

J H Jowett-Daily Meditation 11

J H JOWETT'S DEVOTIONALS

JANUARY	JULY
FEBRUARY	AUGUST
MARCH	SEPTEMBER
APRIL	OCTOBER
MAY	NOVEMBER
JUNE	DECEMBER

MY DAILY MEDITATION for the Circling Year

by John Henry Jowett

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER The First IN THE DAYS OF YOUTH

Ecclesiastes 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

IN my university days at Edinburgh there was a young medical student named Macfarlane. He was one of our finest athletes, and everybody liked him. One day he was stricken with typhoid, which proved fatal. Macfarlane in his days of boisterous health had neglected his Lord, and when one of his friends, visiting him in his sickness, led his thoughts to the Saviour, he turned and said, "But wouldn't it be a shabby thing to turn to Christ now?" "Yes," replied his friend, "it will be a shabby thing, but it will be shabbier not to turn to Him at all!" And I believe that poor Macfarlane turned his shame-filled soul to the Lord.

But it is shabby to offer our Lord the mere dregs in life's cup. It is shabby to offer Him the mere hull of the boat when the storms of passion have carried its serviceableness away. Let me offer Him my best, my finest equipment, my youth! Let me offer Him the best, and give Him the helm when I am just setting sail and life abounds in golden promise! "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

NOVEMBER The Second LEADING TO CHRIST

"Suffer little children to come unto Me."

—Mark 10:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

"UNTO Me!" We must not keep them at any half-way house. We are so prone to be satisfied if only we bring them a little way along the road. If we get them to pray! If we get them to attend the Lord's house! If we get them to be truthful and gentle! All of which is unspeakably good. It is a blessed thing to be in "the ways of Zion"; it is a far more blessed thing to be in the palace with Zion's King and Lord. When we are dealing with little children, every road must lead to Jesus, and not until the road is trodden and we arrive at Him must we think our ministry accomplished.

And, therefore, if I am talking to the little ones about Samuel, or David, or Paul, I must always see the short lane which leads to the Lord. "Suffer the little children to come unto Me!" And once they really own Him, we may trust their instincts for the rest. The heart in the child will leap to the love of the Lord, "for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." When a little one sees the Saviour, it is "love at first sight"!

NOVEMBER The Third THE LORD'S OWN

John 15:11-25.

THE "Lord's own" possess the Lord's love. "I have loved you." And love is not a beautiful sentiment, a passive rainbow stretched over the realm of human life. It is a glorious, active energy, infinitely more powerful than electricity, and always besieging the gates of the soul, or ministering to its manifold needs. Love is the greatest force in the world.

And the "Lord's own" are taken into the inner circle of intimacy, where the deepest secrets dwell. We are not kept on the door-step, or left standing in the hall, or limited to one or two "public rooms"; we are privileged to enter the King's privacy, and be nourished at the King's table, and listen to the King's table-talk concerning "all things" which He has heard of the Father. We have "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

And the "Lord's own" will experience the world's hatred. "Therefore the world hateth you." Our very friendship with the Lord pronounces judgment on the world, and its hostility is aroused. If we are "partakers of the glory" we shall most assuredly be "partakers of the sufferings of Christ."

NOVEMBER The Fourth

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS WITNESS

John 15:26-16:11

THE Holy Spirit is to be a witness of Jesus. "He shall testify of Me." He shall be "the Friend of the Bridegroom," and He shall sing the Bridegroom's grace, and goodness, and prowess, in the eager ear of the bride. And the early love of the bride shall become deeper and richer as more and more she enters into "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

And the Holy Spirit is thus to be a strengthener of the friends of the Lord. He will be my "Comforter." By His gracious advocacy He will make my faith and hope invincible. The best service which can be rendered me is not to change my circumstances, but to make me superior to them; not to make a smooth road, but to enable me to "leap like an hart" over any road; not to remove the darkness, but to make me "sing songs in the night." And so I will not pray for less burdens, but for more strength! And this is the gracious ministry of "The Comforter."

Holy Spirit, strengthen me! Transform my frail opinions into firm convictions, and change my fleeting, dissolving views into abiding visions!

NOVEMBER The Fifth

THE TEMPLE OF THE BODY

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

THE Lord wants my body. He needs its members as ministers of righteousness. He would work in the world through my brain, and eyes, and ears, and lips, and hands, and feet.

And the Lord wants my body as "a living sacrifice." He asks for it when it is thoroughly alive! We so often deny the Lord our bodies until they are infirm and sickly, and sometimes we do not offer them to Him until they are quite "worn out." It is infinitely better to offer them even then than never to offer them at all. But it is best of all to offer our bodies to our Lord when they are strong, and vigorous, and serviceable, and when they can be used in the strenuous places of the field.

And so let me appoint a daily consecration service, and let me every morning present my body "a living sacrifice" unto God. Let me regard it as a most holy possession, and let me keep it clean. Let me recoil from all abuse of it—from all gluttony, and intemperance, and "riotous living." Let me look upon my body as a church, and let the service of consecration continue all day long. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?"

NOVEMBER The Sixth

PEACE IN TRIBULATION

John 16:25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

HERE is a strange medley of experiences! I am to enjoy the gift of peace, and yet I am to be smarting under tribulation!

When the Holy Spirit is my guest I am to enjoy the gift of peace. "These things I said unto you that ye might have peace." The life of the soul is to move without jar or discord. It shall be like a quiet engine-house, in which every wheel co-operates with every other wheel, and there is no waste or friction in the holy place. "All that is within me" blesses God's holy name.

And yet, while peace reigns within, there may be tribulation without! "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Here is a peace which is not broken by the noise and assault of brutal circumstance. The most tempestuous wind cannot disturb the quiet serenity of the stars. When the world stones me, not one grain of its gritty dust need enter the delicate workings of my soul. That was the peace of my Lord, and it is my Lord who says to me: "My peace I give unto you!" So "be of good cheer," my soul! Thy Lord has "overcome the

world," and thou shalt share His victory.

NOVEMBER The Seventh

REJECTED LOVE

Isaiah 63:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

IF I refuse the friendship of the Holy One I inevitably invite His hostility. "But they rebelled, and vexed His holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them."

And so, if I reject the forces of grace I do not turn them from my gate, I convert them into foes. Malachi teaches me that rejected sunshine becomes like a burning oven. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches me that rejected love becomes "a consuming fire." Holiness nourishes virtue, it withers vice. If I offer my Lord a tender aspiration, His breath woos it like the balmy air of the spring; if I come before Him with the weeds of ignoble dispositions, He blights them as with the nipping of the frost.

And is it not well, for thee and me, that our Lord is thus fiercely hostile to our sins? Is not this "consuming fire" the friend of my soul? May I not pray: Burn on, burn on, pure flame, until all the refuse and rubbish of my life are utterly consumed; burn on, burn on, until fierce flame becomes mild light, flinging its genial radiance over a transfigured desert?

NOVEMBER The Eighth

THE ORGAN OF SPIRITUAL VISION

1Corinthians 2:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

OUR finest human instruments fail to obtain for us "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

Art fails! "Eye hath not seen." The merely artistic vision is blind to the hidden glories of grace. Philosophy fails! "Neither hath ear heard." We may listen to the philosopher as he spins his subtle theories and weaves his systematic webs, but the meshes he has woven are not fine enough to catch "the deep things of God." Poetry fails! "Neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." Poetic imagination may stretch her wings, and soar, but she fails to enter the guest-chamber of the Lord, and take an inventory of "the things prepared." All these gracious ministries fail to reach life's glorious and purposed end.

"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." When art, and poetry, and philosophy all pitiably fail, the Spirit unveils to us the bewildering feast. And so the unlearned has the same ultimate advantage as the learned, and the cottager has equal privilege with the monarch. The greatest things are not the perquisites of culture, but the endowments of humility and holy faith. The poor man has access to the "many mansions," and finds a place at the King's feast.

NOVEMBER The Ninth

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS EMANCIPATOR

2Corinthians 3:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

IN the Holy Spirit I experience a large emancipation. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." I am delivered from all enslaving bondage—from the bondage of literalism, and legalism, and ritualism. I am not hampered by excessive harness, by multitudinous rules. The harness is fitting and congenial, and I have freedom of movement, and "my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

And I am to use my emancipation of spirit in the ministry of contemplation. I am to "behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." My thought has been set free from the cramping distractions devised by men, and I am now to feast my gaze upon the holy splendours of my Lord. It is like coming out of a little and belittling tent, to feast upon the sunny amplitude of the open sky! I can "cease from man," and commune with God.

And the contemplation will effect a transformation. "We are changed into the same image from glory to glory." The serene brightness of the sky gets into our faces. The Lord becomes "the health of our countenance," and we shine with borrowed glory.

NOVEMBER The Tenth

NEVERTHELESS!

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

HERE is obedience in spite of the night of failure. "Nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net." That word "nevertheless" has

always made history. It has been spoken after scourgings, after “bonds and imprisonments.” Ten thousand times has it been heard in the chamber of bereavement, the first sound to break the awful silence. “At evening my wife died.... In the morning I did as God commanded me.” And may it be true of me! May my “nevertheless” of willing obedience rise like a lark above the storm.

And because there was obedience there came vision. In the wonderful answer to his faith Peter beheld the glory of his Lord. And so I never know where the unenticing road of obedience will lead me. At the end of the dull road there will be some gracious surprise! It is the rugged path which leads to the summit! The panorama comes as the reward of the toilsome climb! Always, in the realm of the Spirit, the dogged “nevertheless” will lead to the “shining tableland to which our God Himself is moon and sun.”

NOVEMBER The Eleventh **FOILING THE ENEMY’S PLOTS**

Luke 22:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34.

I DO not meet my tempter alone. The engagement has been foreseen by my Lord. “Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you!” The tempter’s plots, and wiles, and ambuscades are all clearly perceived. My Lord has got the enemy’s maps, and his plan of campaign, for all things are open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. I do not fight a lonely warfare on a dark and unknown field. My Lord Himself both scouts and fights for those who are His own.

And one great means of His co-operation is the mighty ministry of intercession. “But I have prayed for thee.” That “but” is the massing of the forces of heaven against the black and subtle hordes of hell. Let me ever remember that the Lord’s prayers are always the conveyers of holy power to those for whom He prays. It is as when Christian met Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation: there comes a sudden accession of strength to the bleeding warrior, and Apollyon retires wounded and beaten from the field.

And the only way to preserve the fruits of a triumph is by helping other warriors to gain a similar conquest. “When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.” I shall retain the hard, muscular limbs of a soldier if I am willing to share my blood with the entire army.

NOVEMBER The Twelfth **THE FASHIONING OF A DENIAL**

Luke 22:54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62.

FROM Peter’s denial I would learn the peril of the first cowardly surrender to sin. Surely Peter must have “trimmed” many times in the days which preceded his actual discipleship. Great crises do not make men, they reveal them. The men have been made in the smaller issues which go before. We march to our crises by a gradient, every step of which is a moral decision. The interior of the tree is secretly eaten away by white ants; the tempest reveals and completes the destruction.

And I would learn from Peter’s denial the cumulative power of sins. One sin widens the road for a bigger one to follow. The second denial will be more vehement than the first. The third will add the element of blasphemy. Yes, every sin is a miner and sapper for a larger army in the rear. It not only does its own work, it prepares the way for its successor.

But I will connect this “dark betrayal night” with that sweet after-morning when the Lord and His denier met face to face by the lake. And that sweet morning of reconciliation is a possible experience for all the deniers of the Lord, and it is therefore possible for thee and me.

NOVEMBER The Thirteenth **A TRANSFORMED FISHERMAN**

“Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing.”
—John 21:1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14.

SIMON PETER had often gone a fishing, but never had he gone as he went in the twilight of that most wonderful evening. He handled the ropes in a new style, with a new dignity born of the bigger capacity of his own soul. He turned to the familiar task, but with a quite unfamiliar spirit. He went a fishing, but the power of the resurrection went with him.

This action of Simon Peter’s is the only true test of the reality of any spiritual experience. How does it fit me for ordinary affairs? A spiritual festival should do for the soul what a day on the hills does for the body—equip it for the better doing of the duties in the vale.

This action is also a preparative to a renewal of the gracious experience. The road of common duty was just the way appointed for another meeting with his Lord, for in the morning-light there came a voice across the waters: "Children, have ye any meat?" "And that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter: 'It is the Lord.'"

NOVEMBER The Fourteenth
THE PURIFICATION OF LOVE

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

LOVEST thou Me?" There was a day, only a little while back, when Simon Peter's love was not yet purified, and it indulged itself in loud and empty boasts. True love never blusters and brawls. It is like a stream of water flowing silently underground, and secretly bathing the roots of things, and keeping their heads fresh, and cool, and sweet. The boast has now dropped out of the love! It is now ashamed of words! "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

Yes, true love expresses itself, not in clamorous boastfulness, but in quiet services. It ministers to the Lord's sheep and the Lord's lambs. It spends its strength on the mountains, "seeking that which is lost," and it does this in the darkness, where there is no applauding crowd. The true lover does not ask for some dramatic scene where he can die for the beloved; he delights in obscure services, the feeding and tending of the sheep of the flock.

But the love that does the humbler thing will be ready for the greater sacrifice whenever the day shall demand it. Some day the once boastful denier shall lay down his life for his Saviour, and through martyrdom he shall pass to his crown.

NOVEMBER The Fifteenth
THE MUSIC OF RECONCILIATION

Psalms 85:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

LET me listen to this psalm of reconciliation, as it makes music for my soul to-day.

It tells me of the Divine favour. "Lord, Thou hast been favourable to Thy land." As I write these words, the sun has just slipped out from behind the cloud. It has been there all the time, but the ministry of the cloud was needed, and so it appeared as though there would be sun and spring no more. "Behind a frowning Providence He hides a smiling face."

And it tells me of the Divine forgiveness. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people." Yes, when the sun appears, He loosens the frozen earth and streams, and turns the bondage into liberty. The soul that was imprisoned in freezing guilt attains a joyous freedom.

And it tells me of revival. "Wilt Thou not revive us again?" It is the next step in the returning spring. The sleeping, benumbed things will all awake! "The flowers appear on the earth." Where grace reigns, graces spring! Forgiveness is attended by renewal, and the wilderness begins to "blossom like the rose."

NOVEMBER The Sixteenth
THE MAKING OF A BRAVE MAN

Acts 4:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

HERE is a marvellous transformation! I have been wondering at the littleness of the denier, and now this same denier is making the world wonder by his majestic boldness! His one resource is now the risen Christ, and his one moral standard is "whether it be right!" Once he quailed before an accusing maid; now he stands undaunted before the rulers of the earth. How has it all come about?

He has been to the empty tomb. The awe of the resurrection is upon his spirit. Through the once blind cul-de-sac of the grave he has seen the King and the great white throne.

And he has been by the lake on the morning of reconciliation. The live coal from the altar of his Lord's love has touched him and has purged away the uncleanness of his denial.

And he has been in the upper room at Pentecost, and the mighty Spirit has come upon him like wind and flame, endowing him with forceful and enthusiastic character. Now he can dare for God, now he can work for God, now he can burn for God! And this is how he has been transformed.

NOVEMBER The Seventeenth

IF GOD BE FOR US——!

Romans 8:31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39.

WHO else is worth naming? How much does anybody count? If the sun be on my side, why should I be dismayed at any icy obstacle that may rear itself in my way? Sun versus ice! God versus my impediments! Why should I fear? If the atmosphere is on my side, then even the opposing strength of iron will rust away into powder. “The breath of the Lord bloweth upon it,” and if the holy breath, God’s Holy Spirit, is for us, then the apparently invincible obstacle will crumble away into dust.

But we are deceived by mass, and we are forgetful of spirit. Mere size affrights us. We are dismayed by numbers. We forget the quiet, pervasive, all-powerful ministry of the Spirit of God. We are overwhelmed by the phenomena of tempest and earthquake and fire, and we forget that almightiness hides in the “still, small voice,” in “the sound of a gentle stillness.” God’s breath is more than the fierce threatenings of embattled hosts. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” I will hide myself in His holy fellowship, and “none shall make me afraid.”

NOVEMBER The Eighteenth

EXHILARANT SPIRITS

“He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet.”

—Psalm 18:31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39.

THINK of Wordsworth’s lines, in which he describes a natural lady, made by Nature herself:

She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs.

And it is this buoyancy, this elasticity, this springiness that the Lord is waiting to impart to the souls of His children, so that they may move along the ways of life with the light steps of the fawn.

Some of us move with very heavy feet. There is little of the fawn about us as we go along the road. There is reluctance in our obedience. There is a frown in our homage. Our benevolence is graceless, and there is no charm in our piety, and no rapture in our praise. We are the victims of “the spirit of heaviness.” And yet here is the word which tells us that God will make our feet “like hinds’ feet.” He will give us exhilaration and spring, enabling us to leap over difficulties, and to have strength and buoyancy for the steepest hills. Let us seek the inspiration of the Lord. “It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.”

NOVEMBER The Nineteenth

THE ARMOUR OF GOD

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

THE Word describes the armour, and it directs us to the armoury. The description would oppress me if the directions were absent. If I have to forge the armour for myself I should be in despair. But I can go to the armoury of grace, where there is an ever-open door and abundant welcome for every person who fain would be a knight-errant of the Lord. The Lord will provide me with perfect equipment suitable for every kind of contest which may meet me along the road. There are no favourites among the pilgrims except, perhaps, the neediest, and to them is given “more abundant honour.”

Sometimes one of the Lord’s knights loses one piece of armour, and he must at once repair to the armoury. Perhaps he has lost his helmet, or his shield, or even his breastplate, and the enemy has discovered his vulnerable place. We must never continue our journey imperfectly armed. The evil one will ignore the pieces we have, and he will direct all his attack where there is no defence. Back to the armoury! Back to the armoury, that we may “put on the whole armour of God.” The Lord is waiting; let us humbly and penitently ask for the missing piece.

NOVEMBER The Twentieth

THE REAL ARISTOCRACY

“Abraham, my friend.”

—Isaiah 40:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

THINK that is the noblest title ever given to mortal man. It is the speech of the Lord God concerning one of His children. It is something to be coveted even to enjoy the friendship of a noble man; but to have the friendship of God, and to have the holy God name us as His friends, is surely the brightest jewel that can ever shine in a mortal's crown. And such recognition and such glory may be the wonderful lot of thee and me.

"Abraham, my friend." The Lord of hosts found delight in human friendships. He comes in to sup with us. He drinks of the cup of our delights. For, surely, it is one of the supreme characteristics of true friendship that it rejoices at the other's joy. And my heavenly Friend is glad in my gladness as well as sympathetic in the day of sadness and tears. Yes, He comes in to sup with me, and I may sup with Him.

"Abraham, my friend." And He shares His sweets with His friend, in inward counsels, and in tender revelations of His purposes and in the gifts of joy and peace. There is perfect openness between these friends; nothing is hid. They have the run of each other's hearts.

"I tell Him all my joys and fears,

And He reveals His love to me."

NOVEMBER The Twenty-first

THE EARLY BUILDERS

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

IT is always a healthy means of grace to link my own accomplishments with the fidelity and achievements of the past. Solomon traced his finished Temple to the holy purpose in the heart of David his father. I lay the coping-stone, but who turned the first sod? I lead the water into new ministries, but who first dug the well?

There is the temple of liberty. In our own day we are enriching it with most benignant legislation, but we must not forget our dauntless fathers, in whose blood the foundations were laid. When I am walking about in the finished structure, let me remember the daring architects who "did well" to have it in their hearts.

Such retrospect will make me humble. It will save me from the isolation and impotence of foolish pride. It will confirm me in human fellowship by showing me how many springs I have in my fellow-men.

And such retrospect will make me grateful to my God. Noble outlooks always engender the spirit of praise. The fine air of wide spaces quickens the soul to a song.

NOVEMBER The Twenty-second

RECOVERING LOST STRENGTH

1Kings 8:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36.

IN this portion of this great prayer I discern the unalterable mode in which nations and individuals recover their moral health and strength.

How do they lose it? Two words tell the story. They "sin" and are "smitten." It is an inevitable sequence. Every sin is the minister of disease. Sometimes we can see it, when the disease flaunts its flags in the flesh; lust and drunkenness have glaring placards, and we know what is going on within. But even when sin makes no visible mark the wasting process is at work. It is as true of falsehood as of drunkenness, of treachery as of lust. "Evil shall slay the wicked."

And how do we recover our lost estate? There are three words which tell the story. "Turn!" "Confess!" "Make supplication!" The words need no exposition. I must turn my face to my despised and neglected Lord; I must tell them all about my miserable revolt, and I must humbly crave for His restoring grace.

And the answer is sure. Such humble exercise sets the joy-bells ringing, and the rich forgiveness of the Lord fills the soul with peace. "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is."

NOVEMBER The Twenty-third

THE STRANGER

1Kings 8:37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53.

YES, indeed, what space has "the stranger" in my supplications? Has he any place at all? Are my intercessions private enclosures, intended only for the select among my friends? Do I ever open the door to anyone outside my family circle? Are my ecclesiastical sympathies large enough to include "outsiders" from afar? What do I do with "the stranger"?

There is nothing which keeps prayer sweet and fresh and wholesome like the letting in of "the stranger"! To let a new guest sit down at the feast of my intercession is to give my own soul a most nutritious surprise. It is a most healthy spiritual habit to see to it that we bring in a new "stranger" every time we pray. Let me be continually enlarging the circle of hospitality! Let some new and weary bird find a resting-place in the branches of my supplications every time I hold communication with God.

A prayer which has no room for "the stranger" can have little or no room for God.

NOVEMBER The Twenty-fourth

THE PRAYER WHICH ENDS IN SACRIFICE

1Kings 8:54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66.

AND that is the healthy order of all true worship. It begins in spacious supplication in which "the stranger" finds a place. Then there is a lavish consecration of self and substance. And then the wedding-bells begin to ring, and "the joy of the Lord is our strength!" "They went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done."

But so many suppliants miss the middle term, and therefore the gladness is wanting. Supplication is not followed by consecration, and therefore there is no exultation. It is a fatal omission. When we are asking for "the gift of God" our request must be accompanied by the gift of ourselves to God. If we want the water we must offer the vessel. No gift of self, no bounty of God! No losing, no finding! "When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began."

"Take my life, and let it be

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

NOVEMBER The Twenty-fifth

AFTER THE PRAYER THE FIRE!

"When Solomon had made an end of praying the fire came down from heaven."

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

AND the fire is the symbol of the Holy God. Pure flame is our imperfect mode of expressing the Incorruptible. This burning flame is heat and light in one. And when Solomon had prayed, the holy Flame was in their midst.

But not only is the flame the symbol of the Holy; it also typifies the power which can make me holy. We have no cleansing minister to compare with fire. Where water fails fire succeeds. After an epidemic water is comparatively impotent. We commit the infested garments to the flames. It was the great fire of London which delivered London from the tyranny of the plague. And so it is with my soul. God, who is holy flame, will burn out the germs of my sin. He will "purify Jerusalem with the spirit of burning." "Our God is a consuming fire."

Come to my soul, O holy Flame! Place Thy "burning bliss" against my wickedness, and consume it utterly away!

NOVEMBER The Twenty-sixth

UNCONSECRATED SOULS

"This house which I have sanctified will I cast out of my sight,

and will make it a proverb and a by-word among all nations."

—2Chronicles 7:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

AND thus am I taught that consecrated houses are nothing without consecrated souls. It is not the mode of worship, but the spirit of the worshipper which forms the test of a consecrated people. If the worshipper is defiled his temple becomes an offence. When the kernel is rotten, and I offer the husk to God, the offering is a double insult to His most holy name.

And yet, how tempted I am to assume that God will be pleased with the mere outsides of things, with words instead of aspiration, with postures instead of dispositions, with the letter instead of the spirit, with an ornate and costly temple instead of a sweet and

lowly life! Day by day I am tempted to treat the Almighty as though He were a child! Nay, the Bible uses a more awful word; it says men treat the Lord as though He were a fool!

From all such irreverence and frivolity, good Lord, deliver me! Let me ever remember that Thou “desirest truth in the inward man.” “In the hidden parts” help me “to know wisdom.”

NOVEMBER The Twenty-seventh

THE VALUE OF REVERENCE

Romans 13:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

WHEN I pay honour to honourable ministers I not only honour my God, but I enrich and refine my own soul. One of the great secrets of spiritual culture is to know how to revere. There is an uncouth spirit of self-aggression which, while it wounds and impoverishes others, destroys its finest spiritual furniture in its own ungodly heat. The man who never bows will never soar. To pay homage where homage is due is one of the exercises which will help to keep us near “the great white throne.”

I know my peril, for I recognize one of the prevalent perils of our time. Some of the old courtesies are being discarded as though they belonged to a younger day. Some of the old tokens of respect have been banished to the limbo of rejected ritual. Dignitaries are jostled in the common crowd. “One man is as good as another!” And so there is a tendency to strip life of all its reverences, and venerable fanes become stables for unclean things.

My soul, come thou not into this shame! Move in the ways of life with softened tread, and pay thy respect at every shrine where dwells the grace and power of God.

NOVEMBER The Twenty-eighth

HOW TO FIGHT EVIL

“Overcome evil with good.”

—Romans 12:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

FOR how else can we cast out evil? Satan cannot cast out Satan. No one can clean a room with a filthy duster. The surgeon cannot cut out the disease if his instruments are defiled. While he removed one ill-growth he would sow the seed of another. It must be health which fights disease. It will demand a good temper to overcome the bad temper in my brother.

And therefore I must cultivate a virtue if I would eradicate a vice. That applies to the state of my own soul. If there be some immoral habit in my life, the best way to destroy it is by cultivating a good one. Take the mind away from the evil one. Deprive it of thought-food. Give the thought to the nobler mood, and the ignoble mood will die. And this also applies to the faults and vices of my brother. I must fight them with their opposites. If he is harsh and cruel, I must be considerate and gentle. If he is grasping, I must be generous. If he is loud and presumptuous, I must be soft-mannered and self-restrained. If he is devilish, I must be a Christian. This is the warfare which tells upon the empire of sin. I can overcome evil with good.

NOVEMBER The Twenty-ninth

TRANSFORMING OUR FOES

Matthew 5:38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48.

“LOVE your enemies.”

It must be the aim of a Christian to make his enemy lovely. It is not my supreme business to secure my safety, but to remove his ugliness. He may only annoy me, but he is destroying himself. He may injure my reputation; but far worse, he is blighting his own character. Therefore must I seek to remove the greater thing, the corrosive malady in his own soul. I must make it my purpose to recover his loveliness, and restore the lost likeness of the Lord.

And only love can make things lovely. Revenge can never do it. Even duty will fail in the gracious work. There is a final touch, a consummate bloom, to which duty can never attain, and which is only attainable by love. All love’s ministries are creative of loveliness. Wherever her finger rests, something exquisite is born. Love is a great magician: she transforms the desert into a garden, and she makes the wilderness blossom like the rose.

But where shall we get the love wherewith to make our enemy lovely? From the great Lover Himself. “We love, because He first loved us.” The great Lover will love love into us! And we, too, shall become fountains of love, for our Lord will open “rivers in the high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys.”

NOVEMBER The Thirtieth

THE SPRING AND THE RIVER

“With the Lord there is mercy.”

—Psalm 130:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

THAT is the ultimate spring. All the pilgrims of the night may meet at that fountain. We have no other common meeting-place. If we make any other appointment we shall lose one another on the way. But we can meet one another at the fountain, men of all colours, and of all denominations, and of all creeds. “By Thy mercy, O deliver us, good Lord!”

“There is forgiveness with Thee.” That is the quickening river. Sin and guilt scorch the fair garden of the soul as the lightning withers and destroys the strong and beautiful things in woodland and field. The graces are stricken, holy qualities are smitten, and the soul languishes like a blasted heath. But from the fountain of God’s mercy there flows the vitalizing stream of His forgiveness. “There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.” It is the mystic “river of life, clear as crystal.” “Everything shall live whither the river cometh.”

“With Him is plenteous redemption.” Salvation is not merely a recovered flower, it is a recovered garden. It is not the restoring merely of a withered hand; “He restoreth my soul.” God does not make an oasis in a surrounding desert; He makes the entire wilderness to “rejoice and blossom as the rose.”