

J H Jowett-Daily Meditation 10

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MY DAILY MEDITATION for the Circling Year

by John Henry Jowett

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 1

A WONDERFUL UNBELIEF

Psalm 78:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25

"THEY believed not in God ... though He had _____" Let everyone finish that sentence out of his own experience. How much grace can our unbelief withstand? The Lord had made the rock like unto a spring of water, and yet these people believed not! What has He done for thee and me? Let us retrace the pilgrimage of our own years. Let us recall the blessings by the way—the streams in the desert, the pillar of fire that led us in the night. And yet what is the quality of our faith? It is often weak and reluctant, riddled with timidities, or moth-eaten with worldly ease. It is not mighty and daring, riding forth every morning like a chivalrous knight to inevitable conquest. It creeps along, like Mr. Halting, and Miss Much-Afraid, and Mr. Little-Faith.

"He marvelled at their unbelief." (Mk 6:6) The Lord Jesus wondered that men and women, seeing what they had seen, did not immediately spring to the life and service of faith. Perhaps we do not give time for faith to be born! Perhaps we do not see because we do not look. Perhaps we are blind to His mercies and are therefore dead to the faith. And therefore, perhaps, our first prayer should be, "Lord, that I might receive my sight," and then the prayer, "Lord, increase my faith." (cp Mk 9:24)

OCTOBER 2

HUMBLING OUR PRIDE

Job 38:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

I WILL demand of thee, and answer thou Me." When our God begins to ask questions our pride is soon humbled, for the limits of our knowledge and power are speedily reached. The mist is very close to our doors, and in a very few steps we are lost on a trackless moor. Who can trace the real springs of a tear and lay his hand on the emotion that gave it birth? Who can lead us into the bright realm where smiles are born? Who knoweth the way of a frown, or who can uncover the secrets of fear? No living man can explain his own breathing, or can unravel the mysterious decree which moves his own finger!

And as there is so much mystery, it must be surely true that mystery is a very gracious thing. Uncertainty is the divine ministry of blessedness. If it were not so, He would have told us! "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." If it were best for us that the mist should be removed, He would roll it up like a garment and give us the light of unclouded day. But the mist remains, the home of blessing. "He cometh in a thick cloud." "The clouds drop fatness."

OCTOBER 3

WATCHING THE CREATOR

Jeremiah 10:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

HE hath made the earth by His power." And He is making it still. Even in the material world "His mercies are new every morning." James Smetham used to speak of going into his garden "to see what the Lord is doing." He would stand on the top of Highgate Hill on a blustering night "to watch the goings of the Lord in the storm." And all this means that to James Smetham creation was not merely a single event, but a process whose countless events are still going on. He watched his Lord at work! Every sunset was a new creation from the Almighty Maker's hands.

To many of us the Creator is remote from His works. He is not immediately near. And so He no longer "walks in the garden in the cool of the day." The garden is no longer a holy place. Let us recover the sacredness of things. Let us "practise the presence of God." Let us link His love and power to every flower that blows. And so shall we be able to say, as we move amid the glories of the natural world, "The Lord is in His holy temple."

OCTOBER 4

CREATOR AND CREATURE

Isaiah 40:9-28.

LET me mark the range of this teaching. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand... He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." And let me mark it again. "The Creator of the ends of the earth ... giveth power unto the faint." Almightyness offers itself to carry my burden! The Creator offers Himself to re-create me! I can engage the forces of the universe to help me on my journey. Emerson counselled us to hitch our wagon to a star. We can do better than that. We can hitch it to the Maker of the star! We have something better than an ideal; we have the Light of the world. We are not left to a radiant abstraction; we have a gracious God.

The water flows from the Welsh hills to every house in Birmingham. Rich and poor alike share the bounty of the mountains. The wealth of the mountains comes to the common thirst. And everybody, too, may have the water from the everlasting hills. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him." The river of life will flow to every soul of man.

OCTOBER 5

THE SOUL AND NATURE

Psalms 148:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

"PRAISE ye the Lord." And the Psalmist calls upon the creation to join in the anthem. And that is the gracious purpose of our God, that the world should be filled with harmonious praise. It is His will that the character of man should harmonize with the flowers of the field, that the beauty of his habits should blend with the glories of the sunrise, and that his speech and laughter should mingle with the songs of birds and with the melody of flowing streams. But man is too often a discord in creation. The flowers put him to shame. The birds make him sound harsh and jarring. He is "out of tune."

What then? "Tune my heart to sing Thy praise." We must bring the broken strings, the rusted strings, the jarring strings to the Repairer and Tuner of the soul. It is the glad ministry of His grace to re-awaken silent chords, to restore broken harps, to "put new songs" in our mouths. He will make us the kinsfolk of all things bright and beautiful. We shall "go forth with joy," and "all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

OCTOBER 6

HE KNOWETH OUR FRAME

Psalms 103:13-22.

"HE knoweth our frame." The Bible abounds in such gracious and tender words. "He remembereth us in our low estate." "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." "He will not permit you to be tempted above that ye are able." The burden is suited to our strength. The revelation is determined by our experience. The pace is regulated by our years. "He carrieth the lambs in His arms." He "leads on softly." Nothing is done in ignorance. "The Lord is mindful of His own. He remembereth His children."

And so I must practise the belief in God's compassionate nearness. In my childhood I used to sing "There's a Friend for little children, Above the bright blue sky." I know better now. He is nearer to me than I can dream. I used to sing "There is a happy land, Far, far away." Now I sing, "There is a happy land, Not far away." The good Father and His home are not in some remote realm. They are very, very near to me, and He knows all about me. "He knoweth our frame."

OCTOBER 7

NEEDING AND WANTING

Acts 17:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

"AS though He needed anything." "He may not need us; but does He want us?" Such is the question I heard Dr. Parker ask as he preached upon these words. And he took up a handful of flowers which he had upon the pulpit, and said: "These flowers were gathered for me by little hands in a Devonshire lane. Did I need them? No. Did I want them?... Your little girl kissed you before you left for business this morning. Did you need it?... Did you want it?"

And so Almightyness may not need our weakness, but the loving Father wants His children. "We are His offspring." Our Father delights in the love of His children. The Saviour said to a Samaritan woman, "Give Me to drink." And perhaps it is within the scope of our holy privilege to refresh the heart of our Lord. Perhaps we can give Him to drink of the well of our affections, and He will see of "the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

OCTOBER 8

GOD'S GLORIOUS PURPOSE

"I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

—Isaiah 43:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

THAT is surely a superlative honour! "I have created him for My glory." I stood before one of Turner's paintings, and a man of fine judgment said to me, "That is Turner's glory!" He meant that in that picture the genius and the power and the grace of Turner were most abundantly expressed. And it is the will of God that man should express His glory, and by his righteousness and goodness witness to the great Creator's power and love. Amid all the wonders and sublimities of earth, and sky, and sea, man is to be the Almighty's "glory."

The contrast is pathetic when we turn from the Creator's purpose to our immediate life. There is so much that is shameful, crooked, and perverse. There is little or nothing of "glory." But, blessed be God! the purpose abides, and the Creator's work goes on. In His redemptive grace He has made provision for marred work, for spoilt and perverted life. "The crooked shall be made straight." "I will bring again that which is out of the way." "Where sin abounds grace doth much more abound."

OCTOBER 9

THE LARGER WATERS

1Thessalonians 4:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

DEATH is not an end; it is only a new beginning. Death is not the master of the house; he is only the porter at the King's lodge, appointed to open the gate, and let in the King's guests into the realms of eternal day. "And so shall we be ever with the Lord."

And so the range of three score years and ten is not the limit of our life. Our life is not a land-locked lake enclosed within the shore-lines of seventy years. It is an arm of the sea, and where the shore-lines seem to meet in old age they open out into the infinite. And so we must build for those larger waters. We must lay our life plans on the scale of the infinite, not as though we were only pilgrims of time, but as children of eternity! We are immortal! How, then, shall we live to-day in prospect of the eternal morrow?

OCTOBER 10

OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

Psalms 46:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

"GOD is our refuge and strength." And in the varied conflicts and perils of life we need both these resources. We need the "refuge." There are times when our mightiest warfare is to lie passive, to shelter quietly in the strong defences of our God. Our finest strategy is sometimes to "rest in the Lord and wait." We can slay some of our enemies by leaving them alone. We can "starve them out." They can be weakened and beaten by sheer neglect. We feed their strength, and give them favoured chances, if we go out and face them actively, "marching as to war." The best way is to hide, and keep quiet; and "God is our refuge."

But we also need the "strength." This is positive equipment for active service. The defensive is changed to the offensive, and in the "strength" of the Lord we advance against the foe. We "ride abroad, redressing human wrongs." We "tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon we trample under foot." We meet our enemy on the open field, and we slay him in his pride!

And so our God is our resource in the double warfare of active and passive crusade. In Him we can take refuge, and the enemy withers. In Him we can find fighting strength, and the enemy is overthrown.

OCTOBER 11

THE OLD COMPANION ON THE NEW ROAD

“Get thee out ... and I will show thee.”

“So Abram departed ... and the Lord appeared.”

—Genesis 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

WE must bring these separated passages together if we would appreciate the graciousness of the Lord's call. They are like the two sides of the same shield. They answer each other as voice and echo. When I move in obedience the Lord moves in inspiration. He never lets me go on my own charges. “All things are now ready.” Before He makes me hunger the bread is prepared. Before I thirst the water is at hand. Before He calls me He has opened springs in difficult places and harbours of rest along the road. When Abram set out from his own country the Lord went before him.

And so I need not fear the arduous call. The very measure of its difficulty is also the measure of the riches of the divine provisions. “As thy day so shall thy strength be.” At every turning of the winding way the Lord will appear unto us. At every new demand we shall discover new bounty, and everywhere in the unfamiliar road we shall gaze upon the familiar and friendly face of the Lord.

OCTOBER 12

ROUND-ABOUT WAYS

Acts 7:1,2,3,4,5,6,7.

“INTO a land that I will show thee.” But what mysterious windings there often are before that land is reached! But God's windings are never wasteful and purposeless. The apparent deviations are always gracious preparations. We are taken out of the way in order that we may the more richly reach our end. George Pilkington yearned to go to the foreign field, and God sent him to a dairy farm in Ireland. But the Irish dairy farm proved to be on the way to Uganda; and all the experience and knowledge which Pilkington picked up in this strange business proved invaluable when he reached his appointed field. “He bringeth the blind by a way that they know not.”

So I will remember that the “short cut” is not always the finest road. God's round-about ways are filled with heavenly treasure. Every winding is purposed for the discovery of new wealth. What riches we gather on the way to God's goal!

“The hill of Zion yields

A thousand sacred sweets

Before we reach the heavenly fields

Or walk the golden streets.”

OCTOBER 13

THE ROYAL AIR

Galatians 3:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

EMERSON says somewhere that he has noticed that men whose duties are performed beneath great domes acquire a stately and appropriate manner. The vergers in our great cathedrals have a dignified stride. It is not otherwise with men who consciously live under the power of vast relationships. Princes of royal blood have a certain great “air” about them. The consciousness of noble kinships has an expansive influence upon the soul. The Jews felt its influence when they called to mind “our Father Abraham.”

So is it with men and women of glorious kinships in the realm of faith. Their souls expand in the vast and exalted relations. “The children of faith” have vital communion with all the spiritual princes and princesses of countless years. They have blood-relationship with the patriarchs, and psalmists, and prophets, and they dwell “in heavenly places” with Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Wesley.

Surely, such exalted kinship should influence our very stride, and set its mark upon our “daily walk and conversation.” It ought to make us so big that we can never speak a mean word, or do a petty and peevish thing.

OCTOBER 14

COMMONPLACE PEOPLE

John 1:35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47.

OUR Lord delights to glorify the commonplace. He loves to fill the common water-pots with His mysterious wine. He chooses the earthen vessels into which to put His treasure. He calls obscure fishermen to be the ambassadors of His grace. He proclaims His great Gospel through provincial dialects, and He fills uncultured mouths with mighty arguments. He turns common meals into sacraments, and while He breaks ordinary bread He relates it to the blessing of heaven.

And "this same Jesus" is among us to-day, with the same choices and delights. He will make a humdrum duty shine like the wayside bush that burned with fire and was not consumed. He will make our daily business the channel of His grace. He will take our disappointments, and, just as we sometimes put banknotes into black-edged envelopes, He will fill them with treasures of unspeakable consolation. He will use our poor, broken, stammering speech to convey the wonders of His grace to the weary sinful souls of men.

OCTOBER 15

THE CALL AND THE EQUIPMENT

Luke 5:27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

MATTHEW was very weary, and the all-seeing Lord read the signs of his spiritual dissatisfaction and unrest. As Jesus "passed by" nothing escaped His watchful eye. He saw a look in Matthew's eye as of some caged creature longing for freedom. Matthew's office, the contempt of his fellows, and perhaps his own self-contempt held him in imprisoning disquietude. The Lord knew it all, and one word from Him and the iron gate was open, and the prisoner was free! "Follow Me! And he left all, rose up, and followed Him." With the Lord's command was conveyed the ability to obey, and Matthew stepped into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

And this is the Master's way. His calls are always equipments. Every received commandment is also the vehicle of requisite grace. God's decrees are also promises, nay, they are immediate endowments. If we reverently open one of His callings we shall find it a store-house of needed strength.

And therefore we need not fear the calls of the Lord. They are not the harsh commandments of a tyrant, they are the loving invitations of a friend. If we obey them we shall taste the grace of them, and "His statutes will become our songs."

OCTOBER 16

THE INSPIRATIONS OF THE PAST

Isaiah 51:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

HERE is a sentence from Lord Morley: "If a man is despondent about his work the best remedy I can prescribe for him is to turn to a good biography." He counsels him to go into the yesterdays to find inspiration for the life of to-day. Other men's attainments are bugle-calls to me. "Look unto Abraham, your father." Look unto the blessings which waited upon his obedience! See how springs of refreshment broke out in the troubled way! God "called him and blessed him." Rekindle your hope at his radiant triumph. Strengthen your will in his glorious persistence.

Here do I see God's mercy in the gift of memory and in the witness of history. I can turn to the yesterdays for light and quickening. "Do ye not remember the miracle of the loaves?" Yes, I can recall the grace that met me in my need, the power that made the crooked straight and the rough places plain. And I am privileged to turn the pages of other men's testimonies and read the record of the Lord's dealings with them. And so do memory and history come as helpful angel-presences to my soul.

"His love in time past

Forbids me to think

He'll leave me at last

In trouble to sink."

OCTOBER 17

NO QUEST OF GOD

"He inquired not of the Lord."

—1 Chronicles 10:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

THAT was where Saul began to go wrong. When quest ceases, conquests cease. "He inquired not"; and this meant loss of light. God will be inquired after. He insists that we draw up the blinds if we would receive the light. If we board up our windows He will not drive the gentle rays through our hindrance. We must ask if we would have. The discipline of inquiry fits us for the counsel of the Lord.

"He inquired not"; and this meant loss of sight. When light fails, sight fails. The ponies in our pits become blind. When a spiritual power is not exercised in the heavenly, it is deprived of its appointed functions. And the tragedy is this, that the blind are deceived into thinking that they still retain their sight. "Ye say, we see!"

"He inquired not"; and this meant loss of might. For "the light of life" is not only illumination; it is inspiration too. It is both light and heat; it confers guidance and dynamic. When a man, therefore, refuses the light he becomes a weakling, and he will meet with disaster in the first tempestuous day.

OCTOBER 18

UNANIMITY IN THE SOUL

"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

—James 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,8.

IF two men are at the wheel with opposing notions of direction and destiny, how will it fare with the boat? If an orchestra have two conductors both wielding their batons at the same time and with conflicting conceptions of the score, what will become of the band? And a man whose mind is like that of two men flirting with contrary ideals at the same time will live a life "all sixes and sevens," and nothing will move to purposeful and definite issues. If the mind flirt with Satan and Christ, life will be filled with disastrous instability and confusion.

The first thing we need, therefore, for influential and impressive living is unanimity. Unanimity in the mind is the primary factor in a forceful life. To bring "all that is within me" into concord, to make every instrument of the soul bow to one conductor, to lead all the powers into homage to the Lord—this is the unanimity which assures the perfection of holiness. "Unite my heart to fear Thy name." That is the mood which wins life's prize, "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

OCTOBER 19

READY!

"Let your loins be girded about."

—Luke 12:35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40.

LOOSE garments can be very troublesome. An Oriental robe, if left ungirdled, entangles the feet, or is caught by the wind and hinders one's goings. And therefore the wearer binds the loose attire together with a girdle, and makes it firm and compact about his body. And loose principles can be more dangerous than loose garments. Indefinite opinions, caught by the passing wind of popular caprice, are both a peril and a burden. Many people go through life with loose beliefs and purposes, and they never arrive at any glorious goal. "Let your loins be girded about." Bind your loose thinkings together with the girdle of truth into firm and saving conviction.

"And your lights burning."

Be ready for the emergency. When the darkness falls, don't have to hasten away to buy oil. Look after your resources, and be competent to meet the crisis when it comes. Let the light of conscience be burning with clear flame, like a brilliant lighthouse on a dangerous shore. Let the light of love be burning, like a lamp which sends its friendly, cheery beams to the pilgrims of the night. "Our sufficiency is of God," and the oil of grace will keep the lights burning through the longest night.

OCTOBER 20

THE LORD AS THE SERVANT

"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands,

and that He came forth from God, and goeth to God... "

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

AND how shall we expect the sentence to finish? What shall be the issue of so vast a consciousness? "He took a towel, and girded

Himself ... and began to wash the disciples' feet."

So a mighty consciousness expresses itself in lowly service. In our ignorance we should have assumed that divinity would have moved only in planetary orbits, and would have overlooked the petty streets and ways of men. But here the Lord of Glory girds Himself with the apron of the slave, and almightiness addresses itself to menial service.

And that is the test of an expanding consciousness. We may be sure that we are growing smaller when we begin to disparage humble services. We may be sure we are growing larger when we love the ministries that never cry or lift their voices in the streets. When a man begins to despise the "towel," he is losing his kingly dignity, and is resigning his place on the throne. "I have given you an example that ye also should do as I have done to you."

OCTOBER 21

THE CONTRITE HEART

Isaiah 57:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

LET us look at this description of the dwelling-place of the Eternal God. "I dwell with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

And who are the contrite? In the original word there is the significance of pieces of rock or lumps of soil having been crumbled into the finest powder. Have I not sometimes heard the phrase—"He's just a lump of pride"? Well, that pride has to be broken down into the finest powder, until not a bit of stubborn self-conceit remains. And then the contrite become the humble! Our gracious Lord has sometimes to use heavy hammers in the destruction of this hard and stony pride: the shock of calamity, the battering of disappointment and defeat! Our pride must be ground to powder. Then He will come in and dwell with us!

And what then? He will "revive the spirit of the humble, and revive the heart of the contrite ones." Our broken pride shall be as broken soil in which our Lord will grow the flowers and fruits of the Spirit. The death of pride shall be followed by a revival of all things sweet and beautiful. When pride is laid low, it is a "day of resurrection." The wilderness shall "blossom as the rose."

October 22

THE TRUE STANDARD OF GREATNESS

Matthew 18:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

HERE is our Lord's estimate of true greatness. How infinite is the contrast between His standard and the standards of the world! The world measures greatness by money, or eloquence, or intellectual skill, or even by prowess on the field of battle. But here is the Lord's standard—"Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Those people are greatest who are most like God. We become partakers of the Divine nature through a child-like relationship to God. The grace and power of God pour into our souls when we wait upon Him like a little child.

Child-likeness opens the doors and windows to the incoming of the Almighty. The child-like is the trustful, and no barriers of cynical suspicion block the channels of spiritual communion. And the child-like is the docile, and no boulders of arrogance or self-conceit block the channel of the invigorating waters of life. And so the child-like become the God-like, and, of course, they are the greatest among the sons of men. The little child enshrines the secret of the God-man, and we should be infinitely wise if we had the little child always in our midst.

OCTOBER 23

MASTERS AND SERVANTS

Matthew 20:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

IT is always our peril that we hunger for place more than for character, for position more than for disposition, for a temporal sceptre more than for a majestic self-control.

These disciples coveted places on the right and left of the Lord, and they had little or no concern about their worthiness for the posts. Temporalities eclipsed spiritualities, fleeting fireworks hid the quiet stars. They wanted to be great and prominent, the Lord wanted them to be pure and good. They longed to be Prime Ministers, the Lord purposed that they should be glad to be ministers, working contentedly in an obscure place.

Now mark our Lord's response. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?" They wanted to be the King's cup-bearers; He offers

them to drink of His cup. They call for sovereignty: He asks for sacrifice. They crave sweetness: He offers them bitterness. They seek a life of "getting": He demands a life of "giving." Who has a cup of bitterness to drink? Go and share it with him! Where are the morally and spiritually anæmic? Go and give them thy blood! "Whoever shall lose his life shall find it." Through self-sacrifice we pass to our throne.

OCTOBER 24

"PUSH" AND "PULL"

Lk 14:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 10, 11.

THE world canonizes "push." It eulogizes the "man of push." It loves to see a man elbowing his way through the jostling crowd, and gaining for himself a "chief seat" at life's feast. He is proclaimed a "successful" man, and he rises in "the chief seat," and amid loud hurrahs he responds to the toast of his health.

Yes, "push" is the word of the world, but "pull" is the word of the Lord, and between the two there is the difference of darkness and light. "Push" is selfish and exclusive: "pull" is inclusive and neighbourly. "Push" takes as its motto, "The weakest to the wall!" "Pull" takes as its motto, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

The final verdict upon life will be founded, not upon our own success in gaining a chief seat, but upon our success in encouraging the faint and the weakling, and in "helping lame dogs over stiles."

My gracious Lord, help me to put on "a heart of compassion" that by neighbourly feeling and ministry I may lead my fellows to the choice places of life's feast.

OCTOBER 25

THE ROBE OF HUMILITY

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

LET me, therefore, learn this lesson, that if my Lord should give me prominence in His church it is not to feed my lust of dominion, but in order to strengthen and extend the influence of the church's life. "Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock."

The only truly imperial purple is the robe of humility. Any other sort of attire may appear to be kingly, but it has none of the glorious significance which belongs to our sovereign Lord. When a man puts on the robe of pride, he immediately belittles his manhood. When a man puts on the robe of humility, he becomes a greater man.

But humility is more than an imperial robe, it is a complete armour. It is fine for defence! The devil cannot get at the man who is "clothed in humility." There is no chink or crevice through which his deadly rapier can pierce. And it is equally fine for offence! Wearing this armour we can go out "redressing human wrongs." The stroke of pride is ever futile. When the humble man deals a blow, the power of the Almighty is in his right hand. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God."

OCTOBER 26

THE LUST OF THE EXTERNAL

Matthew 23:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

PHARISAISM is the lust of externalities, and the utter negligence of the inward sanctities of the spirit. It thinks more of decorum than of holiness, more of etiquette than of equity, more of ritualism than of "the robe of righteousness and the garment of salvation." Pharisaism lives in the streets: it does not dwell in the inner chambers of our mystic life.

Pharisaism thirsts for the homage of men and not for the approbation of God. It is far more alert to the "Rabbi! Rabbi!" of the crowd than it is to the secret callings of the Lord. The path between itself and the highest is unfrequented and grass-grown; the path between itself and the multitude is a well-trodden and barren road.

My Lord, let me be warned! Let me not pervert the ministries of religion to the aggrandizement of self. Let me not, in appearing to worship Thee, be seeking the worship of men. Give me singleness of mind. Give me purity of heart. And may I discover true greatness in seeking greatness for others.

OCTOBER 27

PAYING HOMAGE TO THE KING

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

ACKNOWLEDGE Him.” But not with a passing nod of recognition. I must not merely glance at Him now and again, admitting His existence on the field. To acknowledge Him is to acknowledge Him as King, with the right to control, and as predominant partner in all the affairs of my life, even the right to give the determining voice in all my decisions. No, it is not the recognition paid to an acquaintance, it is the homage paid to a King.

And if I thus acknowledge Him, He will direct my paths. Life shall always be moving on to its purposed end and glory. The path chosen will not always be the most alluring one, but it will be the right one, and therefore the safe one, and there will be wonderful discoveries on the uninviting track.

How will He let me know which path to take? I cannot say. We can never anticipate God’s ways of dealing with us. But if my life is bent to the loving acknowledgment of His will, He will assuredly find a way to make His will known. The light will always reach the willing mind.

OCTOBER 28

PLEASANTNESS AND PEACE

“Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

—Proverbs 3:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

AN the ways of the Lord I shall have feasts of “pleasantness.” But not always at the beginning of the ways. Sometimes my faith is called upon to take a very unattractive road, and nothing welcomes me of fascination and delight. But here is a law of the spiritual life. The exercised faith intensifies my spiritual senses, and hidden things become manifest to my soul—hidden beauties, hidden sounds, hidden scents! Faith adds a mysterious “plus” to my powers, and “all things become new.”

And in the ways of the Lord I shall also find the gracious gift of peace. Not that the road will be always smooth, but that I may be always calm. I can be unperturbed when “all around tumultuous seems.” I can journey in holy serenity, because the Lord of the road is with me. For peace consists, not in friendliness of circumstances, but in friendship with the Lord.

OCTOBER 29

THE STORY OF THE PAST

Deuteronomy 31:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

AND no ears are more receptive to spiritual story than the ears of a little child. It is not needful to open the gate of interest; it is wide ajar already. And imagination also is there, ready to busy itself about the story. And so, too, is the spirit of homage and adoration. The children are ready for the King! “Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

And, therefore, we have need of wise tellers of the story, who know the story themselves. And in these delicate regions I must ever remember how much my spirit shares in the story I tell. My spirit is a friend or a foe to my power. My words may be well chosen, but they may all be light as empty shells, devoid of all vitality. My words have just the power of their spiritual contents. “You cannot fight the French with 200,000 red uniforms,” said Carlyle; “there must be men inside them.” And we cannot engage in the evangelization with mere uniforms of words. There must be spirit inside them, even the spirit of pure and consecrated lives.

OCTOBER 30

A TESTIMONY MEETING

Psalms 34:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

THIS is a little testimony meeting, in which each of the witnesses tells the story of the Lord’s gracious dealings with him. Let me listen to them.

“He delivered me from all my fears.” His fears held him in dungeons. Even the noontide was as darkness round about him, and there was no song in his soul. And the Lord broke open the prison-gate and let him out to light, and joy, and belief.

“They looked to Him and were lightened.” They looked upon the grace of the Lord, and were lit up, just as I have seen humble cottage windows ablaze with the glory of the rising sun. I must “set my face” towards the Lord, and I, too, shall catch the radiance of His glory.

"This poor man cried ... and the Lord saved him out of all his troubles." And these troubles were what I should call "tight corners," when the life is hemmed in by unfortunate circumstances, and there seems no way of escape. Disappointment shuts us in. Sorrow shuts us in. Lack of money shuts us in. Let me cry unto the Lord. He is a wonderful Friend in the tight corner, and He will bring my feet into "a large place."

OCTOBER 31

TWO GREAT MYSTERIES

Psalm 81:1-16

THIS is an unutterable mystery, that a man can close his life against God. "Israel would have none of Me." We can shut out God as we can shut out the pure air. We can bar His entrance just as we can exclude the light from the chamber. And then the pity is, we can deceive ourselves into believing that the air is perfectly fresh and that the room is flooded with light. We lose our fine discernment, and we call evil good, and the darkness we call day. If we "refuse to have God" in our thoughts God gives us over to a "reprobate mind."

And it is an equally unutterable mystery that a man can open his life to the entertainment of Almighty God. "I will dwell with them!" That is my supreme honour, that the Lord will be my guest. I can "hearken" to Him, and "talk" to Him, and "walk" with Him. And He offers me protection. He will "subdue my enemies." And He offers me unfailing provision. The Guest becomes the Host! I put my little upon the table, and lo! I find that "the cruse of oil fails not, and the meal in the barrel is not consumed!"