "I do." "I will." "You can count on me." There is power in every promise that is made and kept. --D C McCasland ([L](#))

Thinking It Over

Are you a person whose word can always be trusted?

What commitments have you made to your family,
your spouse, your friends, your church, God?

When you give your word, keep it.

1 KINGS 8:54-61 8:54-61

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1 Kings 17:1-16 17:1-16

GOD'S WAYS

"How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out." - Romans 11:33

After Elijah had experienced some especially trying times, the Lord told him to flee to Zarephath where he could find food and shelter. Imagine Elijah's surprise when he discovered that the widow who was to provide for him was extremely poor! In fact, she expected that she and her son would soon die of starvation.

How often God delights to astonish us by the wonder of His ways! Our limited understanding of Him can be likened to a fly crawling on one of the great pillars of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. What

does that tiny insect know about the architect's magnificent design? It sees only the little space

of stone on which it moves. The beautiful carvings and ornamental work seem like towering mountains and deep valleys that only impede progress and obscure the view.

We as Christians often see only our immediate circumstances and perceive but a glimmer of God's marvelous purpose. The obstacles that block our vision and get in the way of our plans are actually part of the beautiful designs of divine grace.

Our heavenly Father knows exactly what He is doing. Although His ways are unsearchable, He assures us that all will work out for our good if we trust Him.-- Henry G. Bosch

God's ways and judgments baffle those
Who do not see His perfect plan;
But those who trust His saving grace,
With wonder all His actions scan! -- HGB

God may conceal the purpose of His ways, But His ways are not without purpose.

1 Kings 17:14 17:14

Dwindling Resources

The barrel of meal shall not be used up, neither shall the cruse of oil fail. 1 Kings 17:14

At some point in life most of us face the problem of dwindling resources. The story of the widow of Zarephath should encourage us to trust the Lord to supply our needs at all times.

H. A. Ironside told of a Christian widow who lived in Scotland. With several "bairns" in the home, it was extremely difficult for her to provide food and clothing for her household. Through it all, she lived close to the Lord and lovingly taught her children to put their confidence in Him. The day finally came when the purse was empty and the pantry depleted. Only a handful of flour remained in the big barrel. The mother reached down into the container to scrape up the last bit in order to make some bread for her hungry little ones. As she bent over the barrel, her faith began to waver and she could hold back the tears no longer. Her little son Robbie heard her sobs and began tugging at her dress till she lifted her head and looked into his questioning eyes. In his Scottish dialect he asked, "Mither, what are ye weepin' about? Dinna God hear ye scrapin' the bottom o' the barrel, Mither?" Ironside said, "In a moment her failing faith reasserted itself. Ah yes, God did hear. All else might be gone but He remained, and His Word declared that her every need would be supplied." -P.R.V.

1 Kings 18:1,41-45

Miracle Rain

I am God, and there is no other. Isaiah 46:9

Life is hard for the villagers who live on a hilly terrain in the Yunnan Province of China. Their main source of food is corn and rice. But in May 2012 a severe drought hit the region and the crops withered. Everyone was worried, and many superstitious practices were carried out as the people attempted to end the drought. When nothing worked, people started blaming the five Christians in the village for offending the spirits of the ancestors.

These five believers gathered to pray. Before long, the sky darkened and thunder was heard. A heavy downpour started and lasted the whole afternoon and night. The crops were saved! While most of the villagers did not believe God sent the rain, others did and desired to find out more about Him and Jesus.

In 1 Kings 17 and 18 we read of a severe drought in Israel. But in this case, we are told, it was a result of God's judgment on His people (17:1). They had begun to worship Baal, the god of the Canaanites, believing that this deity could send the rain for their crops. Then God, through His prophet Elijah, showed that He is the one true God who determines when rain falls.

Our all-powerful God desires to hear our prayers and answer our pleas. And though we do not always understand His timing or His purposes, God always responds with His best for our lives.

In what ways have you seen God answer prayer in the past? What needs do you have to bring before Him today? What do you want to thank Him for?

Through prayer, we draw upon the power of the infinite God. Poh Fang Chia

Insight: The Old Testament prophet Elijah was a man whose name mirrored his mission and message. Sent by God to a generation that had embraced Baal as their god, Elijah, whose name means "Jehovah is my God," was sent to remind them of the God of their fathers. Along the way, Elijah experienced evidence of God's greatness through the miraculous provision of food at Kerith and Zarephath, the resurrection of a widow's young son, and the supernatural demonstration of His power on Mount Carmel as fire fell from heaven (1 Kings 17-18). All these miracles bore witness to the reality that Jehovah is God. Bill Crowder

1 Kings 19:1-18 19:1-18

A Neglected Remedy

He gives His beloved sleep. -Psalm 127:2

I am often asked to speak on the subject of stress. I'm not an expert on stress, just an experienced sufferer! I simply share counsel from God's Word that helps me live less stressfully and more restfully. Many listeners are desperate for any new insight I might offer. What blank looks I sometimes get when I make this particular recommendation: "Get more sleep!" In their longing to deepen their experience of God's peace, they were hoping for something more spiritual than that.

But I'm not alone in linking spirituality to sleep. A godly Bible teacher was asked to share the key ingredient in his own life for walking in the Spirit. He studied the Bible and prayed regularly, but his surprising reply was this: "Get 8 hours of sleep each night."

This reply is less surprising in light of God's initial remedy for Elijah's stress and depression (1 Kings 19:1-18). Twice God gave him food and undisturbed sleep before gently confronting him at Mt. Horeb with his error.

Psalm 4:8 says, "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Sleep is not the full remedy for stress, but other solutions can become clearer to people who get adequate rest. -J E Yoder

When life is so busy and hectic and humming,
You're uptight and frazzled and stressed;
Slow down for a while and spend time with the Savior,
And be sure to get adequate rest. -Fitzhugh

We can sleep in peace when we remember that God is awake.

[Safe & Secure](#)

[What Can I Do With My Worry?](#)

1 Kings 19:1-18 19:1-18

Light In The Darkness

Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers. --1 Kings 19:4

Christians who pass through the dark tunnel of depression tend to focus on their sins and weaknesses and failures so much that they may even want to die. God can use times like this, however, to increase their awareness of His inexhaustible grace.

In 1964, Alan Redpath, former pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, sank into the depths of despondency following a near-fatal stroke. He wrote later of having terribly wicked thoughts. "O Lord," he prayed, "take me right home!" It was then he sensed that the Lord was saying, "It is I, your Savior, who has brought this experience into your life to show you [that] this is the kind of person--with all your sinful thoughts and temptations which you thought were things of the past--that you always will be, but for My grace."

Redpath's experience reminds me of the prophet Elijah. He too wanted to die. He cried out, "Lord, take my life!" (1 Kings 19:4). Although Elijah had been mightily used of God, he needed to be reminded of God's sustaining grace. Depression, which in his case was triggered by physical and emotional exhaustion, became God's mirror of truth to let him see anew the marvelous light of His grace. The darkest night is never without that light. --D J De Haan

Though tempted and sadly discouraged,
My soul to this refuge will flee
And rest in this blessed assurance:
"My grace is sufficient for thee." --Anon.

Amid the darkness of sin, the light of God's grace shines brightest.

[When Hope Is Lost: Dealing With Depression](#)

1 Kings 19:1-18 19:1-18

"RENEWED HOPE"

[Elijah prayed], "Lord, take my life."... Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way." -1 Kings 19:4, 15

People who live without hope can become suicidal. So it was with an Italian prisoner of war being held on a military base in the United States during World War II. He had become despondent after learning that his wife had died in Italy. The camp commander, knowing that the man had been a stonemason, asked him if he could design a chapel for the base. The POW accepted the assignment and even supervised construction.

Today a unique chapel stands at the Letterkenny Army Depot in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. The formerly despondent prisoner found renewed hope by using his God-given talents to bless others.

In 1 Kings 19, we read that Elijah was despondent. He was physically and emotionally drained after fleeing from the evil Queen Jezebel. In despair, he asked God to take his life. Instead, the angel of the Lord ministered to his physical needs. Some days later, the Lord spoke to Elijah and told him that his work was not over.

When you are in despair, the first step on the pathway to new hope is to take care of your physical needs. Then listen to God's voice through the Scriptures. The Lord will show you your spiritual condition and tell you what He would have you do to bless others.-- D J De Haan

When plunged in darkness and despair,
Our only hope is in the Lord;
Not once does He withhold His care,
Or ever fail to keep His Word.-- DJD

God gives hope to us as we give help to others.

1 Kings 19:1-18 19:1-18

You're Not Alone

[God] has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." --Hebrews 13:5

If you're in a situation where you feel that you're the only one standing true to God, take heart! There's encouragement in the story of Elijah.

The prophet had experienced the Lord's protection and miraculous provision, and he had just won a great victory over those who had led God's people astray (1 Kings 17-18). But then we find Elijah running for his life and sinking into despair, convinced that he was the only one of God's prophets who hadn't been destroyed by the enemy (1 Kings 19). After having exhibited great courage, he suddenly was overcome with fear.

We may have a similar reaction. It may occur in the early stages of an unknown venture or after a great success. Suddenly we feel isolated, vulnerable, alone, afraid.

God came to Elijah in his darkest moment and gave the fearful prophet a word of encouragement. The Lord told him, "I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal" (1 Kings 19:18).

Seven thousand! God has His people everywhere. In your job, neighborhood, dormitory, or barracks, you may feel that you're the only one standing for Christ. Take courage! Other believers are in the same situation. And most important, God will not leave you. You are not alone. --D C McCasland

Though all around me is darkness
And earthly joys are flown,
My Savior whispers His promise--
Never to leave me alone. --Anon.

When we have nothing left but God, God is enough.

[Lonely But Never Alone](#)

1 Kings 19:1-18 19:1-18

Finding New Hope

Why are you cast down, O my soul? ... Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him. --Psalm 42:5

A woman who was widowed for the second time felt the loss deeply. She saw little reason to go on living.

One day she got into the car with her young grandson. After securing him properly, she started the car without fastening her own seatbelt. When the 5-year-old politely pointed this out to her, she told him she didn't care about her safety because she wanted to go to Jesus and Grandpa. The boy replied, "But Grandma, then you would leave me!"

God used this youngster to bring to her the realization that He still had service for her to perform, and that her situation was not as hopeless as it seemed to be.

During almost 50 years of ministry, I've seen many despairing people come to the place where they felt there was no way out. Like Elijah, they wanted to die (1 Ki. 19:4). God sustained them, however, and showed them that He still had work for them to do. They discovered that the situation was not as dark as they had thought and that God had a reason for them to go on living.

Don't give in to despair! Remind yourself of God's goodness and love. Talk to Him. He will meet your needs. He'll lead you in paths of love and light and joy where you will find new hope. --H V Lugt

Beyond the losses of this life
That cause us to despair,
New hope is born within our hearts
Because our God is there. --DJD

No one is hopeless whose hope is in God.

1 Kings 19:2-4 19:2-4

ELIJAH AT HOREB (DEPRESSION)

"Elijah ... arose and ran for his life, and went ... a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die (1 Kings 19:2-4).

Adoniram Judson, the pioneer missionary to Burma who translated the Bible into Burmese and is considered one of the great early missionaries, had difficulty dealing with the death of his wife, Nancy. In deep depression, he said, "God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in him, but I find him not."

We have all gone through times when the only certainty was uncertainty. Like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, we have all faced Giant Despair. As Winston Churchill put it, we are sometimes overtaken by the "black dog of depression."

Jezebel scared Elijah with her death threat, and he ran for his life. He was so discouraged that he asked God to carry out Jezebel's pronouncement. Instead, God reassured Elijah with His presence and plan for the future.

Like Elijah, the two disciples from Emmaus were near despair. Their hope that Jesus would redeem Israel had been dashed, leaving them disappointed and puzzled-but only until the resurrected Christ appeared. With His presence came a bright light for the future.

Faith and doubt travel hand in hand, and doubt about God's goodness and care often leads to depression. Yet sorrow has a spur; depression can drive us to Him. If we do not find Him, He finds us; and we cry out for joy. He is alive and He loves us.

1 KINGS 19:1-10 19:1-10

"Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" (1 Kings 19:4).

A letter came to Radio Bible Class that bore no signature and no return address. It read, "By the time you receive this letter, I will have committed suicide. I accepted Christ two years ago. Lately my world has been crumbling around me. I can't take it anymore. I can't fall again or be 'bad' anymore. God and I have drifted apart... Lord, help me. Could you take a moment and say a prayer for me, a teenager? Lord forgive me!"

Even Christians can get so desperate that they want to take their own life. In 1 Kings 19 we read that Elijah was so physically and emotionally exhausted that he asked God to take his life. Although that's not suicide, his request arises from the same feelings of despair. But God brought Elijah out of his depression. He lifted him up by strengthening him with food, restoring him through sleep, listening to his complaint, gently correcting him, reassuring him in a still, small voice, giving him new work to do, and telling him that all was not lost.

Most people who take their own lives do so when they are deeply depressed. Reality has become distorted, and they can't see the selfish, sinful nature of their act. But God wants to restore and uphold them. Sometimes He speaks hope directly to the soul, but more often He uses sensitive, caring people who come alongside to help. We can be God's hope to others. With a word, a smile, or a helping hand we can say to those who are cast down, "In Christ there is hope." -D J De Haan

When we are most ready to perish, God is most ready to help us.

1 Kings 19:1-13 19:1-13

"What Doest Thou Here?"

Vance Havner

Jezebel had threatened Elijah, his nerves had gone into a tailspin, and under the juniper he imagined himself to be the surviving saint, the last good man. There are three great chapters in the life of this prophet and they might well be titled, Cherith, Carmel, and the Cave. In the cave the Lord asks him, "What doest thou here?"

Not a few of the saints are in a cave today and we would inquire of them, "What doest thou here?"

1. For one thing, Elijah was tired.

It is too much for most of us these days. Never have I preached to so many tired people as now. The human race lives in a nervous breakdown. It is a day of stress, strain and tension, and our very speech is the speech of weariness, the language of languor. We are weary and faint in our minds. Fatigue is filling hospitals, asylums, graves. Men cannot drink it away with whiskey nor play it away at card tables nor laugh it off in a theatre nor sleep it away with sedatives. Our remedies treat only the symptoms and not the disease.

2. Elijah was also discouraged and pessimistic.

He thought he was the last good man, and needed to learn that God had seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal. When we are too tired we easily grow despondent and imagine that everybody is out of step except ourselves.

3. Furthermore, Elijah was suffering a reaction from a big and noisy day on Carmel.

This noise standard shows up in our churches. Some of us think we are not having a good meeting unless there is a lot of hullabaloo. Oh, I know that what some call worship is just the device by which some resters at ease in Zion catch up with their sleep. And what some call reverence and dignity is just spiritual rigor mortis, the Sunday coma of religious dopesters getting their eleven o'clock dose of pulpit cocaine. But the counterfeit implies the truth, and most of us are so feverish and nervous that we cannot hear God's whisper. "Be still and know that I am God." The Lord commanded the multitude to sit down before He fed them.

4. [Elijah] was derelict in his duty.

He had no business under the juniper. He needed to get back on the job. In God's permissive will He took mercy on the prophet and taught him a lesson, but Elijah should not have run from the threat of Jezebel. A man is first a runaway before he is a castaway.

"What doest thou here?" Are you under a juniper? Is the journey too great for you, and are you exhausted, tired on the way, though

not tired of the way? Have you grown pessimistic until you imagine yourself the surviving saint? Have you been living on excitement, big days, and big demonstrations, fire and wind and earthquake, until you cannot hear God whisper? Has the threat of Jezebel driven you to the wilderness? Wait on the Lord and renew your strength! As important as it is to be saved and sure and sound and strong, don't forget how much it means to be still!

Life's Darkest Moments

Read: 1 Kings 19:1-8

An angel touched [Elijah], and said to him, "Arise and eat." —1 Kings 19:5

Charles Whittlesey was a hero's hero. Leader of the so-called "Lost Battalion" in World War I, he was awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery when his unit was trapped behind enemy lines. When the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was dedicated, Charles was chosen to serve as pallbearer for the first soldier laid to rest there. Two weeks later, it is presumed that he ended his own life by stepping off a cruise ship in the middle of the ocean.

Like Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-7), Charles was publicly strong, but in the quiet, post-public moments, his feelings of despair set in. People today frequently face situations bigger than they can handle. Sometimes it's temporary despair brought on by fatigue, as in Elijah's case. He had been part of a great victory over the prophets of Baal (18:20-40), but then he feared for his life and ran into the wilderness (19:1-3). But often, it's more than despair and it's more than temporary. That's why it is imperative that we talk about depression openly and compassionately.

God offers His presence to us in life's darkest moments, which enables us, in turn, to be His presence to the hurting. Crying out for help—from others and from God—may be the strongest moment of our lives.

Father, grant us the candor to admit to each other that sometimes life overwhelms us. And grant us the courage to help others find help—and to seek it when we need it.

Hope comes with help from God and others.

INSIGHT: Elijah, deemed Israel's greatest prophet, was highly revered and well spoken of by the Jews, by the Lord Jesus Himself, and by the apostles (Matt. 17:10-11; Luke 1:17; Rom. 11:2-4, James 5:17-18). He appeared with Moses at the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17:3). Because Elijah did not die (2 Kings 2:1), the Jews believed he would come back again (Mal. 4:5). Many scholars believe that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11.

By Randy Kilgore

1 Kings 19:5, 15, 16

NOTHING LEFT TO DO BUT DIE

Now, O Lord, take away my life... And the Lord said unto him, Go ... anoint Hazael ... and Jehu ... and Elisha 1 Kings 19:5, 15, 16

The words, "There's nothing left to do but die," spoken by a twenty-year-old girl who attempted suicide after a drug-taking episode, still ring in my ears. She was a picture of abject hopelessness and despair as she sat across the desk from me for our interview. She declared that she had committed every kind of sin imaginable, and had never done anything commendable that she could recall. Her moments of exhilaration had come only while under the influence of forbidden and habit-forming drugs. Now, confined to prison for her misdeeds, she said she expected soon to die, but admitted she was desperately afraid. I assured her that God still loved her, that Jesus died for her sins, and that the Lord would save her and make the rest of her life worth-while if only she would receive Christ. I pointed out that if she came to know the Lord, she would become a new and vibrant person, full of eager anticipation for the future. After counseling with her, giving her some additional Scriptures to read, and praying with her, I left. Since then I have been praying that God will reach her by His grace and claim her for himself. As yet she has not responded to the Holy Spirit's wooings.

Friend, don't make the mistake of that girl in prison who can-not bring herself to believe that God loves her. It is surprising that even Christians sometimes doubt the Lord when confronted by adverse circumstances. Note the case of Elijah mentioned in our text. Although a child of God, he too was discouraged and wished to die, but the Lord still had much work for him to do. God in His own good time will call us Home when our task on earth is finished, but let us never faithlessly declare, because of our limited perspective, that we have "nothing left to do but die." God loves us and has a plan for each of us to follow. Life with Christ is always worth living!

Don't be downhearted, look up, look up,
For Jesus is on the Throne,
And He will supply every need from on High;
Cheer up, cheer up, cheer up!-Old Chorus

No life is hopeless unless Christ is ruled out!

Still Small Voice

Read: 1 Kings 19:11-18

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! —Psalm 46:10

When God spoke to Elijah on Mount Horeb, He could have done so in the wind, earthquake, or fire. But He didn't. He spoke with a "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). God asked, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (v.13), as he hid from Jezebel who had threatened to kill him.

Elijah's reply revealed what God already knew—the depth of his fear and discouragement. He said, in effect, "Lord, I have been most zealous when others have forsaken You. What do I get for being the only one standing up for You?" (see v.14).

Was Elijah really the only one serving God? No. God had "seven thousand in Israel . . . whose knees have not bowed to Baal" (v.18).

In the depths of our fear or despair, we too may think we're the only one serving God. That may happen right after the height of a success, as it did for Elijah. Psalm 46:10 reminds us to "be still, and know" that He is God. The sooner we focus on Him and His power, the quicker we will see relief from our fear and self-pity.

Both the clashing cymbals of our failures and the loud trumpeting of our successes can drown out God's still small voice. It's time for us to quiet our hearts to listen for Him as we meditate on His Word.

Keep listening for the "still small voice" If you are weary on life's road; The Lord will make your heart rejoice If you will let Him take your load. —Hess

To tune in to God's voice we must tune out this world's noise.

By Albert Lee

1 Kings 19:12

He Can Lead You Out

Read: 1 Kings 19:1-12

After the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. —1 Kings 19:12

Almost everyone will at some time in their life be affected by depression, either their own or someone else's. Some common signs and symptoms of depression include feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, worthlessness, and helplessness. Although we cannot say for certain that characters in the Bible experienced depression, we can say that some did exhibit a deep sense of despondency, discouragement, and sadness that is linked to personal powerlessness and loss of meaning and enthusiasm for life.

Elijah is one biblical character who fits this description. After defeating the prophets of Baal, he received a death threat from Jezebel. His hope was shattered, and despondency set in. He wanted to die! God helped Elijah deal with his despondency in several ways. The Lord did not rebuke him for his feelings but sent an angel to provide for his physical needs. Then, the Lord revealed Himself and reminded Elijah that He was quietly working among His people. Next, He renewed Elijah's mission by giving him new orders. Finally, God reminded Elijah that he wasn't alone.

In our times of discouragement, let us remember that God loves us and desires to lead us to a place of a renewed vision of Himself!

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain. —von Schlegel

The weak, the helpless, and the discouraged are in the Shepherd's special care.

By Marvin Williams |

1 Kings 20:28 20:28

THE GOD OF THE VALLEYS

"the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys 1 Kings 20:28

The king of Syria, Ben-hadad, together with his great army, had suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Israel. Since Palestine is rather mountainous, the king erroneously concluded that the Israelites had been successful because their deity was a God of the hills. If he could but engage them again in the valley, he was sure that he could easily overcome them. However, the prophet of the Lord spoke to King Ahab assuring him that to vindicate the Lord's honor, and to show He was God of all places and circumstances, Israel would again defeat the Syrian hosts. When the battle came, God's people won an even more impressive victory. They were thus reassured that the Lord was always at their side - even in the valley of deepest testing!

Many people today still think God is with them when they enjoy prosperity, yet mistakenly feel He has forsaken them when they are called to suffer affliction.

A merchant was informed by his confidential secretary that his company was in serious financial difficulty. "It's been a bad year, sir," said the employee; "there have been vast losses and few gains." The merchant saw that bankruptcy was imminent. When at last he spoke, his voice was low and steady. "No, John, it has been a good year in spite of everything. Every one of those figures 'in the red' represent hours of agonizing prayer on my part - experiences that have made me so spiritually rich that I cannot despair over any earthly losses. The future is bright, for the Lord has promised, 'No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.'" The secretary looked at him for a moment, and then said, "I want to tell you it was your steadiness under the testings of the past year that has made me long to know Christ as you do; and so the other night I received Him as my Savior. I agree, sir; it has indeed been a good year!" Both men had come to realize in a wonderful way that the Lord is also "the God of the valleys!"

God's "green pastures" are often found in the lowlands of trial! -H. G. Bosch

1 Kings 21:17-29 21:17-29

FRIEND OR ENEMY?

Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. -- Proverbs 27:5

I like people and want people to like me. So to tell them that their conduct is dishonest or immoral isn't easy for me. On several occasions, men have told me how they got out of a speeding ticket by making up a touching story, or how they got even with some rascal in a shady business deal. I've responded by asking, "That was clever, but was it honest?"

When I get acquainted with people and they tell me they are living immorally, I may ask, "Do you believe in God and that you must answer to Him? Or do you think we are accidents of nature with no more meaning than an insect, and that it doesn't matter how we live?" When they express some belief in God (and almost everyone does), I'll gently share with them what He has said about their conduct. Many times this opens the door to present the good news of salvation.

Ahab called Elijah an enemy (1 Ki. 21:20). But he was wrong. The prophet was really his best earthly friend. If only he would have listened to God's servant, he could have been a good king and a child of God.

Lord, help us to be loving as we confront people with their sin. And help us to see that those who point out our sins are not our enemies but our true friends. --H V Lugt

True friends will say what's kind and true,
Though it may cause us pain;
They're thinking of what's good for us
And all we stand to gain. --DJD

Faithful are the wounds of a friend. -- Proverbs 27:6

1 KINGS 21:17-29 21:17-29

Ahab ... tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, ... and went about mourning (1 Kings 21:27).

John and Joe stole some money, but they reacted differently when confronted with the evidence. John broke down immediately, confessed his guilt, and offered to repay the money. But Joe refused to take any responsibility and blamed his companion. Later, with his parents supporting him, Joe claimed he was forced into this conduct because some of the young people in his church had never accepted him.

After more than thirty-five years of giving spiritual counsel, I can testify that people who try to cover their sins will not prosper, and that those who confess and forsake them find mercy (Pr 28:13). Many people never realize that they become their own worst enemies by blaming others instead of facing up to their own faults.

In 1 Kings 21, we read that King Ahab wanted a vineyard belonging to Naboth, but the owner refused to sell it. So Jezebel, Ahab's wife, had Naboth executed. Although Ahab merely allowed her to use his name in signing the orders, he didn't blame his wife when confronted with his evil deed. Instead, he acknowledged his crime, expressed grief over it, accepted responsibility, repented, and received a merciful reprieve.

Whenever we do wrong, we are wise to face up to it, take responsibility for our actions, and ask God to forgive us. We will be better people when we learn to say, "I'm to blame." -H V Lugt

Only those willing to take blame can ever be trusted with responsibility.

1 Kings 21:1-16 21:1-16

The Cure For Greed

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. --Colossians 3:2

A man who lived with his elderly aunt expected to inherit her small fortune. But he didn't wait for her to die naturally. The newspaper reported that he killed her by giving her an overdose of medication. He's now in prison.

In 1 Kings 21, we read about wealthy King Ahab, who wanted a vineyard so much that he allowed his wife to murder the owner. God was so displeased that He sent Elijah to tell Ahab that dogs would lick up his blood in the very place where Naboth had been murdered. Not only that, but his wife and every male descendant would be slaughtered. The terrifying prophecy was fulfilled 3 years later (2 Ki. 9:4-10:11).

We should fear the sin of greed because it leads people to do terrible things. We should hate it because it is idolatry (Col. 3:5), causing us to value earthly things above God.

The good news is that we can escape greed's grip. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2). He urged us to focus on our relationship with Christ and to look forward to meeting with Him when He returns (Col 3:1-4).

Think of Christ and all that He has given you. That's the cure for greed. --H V Lugt

Thinking It Over

Why is greed so pointless? (Mt. 6:19-24).

What's more important than possessions? (vv.25-34).

What do I desire most in life?

If we have Christ, what more do we need?

1 Kings 22:41-45 22:41-45

"Learning from Dad"

"(Jehoshaphat) walked in all the ways of his father Asa." 1 Kings 22:43

Whenever major league baseball player Curt Schilling pitches, he writes his dad's name on the free-ticket list for that game. It's a practice he started in 1988, and he says it will continue as long as he plays the game.

This wouldn't be all that unusual, except that a few months before Curt's major league debut his dad died of cancer. Putting his father's name on that list is an ongoing tribute to the man who for 22 years provided guidance, instruction, encouragement, and inspiration.

Just as Curt Schilling's dad gave him the incentive to succeed in baseball, so we need to instill in our children the knowledge, desire, and wisdom to succeed in the arena of faith. Nothing is more important than to spend time building into our children the skills to do right in God's eyes.

Asa, who was loyal to God (1 Kings 15:11), must have imparted that quality to his son, because Jehoshaphat "walked in all the ways of his father Asa" (1 Kings 22:43).

We must lead our children to Christ and encourage them to let Him be the Lord of their lives. This may never make them prominent like a great athlete, but it will help them "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). And that's the only competition that matters. - J D Brannon

Take stock of yourself and consider your child --
Your time and your thoughts are his due;
How would you reply to the Lord should He ask,
"What kind of parent are you?" - Anon.

Don't just spend time with your children - invest it.

1 Kings DEVOTIONALS Our Daily Homily F B Meyer

1 Kings 1:29 1:29

As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress.

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

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

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

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

1 Kings 2:4 2:4

That the Lord may continue His word.

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

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

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

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

1 Kings 3:7-9 3:7-9 (from Our Daily Walk)

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."-- 1 Kings 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 (1 Kings 3:13; Matthew 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 (Hebrews 5:14; Phil 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 (1Kiings 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.

1 Kings 3:13 3:13

I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked.

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

Put first things first.— One of the most important lessons of life is to discern the relative value of the objects within our reach. The

child will take the handful of glass beads, and leave the heap of diamonds in the rough. It is the terrible mistake of men that, perplexed by earth's cross-lights, they put evil for good and good for evil; they make earth rather than heaven their center; time rather than eternity their measurement.

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

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

1 Kings 4:29 4:29

Largeness of heart.

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

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

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

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

1 Kings 5:4 5:4

Now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side.

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

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

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

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

1 Kings 6:7 6:7

There was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard.

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

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

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

1 Kings 7:46 7:46

In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them.

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

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

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

1 Kings 8:59 8:59

That He maintain the cause of His servant, as every day shall require. (r. v.)

The R. V. marginal reading is, "The thing of a day in its day." What rest would come into our lives, if we really believed that God maintained the cause of His servants! Men hate you, and say unkind or untrue things about you; on your part, though you are quite prepared to admit that you have made mistakes, yet you know that you desire above all things to act as God's servant should, that your motives are sincere, and your hands clean— be of good courage then, God will maintain your cause, as every day may require.

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

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

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

1 Kings 9:3 9:3

I have hallowed this house which thou hast built.

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

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

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

1 Kings 10:9 10:9

Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 Kings 11:4 11:4

His wives turned away his heart.

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

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

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

1 Kings 12:33 12:33

The month which he had devised of his own heart.

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

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

1 Kings 13:21-22 13:21-22

Forasmuch as thou hast been disobedient,... but camest back. (r. v.)

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

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

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

1 Kings 14:6 14:6

I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.

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

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

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

1 Kings 15:11 15:11

Asa did ... right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father.

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

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

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

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

1 Kings 16:33 16:33

Ahab did more to provoke the Lord to anger than all the kings.

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

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

1 Kings 17:4, 9

I have commanded the ravens ... a widow woman ... there.

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

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

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

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

1 Kings 18:21 18:21 (from Our Daily Walk)

TAKING SIDES

"Who is on the Lord's side!"-- Exodus 32:26.

"How long halt ye between two opinions! If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, follow him. And the people answered him not a word."-- 1 Kings 18:21.

MOSES AND Elijah uttered practically the same call, which is always being spoken to each fresh generation. As soon as we can think for ourselves, we are accosted by the challenge of the Divine Voice- Art thou for Me or against Me? Which side dost thou take? From the lips of our blessed Lord comes the additional challenge, which compels us to face the alternative as one that may not be trifled with or put aside: "He that is not with Me is against Me."

How long halt ye between two opinions? We must take one side or the other. When the division-bell rings in the House of Commons, the Ayes must go to the right and the No's to the left. A man must choose which he will take! If Jehovah, If Baal, We cannot be neutral without being stultified.

Who, then, is prepared to take sides, and to come out to Christ, without the camp, bearing His reproach? (Heb13:13). To be on the Lord's side is to acknowledge Him as our King as well as Saviour. It is to render to Him our reverence, obedience, love and devotion. It is to abandon all refuges and resorts to our own works and ways, and to strive for heart, mind, and life to be assimilated to His will and character. This is what our Saviour expects and asks of each of us! We are to belong wholly to God, to give Him all that we are capable of giving, to choose His cause, and to find in Him the beginning and ending, the first and last.

Jesus Christ possesses an unimpeachable and absolute right over us--the right of Creator, "it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves"; the right of Benefactor, not only in the realm of temporal but of spiritual existence; the right of Redeemer, and this is the greatest claim of all.

Our decision demands declaration. Christ will not have His followers live in secret. In the days in which we live, when there are so many temptations to compromise between the disciples of Jesus and the votaries of the world, there is overwhelming reason why we should take His side. And in that great day, He will take our side and acknowledge us before His Father and the Holy Angels!

PRAYER - O Lord, we acknowledge Thy dominion over us; our life, our death, our soul and body, all belong to Thee. Grant that we may willingly consecrate them all to Thee, and use them in Thy service. AMEN.

1 Kings 18:36-39 PRAYER THAT WORKS - THEODORE EPP

James 5:17-20;

Because this was such a crucial prayer, it is worth noting the specific things for which Elijah prayed.

He had four specific requests of God. First, "Let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel" (1 Kings 18:36). The burden of Elijah's heart was that others would know the true God and that they would realize that He alone is God.

Second, "That I am thy servant" (v. 36). This revealed Elijah's humble attitude--he wanted to be known only as a servant of the true God.

Third, he asked God to show "that I have done all these things at thy word" (v. 36).

Elijah not only wanted to be known as the servant of God but also as an obedient servant. He especially did not want the prophets of Baal to think that he had dreamed up all of this on his own.

He wanted them to be clearly convinced that God had directed him. This is also an indication that God is a personal God. Baal could not direct anyone; even those who worshiped him could not expect personal guidance.

Fourth, Elijah prayed, "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again" (v. 37). Elijah wanted his prayer to be heard by God, and he wanted the people to return to God.

Then the fire fell! It consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust and the water that had been poured in the trenches.

"When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God" (v. 39).

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22). See more at: <https://www.backtothebible.org/devotions/prayer-that-works#sthash.zug18t9n.dpuf>

1 Kings 18:42 18:42

So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel.

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

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

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

1 Kings 19:5 19:5

Behold, an angel touched him.

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

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

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

1 Kings 20:40 20:40

As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.

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

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

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

Busy here and there, and the knowledge of God is gone.— Remember how the birds caught away the seed of the Kingdom; and be sure that, in the same way, the cares and riches of this world, and the lusts of other things may enter in, and destroy the

impression made on the heart. The ephemeral interests of life press hard on its real interests. Like boys, we squander in trifling the hours given to prepare for an examination on which all the future must turn.

1 Kings 21:20 21:20

And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?

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

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

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

1 Kings 22:34 22:34

A certain man ... smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness.

Every man we meet is clothed in armor; in other words, we all cover ourselves with plates on which to receive the thrust of accusation and reproach. "I only do as others." "I do not see any special harm in it." "My father did it before me." "I cannot help it." Such are some of the plates in the armor of the soul; and our work as Christian workers becomes abortive in so many instances, because we are content to belabor the plates, instead of striking home to the one place where the armor-joints are. Successful soul-winning depends on discovering the vulnerable part of a man, and striking there. But all this demands a very special discernment of spirits, and anointing of the Holy Ghost. Only so can we detect where best to bring about conviction, and make men know their need of the Gospel of God's grace. The great need of the present day is a sharper and more searching analysis of sin. Men need to be shown how they are violating the Laws of God. They assent generally to the Scriptural statements of what God requires, but fail to realize how greatly they have come short. You are almost sure to hit, if you begin to show the various ways in which respectably-living people are coming under the Divine sentence.

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

1 Kings COMMENTARY

by F B Meyer

INTRODUCTION

The Books of Kings were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible. They cover the whole time of the Israelitish monarchy, exclusive of the reigns of Saul and David. The Jewish tradition ascribes them to Jeremiah, and this is corroborated by internal evidence. But of course, Jeremiah, if he were the compiler, availed himself of the state records, and of all the documentary or oral sources of information within his reach. The Spirit of God was continually prompting his prophets to preserve a continuous record of the history of the chosen people; and thus abundant materials would be waiting for the author's use.

The First Book of Kings carries the story of Israel from the death of David to that of Ahab, while the record of the kingdom of Judah is carried to the death of Jehoshaphat. It is a wonderful story of the fulfilment of God's gracious promise to David, side by side with the chastisement of the people for their sins. The story of Solomon's greatness; the building of his temple; the breaking away of the ten tribes; the ministry of Elijah -- are told at considerable length. This book is often quoted in the New Testament; and our Lord

especially derived from it many a searching lesson, as when He spoke of the Queen of Sheba, and the widow woman of Sarepta.

1 KINGS 1 SOLOMON ANOINTED KING

1 Kings 1:1-10 Adonijah's revolt. --

Adonijah was the fourth son of David (2 Sam. 3:4), and perhaps the oldest then surviving. He was born after Absalom (1 Kings 1:6); and, like him, was goodly in appearance, ambitious in spirit, and spoiled by his father's indulgence (1 Kings 1:5-6). This attempt on his part to usurp the kingdom was a fulfilment of Nathan's prediction in 2 Samuel 12:10-11. To the end of his life the effects of David's sin followed him. And as Bathsheba and he met, for perhaps the last time on this dark day, each of them must have remembered the announcement which had broken in on their guilty attachment so long before. How carefully we should walk before God, trusting Him to keep us moment by moment, since one glance of the eye may lead to such disastrous results!

The revolt was abetted by Joab and Abiathar (1 Kings 1:7). The former had more than once crossed David's purpose, and might reasonably fear that Solomon would not favor him, while the latter was perhaps jealous of Zadok. It was a compliment to the fidelity of the others that they were not invited.

1 Kings 1:11-27 Bathsheba's and Nathan's appeal. --

Any jealousy that might have stirred in the heart of the royal consort at seeing her place taken by another, was hushed in the presence of the supreme danger which threatened not only to engulf her hopes that Solomon should succeed to the throne, but to involve both her and him in a common death. What a noble part Nathan had played in David's life! How much we owe to a true and wise friend!

1 Kings 1:28-38 David's decisive action. --

Though weakened in body, his mind was clear and his spirit strong and resolute. He did not forget, in those closing days of his life, the bitter adversity of his earlier years, or the redeeming mercy of God. He was equally mindful of his own solemn words of promise made in the presence of the living God: "As I swore unto thee., so will I do this day" His action was as prudent as it was prompt, and left no doubt as to his successor. Solomon must ride on David's own mule (1 Kings 1:33; Gen. 41:43; Esther 6:8), attended by the royal body-guard (1 Kings 1:38), and anointed by Priest and Prophet.

1 Kings 1:39-53 Solomon's coronation. --

The tidings of this glad event carried comfort and joy into the hearts of all loyal citizens, but dismay into the hearts of traitors. To the one a savor of life unto life, to others of death unto death. Those shouts that made the earth ring anticipated the acclamation that shall accompany the exaltation of Jesus to be King of men. Ah, happy day for His Church; but woe to them that plot against His rule! The nations rage and the peoples take counsel together; yet God will set His Son upon His holy hill. Let the Adonijahs and Joabs make haste to kiss Him, lest they perish from His presence.

A SELF-SEEKER'S SCHEME

1 Kings 1:1-14

Adonijah was the fourth son of David, but probably the oldest of those who survived. He was born after Absalom, and like him was goodly in appearance, ambitious in spirit, and equally spoiled by his father's indulgence, 1 Kings 1:6. His attempt to usurp the kingdom reminds us of another great usurper. Satan, we know, in one last desperate effort, will try to secure the empire of the world. But when the people rage and the rulers devise, Psalms 2:1-2; Psalms 2:4, Heaven will laugh at them. The Lamb that was slain is the destined King of men, Revelation 11:15. The book of destiny is in the pierced hand. The government is upon Christ's shoulders. He declares the decree, "The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," Psalms 110:1.

We look out on the world which is rent by revolt. The prince of this world is attracting to himself the Joabs and Abiathars. They make merry, but do not realize that the hour is at hand when they shall cry to the rocks and the hills to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, Revelation 6:16. Remember the counsel of Augustine, "If you would flee from God, flee to Him!"

LEARNING THE KING'S WILL

1 Kings 1:15-27

The attempt of the usurper was met and defeated through Nathan's prompt action, and by the concerted appeal that he and Bathsheba made to the king, who seems to have sunk into premature old age. Bathsheba and David probably met for the last time on this dark day, and each of them must have remembered the solemn promise given them years before, through Nathan, who

was still with them as friend and counselor. Much had happened since, but, amid all the changes in human affairs, the word of God is immutable and the promise of 1 Chronicles 22:9 must stand.

Probably only Bathsheba and Nathan knew of that solemn compact; and, knowing it, they at once took action. It is not enough that God should make a promise to His people; they must claim its fulfillment and put themselves at His disposal, that it may be fulfilled through them. The ancient prediction that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord is true, but we must pray for and hasten its advent.

Verses 28-40

AN OINTING THE CHOSEN ONE

1 Kings 1:28-40

David aroused himself and acted with commendable prudence and celerity. The crisis required promptness of decision and energy in execution. The whole nation was waiting to know the king's will regarding the succession to the throne, and David left no doubt as to his choice. His orders were quickly carried out by Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah, and the royal action was also endorsed by popular acclaim.

What tumultuous joy burst over Jerusalem when Solomon was enthroned! The earth rang again with jubilant shouts which struck terror among the guests at Adonijah's feast. But all such opposition shall be forgotten in that day for which the whole creation-groaning in travail, Romans 8:22 -waits: when Jesus shall be manifested, and those who love Him shall be manifested with Him in glory, Colossians 3:4. Then we shall hear that new song, in which ten thousand times ten thousand voices shall acknowledge that Jesus is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. He must reign! Revelation 5:12.

Verses 41-53

JUSTICE AND BROTHERHOOD THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE STATE

1 Kings 1:41-53

According to popular usage, Adonijah was the rightful heir to the throne. He was handsome and kingly in appearance and behavior. He was also in his prime, while Solomon was just out of his teens. So plausible was his address that the nation was bewildered, and old retainers of David's throne were seduced. We are reminded in all this of the god of this world, 2 Corinthians 4:4, who blinds the eyes of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious knowledge of God should shine in upon them.

Solomon displayed remarkable clemency in dealing with Adonijah. He was willing to let bygones be bygones. He promised that if Adonijah proved himself a worthy man, no harm should befall him. But as the following chapter records, the evil that wrought in Adonijah came out in a further plot to secure the throne, and he paid the death penalty. Let us see to it that we walk, not according to the course of this world or the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, but, remembering that we have been quickened together with Christ and made to sit with Him in heavenly places, let us walk worthy of our high calling

1 KINGS 2 THE DEATH OF DAVID

1 Kings 2:1-11 David's charge and death. --

With all its faults it had been a great life. The clouds had passed away and the sun shone out as it westered. There was no faltering in the tones of the voice that gave its farewell charge. Though he was in the valley of the shadow, he feared no evil -- God was with him. The dying man spoke, not only by the inspiration of God's Spirit, but as epitomizing his own experiences; and it is good to ponder these strong and noble words. To be strong in God's might; to quit oneself as a man; to keep God's charge; to walk in His ways; to keep His statutes and commandments -- such is the pathway of prosperity and peace. When once God has passed His word, years may intervene; but it shall be even as He has said if only we, on our part, fulfil the conditions on which His promise is based.

At first it might appear as if David carried to the grave, feelings of bitter hatred to the men whom he named to Solomon. But we must not forget that he spoke as much as a politician as a man. He saw that they constituted a grave source of danger to the public peace, and therefore warned Solomon against them. Nor were his prognostications mistaken; for as this chapter shows, each of them was discovered in acts of treachery, for which, rather than because of David's injunctions, they suffered death, What a comment on Psalm 55:23!

1 Kings 2:12-46 The fate of traitors. --

Adonijah, when David was dead, revived his attempt to gain the throne. To have received one of David's wives would have given him a claim for something more. The request was probably the first of a series of moves, concocted by himself and his accomplices. They made a tool of Bathsheba, who, as the king's mother, would have special weight with him. She apparently did not see through the plot; but Solomon did. And though he paid her exemplary respect (1 Kings 2:19-20), he steadfastly refused her request, and proceeded to take the life of Adonijah, who had prompted it.

Abiathar's deposition, in fulfillment of an ancient prediction (1 Sam. 2:31), and the death of Joab, who had been guilty of atrocious murders, still further weakened the party of disaffection (1 Kings 2:26-36). Notice Joab's vain attempt to find safety at the altar (1 Kings 2:28-31). He reminds us of those who, notwithstanding their unconfessed sins, think to gain exemption from punishment by external rites. The cross itself will not save if we have not the spirit of the cross within, contrite and penitent, believing and forgiving. Shimei broke the condition on which his life depended, and died by the hand of Benaiah (1 Kings 2:36-48). (See Proverbs 25:5.)

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE NEW KING

1 Kings 2:1-9

1 Chronicles 28:1-21; 1 Chronicles 29:1-30 should be read as coming between this and the preceding chapter. It was with a ripe knowledge of life that David urged Solomon to keep God's charge, to walk in His ways and do His commandments, as the sure road to prosperity. The guiding-star of David's life- 2 Samuel 7:25 -shone over him in death. God never goes back on a word that he has once spoken. He continues His word-only we must walk before Him in obedience and faith, that it may have free course.

At first sight, we might suppose that the old king cherished bitter feelings against those named in this parting charge; but it should be remembered that he speaks here from a public, rather than a private, standpoint. He knew that these men constituted a grave peril to the peace and stability of the State; and indeed his fears were abundantly justified, for each of them was discovered in acts of treachery, on account of which, and not because of David's words, he suffered death. David held that the claims of gratitude were not less binding than those of justice; hence his warm recommendation of Barzillai. "Show thyself a man" was good advice to a youth called to rule in turbulent times.

A FOOLISH AND FATAL PETITION

1 Kings 2:10-25

So David's troubled life came to a close, but he has never ceased to lead the praises of the saints.

At the very beginning of his reign Solomon was confronted by a difficult problem. There was so close a connection in public opinion between the title to the crown and the possession of a deceased monarch's harem, that it would have been impossible to grant Adonijah's request without giving strong encouragement to his pretensions. Solomon treated Bathsheba with profound respect, but his love for her did not blind him to his duty to his realm, Proverbs 20:26.

Notice that solemn declaration, "As Jehovah liveth," 1 Kings 2:24. It was common to the godly of those days. See 1 Kings 17:1. They would not use the phrase lightly nor flippantly, but with a profound realization of standing in the presence of God. Let us recall those words of our Lord, "As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father," John 6:57, and let us draw daily on His life, so that we may live-yet not we, but he in us and we in Him, Galatians 2:20.

Verses 26-35

PAYING PENALTY FOR BLOODY DEEDS

1 Kings 2:26-35

The removal of Abiathar from the office of high priest and the execution of Joab quenched the last faint hopes of the house of Saul. In the case of Abiathar, note the remarkable fulfillment of the divine prediction, 1 Samuel 2:31-35. God does not fail to keep His word, whether of threatening or of promise.

Joab fled to the altar. Men who, throughout their life, have disregarded or despised religion will often turn to it in their extremity. Those who blaspheme when the seas are smooth, will be the first to cry for mercy when the storm-winds lash the waters into foam.

Joab's attempt to find mercy through the altar was futile; but no sinner ever flees to the Cross in vain. If he fulfills the conditions of repentance and faith, the sword of the avenger cannot touch him there. If we confess and forsake our sins, and humbly trust in the mercy of the Redeemer, no weapon that is formed against us can prosper, and every tongue that rises in judgment is condemned. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord," Isaiah 54:17.

Verses 36-46

PRESUMING AND PERISHING THEREFORE

1 Kings 2:36-46

Shimei broke the one condition on which his life had been given back to him, and could have no just cause of complaint against the king. It may be argued that his offense was a trifling and excusable one, but we must remember that it was committed not only against the royal commandment, but against the oath of God, 1 Kings 2:43. By this one act he forfeited all claim upon Solomon's clemency.

We are here reminded of the parable of the two debtors in Matthew 18:28, etc. The debtor who owed the most had been released, and we naturally look to see the forgiven man's glad forgiveness of his brother, who was, in turn, indebted to him. But, so far from forgiveness, there was rough retaliation. This canceled the first offer of pardon and it was withdrawn. So this act on the part of Shimei was fatal in its effect. The Jews were doubtful as to the forgivableness of presumptuous sins, and our Lord also taught that there is a sin against the Holy Spirit which cannot be forgiven. May God's Holy Spirit Himself preserve us from this!

1 KINGS 3 SOLOMON'S WISDOM

1 Kings 3:1-4 Solomon's marriage. --

More than a year before he had married Naamah, an Ammonitess, the mother of Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:13). Shadows soon began to gather on the fair dawn. The marriage with Pharaoh's daughter was not absolutely forbidden, as alliances with the Canaanites were; but it was very inopportune. Was this the theme of Psalm 45? There are two significant onlys in the second and third verses. But these reservations may have been due to the want of a proper temple, in which the people might observe their religious rites. Solomon's love to God, and his appropriate conduct, are delightful gleams of promise.

1 Kings 3:5-15 Solomon's choice. --

Solomon had deeply pondered the lessons of David's life. He had seen that God's great kindness had been shown on the conditions of David's truth, righteousness, and uprightness of heart; and that God had kept His great kindness for His servant. And it was on this that he founded his own requests and trust. So may the religious life of the parent become a priceless legacy to the child. It is to those who count themselves as little children that God reveals things hidden from the wise and prudent, and shows Himself strong. Happy is the man, who, in the presence of a great responsibility, can say, "I am but a little child; I know not" (1 Kings 3:7).

To each of us, as we abide in Jesus, the gracious words come, "Ask what I shall give thee;" (See 1 John 5:15). The only limitations are those imposed by our faith or our capacity to receive. Happy are we if we seek not our own, but Christ's! When we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things else are added. When we are set on doing God's work, we may claim with confidence the special gifts needed for its effective doing; and God will bestow, not these alone, but all else we require, exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly:"

1 Kings 3:16-28 Solomon's wisdom

How could so difficult a case as this be decided, when no witnesses could be called on either side? The proposal to divide the child revealed the mother's heart. Better lose her babe than that it should die. It appealed to the great instincts of the human heart, and struck a responsive chord throughout all Israel, as the story of the incident spread from lip to lip. "The people feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him" (1 Kings 3:28). Bishop Hall, commenting on the incident, says, "Satan, that hath no right to the heart, would be content with a piece of it; God, that made it all, will have either the whole or none."

THE YOUNG KING'S WISE CHOICE

1 Kings 3:1-15

The chapter opens doubtfully. The affinity with Pharaoh, and the two onlys of 1 Kings 3:2-3 are not promising. See Deuteronomy 12:13-14. Yet there were hopeful features in Solomon's love for God, and the devotion and obedience by which it was proved. It remained, however, to be seen, which of these influences was to triumph in the outworking of his character. That is always the most urgent, question in life. With too many the early dew and morning cloud pass away, leaving no trace, Hosea 6:4.

There is an inner wisdom which is of the heart rather than of the head, and which God's Spirit bestows on those who love Him. Having this, we possess the key to all things in heaven and on earth. See 1 Corinthians 2:5, etc. When a man seeks first the Kingdom, all else is added, Matthew 6:33. Only the man who delights in God can be trusted with the gratification of his heart's desires, Psalms 37:4.

Live deep in God. Do not be dazzled or fascinated by outward things. Be concerned to know God's will and become the organ of His purpose. He will add to you all else that is needful for the fulfillment of your life-course.

Verses 1-28

A DISCERNING JUDGMENT

1 Kings 3:16-28

The incident gave convincing proof of the gift of wisdom. This is the most esteemed endowment of an Eastern potentate, who is called upon to arbitrate in cases that defy the labored processes of law and precedent. How could so difficult a case be decided? There were no witnesses on either side. But Solomon appealed to the instincts of a mother's love. The proposal to divide the child at once revealed the mother, who would rather expose herself to a life of anguish than see her child suffer or its life extinguished.

Bishop Hall, commenting on this incident, says, "Truth demands entireness; falsehood is satisfied with less. Satan, who has no right to the heart, is content with a piece of it; God, who made the heart, will have either all or none."

But surely there is a still deeper lesson. When we truly belong to Christ, sharing His nature and having fellowship in His Kingdom, we shall live in quick sympathy with everything that touches His honor. The child of God instinctively winces whenever his Father's character is challenged, or a foul suggestion is made to his own soul. This is evidence of sonship.

1 KINGS 4 A GLORIOUS KINGDOM

In the previous chapter an incident was given to show how Solomon was endowed with special wisdom; here further proof is given of his unparalleled riches and honor.

1 Kings 4:1-21 His internal administration. --

The scribes or secretaries; the recorder or annalist; the commander-in-chief; the chief of the officers; the confidential minister, adviser, or friend of the king -- all are carefully enumerated. The twelve officers seem to have been charged to collect the revenues for the royal treasury, which in the East are generally paid in the produce of the soil. Each provided maintenance for the king from his district for one month in the year. It was evidently a time of great prosperity and joy (1 Kings 4:20).

But from Solomon we turn to a greater than he. Who can measure the unsearchable riches of Christ! What roll-call can contain the names of those who have served Him faithfully, and are now gathered around His throne! How happy and safe are they who own Him as their King! "Eating and drinking and making merry" (1 Kings 4:20). (See Ephesians 5:19.)

1 Kings 4:22-28 His provision and magnificence. --

From the river Euphrates to the Philistines were the borders of the Kingdom, which at this time realized the extent predicted to Abraham (Gen. 15:18). Tiphshah was on the western bank of the Euphrates, and Azzah was Gaza on the Philistines' border. Thirty measures of fine flour would be equal to two hundred and forty bushels. Instead of forty thousand stalls (probably an error in transcription), read four thousand, as in 2 Chronicles 9:25.

So Christ shall have dominion from the river to the uttermost ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before Him: and the uttermost parts all contribute to the magnificence of His reign (Isa. 60). All things are ours, because we are His.

1 Kings 4:29-34 His marvellous endowments. --

What is here said of Solomon has its abundant counterpart in our blessed Lord. There is nothing in our lives, small as a hyssop, that escapes His notice. And there is no problem so perplexing that He cannot solve it. He not only speaks of all the abundant animal creation; but He speaks to each, and they serve His will. And as we read Psalm 72, we feel that its marvellous portraiture is only perfectly realized in the Prince of the kings of the earth.

A PROSPEROUS NATION

1 Kings 4:1-7;

What a picture is here given of national contentment and prosperity! We can almost hear the gladsome voice of the myriad-peopled land, teeming with young life and laden with golden harvests. It was the summer of their national existence. The sacred scribe enumerates first the high officials of the court, then the daily provision of the king, his studies, and his fame. Abundant proof was yielded by all these circumstances to the manner in which God kept the pledges which had been made to David, his father.

Here is Solomon "in all his glory," but as we turn from him to the lowly Carpenter of Nazareth, who had nowhere to lay His head;

who found His friends among the poor; and who ultimately laid down His life a ransom for many, we realize that, even apart from His divine nature, His was the nobler ideal and the richer existence. "A greater than Solomon is here." Who can measure His empire or resources? What tongue can recount His wisdom? Happy and safe are they that sit at His table, hear His words, and are joint-heirs with Him in His Kingdom! Romans 8:17.

THE WISE KING'S GREAT PURPOSE

1 Kings 4:29-34; 1 Kings 5:1-6

David, before his death, had made great preparations for building the Temple, but had not been permitted to proceed with its construction. "Thou didst well that it was in thy heart," 2 Chronicles 6:8. God credits us with what we would have done, had it been in our power. But now war on every side had been exchanged for peace, and the time for temple-building had come. A great principle is here involved which has many applications.

It is true of the Church at large. When the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee had peace, it was edified; and as it walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it was multiplied, Acts 9:31. When the love of God reigns amid professing Christians, and they neither war against nor vex each other, then the world believes, and the very Hiram's help to build.

It is also true of the inner life. The days of peace are those in which the heart thrives. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and Hebrews 13:20. God is not in the earthquake nor in the fire, but in the "still small voice." Cultivate a quiet heart, as did Mary, at the feet of Christ. It will result in deeds to be spoken of throughout the whole world, Luke 10:39 and Matthew 26:13.

1 KINGS 5 HIRAM, KING OF TYRE

Before his death David made great preparations for the building of the Temple (1 Chron. 29:1-5). The time for commencing the work had at last arrived.

1 Kings 5:1-3 Times of peace. --

David had been prevented from executing his purpose, because he was a man of war and blood (1 Chron. 22:8). But, as God had promised, "a man of rest" was now on his throne. The name Solomon means peaceful God had given him rest. It is only in times of peace that the Temple of God can be built, whether in man's heart or in the world (Acts 9:31). It is the still heart that becomes the habitation of God. "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell." Times of temptation and difficulty are needed to brace us to endure hardship; but we grow most in days of calm and loving meditation.

1 Kings 5:4-12 Hiram. --

A lover of David; and through that love probably possessed of a faith in David's God. He was a Gentile, but he had an important function in the building of the Temple: indeed, much of its beauty and magnificence was due to him. Isaiah alludes to this as foreshadowing events still future (Isa. 60:10-13). And our Lord Himself, of whom Solomon was a type, permits them that are "far off" to come and build in the Temple of the Lord (Zech. 6:12-15). Every believer is a living stone in the Temple, and is called to fellowship with the Lord in its erection. How careful the historian is to fall back reverently and repeatedly on the Divine promise (1 Kings 5:12). Amid all the splendor of Solomon's realm, we can never forget the Divine purpose and promise to which all must be counted back. My soul, boast not of aught which thou hast; thou hast nothing which thou hast not received.

"Iy're gave skill and labor; Israel supplied food for the workmen as well as for Hiram's household. For twenty measures of pure oil (1 Kings 5:11), read twenty-thousand baths, as in 2 Chronicles 2:10.

1 Kings 5:13-18 Solomon's levy. --

These were not Israelites, but tributary or conquered nations (1 Kings 9:20-22; 2 Chron. 2:17-18). This enforced service was extremely heavy and bitterly resented, as appeared afterwards (1 Kings 12:14-18). According to Josephus, Solomon enlarged the area of the top of the mount by raising a wall from the valley beneath, and filling the intervening space with earth. Immense stones still attest these mighty works. Be content to hew on the mountains, or shape in the valleys; so long as thou shalt do something for the building of the Church, which is the true Temple of God, and thy work shall abide for ever.

THE WISE KING'S GREAT PURPOSE

1 Kings 4:29-34; 1 Kings 5:1-6

David, before his death, had made great preparations for building the Temple, but had not been permitted to proceed with its construction. "Thou didst well that it was in thy heart," 2 Chronicles 6:8. God credits us with what we would have done, had it been in our power. But now war on every side had been exchanged for peace, and the time for temple-building had come. A great

principle is here involved which has many applications.

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PREPARATIONS FOR THE GREAT TASK

1 Kings 5:7-18

It was good for Hiram and his Tyrians to be associated with the servants of Solomon. Together they hewed immense blocks of stone, some of which were thirty feet in length and six feet in breadth, and which still form foundations on the ancient Temple site. Together they hewed down and fashioned the cedar and fir trees on the slopes of Lebanon. May we not learn from this partnership that Gentiles are to be associated with Jews in that one holy Temple, which through the ages is growing into a habitation of God by His Spirit? Ephesians 2:21-22. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision.

The treaty between the two kingdoms was eminently wise, because they differed so widely—the one being pastoral, the other commercial. It was wise for Peter and John to enter into close friendship, and together ascend the steps to the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, Acts 3:1-3. Be content to be a hewer on the mountains, shaping rough blocks of granite, but, do something toward building the Temple of God, which arises slowly amid the wreck of all human structures.

1 KINGS 6 THE ERECTED TEMPLE

1 Kings 6:1 The time. --

Here is a chronological difficulty; there is some doubt as to the exact date (see Acts 13:20). The early years of Solomon's reign were spent in preparation. The kingdom needed to be settled, and the materials prepared. There must be times of subsoil work before there can be a harvest of results. Time is not wasted which is spent in preparation.

1 Kings 6:2-14 The house. -- The Temple was twice the size of the Tabernacle, ninety feet long by thirty feet broad, and forty-five feet high; the porch fifteen feet forward along the breadth. "The walls narrowed as they ascended, by sets-off of about eleven inches on each side, which received the flooring-joists, as no cutting was permitted on the sacred building." It was built on the plan given by God to David (1 Chron. 28:11-19); and was a type, first, of the body of the believer (1 Cor. 3:16), and, lastly, of the whole Church of God (Eph. 2:21, 22). Each of these is God's dwelling-place. There is no need to seek for God in any material structure, or even in heaven -- He is within.

The silence in which the Temple was reared was very significant. Like some tall palm, growing amid the silence of the desert, that wonderful building rose on the summit of Zion. The stone was made ready at the quarry. Thus all true work in the world is being done still. But how reassuring the promise which broke in on the heart of Solomon, that God would dwell there, and not forsake His people Israel.

1 Kings 6:15-38 The furniture. --

The stone walls were lined with cedar, and this was covered with gold. The Holy of Holies called (1 Kings 6:16) the oracle -- was a perfect cube of thirty-five feet. The cherubim that stood erect within were seventeen feet high, made of olive wood, and covered with gold. The house was for God, and so demanded the best of everything. It took seven years to finish. Can we wonder therefore that the Church has taken so many centuries for its erection, and is not yet complete?

THE PLAN OF THE LORD'S HOUSE

1 Kings 6:1-13

The Temple was twice the size of the Tabernacle—ninety feet long by thirty feet broad, and forty-five feet high. The plan had been given to David by revelation, 1 Chronicles 28:11-12. Seven years and a half were consumed in its erection. It was completed in sacred silence, 1 Kings 6:7. The awful sanctity of the shrine would have been violated if its construction had been marred by the harsh and violent sounds that generally accompany the mason's toil. "Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprang." In nature, God works so silently that we do not realize His activities.

The central motive was to provide a place worthy to be called the house of God. Israel was now ruled by a king, but he was viewed

as the organ and instrument of Jehovah. It was fitting, therefore, that the King of kings should have a dwelling-place among the people of Israel. The tabernacle of God was with men. He dwelled with them on the earth. The Temple was, moreover, the type, first of the body of Jesus, John 2:21; then of each believer, 1 Corinthians 3:16; and lastly of the whole Church, Ephesians 2:21-22. Each of these is the dwelling-place of God, and the innermost chamber-the Holy of Holies-is meant to be the throne-room of the Shekinah of His presence, Leviticus 16:2.

Related Resource: Study of Shekinah

THE ORACLE IN THE MIDST

1 Kings 6:14-28

In the Temple the general design of the Tabernacle was perpetuated by the division between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, but there were several additions. For instance, there was a lofty porch in front of the Temple, beneath which the priests passed to the entrance. Also, on the other three sides were rooms, built one above the other in three stories. They were needed for storage purposes.

Inside no stones were visible-all was of gilded cedar, olive, and cypress wood, variously carved and tapestried by embroidered hangings. It was "exceeding magnificent." The Holy of Holies was plunged in darkness, save as the Shekinah shone from the mercy-seat over the Ark and between the cherubim. Over this venerable relic of the Wilderness pilgrimage, Solomon set up two cherubim. Each was ten cubits high, and their outstretched wings, which touched each other above the Ark, also touched the walls on either side. These symbolized the highest forms of creature-life, reverently attendant upon their Creator.

CARVED OVERLAID FINISHED

1 Kings 6:29-38

The meaning of 1 Kings 6:31 is uncertain. We gather that the door of the inner shrine was made of wild-olive wood and in two parts, and that it occupied a fifth of the cedar partition which separated the two chambers. This wooden door was carved with cherubim, palm-trees, and open flowers, and was overlaid with gold. One part was always open, but the interior was concealed from view by a veil of blue, purple, and crimson, 2 Chronicles 3:14. In front of this were hung festoons of golden chains. Thus it was signified that the way into the Holiest was not then open. But we have boldness to enter, through the new and living way which Jesus consecrated for us. The surrendered will, the cleansed life, the meek and humble faith-these are the path, Hebrews 10:19-20.

The erection occupied seven and a half years, and the completed Temple stood for upward of four centuries, until destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The construction of character, after God's ideal, may take long, but it advances to completion. First the stone, hewn with difficulty; then cedar and olive; lastly gold.

1 KINGS 7 SOLOMON'S PALACE

1 Kings 7:1-12 Solomon's palace. --

This building was probably called "the house of the forest of Lebanon," because of the immense amount of cedar used in its construction. It, with the house for Pharaoh's daughter, was probably one vast pile of buildings. Note the porch of pillars (1 Kings 7:6), the porch of judgment (1 Kings 7:7), his own house, with its inner porch (1 Kings 7:8). It may be remarked that the stonework was equally excellent on the inside, though covered with cedar, as on the outside (1 Kings 7:9); and in the formation, though out of sight, as in the superstructure, God sees, and our most hidden work should be done in His sight, as to Him.

1 Kings 7:13-14 Hiram. --

His mother probably belonged to Dan (2 Chron. 2:14), and her first husband to Naphtali (1 Kings 7:14). "The head of a Tyrian, and the heart of an Israelite"; God uses all.

1 Kings 7:15-22 The brazen pillars. --

Each was twenty-seven feet high, and eighteen feet in circumference, and the capitals seven and a half feet high. Here and in Jeremiah 52:21, the height of the pillars alone is given; in 2 Chronicles 3:15, that of the pedestals on which they stood is included. They were elaborately ornamented, and stood in the temple porch. Their names spoke to every priest, as he entered on his ministry. Jachin, "He shall establish or prepare." Boaz, "In Him is strength;" In worship and warfare, amid all life's changes, we need the prepared and the strong heart.

1 Kings 7:23-26

The molten sea was substituted for the laver. It was called a sea because of its immense size. Its contents would be equal to fourteen thousand gallons. We need not only the blood of the Altar, but the water of the Word: not only the sacrifice of the cross, but the washing of the feet -- as in John 13 -- from the daily defilement of the way. The same lesson is taught in the ten/avers used for washing the burnt-offerings (1 Kings 7:27-40). Our acts of consecration need cleansing; our prayers, the sweet incense of Christ's merit.

Elaborate details are given of the workmanship of the bases on which the lavers stood. They were on wheels, so as to be easily moved from one part of the ample court to the other, as required (2 Chron. 4:6). Christ comes to where we are in need of Him.

1 Kings 7:41-51 The immeasurable weight of material. --

"The weight was not searched out" (47, R.V.). So is it with the unsearchable riches of Christ. Even the hinges and snuffers in Christian service should be of gold, derived from Him. You cannot weigh up God's grace; nor our hope and joy. They are unspeakable. They pass knowledge. As you leave the outer courts and go ever deeper, you find that brass is left for gold. Always from grace to grace; from strength to strength; from glory to glory.

OTHER SPLENDID STRUCTURES

1 Kings 7:1-12

Solomon's house took nearly twice as long to build as did the Temple, because there was not the same urgency for it. His house and that for the queen were probably built around large open courts, and stood, after the manner of the East, on either side of the central hall where public business was transacted.

The royal hall in Jerusalem was called the "House of the Forest of Lebanon," because its many pillars resembled a forest of cedar wood. In front of this building was a colonnade, and in front of this again, the King's Gate.

It is more than likely that the area of Mount Zion was greatly enlarged by walls built up from the valley and filled in with earth. This furnished room for the many splendid buildings named in this paragraph. Traces of these cyclopean walls can still be seen. In order to estimate the real value of all this splendor we have only to turn to the earliest chapters of Ecclesiastes, where we read how little it satisfied the hunger of Solomon's soul. He turned away from it all, as unsatisfied as the prodigal from the husks of the swine. We were made for God and only God can suffice

PILLARS OF SECURITY AND STRENGTH

1 Kings 7:13-26

Hiram, the artificer, was remarkably gifted. From his father he had inherited all the genius of Tyre, while on his mother's side he was of the tribe of Naphtali and thus inherited the religious genius of the Hebrew people. The twin pillars were made of the brass taken from the king of Zobah, 1 Chronicles 18:8-9. Each would stand to a height of forty feet. Their names were symbolical, and indicated their strength and durability. Wreaths of golden chainwork hung from the capitals, while beautiful ornaments of lily-work adorned the heads of these noble columns. Jachin-"he shall establish"-and Boaz-"in him is strength"-combined with the beauty of the lily-work, remind us that strength and beauty are in God's sanctuary and blend in the character of His people.

The molten sea was substituted for the ancient laver, Exodus 30:18. It was an immense circular vase, holding 20,000 gallons of water. Its brim was in the form of a lily and it stood on twelve brazen oxen. Water in abundance was needed for the cleansing of the courts; and our Lord has taught us in John 13:1-38 the necessity for constant washing if we would walk with God.

VASES AND LAVERS

1 Kings 7:27-39

In addition to the great molten sea, described in the previous verses, there were ten portable vessels, or vases, that ran on wheels, so that they could be pushed across the level marble floor to any part of the court where fresh cleansing water was required. Five of these lavers were placed on the right, and ten on the left, of the great brazen altar. Such things as belonged to the burned-offering they washed in them; but the sea was for the priests to wash in, 2 Chronicles 4:6.

We should carefully note the large provision made under the old Covenant for ceremonial washings. How precise is this account of these vessels! Does it not give weight to that injunction: "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord"? Isaiah 52:11. This passage reminds us of the infinite purity of God, who charges His angels with folly, Job 4:18, and in whose sight the heavens are not clean, Job 15:15. As our Lord said to His disciples: "He that is clean needs... to wash his feet," John 13:10. Every act of ours, even though we are priests unto God, needs to be cleansed and sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, Acts 6:4.

VESSELS OF BRASS AND OF GOLD

1 Kings 7:40-51

As we pass from the outward to the inward part of the sanctuary, brass gives place to gold. The nearer we come to God's throne in the Holy of Holies, the more costly and magnificent everything must become. Even snuffers, hinges, and spoons must be of gold. God's highest service calls for our best in the least things that pertain to it.

The enumeration of ornaments and utensils in brass and gold, leads to the announcement that Solomon gave up counting the weight, and that the weight of the brass could not be found out. The r.v. margin says, "was not searched out." In this there is shadowed forth "the unsearchable riches of Christ," Ephesians 3:8. You cannot weigh them up. They defy calculation. It is only when you get the accumulated experience of all the saints that you can comprehend the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, Ephesians 3:18. See to it that you grow in the grace and in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord, 2 Peter 3:18. Let there be a sensible advance into the deep things of God. For wood bring stones, for stones iron, for iron brass, and for brass gold, Isaiah 60:17. And may we all leave a finished building behind us when we pass on to see the King!

1 KINGS 8 THE TEMPLE DEDICATION

1 Kings 8:1-13 The Temple dedicated. --

The Feast of Tabernacles, which was held in the seventh month (Lev. 23:34), was blended with this solemn festival: or perhaps the one feast immediately followed the other (1 Kings 8:65). All Israel in festive attire welcomed the ark to its abiding place, with sacrifices that could not be numbered. The Priests bare it; for the Levites, by whom this duty had been performed, were not permitted to enter the Holy of Holies.

There is rare joy in the heart, when He, of whom the ark was a type, with its blood-stained propitiatory, takes up His abode there. Then the glory-cloud fills the whole being, and there is no longer any part dark; but the spirit, soul, and body -- the Holy of Holies, and the outer court -- are all infilled. This is to be sanctified wholly. Thus the whole nature may be preserved blameless (1Th 5:23).

Related Resource: Study of Shekinah

The budding rod and the pot of manna had disappeared. They were the symbols of a life that had passed away. But the Holy Law was there. In our most rapturous experiences we shall never be able to get away from the need of loving meditation on God's Word.

1 Kings 8:14-21 The people blessed. --

Solomon recited the chain of incidents that had conducted to that august moment. Each link is worthy of notice, especially the clause which declares that though David was not permitted to carry his pious intention into effect, it was yet accepted. "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart" There are many who desire to devote their lives to God as missionaries or ministers, but are hindered by death, or home-ties, or other considerations. But they are credited before God, not only with the desire, but with the fact. In the seed He beholds the perfected plant.

1 Kings 8:22-54 The prayer of intercession and consecration. --

He began by standing (1 Kings 8:22), but in the eager pursuit of his entreaties, he found his way to his knees (1 Kings 8:54). Familiarity with God begets reverence (Heb. 12:28). All prayer should contain a large proportion of adoration. What scope we have for this as we meditate on God's faithfulness (1 Kings 8:24), and His promises (1 Kings 8:25)! In prayer, God's children should quote and claim the promises. Let us also be minute in prayer, passing step by step through the needs of our life, and asking appropriate help. The vindication of righteousness (1 Kings 8:31); defeat (1 Kings 8:33); drought (1 Kings 8:35); pestilence (1 Kings 8:37); the case of the stranger (1 Kings 8:41); captivity in a strange land (1 Kings 8:46) -- these will suggest counterparts in all lives. But in each case there had to be confession, directed towards that place where the blood was shed and the priesthood burnt sweet incense -- so in our case there is no forgiveness, save through the sacrifice and intercession of Jesus Christ. There are some notable expressions in this prayer: "The plague of the heart" (1 Kings 8:38), "The furnace of iron" (1 Kings 8:51), and so on.

1 Kings 8:55-66 Thanksgiving and sacrifice. --

As God had not failed, so they might reckon on His being true. This reckoning God to be faithful to do what He has promised is the after-glow of true prayer; and then there is the obvious condition on our side of the perfect heart. In considering the great numbers of victims sacrificed, let us not forget, that though all was offered to God, only a small part was burnt on the altar; the rest was eaten. It was needful to make provision for the immense multitudes of guests.

THE TEMPLE FILLED WITH GLORY

1 Kings 8:1-11

When the Temple was finished it was dedicated in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles. All Israel in its most festive attire welcomed the Ark to its resting-place, with sacrifices and offerings that defied calculation. The budding rod and manna had gone from the Ark, because they belonged to a stage of experience which had passed away, just as we have to put away the things of our childhood; but the holy Law was there, 1 Kings 8:9, because, in our most ripened experience, we need to build and meditate on the eternal righteousness which is the foundation of God's throne. The staves of the Ark were drawn out, because this was God's resting-place forever. See Psalms 132:1-18.

How comforted Solomon was when he saw the glory cloud settle down, like a bird on its nest! It was the sign of the divine approval and acceptance, Exodus 40:34. May that Presence fill the throne-room of our nature, that there may be no part dark, Luke 11:36, but that soul, mind, and strength may be full of love and light.

Related Resource: Study of Shekinah

THE BUILDER'S DEDICATION ADDRESS

1 Kings 8:12-21

Solomon, standing on the great platform within, view of the vast, thronging multitudes, recited the steps that had led them to that illustrious hour. His whole speech was of God's dealings. Why do we not speak of God more often, as the most important factor in life! It is a blessed thing to trace the connection between what God has promised and what He has fulfilled, 1 Kings 8:15. "The Lord hath performed His word that He spoke," 1 Kings 8:20. Many of us could say that, and we ought to say it.

Solomon brought out clearly in this address that God took account of David's good intentions. "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart," 1 Kings 8:18. Circumstances may prevent the execution of a desire and a purpose with which, years ago, our hearts were filled. God, however, will never forget it, and will see that the project is carried out in some other way-perhaps by another instrument. It was well that it was in thine heart to become a foreign missionary, though the need of widowed mother, or the claims of home, rendered literal obedience impossible. Thou shalt have the missionary's place and crown hereafter, for it was in thine heart.

Verses 22-32

GOD GREATER THAN ANY TEMPLE

1 Kings 8:22-32

Solomon's different attitudes are specially mentioned. First he stood with hands outspread, 1 Kings 8:22; then, as indicated by 1 Kings 8:54, he came to his knees. These attitudes show expectant faith, as well as profound humility and reverence. The more we know of God, and experience the blessing of fellowship with Him, the lower becomes our self-estimate. Confidence in God always enhances reverence, Hebrews 12:28. The man who is lowest on his knees before God stands most erect to bless others, 1 Kings 8:55.

The prayer began with an ascription of glory to God. In this it resembles the Lord's Prayer; which begins with Hallowed be thy Name. Compare Psalms 115:1. Let us form our own prayers on this model. Then it acknowledges God's fidelity to His promises. As He speaks, so He fulfils. But it is our part always to say with Solomon, Keep that which thou hast promised, 1 Kings 8:25, and Let thy word be verified, 1 Kings 8:26. When we stand on this sure footing with God, we can look out on all possible ills that may confront us-whether, drought, famine, pestilence, defeat, or captivity-and be absolutely sure that he will hear, answer, and forgive. Heaven cannot contain Him, but he dwells in the contrite heart, Isaiah 57:15.

Verses 33-43

APPEALS TO THE GOD OF MERCY

1 Kings 8:33-43

Solomon's prayer is evidently based on the book of Deuteronomy, and tends to confirm the old belief that, with the rest of the Pentateuch, this book came from the hand of Moses. In 2 Chronicles 20:7-9, Jehoshaphat pleaded this prayer as though it were substantially a promise, and therefore all needy souls who find their case described here, may plead it on their own behalf.

Notice how frequently Solomon speaks of prayer, even in the land of captivity and exile, as being-directed toward the Temple, 1

Kings 8:38, etc. It reminds us of the grave need of maintaining unimpaired our spiritual frontage. It has been truly said that the direction of the soul's outlook is the preliminary question in religion. Whether our home looks south or north; whether it faces sunless alleys or sunny fields, is an important physical consideration with us: It is likewise of great importance that the mind or soul should face the right way. The difference between spiritual health and disease is very largely one of the way in which we front. For us, Temple, Altar, and Mercy-Seat are all summed up in Jesus Christ. Our life must be spent looking unto Him, Hebrews 12:2.

Verses 44-53

A PLEA FOR NATIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

1 Kings 8:44-53

How true it is that there is no man that sinneth not, 1 Kings 8:46! Only one that ever walked this earth was holy, guileless, and undefiled, Hebrews 7:26. When we fail to watch and abide in Christ, we are easily carried into captivity. How many of God's children are thus taken captive! They are in bondage to some besetting sin, to some evil habit, to some degrading business, or to some unseemly alliance. Like blind Samson, they grind in the prison-house.

Let any such, who long for freedom, take home to their souls the infinite comfort which God's Word affords. Let them bethink-themselves of the holy and blessed days of the past. Let them repent, that is, in their heart and in practice put away the evil thing which is the outward badge of their sad condition. Let them turn again to the Savior, who has passed into the Holiest, that He may intercede in the presence of God for us all. There will be an immediate response. God will hearken in all that they call unto Him for, will forgive transgression and sin, and will restore His people to become again His own inheritance for His glory and praise.

Verses 54-66

PETITION AND SACRIFICE

1 Kings 8:54-66

The man, as we have seen, who kneels most humbly before God is empowered to bless the people in God's name. What an august and noble testimony the king bore: "There hath not failed one word of all His good promise," 1 Kings 8:56. Joshua had said that before Solomon, Joshua 23:14. Myriads have borne similar witness, and, as we are passing hence, we shall say the same. We have failed, but not God; we have left Him, but He has never cast us away. The mountains may depart and the hills remove, but He will not alter nor falter in His everlasting kindness. Let us ask Him to incline our hearts unto Him, 1 Kings 8:58.

Notice the r.v. marginal reading in 1 Kings 8:59 of the phrase, "as every day shall require"-*"the thing of a day in its day."* Whatever may be the requirement for any day, the abundance of grace needed is provided, but you must look up for it and use it. It is they who receive the abundance of grace that reign in life. But you cannot receive unless your heart is perfect with God, and you walk in His statutes and keep His commandments.

1 KINGS 9 GOD'S COVENANT WITH SOLOMON

1 Kings 9:1-9 God's second appearance. --

It is suggested that the dedication of the Temple did not take place until Solomon had finished his own house. There was nothing then to distract his mind, and no unfinished works on the great Temple-site. This second vision was intended to assure Solomon that his prayer was heard and the new Temple hallowed; and to declare the conditions on which both king and people might be assured of permanent prosperity.

As soon as we yield ourselves to God to be only His, He enters upon a possession, guaranteeing our security. Obedience to the least prompting of the Divine Spirit is an essential condition of blessedness and prosperity. Let us watch against indolence in the self-watch. It is true that we are not under the law, but under grace; but we are under the law to Christ.

1 Kings 9:10-14 Hiram's discontent. --

"Cabul" in the Phoenician tongue, signified displeasing. It was a pity, after all their cooperation, that there was any grievance between the two. But there is no security for human friendship unless it is based on the love of God.

1 Kings 9:15-28 Solomon's growing power. --

All great kings have been great builders. Baalath (1 Kings 9:18) is supposed by some to have been Baalbek, in the extreme north of Canaan; but more likely it was a town on the southern frontier. Tadmor, or Tamar, is supposed to have been Palmyra, midway between Damascus and the Euphrates, forming an oasis. The remnants of the Hittites that still lived among the Israelites were reduced to bondage; but the chosen people furnished the soldiers and officers of state.

It is significant to have this mention of mercantile marine at Ezion-geber. It was a strange outburst of national life which made the Jew a sailor, willing to undertake journeys to Ophir (India). But what visions of new worlds must those voyages to the barbaric splendor of India have excited! In 2 Chronicles 8:18 the weight of gold is fixed at four-hundred and fifty talents; perhaps the thirty talents went to defray the expenses of the voyage, the balance alone being paid into the royal treasury.

In these early years Solomon's piety seemed to keep pace with his success, and we learn of his public appearance three times yearly for the purposes of sacrifice (1 Kings 9:25).

A SEARCHING WORD TO THE WISE

1 Kings 9:1-14

God's second revelation of Himself to Solomon had a double object. In the first place, it assured the king that his prayer was heard and that the new building was accepted. It is always thus. When we yield ourselves to God, desiring to be His alone, He enters on possession, hallowing, infilling, and guaranteeing our security. In the second place, God laid down the conditions on which both king and people might be assured of permanent prosperity. We must be whole-hearted, not in the miles but in the steps of our daily walk. Obedience to the inner voice is essential. The child of God distinguishes his Father's voice from every other sound and call, because it is definite and unvarying.

It was a pity that, after such loyal cooperation, Hiram was disappointed with his recompense. Happy are they who, as they work for God, look for no reward from their fellows, because they are the servants of a Master whose generous gifts do not need to be eked out by additions from any other quarter. Do right, because it is right, and not because you are looking for any gift or reward from human hands.

PROSPERITY AND WEALTH

1 Kings 9:15-28

Solomon was a great builder and employed vast numbers of Canaanites, the old inhabitants of the land, as forced laborers. They performed the drudgery, while the Israelites filled the more honorable and lucrative posts. See Isaiah 60:10. There are Amorites and Perizzites in our lives. Let us not be mastered by them, but compel them to subserve our own growth in grace.

Millo was the key to the fortifications of Jerusalem; Hazor and Megiddo, Baalath and Tadmor guarded the northern frontier. On the extreme south, the navies visited distant realms, and returned laden with gold. Such were Israel's midsummer days. But as, in the latter days of summer, there is the faint odor of decay in the air, and we know that the autumn comes apace, so beneath all this splendor and imperial glory, as we turn to the earlier chapters of Ecclesiastes, we learn that decadence was at its heart.

1 KINGS 10 THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

1 Kings 10:1-13 The Queen of Sheba. --

Matthew 12:42 gives the spiritual lessons of this memorable visit. She heeded the report. She came to verify it. She had many questions -- questions for heart as well as head. We, too, are troubled with these; but for each of them there is a solution in Jesus, the "greater than Solomon." Too often men seem to suppose that we must stay away from Him till these questions are all answered, and only afterwards go to His feet. But at this rate we shall never go at all. We must travel to Him from the uttermost parts, and in the light of His face all mists and clouds will vanish.

This Eastern queen found that the half had not been told of Solomon's wisdom and prosperity. So when we come to Christ, His wisdom and goodness far surpass the power of men and angels to utter. The soul exults in the golden radiance of His love and grace, which are inexpressible. We sink in our own esteem, there is no spirit left in us; while we have ever enlarging conceptions of Christ. There, however, the likeness ends. She had to leave the magnificent monarch, congratulating those who ever stood in his presence; we, on the other hand, need never pass out of the presence-chamber of our King. Fed on His provision; living on His royal bounty; and satisfied with His goodness. He also gives all our desire, and "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

1 Kings 10:14-29 The glory of Solomon. --

he "ascent" (1 Kings 10:5) may have been a splendid aqueduct between Mount Zion and Mount Moriah. Almug trees, probably sandal-wood, brought from India (2 Chron. 9:10, 11). Tarshish is supposed to have been situated on the coast of Spain. The horses came up from Egypt in droves (1 Kings 10:28), in violation of Deuteronomy 17:16. There was a great temptation to trust in these as a means of defense rather than in Jehovah (Isa. 31:1). This magnificence furnishes materials on which the prophet constructs his conceptions of the latter-day glory of the coming King (Isa. 60).

“THE HALF WAS NOT TOLD ME”

1 Kings 10:1-13

Sheba, to the Jewish mind, was at the ends of the earth, Matthew 12:42. It probably lay in southern Arabia, fifteen hundred miles from Jerusalem. The queen brought munificent presents of spices, gold, precious stones, and sweet-scented wood. The last-named Solomon used for musical instruments and for stairs in his Temple and palace, 2 Chronicles 9:11. But the queen's heart was set on plying him with hard questions, for which she had sought in vain a satisfactory solution.

We may come to “a greater than Solomon,” Matthew 12:42. Our native country may lie far away, but He will receive us, and give us the right to live forever in His palace, listening to His words and beholding His face. Let us bring Him, as our gifts, the faith, love, and loyalty of our hearts. Above all, let us lay before Him our perplexities and questions. He may not immediately reveal an answer, as Solomon did, but will put His Spirit into our hearts. And having the anointing of the Spirit, we shall know all things, 1 John 2:27. Though the mind cannot grasp, the heart will be at rest. The Bible, as someone says, does not teach us philosophy, but makes us philosophers. Be sure to obtain and use your share of His royal bounty.

“SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY”

1 Kings 10:14-29

How dazzling is this description of Solomon's glory! And yet our Lord said that it was excelled by a single lily of the field, Matthew 6:28. Solomon's glory was put on from without; the real beauty is that which unfolds from within. If only your soul is planted in the soil of God's grace, it will array itself in the beauties of a holy life. The stainless robes are those which are washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Observe again-this was not the glory of June, but of October. Already the germs of disease were in Solomon's heart; already the autumn decay was in the air. The secret is told in the significant words of Nehemiah 13:26. Among many nations there was none like him and he was beloved of his God, but strange women were turning away his heart. It was a true statement that our Lord made concerning the rich, that with difficulty they enter the Kingdom. A holy man had good reason to pray earnestly for a young believer, who had suddenly come into a large estate.

The questions on, Sections 1-30, to be found on pages 177 and 178, will serve as a review at this point.

1 KINGS 11 DEATH OF SOLOMON

1 Kings 11:1-13 Declension and sentence. --

Solomon's fall was attributable to the influence of his wives, whom, in direct defiance of God's command, he had married from surrounding nations (Deut. 7:3-4). Strange women caused him to sin (Neh. 13:26). A wife will make or mar. How many of the greatest men have been ruined through their passions.

Temples rose in the holy city to heathen deities; and the sin was greatly aggravated in Solomon's case by the great privileges he had enjoyed. There was no help for it, but that he should be severely chastised. He had been specially pre-warned that such would be the case (2 Sam. 7:14); and the more privileged and honored we are, the more disastrous our fall, the more inevitable our sufferings. If God loved us less, He might spare us more. Because we are capable of such heights, He makes it impossible for us to rest contented in the bed of luxurious self-indulgence. He punishes us with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. All the while, however, His mercy does not depart from us; but lingers over us, as a father will listen at the closed door of his child's chamber to detect the first symptoms of broken-hearted sorrow.

A HEART TURNED AWAY FROM GOD

1 Kings 11:1-13

The practice of mixed marriages was in direct violation of the divine Law, Deuteronomy 7:3-4, and it led to idolatry. All around the Holy City arose heathen temples. It seems almost incredible that Solomon should have lent himself to such unblushing patronage of idolatry. His sin was aggravated by the great privileges he had enjoyed, 1 Kings 11:9, and there was no escape from chastisement, 2 Samuel 7:14. The more privileged we are, the more disastrous our fall, and the more inevitable the penalty. If God loved us less, He might be more sparing of the rod. We are often punished with the rod of men, that is, we suffer at their hands; but God does not cease to love us. The father will listen at the door of the room of the child whom he has been compelled to chastise to detect the first sign of broken-hearted grief.

It is sad to witness the break-up of a noble ship. Listen to the boom of the successive waves: “His heart was not perfect”... “Did that

which was evil"... "The Lord was angry"... "Behold, I will rend the kingdom." But out of loving regard to David's memory, one tribe was left. See 1 Kings 11:12; 1 Kings 11:32; 1 Kings 11:34; 1 Kings 11:38-39. Your children's children will benefit as the result of your consecrated life. God will not forget.

ADVERSARIES OF THE RECREANT KING

1 Kings 11:14-25

Two of the instruments of Solomon's chastisement are enumerated in this paragraph.

First, Hadad, the Edomite, 1 Kings 11:14-22. Notice the importance of a little child. All the male representatives of the royal family of Edom had perished; but in this child, the line was preserved and perpetuated, to be, through long years, a formidable menace to Israel. Never neglect a little child. You never know what good or ill may be hidden in a tiny bud-an Ingersoll or a Garfield, a Paine or a Wilberforce. Mark in this man Hadad the trace of those strange impulses which determine destiny. He could not assign the reason that led him to leave Egypt, but he knew he must go, 1 Kings 11:22. Thus migratory birds feel the call of southern lands.

Second, Rezon, also, hated Israel, 1 Kings 11:23-25. It is an awful thing when such hatred arises between two peoples. We as Christians must use all our power to arrest and allay it. Only love and good-will can guarantee a lasting peace. It was by these two human "rods" that God chastened Solomon. Let us live in such conformity to His will that he may not need to chasten us as individuals or as a nation. "Our God is a consuming fire!"

THE KINGDOM PROMISED TO HIS SERVANT

1 Kings 11:26-40

The opening chapters of Jeroboam's life were very promising. He sprang from the ranks of the toilers, but his business talent attracted the notice of Solomon, who set him over the forced labor which was levied from the great tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, Whether Jeroboam had entertained the prospect of rulership before the prophet met him, we cannot tell, but after that interview his whole life was altered. And if only he had observed the injunction of 1 Kings 11:38, he might have lifted Israel to a level of prosperity and glory that would have blessed the world. But, alas! he sinned, and made Israel to sin- 1 Kings 12:30; 1 Kings 13:34; 1 Kings 14:16; 1 Kings 16:2; 1 Kings 16:9; 1 Kings 16:26, etc.

When God has given you your place, do not devise things out of your own heart, in order to retain it, 1 Kings 12:33. The plans that Jeroboam laid to secure the stability of his throne led to its undoing, and covered his name with undying infamy. "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land." "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." "Thou maintainest my lot." Let those who feel compelled to do wrong in order to keep their business or position, dare to stand with God against the temptation. He will honor those who honor Him, 2 Samuel 2:30.

1 Kings 11:14-43 Adversaries and death. --

Hadad was first stirred up. He was prosperous and comfortable in Egypt; but he felt that mysterious prompting to go, he knew not why or where. We know not from where these strange movings come, or where they go; but we do well to follow them. "Let me go in any wise:" Then Rezon came (1 Kings 11:23); and lastly and most disastrously, Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:26). It would appear that the latter, a young man of great promise, was at the head of a large body of men, principally belonging to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and engaged on the royal works in Jerusalem.

It was thus at Ahijah, a native of Shiloh and a prophet, met him. The prophet had clothed himself with a new mantle, to give a more effective presentation of his message (1 Kings 11:29, R.V.). The taking away of ten tribes would leave two (1 Kings 11:32); but Simeon had by this time so lost his identity that it was practically absorbed into Judah. Solomon's attempt to murder Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:40) is in bitter contrast with the opening of his reign. He is said to have written the Book of Ecclesiastes after this; if this be so, we may trust that he became a penitent. But, in any case, it was a sad overcasting of a brilliant dawn.

THE WISE KING'S FOOLISH SON

1 Kings 11:41-43; 1 Kings 12:1-11

Solomon's reign had been splendid but very oppressive, and it was reasonable to ask for some relief. The people felt that the accession of the new king gave them their opportunity, and apparently they took the first step in this momentous crisis. We are expressly told that Rehoboam came to Shechem. If this mighty gathering had been called by himself or his court, the people would have had to come to him at Jerusalem. Here was the muttering of the rising storm.

There was much wisdom in the counsel of the older men: "Serve them... then they will be thy servants forever," This principle underlay the sacrifice of Calvary. "Thou art worthy to take the book, for thou wast slain," Revelation 5:9. It is because Jesus girded

Himself with humility and washed our sins in His own precious blood, that He has ascended to the throne, not only of God, but of our hearts and lives. And He has taught us, that whosoever would become great must begin by being the servant of all. The proud and lofty in this world are served often enough with the eye-service that gives superficial obedience for wages and rewards, Ephesians 6:6, but what is this compared with that which is yielded by gratitude and love!

1 KINGS 12 REHOBOAM

1 Kings 12:1-15 Rehoboam's accession. --

Solomon's reign had been splendid, but very oppressive; it was reasonable to ask for some relief. And there was much wisdom in the counsel of the old men: "Serve them, and they will be thy servants for ever" That is a true principle. It underlay the sacrifice of Calvary. "Thou art worthy to take the best, for Thou wast slain" It is because Jesus has girded Himself and washed our feet that we gladly bear the brand marks of His service for ever. But Rehoboam chose the counsel of the young men, who advised a more spirited policy. These young men had been educated with him, and were probably about the same age. He was forty. "The scorpion was a long and heavy scourge, weighted with spikes of metal"

1 Kings 12:16-24 The revolt of the ten tribes. --

Jeroboam suddenly found himself possessor of four-fifths of the land of Canaan, together with the sovereignty of Moab (2 Kings 1:1; 3:4). A resort to arms was forbidden. The Divine purpose was being performed, though the chief agents in executing it were probably unconscious of anything more than their own ambitions and plans. God makes the wrath of man praise Him, and the remainder He restrains (see also Acts 2:23).

1 Kings 12:25-33 The two calves. --

Jeroboam knew better than to attempt, by the setting up of the golden calves, to seduce the people from the spirituality of their worship. It was rather the worship of Jehovah under a material form as under the brow of Sinai (comp. 1 Kings 12:28 and Exod. 32:4). The introduction of new and false deities was left for Ahab's reign. But this worship of the golden calves was a distinct violation of the second commandment. Jeroboam was prompted in this matter, by distrust. Ahijah had clearly told him that, if he would be obedient, God would build him a sure house; but, not content with this, he attempted to make his position surer, and resorted to mere expediency to gain his ends. His endeavor was to make it needless for the people to go to worship at Jerusalem, by making shrines within his own territory.

Bethel was at the extreme south, Dan at the extreme north, of the new Kingdom. The Levites remained true to God (comp. 1 Kings 12:31 and 2 Chron. 11:13-14). Jeroboam even constituted himself a priest, and changed the sacred month (1 Kings 12:33). These expedients to consolidate his kingdom led to its overthrow, as we shall see.

1 KINGS 13 JEROBOAM

1 Kings 13:1-10 A startling prediction. --

"A man of God"; there is no higher designation than this! He came "by the word of the Lord" to utter the Divine disapproval at Jeroboam's inauguration of the new sacred month, and of his self-consecration as priest.

This prophecy (1 Kings 13:2) was given three-hundred and sixty years before it was fulfilled; it indicated that the kings of Judah should be faithful to the law of God, even at that then remote date. It was literally realized (2 Kings 23:15). The withering of Jeroboam's arm was a token of God's preserving care over His messenger; and the rending of the altar, marked the Divine confirmation of the prophet's words. And how significant! Our strength must wither, and our religious rites be flung to the earth as contemptible, unless our hearts are right with God.

What a noble answer was that which the prophet gave, when he told the king that a bribe of half the royal house could not induce him to eat a meal therein. This faithful obedience to God's commands stood in striking contrast to the time-serving conduct of Jeroboam. It taught that there could be no fellowship between God and His erring people.

1 Kings 13:11-19 A disastrous failure. --

This old prophet seems, like Balaam, to have had the gift of foretelling the future; but he was not a holy man. It is not easy to give reasons for his great desire to get his brother beneath his roof. Perhaps he had a vague longing for contact with one who enjoyed a fellowship with God which he had lost. But the unnamed prophet had no right to substitute the word of another, or even the voice of an angel, for the direct and authoritative message from God which had started him on his errand. When once we have heard the voice of God, we must not turn aside at the call of men who profess to be speaking under Divine influence. Each must be guided by his own revelation, and not another's.

1 Kings 13:20-34 A terrible death. --

God does not say "yea" and "nay." In Him there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. And they who act on the supposition that He is changeable will suffer inevitable and terrible results. The doom of the prophet must have spoken to Jeroboam's heart. For if God punished so immediately the man, who a little before had been such a resolute instrument of His will, how much more certainly would judgment descend on His people and their king!

It may be that this incident was similar to matters which are not directly told us, but which had transpired in Jeroboam's recent experience. He may have been deflected from the path of obedience by visions or voices through prophets who professed to speak by the voice of God. Hence the minuteness with which this story is told.

JUDGMENT UPON WORTHLESS WORSHIP

1 Kings 13:1-10

What a noble name for anyone to bear—a man of God! Yet we all might so bear the impress of God in our character that those who come in contact with us might feel that ineffable something which you cannot define, which does not need advertising, but which tells that the person who bears it is truly a child of God.

The altar by which Jeroboam expected to consolidate his kingdom was the cause of its overthrow and disaster, until at last Israel was carried into captivity. When we turn from the fountain of living waters and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water, we start on a course of unending disaster and loss.

Literal obedience to God is indispensable to those who would carry his messages. It was a fit and proper answer that the prophet, in the first instance, gave the king. He rightly told Jeroboam that he must abide by the exact terms of his commission, and that the bribe of half of Jeroboam's house would not induce him to tarry even so long as to take a meal at the royal table. This minute and rigorous obedience stood out in striking contrast to the conduct of Jeroboam. God is exact and requires exact obedience.

LED ASTRAY BY A FALSE MESSENGER

1 Kings 13:11-19

The unnamed prophet from Judah had received distinct instructions not to eat bread nor drink water while on his divinely-commissioned errand. He was therefore justified in refusing the royal invitation; and it would have been well with him had he also refused the invitation of the old prophet, who followed him with the persistent invitation to return with him to his house. But the younger prophet failed, because the older man professed to speak by divine warrant and because the invitation chimed in with his own inclinations. As he sat there under the oak, tired and hungry, he was only too willing to believe that the prophet's message was true, although it was altogether contrary to his own impression.

When God has spoken to us, let us not dare to turn aside on the advice of others, however good they seem, even though their proposals may be draped with a show of religious phraseology. God does not say Yea or Nay; but all His commands, like all His promises, are Yea and Amen in Christ. In Him is no variableness, nor shadow cast by turning.

SIGN UPON SIGN UNHEEDED

1 Kings 13:20-34

There is a tragic note in this paragraph. The man of God had performed God's errand bravely and well, and his words were verified by the result; but he perished as a castaway. See 1 Corinthians 9:27. If only he had obeyed God's word, as it came directly to himself, he might have been entrusted with many similar errands; but "Alas, my brother!" was a true elegy on the part of the man who had led to his downfall. How careful we should be never to dissuade a young soul from some heroic purpose which has formed itself in his imagination! Too many young men have perished on the threshold of their life-work, because older prophets have cried, "Spare thyself; have mercy on thy flesh."

God never goes back on His first instructions. If He has clearly spoken to your soul, refuse to take your marching-orders from others. No man, however aged or holy, has any right to intrude into the sacred dealings of God and the individual disciple. We may always detect the false voice, because its suggestions so exactly chime in with the weakness of our nature, in its desire to eat bread, drink water, and enjoy the society of our fellows.

1 KINGS 14 JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

1 Kings 14:1-6 The sickness of Abijah was co-incident with his father's sins (1 Kings 13:33).

When sorrow or death invades our homes, we do well to see if the Lord may not have a controversy with us (Hos. 5:13). Trouble will often remind us of our real friends and of God's servants. Jeroboam could do well enough with Ahijah in his prosperity; but in trial he passes by the priests he had made, and goes to the man of God, to whom he owed so much (1 Kings 11:31). How strange was the conception which expected that the prophet could look into the future, but could not look behind the disguise assumed by a visitor! Hypocrites are stripped of their garb in the sight of God, and receive their doom: "heavy tidings:"

This chapter is full of those results which disobedience and rebellion bring not to kingdoms only, but to hearts and homes. We veil ourselves under many disguises, but we do not deceive God; often we fail to deceive man. We are senseless enough to suppose that God can answer our questions and not read ourselves; can solve our problems and not understand us. But God is never mocked, and we reap as we have sown.

1 Kings 14:7-20 The prediction of coming disaster.

The king had thrown away marvellous opportunities. He had not only not followed in David's steps, but had misled the people by setting up the golden calves. This was intended as a clever artifice to establish his government, but it was the cause of its ruin. Vaunting ambition often over-reaches itself. To do right is the surest way to establishment (2 Chron. 16:9).

In the worst of families there is often one of God's children. Such are sometimes taken away from the evil to come. But it is a terrible thing for a home when God removes its salt and light.

It is an awful phrase which is indivisibly associated with Jeroboam's name, "He made Israel to sin" (1 Kings 14:16). Does it adhere to him on the other side the veil, which parts time and eternity? For certainly if Baxter was right when he expected another heaven for himself in the case of each of those who reached heaven through his means, so there will be another hell for each that has brought another toward that place. May we be preserved from laying stumbling-blocks or being such in others' ways!

1 Kings 14:21-23 Rehoboam's reign and death. --

His mother was "Naamah" (sweetness or beauty), but she was an Ammonitess. Twice we are told this (1 Kings 14:21-31), as if to emphasize and explain the disastrous influence she wielded over her son. What an awful and rapid descent from the purity and glory of the first days of Solomon! Wherefore "God gave them up" to Shishak. Sin ever weakens us, and causes God to withdraw His encircling presence.

How was the fine gold dimmed! Brass was but a poor substitute (1 Kings 14:27); and served as the outward evidence of the sad change for the worse in the spiritual condition of Israel. Mere traditional goodness, like that of David, cannot save us from the strong set of the current away from God; we need the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, in answer to the prayer, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Ps. 17:5).

THE BLIND PROPHET SEES JEROBOAM'S DOOM

1 Kings 14:1-16

How blind we become when we sin against our conscience! Each act of willful sin puts another shade on the window of the soul. "Their foolish heart was darkened," Romans 1:21. Surely if the prophet were able to predict the issue of this sickness, he would be able to penetrate the mother's disguise, although she brought only the gifts of a poor peasant woman. Jeroboam had devised this ruse, partly, because he did not wish the nation to know that he was consulting a prophet of Jehovah-an act which might invalidate his new temple and the calves, and also because he wanted to get a more favorable answer than that which he anticipated in case the prophet recognized the inquirer. We may disguise ourselves as we will, but we cannot cheat God, and no dissembling can ever turn away the arrow that speeds straight to the guilty heart.

Jewish historians say that the exception was made in Abijah's case, 1 Kings 14:13, because he interceded with his father that all Israelites who wished might be allowed to go to the feasts at Jerusalem, without being penalized. There is always discrimination in the divine judgments. How often God has brought beautiful lives out of foul surroundings, as the pure lily-cup out of a muddy pond!

SOUTH RIVALS WORTH IN SINNING

1 Kings 14:17-31

Rehoboam's mother's name signifies beauty, and she may have been attractive in her person; but we are twice told that she was an Ammonitess, as if to emphasize the disastrous influence which she exercised over her son, 1 Kings 14:21; 1 Kings 14:31. In the earlier part of the chapter, there are tender reminiscences of David-that he kept God's commandments, followed Him with all his heart, did what was right in His eyes. How dear is such a life to God! How He keeps it in remembrance! How He holds it up to veneration, notwithstanding a serious lapse! But this only serves by contrast to make the corruption of later times the more terrible.

The national sins compelled God to withdraw His envioning protection. He no longer went out with their armies. The deterioration in the metal from gold to brass is an apt illustration of how the fine gold of character had become dimmed, Lamentations 4:1. To what may we not come if the grace of God is withdrawn! Well may the Apostle beseech us not to receive it in vain! When corruption sets in, the best and ripest becomes the worst. Traditional goodness-that of our parents-cannot save the soul from the inevitable drift. We must have our personal anchorage in God!

1 KINGS 15 ASA'S GOOD REIGN

1 Kings 15:1-8 Abijam, King of Judah. --

We have a fuller account of this reign in 2 Chronicles 13. He was not wholehearted with God; but he was maintained in his kingdom for David's sake (Ps. 132:10, 11).

How long after David's sun had set did the light of his life glimmer over his house! (1 Kings 15:4) God keeps His covenant and mercy unto thousands of generations. We are probably all inheriting more than we know from the prayers and tears of those who have gone before us.

What a pathetic sigh of regret that mention of Uriah is! One moment of indulged passion may cast a shadow over long years. God forgives sin, yet it grieves Him to the heart. Oh, that there may be no need for God to make such an exception in the case of any of us! And that we might never turn aside from anything He commands all the days of our life!

1 Kings 15:9-24 Asa's good reign. --

This reign was not only good but it was also long (Ps. 91:16). A bad father may have a good son. Let no one feel that a noble life is impossible because of the difficulties of his birth or home surroundings. Through all drawbacks the true life emerges into the light; as a water lily from the muddy sediment of the pond. There were some things which might have been better even in Asa's reign (1 Kings 15:14), yet Asa's heart was perfect with God; from which we may infer that the perfect heart is that which lives up to the limit of its light.

He began, where we must all begin the work of reformation, by putting away evil. He first struck at immorality, then at idolatry. There must be a slaying of the members on the earth, before we put on the new nature (Col. 3:5-10). His grandmother -- for such Maachah evidently was (comp. 1 Kings 15:2 and 1 Kings 15:10) -- was not tolerated, because she persisted in idolatry. He removed her from the court (Deut. 33:9). He brought into God's house the appointed portion from the spoils of the Ethiopians (2 Chron. 14:13). But he surely made a great mistake in seeking the help of a heathen monarch. How subtle is unbelief! How prone we are to depart from the living God!

The Book of Chronicles gives some further interesting details of Asa's life, which show the war of good and evil, and how at last he succumbed to mistrust.

1 Kings 15:25-34 Nadab and Baasha in Israel. --

The term of Asa's reign saw six or seven different monarchs in the northern kingdom. Anarchy and misrule rode rough-shod through the land. Already the description of Isaiah's first chapter could be applied to that unhappy realm. It was a shaken reed, indeed (1 Kings 14:15). Men execute God's judgments on each other, as they follow their own wild will, and fall into the sins which they are raised-up to punish. But God's plan moves on.

A BETTER DAY DAWNS

1 Kings 15:1-15

Again we meet with those references to David that we found in the previous chapter. See 1 Kings 15:3-5; 1 Kings 15:11. His name lingers as sweet fragrance in the air, or as the after-glow of sundown. But Abijam's mother was descended from Absalom, and it is hardly surprising that the unhappy ancestry conflicted with the other and holier influence. Though the lamp burned low, however, it was not entirely extinguished. What a pathetic touch that is in 1 Kings 15:5! One moment of passion may be a long regret to God and to the soul! Yet there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared, Psalms 130:4.

For Asa's reign, we must turn to the book of Chronicles, where further evidence is given of his truly religious character-at least during the earlier portion of his rule. Even his grandmother was removed from her position. Compare 1 Kings 15:2; 1 Kings 10:1-29; the words father and mother are used loosely, as may be seen in 1 Kings 15:3. On the whole, Asa's policy was directed to the overthrow of the heathen worship, but he seems to have shrunk from a root-and-branch extermination of the evil, 1 Kings 15:14; and the result was personal deterioration and the springing up again of idolatry. Our Lord asks us never to compromise. The right hand that offends must be cut off. The brood of the viper must be stamped out to the last egg.

WARRING BRETHREN

1 Kings 15:16-34

We obtain a fuller view of the events described in the earlier part of this passage by reference to 2 Chronicles 16:1-6. Asa's early piety, which shone out in his drastic purging of idolatry and the corruptions which sprang up like fungi on a damp soil, cannot be questioned. Strange that such a man, who, by faith in God, had driven back Zerah's formidable invasion, should in later years succumb to the craven methods of mere expediency in his conflict with Baasha.

This league with Ben-hadad arose from unbelief. Even true believers are sometimes hard pressed to maintain their integrity, because the trials of faith tend to increase. When Peter looked at the rising billows, his heart became troubled and he began to sink. To Asa's alliance with this heathen king may be traced the beginning of the downfall of both kingdoms-of the ten tribes and of Judah. Palestine was no longer a neutral state, but became involved in the political combinations of the time. Those that honor God are honored, 1 Samuel 2:30; those that put their trust elsewhere rue it all their days.

1 KINGS 16 DARK DAYS IN ISRAEL

Baasha was a soldier, strong, active, daring. He waded to his throne through blood (1 Kings 15:29), and reigned for twenty-four years. Of Jehu we know little. The son of a prophet (2 Chron. 16:7), he continued in his office for at least thirty years (2 Chron. 19:2; 20:34); and shone as a star amid the darkness of the times.

No age has been without its prophets; no life, however abandoned, without some remonstrating voice; no soul goes over the cataract without a warning cry. And these things, answering to the voice of conscience within, reveal the merciful, pitying love of the Father, not willing that any should perish.

Baasha died in peace, and was buried in state. Men do not in this life receive the just recompense of their deeds; and herein is a strong argument for another life (Ps. 17:14).

Elah and the remainder of the royal house were cut off by Zimri (1 Kings 16:9). We are told explicitly that the extermination was so complete that none of his avengers were left (1 Kings 16:11, marg.). In this, God's word was literally vindicated and fulfilled; but Zimri trod in his master's footsteps, and was unwarned by his master's end. By his own hand he met a similar fate in consequence of Omri's treachery (2 Kings 9:31). In his brief reign of seven days Zimri had found time to walk in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin. Seven days are long enough to test a man; and in that period he made manifest so great obstinacy and sin as to make longer probation needless, and all thought of reformation hopeless.

Omri (1 Kings 16:16) treated Zimri as he had treated Elah. For the first four years of his reign the throne was shared by Tibni (1 Kings 16:21), but at the death of his rival, Omri reigned alone. He built Samaria as the metropolis of his kingdom; and seems to have embodied his idolatrous statutes in a code (Micah 6:16).

Ahab succeeded him (1 Kings 16:29-34). He not only set aside the second commandment, but the first; and thus realized the terrible statements of 1 Kings 16:30 and 1 Kings 16:33. His wife led him on -- the beautiful, captivating, young idolatress, who was taught by the wily priesthood to use all her influence to bring in the idolatries of her home in Sidon.

The calf-worship at Bethel had a bad effect on its inhabitants, one of whom dared to defy the curse which Joshua had pronounced five hundred years before, and he suffered the terrible penalty of his presumption.

The inspired artist does not hesitate to paint the darkness of the times with Rembrandt colors, and that the background may show up the illustrious glory of Elijah. The darkest hour is that before the dawn; desperation before the step of the Saviour over the wave; Ahab and Jezebel precede Elijah.

EXECUTIONERS OF EVIL-DOERS

1 Kings 16:1-14

A noble figure crosses the canvas for a moment. It is Jehu, the son of Hanani, shining like a star in the night. No age has been without its prophets; no life, however abandoned, has been without some remonstrating voice; no soul goes over the cataract without a warning cry. And these messages, answering to the voice of conscience within, reveal the pitying love of the Father, not willing that any should perish, Ezekiel 18:23. Hanani, Jehu's father, had been a prophet, 2 Chronicles 16:7, and Jehu held the same office for a long period, 2 Chronicles 19:2; 2 Chronicles 20:34.

Baasha died in peace and was buried in state. But such an end is not the end, and points forward to another life, since God is God, Psalms 17:14. Elah and the remainder of the royal house were cut off by Zimri, and the extermination was so complete that none of his avengers were left. But Zimri, after a reign of seven days, was similarly treated, 2 Kings 9:31. Seven days are long enough to

test a man, and in that brief space Zimri found time to walk in the way of Jeroboam and his sin, 1 Kings 16:15; 1 Kings 16:19. Such is the course of this world. Happy are they who, amid political convulsion, live the life of the quiet in the land, 1 Thessalonians 4:11, and receive the kingdom that cannot be moved, Hebrews 12:27.

PERSISTENCE IN SINFUL WAYS

1 Kings 16:15-28

These chapters afford a dreary record of apostasy and revolution, of idolatry and national disaster. Perhaps the great mass of the people-the peasantry-were not greatly affected by these dynastic changes, though severe judgments of famine and drought were soon to make the nation realize what an evil and bitter thing it is to desert the Fountain of living waters for broken cisterns that can hold no water, Jeremiah 2:13. Four times in this chapter we meet the phrase, "provoke to anger," 1 Kings 16:7; 1 Kings 16:13; 1 Kings 16:26; 1 Kings 16:33. To idolatry was added intemperance, 1 Kings 16:9, and the fruit was suicide, anarchy, and civil war, 1 Kings 16:18; 1 Kings 16:21-22. But great as these evils were, they were to be surpassed, 1 Kings 16:30.

The one sufficient bulwark against universal anarchy is the maintenance of true religion. People talk with glib tongues against the Puritan conscience and demand the secularization of the Lord's day, but they are surely imperiling the stability and order of the commonwealth. More than is ordinarily realized are the relations between man and man affected by the relation between the nation and God. The writings of Voltaire helped to bring on the French Revolution; while the religious revivals of the eighteenth century, both in England and in America, contributed greatly to solid national progress.

SIN'S CLIMAX SUMMONS JEHOVAH'S PROPHET

1 Kings 16:29-34; 1 Kings 17:1-7

From the beginning of his reign Ahab set aside both the First and the Second Commandment. His marriage with Jezebel, the young and beautiful Sidonian princess, plunged him and his kingdom into yet deeper darkness. In addition to Jeroboam's calves, the worship of Baal, the sun-god, was shamelessly introduced, and his temple was served by hundreds of priests. The inspired artist does not hesitate to paint with Rembrandt colors, and the illustrious glory of Elijah shows clearly against the dark background. The darkest hour precedes the dawn; the keenest pain ushers in birth. First Ahab and Jezebel, then Elijah.

Gilead was far from court or temple-God trains His workers in His own school. The prophet's name-"Jehovah is my strength"-suggests where he abode and whence he derived his power. He stood before God for the uniting and the uplifting of a divided people. The drought was the result of prayer. Elijah felt that nothing less could arrest king and people, James 5:17. The man who stands before God is not afraid to stand before Ahab. Now and again God bids His servants hide themselves toward the sunrise, but in these periods of enforced seclusion He makes Himself responsible for their supplies.

1 KINGS 17 ELIJAH, THE TISHBITE

1 Kings 17:1-7 A failing brook. --

God rears and trains His noblest servants in unexpected places. Gilead was far from Court and Temple. But what do they need of human help or education who bear a name like this! -- "My strength is Jehovah" Elijah's nature was cast in a strong mold, suited to his great work.

The R.V. suggests that Elijah was of a pilgrim race; and certainly he learned to stand by himself in fellowship with the living God. He was ever standing in His presence-chamber; like the archangel Gabriel, who uses the same words of himself in his address to Zacharias (Luke 1:19). Oh, that we might always stand in the presence of the living God! The God of an undivided Israel -- the ideal Israel.

This drought was the result of prayer (James 5:17). It was as if Elijah felt that nothing else would arrest the king and people. The man who stands before God is not afraid to stand before Ahab.

How often does God bid His servants hide themselves!

(1 Kings 17:3). There are lessons learned in seclusion which elude us in the crowd. And, while we are in hiding, God will supply all our need by most unexpected means (Job 38:41; Ps. 147:9). But even then we must not be without trial, and it is hard to sit by a dwindling brook.

1 Kings 17:8-16 An exhausted cruse. --

Not to Jordan, but to Zarephath (Luke 4:25-26). God uses the weak and foolish things of the world, and those which are despised, as outside the visible Church. Yet there were noble qualities in this woman. She did not complain; she went at once to get some

water, without so much as mentioning its scarceness; she was very hospitable and generous; she was willing to hear mention of Jehovah's name without resentment; and she believed unfalteringly in the Divine promise of the replenish-merit of her stores. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." We get by giving.

1 Kings 17:17-24 A dying child. --

Sorrow never proves that we are off the path of duty. Indeed, the way of obedience is often paved with flints; but our one aim must be to know God's plan and live on it, then no good thing can fail. Elijah found it so; but none of these things shook the heroic fortitude and courage of that noble spirit, who took each new trial as an opportunity for deriving additional grace and strength from his Almighty Friend.

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Gilead was far from court or temple-God trains His workers in His own school. The prophet's name-"Jehovah is my strength"-suggests where he abode and whence he derived his power. He stood before God for the uniting and the uplifting of a divided people. The drought was the result of prayer. Elijah felt that nothing less could arrest king and people, James 5:17. The man who stands before God is not afraid to stand before Ahab. Now and again God bids His servants hide themselves toward the sunrise, but in these periods of enforced seclusion He makes Himself responsible for their supplies.

THE JAR OF MEAL THAT WASTED NOT

1 Kings 17:8-16

Even at Cherith we cannot be exempt from trial, and it is hard to sit beside a gradually dwindling brook. But God always provides. None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate. Whether the visible agents are ravens, or a poor heathen widow ready to perish, it matters little. God's majestic "I have commanded" is enough. Whether it is ordinary or extraordinary, natural or supernatural, through Jew or Gentile, God's purpose does not tarry.

Gentile help supplied what Israel might not give, Luke 4:25-26. God uses the weak and foolish things as well as those which are not, 1 Corinthians 1:28. Yet there were noble qualities in this woman. She did not complain, but went at once for the water; she was generous and hospitable, and believed that God would supply their need. How little did she realize the greatness of her reward, Matthew 10:41-42! But her faith was great. She stood the test of making Elijah's cake first, believing that afterward there would be enough for herself and her son. Though she little understood it, she had within her a spark of the same fire that burned in the soul of the great prophet; and therefore, when we all stand in our lot at the end of the days, Daniel 12:13, her portion will be with the great prophets and heroes of faith.

NEW LIFE FOR THE DEAD

1 Kings 17:17-24

It must have been a severe trial to Elijah's faith, first to note the gradual diminishing of the brook; then the abject poverty of the woman to whom he was directed; and finally the illness and death of her child. But through it all, he held fast to the living God. It was still, "O Lord my God," 1 Kings 17:20. Affliction is no proof that we are off the path of duty. The way of obedience is sometimes paved with flints, as every servant of God has discovered. But the difficulties only give room for the exercise of greater faith, and reveal more of the delivering power of the Almighty Friend.

The true physician bends over the little child of the poor, eager to save a human life; but his power is limited. To faith and prayer, however, other forces are available, which accomplish what no skill or medicine can. When we have confessed and put away sin which the hour of anguish has brought to light, room is made for the exercise of that divine power which is always within the reach of hands that are lifted without fear or doubting.

1 KINGS 18 THE TRIUMPH AT CARMEL

1 Kings 18:1-16

Obadiah was a good man, and did what he could to keep the true light from utter extinguishment (compare 2 Chron. 11:13, 14).

He was in a very abnormal position; but we must not judge him too harshly for being in Ahab's house, unless he was there at the expense of his testimony. Our loyalty to God does not involve leaving the service of men like Ahab, unless we are called upon to violate our conscience. The apostle said distinctly that we were to abide in the calling in which we were when we became Christians (1 Cor. 7:20). Still, Obadiah was doing what he could, and used his position as a means of sheltering the prophets.

1 Kings 18:17-20 Ahab. --

How blind we are to our true interests! A sinner is strangely oblivious to the real cause of his troubles, attributing them to any other source than to his own sin. When a man forsakes God, he brings drought upon his life. Evil things multiply as noisome insects amid decay, and as false prophets did in Israel.

1 Kings 18:21-29 The conflict with the priests. --

Baal was the sun-god; they could not resist the challenge to rely only on him. The people wavered, as they do still; they fluttered as a bird between two sprays. But a man cannot walk firmly with one foot on the curb and the other in the gutter.

1 Kings 18:30-39 The answer by fire. --

The repaired altar was emblem of the united people; the water typified those influences which were prejudicial to the interests of vital Godliness; the fire was emblematical of the descending Spirit. Oh, to be known as God's servant, only obeying Him! (1 Thess. 2:4). Elijah had learned to reckon on God, and he could not be disappointed.

1 Kings 18:40-46 The prayer for rain. --

The prophets must be slain before the rain can come. When God occupies His right place again, and His altar is built, the blood of Baal's priests encrimsons the brook, but the clouds cover the sky.

Our lives must be free from evil, before we can expect the showers. What a contrast between the employments of the king and the prophet! This prayer was humble, earnest, persevering. Six times the boy came back to say there was nothing. The little cloud is often detected by the servant of God before the clouds cover the heavens.

BEHOLD, ELIJAH!

1 Kings 18:1-15

"The word of the Lord came" to Elijah on four successive occasions- 1 Kings 17:2; 1 Kings 17:8; 1 Kings 18:1; 1 Kings 19:9. God has many things to say to us, if we will only listen. His word may find us in very different places, and direct us to varied duties; but to live by it is to execute the perfect plan of life.

Obadiah was a good man, but weak. He did his best to shield the prophets and to keep the true light from becoming extinguished- 1 Kings 18:13. But court favor had corrupted him. He stood before Ahab, while Elijah stood before God. Our Lord said that soft raiment and the king's court go together, Luke 7:25; and in the enervating atmosphere of a palace, it is granted to very few to retain the spirit and power of Elijah or of the Baptist. Who would not rather be Elijah than Obadiah! Elijah dared confront Ahab as the troubler of Israel, while Obadiah daily feared for his own life. Elijah rooted up idolatry, while Obadiah endeavored only to check its excesses. Obadiah sought grass for the royal steeds, but Elijah's prayer brought the rain. Let us dare to stand for God, though we stand alone!

THE GOD THAT ANSWERETH NOT

1 Kings 18:16-29

"The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God." We are thrilled as we read these words. Our altars stand unkindled, our sacrifices are unconsumed, our churches do not witness the descending of the holy flame, and our sermons are damp tinder. It ought not so to be. The Baptist said that our Lord would baptize with the Holy Spirit as by fire, Matthew 3:11, and Jesus Himself taught that he came to kindle fire on the earth, Luke 12:49. The seven lamps burn evermore before the throne, Revelation 4:5. It was as fire that the Holy Spirit fell on the sitting group in the upper room-sitting because they had reached an end of praying, and were now only waiting for the fulfillment of the promise, Acts 2:2-3.

Nothing is needed more absolutely than the answer by fire. There are many who, like the prophets of Baal, endeavor to kindle it. But when prevented from putting their own false fire into the stack of wood, they are paralyzed. The frantic entreaties, the self-inflicted wounds, the monotonous chant, are insufficient. They are carnal and arouse only the worst emotions. Spiritual conditions

have to be fulfilled, as Elijah showed; then God bears witness "by signs and wonders" and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.

THE GOD THAT ANSWERETH BY FIRE

1 Kings 18:30-40

Too many halt, or limp, between two opinions. The altar of consecration to Christ has been thrown down, 1 Kings 18:30. The worship of Baal, which stands for creature-energy, has secretly stolen away our allegiance from Him, who is very jealous of any strange affinities; and as the necessary result, our heart is drought-smitten and our sphere of service is like a parched land. The idolatrous priests had everything in their favor, for at noon the sun-god was on his throne; but there was no voice. It is an awful thing when a man listens for his god to speak, and there is no reply!

Elijah built again the ruined altar which for long years had stood on Carmel's height, 1 Kings 19:10-11. Let us build again the altars of personal consecration, of family piety, and of national religion. Elijah prayed; as the Apostle expressed it, James 5:17, he put all the passion of his mighty nature into prayer. As a result, because they had been shown to be deceivers, he destroyed the prophets of Baal with a ruthless hand. These are the conditions of revival and refreshing. Let any church give itself to consecration, fervent prayer, and the excision of wrong, and there need be no anxiety as to the result—there will be an abundance of rain.

EXALTATION AND DEPRESSION

1 Kings 18:41-46; 1 Kings 19:1-8

When the priests had been executed, the quick ear of the prophet detected the hurrying rain-clouds. Note the contrast between Ahab and the prophet. The one ascended from the Kishon gorge to eat and drink in his pavilion until the darkened heavens made him drive-post-haste to Jezreel; the other went up to pray! which do we care for most—to eat and drink or to pray? God help us! The answer that our hearts utter is far from satisfactory. But what praying was this! So humble, so intense, so expectant. Six times the servant came down from the spur, saying, "There is nothing," and a seventh time he was sent back to watch the Mediterranean sky-line—this time, not in vain!

But why that sudden change to despair? Was it the overstrain of that day on Carmel, which induced a terrible reaction? Was it that swift run from Carmel to Jezreel, in front of Ahab's fiery steeds? Was it that threat of Jezebel? She, at least, was neither awed nor checkmated by the massacre of her favorite priests. Did he lose sight of God in that dark hour? Elijah was but mortal! His feet had almost gone; his steps had well-nigh slipped, Psalms 73:2.

1 KINGS 19 THE STILL SMALL VOICE

1 Kings 19:1-4 Elijah's flight. --

Many causes lay at the root of his hurried departure. Perhaps the reaction from long overstrain; but especially a lapse of faith.

As long as Elijah looked at God, he was strong; but when he looked at Jezebel's threat, it seemed as if the communication of Divine strength was cut off: "when he saw that (when he was afraid, R.V., marg.) he arose and went for his life" (1 Kings 19:3).

It was a fatal mistake, as the movement which had been inaugurated collapsed in his absence. O man of like passions with us! We would not excuse ourselves by thy fall; but we are glad to know that your strength was not your own, for you were naturally as weak as we are, and we may be as strong as you. Let those who long to die, leave God to choose the day; else they may miss the horses and chariots of fire.

1 Kings 19:5-8 The Divine provision. --

God might have allowed him to suffer the results of his terrible lapse. But "He knows our frame!" On the desert sand the meal was lovingly spread, as afterwards on the shores of the lake (John 21). To every erring child God sends merciful help. In the wilderness the feast is spread; and instead of remonstrance, angel hands soothe the weary and despondent prophet. Our fits of depression and apparent desertion as often arise from physical as spiritual causes, and God remembers our weaknesses. In His pity the Father pays a surprise visit to His lonely and sorrowful child.

1 Kings 19:9-14 The lesson of Horeb. --

Nature is often the vehicle of God's voice. Its storm and passion relieve us by expressing our emotion; its calm melts and soothes us. There is much of God's presence when "sounds of gentle stillness" (R.V., marg.) steal around. Not the storm of Sinai, but the whispers of Calvary touch and open hearts. We all need to get alone with God; our Carmels must be followed by our Horebs. There we receive fresh commissions; and there God teaches us to inspire others with the purposes with which He has filled our

own hearts.

It is very beautiful to see the prophet's passionate desire for the glory of God. He had, however, thought that God's work could only be done vehemently, suddenly, and ostensibly. He was taught that God loves also to work in the still, small voice, heard only by the individual heart; and, lo, seven thousand were the result of these gentle influences stealing abroad among men. For each professing servant of God who is known, there may be thousands of secret disciples.

1 Kings 19:15-18 Return to duty. --

This summons to anoint three successors is a little ominous. It would seem that others were to be called in to the work the prophet had left. Still there was comfort in being bidden to return. Backsliders may be encouraged by the words, "Go, return:"

1 Kings 19:19-21 The call of Elisha. --

We may expect to hear the Divine call when we are patiently plodding along the furrow of daily duty. Elisha evidently resolved to give his life to God's service. He burned his bridges behind him by sacrificing his cattle. He left all to follow, but he received more than he renounced (2 Kings 5, 6; Mark 10:30).

EXALTATION AND DEPRESSION

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LEARNING HOW GOD WORKS

1 Kings 19:9-14

God knew how to treat His servant, resting beneath the juniper tree. He steeped his nature in refreshing sleep, fed his exhausted energies, caused angel-hands to minister to him, and finally conducted him across the desert to that sacred mountain where Moses in the old time had stood in the divine audience-chamber. There the forces of nature spoke to Elijah's varying moods. In the fire, the earthquake, and the tempest, he heard the voices of his own soul. They expressed what he would say, and relieved him in the expression. Then the accents of the "still small voice" fell upon his ear, calming, quieting, soothing. Best of all, the voice of God commissioned him once more with the words, "Go, return." The vacated post was open still; the crown of the life-work could be worthily placed; the gate was open through which he might serve the land he loved.

Often we lie down on the desert-sands, and think that death is near. But it is not so. God does not judge us by our moods. He knows the faithful heart that is true to Him, and he wants to bestow the crown of life. Not the winding-sheet of the desert-sands, but the chariot of fire to the Home-Land was to be the portion of God's faithful prophet.

APPOINTING JEHOVAH'S INSTRUMENTS

1 Kings 19:15-21

Elijah was never reinstated in quite the position that he had occupied before his fatal flight. True, he was bidden to return, and work was given him to do. But that work consisted in anointing three men who were to share the ministry which he might have fulfilled, if only he had been true to his opportunities and faithful to his God. God's work must go forward, if not by us, then by others brought in to fill our place.

Hazael, king of Syria; Jehu, the rude captain; and Elisha, the young farmer. Each was as different as possible from the others; yet each had his special sphere in dealing with the idolatries and impurities that were destroying the chosen race. God's nets are not all constructed with the same size of meshes. Men may escape some of the bigger ones, who will be caught by the smaller ones. But God so orders the lives of men that once at least each encounters a mesh that cannot be evaded. What a comfort it is to think

that God is at work in the world, and that, while statistics tell a sad tale, there may still be seven thousand secret disciples for every Elijah.

1 KINGS 20 BEN-HADAD'S DISCOMFITURE

1 Kings 20:1-11 Ben-hadad besieges Samaria. --

The demand was very insolent, and the making of it proves how low Israel had sunk. Ben-hadad presumed on the cowardice which moral decrepitude always induces. There are no hours when we are tempted to such vile and abject sin as those which follow a great appeal which we have refused to heed.

Ben-hadad's boastfulness (1 Kings 20:10) was the forerunner of his downfall (Prov. 16:18). We always fall when we are self-confident; and our only safeguard is implicit faith in the promises and protection of God (Ps. 119:117).

We could hardly have expected that such a man as Ahab could have spoken so wisely (1 Kings 20:11).

1 Kings 20:12-21 Ben-hadad's defeat. --

As in the case of Belshazzar, so here, drunkenness was predecessor of defeat. Through Obadiah's care some prophets were still left to remonstrate with Ahab, and to speak God's word even though Elijah had gone. God is not shut up to one great voice speaking like a trumpet; if that fails Him, He will call in another. His work must go on. If not by an Elijah, then by an unknown prophet.

God always chooses the weakest and most unlikely tools, as these princes (1 Kings 20:15) were; that the excellency of the power may be of Him, and that no flesh may glory in His presence. It seems as if God sometimes interposes, not so much for our sake as for His holy name, which had been blasphemed among the heathen (1 Kings 20:28; Ezek. 36:32).

1 Kings 20:22-30 The second campaign. --

Thinking that he could succeed better in the valley, Ben-hadad, at the suggestion of his servants (1 Kings 20:23), in the next dry season returned to Samaria. Disaster again came upon them, the remnant of the fugitives from the battle being killed by a falling wall.

1 Kings 20:31-34 Ben-hadad's deliverance. --

The servants who were the instigators of the expedition tendered the king some useful advice in his trouble. How often those who have led us into error forsake when counsel is most needed as to the way out! The mercy of the kings of Israel was proverbial, and the plea for Ahab's clemency, even after the double invasion, was not made in vain. Is it not so that the rebel sinner is encouraged by the thought of the mercy of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord? From the throne, the Saviour stoops to call him "Brother" even after repeated transgression, so soon as he sues for pardon, girded with sackcloth and with the rope around his neck, as one who confesses that he deserves the extreme penalty of the law.

1 Kings 20:35-43 The prophet's parable. --

The "smiting" (1 Kings 20:35) was against human inclination; and yet, for refusing, the man was slain by a lion. When our nature would turn us aside from "the word of the Lord" let us be careful to obey God's voice rather than our own inclinations. One point in the parable is worthy of note, "as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone" (1 Kings 20:40). We may all question whether, in being busy about many petty details, we may not be missing Divinely-given opportunities. The king was self-condemned in his judgment of the prophet; so now we often find that in deciding the cases of others, we are pronouncing sentence on ourselves. May we watch each day for our Master's will, redeeming the time, because the days are few and evil.

BOASTING BEFORE THE BATTLE

1 Kings 20:1-15

Ben-hadad's insolent demand indicated how low Israel had sunk. The worship of Jezebel's gods had wrought moral degeneracy. Let us never forget this lesson. When national religion fades and our churches are deserted; when the Bible loses place in education, and family prayer fades out of the home, dry-rot and decay eat away the strength of the national heart.

Ahab's answer was better than might have been expected from such a man, but it would have amounted to little beyond a stalwart boast if there had not been other influences at work on the behalf of the chosen race. It may be that at this crisis, ceaseless prayer was being offered in the schools of the prophets. Elijah, certainly, was not silent, but on mountain heights or by the Cherith brook, was no doubt pouring out his mighty soul. The advent of this prophet, 1 Kings 20:13, unasked, was a harbinger of good. Notice how God's loving-kindness follows us into a far country. See Ezekiel 36:32. He does not forget, but woos us back. His tools of help,

however, are not what we should expect, but ever the weakest and least likely, that no flesh should glory, 1 Corinthians 1:27.

A PROSPEROUS NATION

1 Kings 4:1-7; 1 Kings 20:1-43; 1 Kings 21:1-29; 1 Kings 22:1-53

What a picture is here given of national contentment and prosperity! We can almost hear the gladsome voice of the myriad-peopled land, teeming with young life and laden with golden harvests. It was the summer of their national existence. The sacred scribe enumerates first the high officials of the court, then the daily provision of the king, his studies, and his fame. Abundant proof was yielded by all these circumstances to the manner in which God kept the pledges which had been made to David, his father.

Here is Solomon "in all his glory," but as we turn from him to the lowly Carpenter of Nazareth, who had nowhere to lay His head; who found His friends among the poor; and who ultimately laid down His life a ransom for many, we realize that, even apart from His divine nature, His was the nobler ideal and the richer existence. "A greater than Solomon is here." Who can measure His empire or resources? What tongue can recount His wisdom? Happy and safe are they that sit at His table, hear His words, and are joint-heirs with Him in His Kingdom! Romans 8:17.

THE GOD BOTH OF HILLS AND VALLEYS

1 Kings 20:16-30

What is God to us? Is He only the God of the hills? We expect religion to serve us when we come to the great summits of experience. There are times of rapture and of vision when we seem naturally to stand with God on the holy mountains. We have our Moriah, our Pisgah, our Tabor, our Hermon. But is that all?

No! God is with us in the valleys. When we descend into the valley of weeping, Psalms 84:6, r.v., the valley of the shadow of death, the valley of obscurity and loneliness, the valley of conflict, we can say with the psalmist, "Thou art with me," Psalms 23:4. Most of us, perhaps, spend the larger part of life in the valleys, walking among commonplace duties. Let us see to it that in these shadowed days we walk in close companionship with the Divine Friend; that, when the path ascends and the mountain-breeze is on our faces and the view widens, we may stand with God on our high places as with hinds' feet. See Habakkuk 3:19.

LOSING THE MAN GOD PUT INTO HIS HAND

1 Kings 20:31-43

Ahab's easy good-nature was criminal, and indicated the evil that was enervating and cankering his heart. Whatever may have been his private feelings and sympathy, it is plain that these had no right to control his action as king when national interests were at stake. The judge may be subject to tender compassion toward those on whom his office requires him to pass sentence, but he should be governed by consideration of the good of all. This unwise clemency on the part of Ahab resulted, in after-days, in Israel's suffering at the hand of Syria.

"Busy here and there!" It is true of us all. We are so occupied that we have hardly time to think. We do not realize the opportunities which are placed in our hands, and which, if not made immediate use of, depart never to return. The bald head of departing opportunity, said the Greeks, has not even one lock of hair by which we can catch it and drag it back. Let us be diligent in the King's business, remembering that to Him we must render an account.

1 KINGS 21 NABOTH'S VINEYARD

1 Kings 21:1-4 Ahab coveting Naboth's vineyard. --

The more we have the more we desire. He who possesses a kingdom is heavy at heart because he cannot have a plot of land for a kitchen garden. Naboth's refusal was probably rested upon religious grounds. He said, "The Lord forbid it me" He emphasized the fact that it had come from his fathers, according to the Divine institution. And when the king learned that it was not based on degraded and selfish reasons, he might have given way with good grace. Canaan was, in a special sense, God's land; and no Israelite might alienate his portion of it, except under very special circumstances (Lev. 25:28).

1 Kings 21:5-16 The murder of Naboth. --

Jezebel was the king's evil genius, and Ahab must have known that she could only give him the vineyard by foul means; therefore he was as guilty as she was in her use of the power which he delegated to her. We cannot invest others with our power without being responsible for their use of it. We cannot shut our eyes to what is being done by our employees and at the same time open our hands for the gains of their misdeeds.

There could hardly be imagined a more horrible crime than this. The sanctions of religion were invoked, and a fast was instituted as

if to avert some terrible judgment, caused through the special ungodliness of one of the citizens. Suspicion was directed towards Naboth, who was then assailed by bribed witnesses, and without opportunity for defense hurried away to execution. He and his whole family seem to have been involved in a common fate (2 Kings 9:26).

1 Kings 21:17-29 Elijah's protest and prediction. --

Like an incarnate conscience he reproached the king in words remembered long after (2 Kings 9:25).

Men are blind enough, however, to count conscience their enemy, and God's prophets their foes. Yet these only tell us the natural outworking of our sins, not adding anything of their own, but indicating their inevitable result. Sold unto sin; stirred up to do evil; doing very abominably in following idols -- these are the successive records of Ahab's sin; and yet because he humbled himself for a little, the love of God held back the judgment which was nevertheless certain (1 Kings 21:29). "Let the wicked forsake his way," and our God will "abundantly pardon."

BREAKING THREE COMMANDMENTS

1 Kings 21:1-29;

From a worldly point of view Naboth might have done a good stroke of business by selling his estate to Ahab. A royal price and assured favor might have been his-but he had a conscience! Above the persuasive tones of the monarch's offer sounded the voice of God: "The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine." See Leviticus 25:23; Numbers 36:7; Ezekiel 46:18.

Ahab knew perfectly well that Jezebel could not give him the property of another except by foul means, but he took pains not to inquire. Though the direct orders for Naboth's death did not come from him, yet, by his silence, he was an accomplice and an accessory; and divine justice penetrates all such specious excuses. God holds us responsible for wrongs which we do not arrest, though we have the power. The crime was blacker because of the pretext of religion, as suggested by a fast. See also 2 Kings 9:26. The blood of murdered innocence cries to God, and his requital, though delayed, is inevitable. See Revelation 6:9-10.

HUMBLING BY THE PROPHET'S REBUKE

1 Kings 21:17-29

Once before, when his presence had been urgently needed, Elijah had fled for his life. But there was no vacillation now. He dared face not only Ahab, but his two ruthless captains. He acted as an incarnate conscience. Ahab had perhaps solaced himself with the idea that he was not a murderer. How should he know what Jezebel had done with his seal! But the crime was not Jezebel's alone; it was his also. "Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast killed."

Though the king knew it not, Elijah was his best friend, while Jezebel was his direst foe. Sin distorts everything. Let us not be surprised if men hate us and count us their enemies when we charge them with their sins! "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you... and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely." Each of the woes which the prophet foretold came true. Ahab postponed their fulfillment for some three years by a partial repentance; but at the end of that time he went back to his evil ways, and every item was fulfilled. God is faithful. He bears witness to His witnesses. His mills grind slowly, but they grind to powder!

1 KINGS 22 DEATH OF AHAB

1 Kings 22:1-4

The compact between Jehoshaphat and Ahab. m It seems strange that so good a man as the king of Judah should have entered into such an alliance; but he paid dearly for it, both at this time and afterwards (2 Chron. 20:37). We must not be "yoked together with unbelievers," lest we suffer their fate (Rev. 18:4). God's children will pierce themselves through with many sorrows, if they ally themselves with His foes.

1 Kings 22:5-28 The conflict of the prophets. --

Ramoth was one of the cities of refuge in the land of Gad, across the Jordan; and the effort to regain the city from the Syrians was a natural one. It is a good thing to ask counsel of God before entering upon a new expedition; but it is not always easy or naturally pleasant to submit one's judgment and behavior absolutely to His reply. The false prophets fell in with Ahab's inclination, and advised the war, doing so in the name of Jehovah. But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. There was something deficient in the solemn declaration of these false teachers and their object lessons (1 Kings 22:11).

The address of Micaiah is not a representation of things done in the heavens; but a parable, or figurative mode of expression. God cannot be tempted of evil, nor does He tempt any man (James 1:13). But He permits men to be tempted, and He overrules the working of Satan for the execution of His own purposes. Micaiah adopted an ironical method of speech, which at least suggested

to the king how his prophets might claim to be God-inspired, and yet be deceiving him.

Micaiah's message was unwelcome, and was punished by imprisonment (1 Kings 22:27); but better a thousand times to be Micaiah, in prison and hated, yet bearing uncompromising witness against stiff-necked iniquity, than to sit beside it without rebuking it as Jehoshaphat did. In the judgment of the ages and of God, the prophets who dare to stand alone, and to endure any suffering rather than yield their countenance to the sin of high places, are they who shine like stars. The ivory house of Ahab and the cities that he built have perished, but this simple noble protest is a fountain of life and blessing. O my soul, dare to stand and live alone with God!

1 Kings 22:29-40 The bathe, and Ahab's death. --

The predictions of Micaiah had shaken Ahab, and he thought to evade their fulfilment by disguise, exposing his friend to danger. Jehoshaphat cried to God (1 Kings 22:32, and 2 Chron. 18:31). The at-row's flight was directed by God to execute His purpose. Our disguises cannot evade God's eye. And all our wealth will not avail to ransom our soul from death (1 Kings 22:39).

Do not hide from a true knowledge of yourself. Judge yourself; no, ask God to judge you, that you be not judged. Even though you can hear nothing good of yourself, but only evil, it is better so. You may yet be saved from the chariot-washing at the pool of Samaria.

1 Kings 22:41-50 Jehoshaphat's good reign. --

Further details are given in 2 Chronicles 18, 20. There was an evident effort to rid the land of the more obvious evils which had disgraced it. And God gave him rest, and victory, and prosperity. There seemed almost a gleam of the prosperity of Solomon in the revival of naval projects. The great defect of his character was the ease with which he associated himself with the kings of Israel, who wrought evil in his house (2 Kings 11).

1 Kings 22:51-53 Ahaziah. --

This record is very terrible. The sins of the parents repeat themselves in the child, and the genealogy of his crime is traced back even to Jeroboam. The evil that men do lives after them to the third and the fourth generation. Children walk in the way of their father and mother. How great the contrast in Isaiah 59:21!

ENTERING INTO A NEW PARTNERSHIP

1 Kings 22:1-12

It seems strange that so good a man as the king of Judah should have entered into such an alliance. It began with the marriage of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, and Athaliah, Ahab's daughter; but it was a terrible descent from the high standing of a servant of Jehovah for Jehoshaphat to say to a practically heathen king: "I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses." Partnerships like this, either in marriage or in business, are not only absolutely forbidden, but they are disastrous, in their ultimate outworking. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," 2 Corinthians 6:14.

Micaiah stands out in splendid contrast. His was the proud honor of being hated by Ahab, as was John the Baptist by Herod. But the prophet in his dungeon, with the bread and water of affliction, was a happier man by far than the king, though clad in royal robes and held in high respect. Is it not clear that Ahab, in his heart of hearts, feared this man of God? We shall see that he put off his royal robes and dressed in a common uniform, that he might evade the death that Micaiah predicted as his fate. Of course it did not avail. God cannot be evaded in that way. His purpose is irresistible.

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1 Kings 4:1-7; 1 Kings 20:1-43; 1 Kings 21:1-29; 1 Kings 22:1-53

What a picture is here given of national contentment and prosperity! We can almost hear the gladsome voice of the myriad-peopled land, teeming with young life and laden with golden harvests. It was the summer of their national existence. The sacred scribe enumerates first the high officials of the court, then the daily provision of the king, his studies, and his fame. Abundant proof was yielded by all these circumstances to the manner in which God kept the pledges which had been made to David, his father.

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WHAT JEHOVAH SAITH... THAT WILL I SPEAK

1 Kings 22:13-28

Ramoth was one of the cities of refuge, situated across the Jordan. The false prophets spoke as they knew would please the king and gain the popular ear. But Micaiah did not scruple to say that the spirit of a demon was making use of their lips for the utterance of beguiling falsehood. He was evidently speaking metaphorically. By an ironical method of speech he suggested that the voices of such prophets were not to be accepted as truth. He knew well enough God's living voice. In the silence and solitude of his prison, shut away from all the world besides, he had learned to detect the accent of truth, and could easily discriminate between it and the lying boasts of the false prophets. We must try the spirits, whether they are of God, 1 John 4:1. Beware of being beguiled by every voice that speaks in your heart. God's voice almost always calls you to take up the cross and stand alone against the crowd. It summons to the straight gate and the narrow way.

"Carry him back!" cried the king. He hated the man of God, as the thief dreads a watch-dog. But better a thousand times be in that dungeon with Micaiah than faring sumptuously at Ahab's table. Do not hide yourself from the truth. Let it search, though it hurt you. It will save you from the unerring arrow.

THE BOW AT A VENTURE EXECUTES GOD'S SENTENCE

1 Kings 22:29-40

The cup of Ahab's sins was full, and the arrow at a venture executed divine retribution. Had Micaiah not spoken, men would have attributed this apparently chance arrow to misfortune; now, however, it became invested with quite another significance. There is no such thing as chance in this world. The bird does not fall to the ground, the arrow does not find its way to the heart, without a superintending Providence. Whether you live or die, your life is under the immediate supervision of the Almighty. In the battlefield, not a single bullet can hit your beloved, apart from the permitting providence of God. All is under law.

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand in the evil day. Take the shield of faith, as covering your whole being, lest the joints of the armor open to the fiery darts of your foe. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Note the contrast in the end of these men. The one went to his own place; no disguise could avert his doom. The other seems to have returned to God, 1 Kings 22:32 and 2 Chronicles 18:31, and God gave him years of rest, victory, and prosperity, of which further details are given in 2 Chronicles 19:1-11; 2 Chronicles 20:1-37.

"BROKEN SHIPS"

1 Kings 22:41-53

Further details of Jehoshaphat's good reign are given in 2 Chronicles 17:1-19; 2 Chronicles 18:1-34; 2 Chronicles 19:1-11; 2 Chronicles 20:1-37. He made strenuous efforts to rid the land of the more obvious evils that disgraced it, though some of the abuses seemed too deeply rooted even for his strong hand, 1 Kings 22:43. The great defect of Jehoshaphat's character was the ease with which he associated himself with Ahab and his family; for this subsequent generations paid a heavy penalty, 2 Kings 11:1-21.

Jehoshaphat attempted to re-open the sea-commerce with Ophir, and entered into partnership with Ahaziah to build ships in Solomon's old port of Ezion-geber, to make the circuit of Africa en route for Spain. But, as we learn from 2 Chronicles 20:37, a prophet of Jehovah remonstrated with him for renewing the alliance with the king of Israel; and the storm that shattered the ships on the rocks, before they set sail, gave evidence of the displeasure of the Almighty. Let us beware of these alliances and partnerships with the ungodly. Sooner or later they meet with disaster. God blocks our path and defeats our plans; and if only we are led to repentance, our broken ships may give us cause for thanksgiving in eternity.