

J H Jowett-Daily Meditation 6

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MY DAILY MEDITATION for the Circling Year

by John Henry Jowett

JUNE

JUNE The First

THE BEAUTY OF VARIETY

1Corinthians 12:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

GOD'S glory is expressed through the harmony of variety. We do not need sameness in order to gain union. I am now looking upon a scene of surpassing loveliness. There are mountains, and sea, and grassland, and trees, and a wide-stretching sky, and white pebbles at my feet. And a white bird has just flown across a little bank of dark cloud. What variety! And when I look closer the variety is infinitely multiplied. Everything blends into everything else. Nothing is out of place. Everything contributes to finished power and loveliness. And so it is in the grander sphere of human life. The glory of humanity is born of the glory of individuals, each one making his own distinctive contribution.

And thus we have need of one another. Every note in the organ is needed for the full expression of noble harmony. Every instrument in the orchestra is required unless the music is to be lame and broken. God has endowed no two souls alike, and every soul is needed to make the music of "the realm of the blest."

JUNE The Second

OUR SPIRITUAL GUIDE

"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."

—John 16:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

HOW great is the difference between a guide-post and a guide! And what a difference between a guide-book and a companion! Mere instructions may be very uninspiring, and bare commandments may be very cold. Our Guide is an inseparable Friend.

And how will He guide us? He will give us insight. "He will guide you into all truth." He will refine our spirits so that we may be able to distinguish "things that differ," and that so we may know the difference between "the holy and the profane." Our moral judgment is often dull and imperceptive. And our spiritual judgment is often lacking in vigour and penetration. And so our great Spirit-guide puts our spirits to school, and more deeply sanctifies them, that in holiness we may have discernment.

And He will also give us foresight. He will enable us to interpret circumstances, to apprehend their drift and destiny. We shall see harvests while we are looking at seeds, whether the seeds be seeds of good or evil. All of which means that the Holy Spirit will deliver our lives from the governance of mere whim and caprice, and that He will make us wise with the wisdom of God.

JUNE The Third

THE SAFETY OF THE OCCUPIED HEART

Galatians 5:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25

TWO friends were cycling through Worcestershire and Warwickshire to Birmingham. When they arrived in Birmingham I asked them, among other things, if they had seen Warwick Gaol along the road. "No," they said, "we hadn't a glimpse of it." "But it is only a field's length from the road!" "Well, we never saw it." Ah, but these two friends were lovers. They were so absorbed in each other that they had no spare attention for Warwick Gaol. Their glorious fellowship made them unresponsive to its calls. They were otherwise engaged.

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." That great Companionship will make us negligent of carnal allurements. "The world, and the flesh, and the devil" may stand by the wayside, and hold their glittering wares before us, but we shall scarcely be aware of their presence. We are otherwise engaged. We are absorbed in the "Lover of our souls."

This is the only real and effective way to meet temptation. We must meet it with an occupied heart. We must have no loose and trailing affections. We must have no vagrant, wayward thoughts. Temptation must find us engaged with our Lover. We must "offer no occasion to the flesh." Walking with the Holy One, our elevation is our safety.

JUNE The Fourth

LIFE'S REAL VALUES

Proverbs 8:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

HERE is a man who knows the relative values of things. "Instruction is better than silver"; "knowledge rather than choice gold"; "wisdom is better than rubies." He weighs the inherent worth of things, and puts his choice upon the best.

Let me remember that "all is not gold that glitters." The leaden casket is often the shrine of the priceless scroll. The glaring and the theatrical have often a ragged and seamy interior, and won't bear "looking into." A man may have much display and be very lonely; he may have piles of wealth and be destitute of joy. His libraries may cover an acre, and yet he may have no light. And a man may have only "a candle, and a table, and a bed," and he may be the companion of the eternal God.

I would seek these priceless things. And I would "seek them early." I have so often been late in the search. I have given the early moments to seeking the world's silver and gold, and the later weary moments have been idly devoted to God. "They that seek Me early shall find Me." Let me put "first things first." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

JUNE The Fifth

THE SPEECH OF EVENTS

Acts 13:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.

O I sufficiently remember the witness of history? Do I reverently listen to the "great voice behind me"? God has spoken in the speech of events. "Day unto day" has uttered speech. There has been a witness in national life, sometimes quiet as a fragrance, and sometimes "loud as a vale when storms are gone." Is it all to me as though it had never been, or is it part of the store of counsel by which I shape and guide my life?

And do I sufficiently remember my own providences, "all the way my God has led me"? When a day is over, do I carry its helpful lamp into the morrow? Do I "learn wisdom" from experience? That is surely God's purpose in the days; one is to lead on to another in the creation of an ever brightening radiance, that so at eventide it may be light.

And do I sufficiently remember that I, too, am making history for my fellows who shall succeed me? What kind of a witness will it be? Grim and full of warning, like the pillar of salt, or winsome and full of heartiness, like some "sweet Ebenezer" built by life's way? Let me pray and labour that my days may so shine with grace that all who remember me shall adore the goodness of my Lord.

JUNE The Sixth

LOVE'S EXPENDITURES

1John 3:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

HEREBY perceive we the love of God, because "He laid down His life for us." And the real test of any love is what it is prepared to "lay down." How much is it ready to spend? How much will it bleed? There is much spurious love about. It lays nothing down; it only takes things up! It is self-seeking, using the speech and accents of love. It is a "work of the flesh," which has stolen the label of a "fruit of the Spirit." Love may always be known by its expenditures, its self-crucifixions, its Calvarys. Love is always laying down its life for others. Its pathway is always a red road. You may track its goings by the red "marks of the Lord Jesus."

And this is the life, the love-life, which the Lord Jesus came to create among the children of men. It is His gracious purpose to form a spiritual fellowship in which every member will be lovingly concerned about his fellows' good. A real family of God would be one in which all the members bleed for each, and each for all.

How can we gain this disposition of love? "God is love." "We love because He first loved us." At the fountain of eternal love we too may become lovers, becoming "partakers of the divine nature," and filled with all "the fulness of God."

JUNE The Seventh

MORAL SURGERY

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

THIS is a surgical operation in the realm of the soul. A man has been "overtaken in a fault," some evil passion has pounced upon him, and he is broken. Some holy relationship has been snapped, and he is crippled in his moral and spiritual goings. Perhaps his affections have been broken, or his conscience, or his will. Or perhaps he has lost his glorious hope or the confidence of his faith. Here he is, a broken man, the victim of his own broken vows, lame and halt in the pilgrim-way! And some surgeon is needed to re-set the dislocation, and to make him whole again.

And who is to be the surgeon? "Ye which are spiritual restore such a one." The men who live under the control of God's Spirit are to be the surgeons for broken hearts and souls. When a man has fallen by reason of sin, the Christian is to be a Good Samaritan, seeking to restore the cripple to health and strength again. We are to kneel and minister to him, binding up his wounds, giving him the balm and cordial of oil and wine.

And what is to be the spirit of the surgeon? "The spirit of meekness." We are not to be supercilious, for the "touch" of pride is never the minister of healing. We are to heal as though some day we may need to be healed.

JUNE The Eighth

THE NEW BIRTH

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

HERE is the Life in contact with the icy legalism of the day. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and his piety was cold and mechanical. Religion had become a bloodless obedience to lifeless rules. Men cared more about being proper than about being holy. Modes were emphasized more than moods. An external pose was esteemed more highly than an internal disposition. The popular Saint lived on "the outsides of things."

Then came the Life. And what will He say to the externalist? "Ye must be born again." Nothing else could He have said. If the mechanical is to become the vital there is nothing for it but a new birth. To get from the outside into the inside of things, from the letter into the spirit, we need the miracle of renewal, the recreating ministry of grace.

And so it is to-day. The ritualistic is vitalized by the evangelistic. If the mechanical is to become the spontaneous, there is need of the "well of living water, springing up unto eternal life." When we are born again, ritual becomes helpful trellis for the spiritual flowers; the outward form becomes the helpmeet of redeeming grace.

JUNE The Ninth

THE STORY OF A SORROWFUL SOUL

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

THIS tearful little psalm tells me where a sorrowful soul found a place of help and consolation. He resorted to God.

"Thou art a shield about me." He got the Lord between him and his circumstances. There is nothing else subtle enough to interpose. Our hurtful circumstances are so invasive and so immediate that only God can come between us and them. But when God gets in between we are immune. "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear."

"Thou art my glory." And that is an honour that need never be stained. My worldly glory can be besmirched. An evil man throws mud, and my poor reputation is gone. "There's always somebody ready to believe it!" But my glory with God, and in God—man's mud cannot touch that fair fame! Even Absalom cannot defile that resplendent robe.

"Thou art the lifter-up of my head." The flower is "looking up" again! In the Lord's presence we recover our lost spirits. "He restoreth

my soul." "And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me."

JUNE The Tenth

PILLARS OF CLOUD AND FIRE

"The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud."

—Exodus 13:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 14:1, 2, 3, 4.

I NEED His leadership in the daytime. Sometimes the daylight is my foe. It tempts me into carelessness. I become the victim of distraction. The "garish day" can entice me into ways of trespass, and I am robbed of my spiritual health. Many a man has been faithful in the twilight and night who has lost himself in the sunshine. He went astray in his prosperity: success was his ruin. And so in the daytime I need the shadow of God's presence, the cooling, subduing, calming influence of a friendly cloud.

"And by night in a pillar of fire." And I need God's leadership in the night. Sometimes the night fills me with fears, and I am confused. The darkness chills me, sorrow and adversity make me cold, and I shiver along in uncertain going. But my God will lead me as a presence of fire. He will keep my heart warm even in the midnight, and He will guide me by the kindlings of His love. There shall be "nothing hid from the heat thereof." And my bewildering fears shall flee away, and I will sing "songs in the night."

JUNE The Eleventh

THE PATH ACROSS THE SEA

"Thy way is in the sea."

—Psalm 77:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

AND the sea appears to be the most trackless of worlds! The sea is the very symbol of mystery, the grim dwelling-house of innumerable things that have been lost. But God's way moves here and there across this trackless wild. God is never lost among our mysteries. He knows his way about. When we are bewildered He sees the road, and He sees the end even from the beginning. Even the sea, in every part of it, is the Lord's highway. When His way is in the sea we cannot trace it. Mystery is part of our appointed discipline. Uncertainty is to prepare us for a deeper assurance. The spirit of questioning is one of the ordained means of growth. And so the bewildering sea is our friend, as some day we shall understand. We love to "lie down in green pastures," and to be led "beside the still waters," and God gives us our share of this nourishing rest. But we need the mysterious sea, the overwhelming experience, the floods of sorrows which we cannot explain. If we had no sea we should never become robust. We should remain weaklings to the end of our days.

God takes us out into the deeps. But His way is in the sea. He knows the haven, He knows the track, and we shall arrive!

JUNE The Twelfth

WAITING FOR THE SPECTACULAR

"The waters covered their enemies.... Then believed they His words."

—Psalm 106:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

THEIR faith was born in a great emergency. A spectacular deliverance was needed to implant their trust in the Lord. They found no witness in the quiet daily providence; the unobtrusive miracle of daily mercy did not awake their song. They dwelt upon the "special" blessing, when all the time the really special blessing was to be found in the sleepless care which watched over them in their ordinary and commonplace ways.

It is the old story. We are wanting God to appear in imperial glory; and He comes among us as a humble carpenter. We want great miracles, and we have the daily Providence. We see His dread goings in the earthquake; we do not feel His presence in the lilies of the field. We watch Him in the smoke and flames of Vesuvius; we do not recognize His footprints in the little turf-clad hill that is only a few yards from our own door.

It is a great day when we discover our God in the common bush. That day is marked with glory when our daily bread becomes a sacrament. When we enjoy a closer walk with God, common things will wear the hues of heaven.

JUNE the Thirteenth

CLOUDED BUT NOT LOST!

"Clouds and darkness are round about Him."

—Psalm 97:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

WHEN Lincoln had been assassinated, and word of the tragedy came to New York, “the people were in a state of mind which urges to violence.” A man appeared on the balcony of one of the newspaper offices, waving a small flag, and a clear voice rang through the air: “Fellow-citizens! Clouds and darkness are round about Him! His pavilion is dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies! Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne! Fellow-citizens, God reigns!” It was the voice of General Garfield.

That voice proclaimed the divine sovereignty, even when the heavens were black with the menace of destruction. Lincoln had been assassinated, but God lived! Human confusion does not annihilate His throne. God liveth! “The firm foundation standeth sure.” This is the only rock to stand upon when the clouds have gathered, and the waters are out, and the great deeps are broken up. God’s sceptre does not fall from His grasp, nor is snatched by alien hands. The throne abideth. Joy will rise from the apparent chaos as springs are unsealed by the earthquake. He will bring fortune out of misfortune; the darkness shall be the hiding-place of His grace.

JUNE The Fourteenth

THE LAW IN THE HEART

“I will put My laws into their hearts.”

—Hebrews 10:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

EVERYTHING depends on where we carry the law of the Lord. If it only rests in the memory, any vagrant care may snatch it away. The business of the day may wipe it out as a sponge erases a record from a slate. A thought is never secure until it has passed from the mind into the heart, and has become a desire, an aspiration, a passion. When the law of God is taken into the heart, it is no longer something merely remembered: it is something loved. Now things that are loved have a strong defence. They are in the “keep” of the castle, in the innermost custody of the stronghold. The strength of the heart is wrapped about them, and no passing vagrant can carry them away.

And this is where the good Lord is willing to put His laws. He is wishful to put them among our loves. And the wonderful thing is this: when laws are put among loves they change their form, and His statutes become our songs. Laws that are loved are no longer dreadful policemen, but compassionate friends. “O! how I love Thy law!” That man did not live in a prison, he lived in a garden, and God’s will was unto him as gracious flowers and fruits. And so shall it be unto all of us when we love the law of the Lord.

JUNE The Fifteenth

THE KING’S GUESTS

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?”

—Psalm 24: 1, 2, 3,4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

WHO shall be permitted to pass into the sanctuary of the cloud, and have communion with the Lord in the holy place? “He that hath clean hands.” These hands of mine, the symbols of conduct, the expression of the outer life, what are they like? “Your hands are full of blood.” Those hands had been busy murdering others, pillaging others, brutally ill-using their fellow-men. We may do it in business. We may do it in conversation. We may do it in a criminal silence. Our hands may be foul with a brother’s blood. And men and women with hands like these cannot “ascend into the hill of the Lord.” There must be no stain of an unfair and scandalous life.

“And a pure heart.” We need not trouble about the hands if the heart be clean. If all the presences that move in the heart—desires, and motives, and sentiments, and ideals—are like white-robed angels “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” everything that emerges into outer life will share the same radiant purity. The heart expresses itself in the hands. Character blossoms in conduct. The quality of our current coin is determined by the quality of the metal in the mint. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

JUNE The Sixteenth

SINAI AND CALVARY

Hebrews 12:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

WE need not live at the foot of Mount Sinai. It is like living at the foot of Mount Pelee, the home of awful eruption, and therefore the realm of gloom and uncertainty and fear. We are not saved by law, neither indeed can we be. Neither can law heal us after our transgressions and defeats. The law has nothing for prodigal men but “blackness, and darkness, and tempest.” It has no sound but dreaded decree, no message but menace, no look but a frown. Who will build his house at the foot of Mount Sinai?

“But ye are come unto Mount Zion.” Our true home is not at Sinai, but at Calvary. There is no place for the sinner at the first mount; at the second mount there is a place for no one else. At Calvary we may find our way back to the holiness we lost at Sinai. Through grace we may drop the burden of our sin and begin to wear the garments of salvation. The way back to heaven is by “the green hill,

without a city wall." It is a mount that can be reached by the most exhausted pilgrim; and the one who has "spent all" will assuredly find a full restoration of life at the gate of his Saviour's death. "Ye are come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant."

JUNE The Seventeenth

THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE

"Show me Thy glory."

—Exodus 33:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.

MOSES wist not what he asked. His speech was beyond his knowledge. The answer to his request would have consumed him. He asked for the blazing noon when as yet he could only bear the quiet shining of the dawn. The good Lord lets in the light as our eyes are able to bear it. The revelation is tempered to our growth. The pilgrim could bear a brightness in Beulah land that he could not have borne at the wicket-gate; and the brilliance of the entry into the celebrated city throws the splendours of Beulah into the shade. Yes, the gracious Lord will unveil His glory as our "senses are exercised to receive it."

"My Presence shall go with thee." That is all the glory we need upon the immediate road. His companionship means everything. The real glory is to possess God; let Him show us His inheritance as it shall please Him. Life's glory is to "feel Him near." When the loving wife feels that the husband is in the house, and when the loving husband feels that the wife is in the house, that is everything! The joy of each other's presence is the crown of married bliss. And so it is with the soul that is married to the Lord: His presence is the soul's delight. "Thou, O Christ, art all I want." "O Master, let me walk with Thee."

JUNE The Eighteenth

THE BENEFITTED AS BENEFACTORS

"Who comforteth us ... that we may be able to comfort."

—2Corinthians 1:3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

AND how does the Lord comfort us? He has a thousand different ways, and no one can ever tell by what way the comfort will come to his soul. Sometimes it comes by the door of memory, and sometimes by the door of hope. Sometimes it is borne to us through the ministry of nature, and at other times through the ministry of human speech and kindness. But always, I think, it brings us the sense of a Presence, as though we had a great Friend in the room, and the troubled heart gains quietness and peace. The mist clears a little, and we have a restful assurance of our God.

Now comforted souls are to be comforters. They who have received benefits of grace are to be benefactors. They who have heard the sweet music of God's abiding love are to sing it again to others. They who have seen the glory are to become evangelists. We must not seek to hoard spiritual treasure. As soon as we lock it up we begin to lose it. A mysterious moth and rust take it away. If we do not comfort others, our own comfort will turn again to bitterness; the clouds will lower and we shall be imprisoned in the old woe. But the comfort which makes a comforter grows deeper and richer every day.

JUNE The Nineteenth

RECKONING UP THINGS

Psalms 90:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

NUMBERING things is one of the healthful exercises of the spiritual life. Unless we count, memory is apt to be very tricky and to snare us into strange forgetfulness. Unless we count what we have given away, we are very apt to exaggerate our bounty. We often think we have given when we have only listened to appeals; the mere audience has been mistaken for active beneficence. The remedy for all this is occasionally to count our benevolences and see how we stand in a balance-sheet which we could present to the Lord Himself.

And we must count our blessings. It is when our arithmetic fails in the task, and when counting God's blessings is like telling the number of the stars, that our souls bow low before the eternal goodness, and all murmuring dies away "like cloud-spots in the dawn."

And we must also "number our days." (Ps 90:12) We are wasteful with them, and we throw them away as though they are ours in endless procession. And yet there are only seven days in a week! A day is of immeasurable preciousness, for what high accomplishment may it not witness? A day in health or in sickness, spent unto God, and applied unto wisdom, will gather treasures more precious than rubies and gold.

JUNE The Twentieth

THE REVEALING PRESENCE OF THE LORD

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

A STARLING never reveals the richness of its hues until we see it in the sunlight. A duty never discloses its beauties until we set it in the light of the Lord. It is amazing how a dull road is transfigured when the sunshine falls upon it! God's grace reveals the graces in all healthy things. Hidden lovelinesses troop out when we set them in the presence of the Lord.

And so the Apostle counsels an obedience which is "in the Lord." He wants us to know how beautiful common things can be when they are linked to Christ. And what he says about obedience he says about everything. One of the great secrets in the teaching of Paul is expressed in just this phrase, "in the Lord," "in Christ." It meant connection with a power-house whose energy would light up all the common lamps of life—the lamps of hope, of faith, of love, of daily labour, and of human service.

And this is the secret of the Christian life. We need no other; at least, all other secrets are involved in this. If we attend to this little preposition "in," we have entry into the infinite. If we are "in Christ," we are in the kingdom of everything that endures, and we are outside nothing but sin.

JUNE The Twenty-first

ROOM FOR THE SAPLINGS

"Children crying in the temple, saying Hosanna!"

—Matthew 21:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

CHILDREN'S voices mingling in the sounds of holy praise! A little child can share in the consecrated life. Young hearts can offer love pure as a limpid spring. Their sympathy is as responsive as the most sensitive harp, and yields to the touch of the tenderest joy and grief. No wonder the Lord "called little children unto Him"! They were unto Him as gracious streams, and as flowers of the field.

Let the loving Saviour have our children. Let there be no waiting for maturer years. Maturity may bring the impaired faculty and the embittered emotion. Let Him have things in their beginnings, the seeds and the saplings. Let Him have life before it is formed, before it is "set" in foolish moulds. Let us consecrate the cradle, and the good Lord will grow and nourish His saints.

JUNE The Twenty-second

CHILDLIKENESS

Mark 9:33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41.

IT is the child-spirit that finds life's golden gates, and that finds them all ajar. The proudly aggressive spirit, contending for place and power, may force many a door, but they are not doors which open into enduring wealth and peace. Real inheritances become ours only through humility.

The proud are, therefore, self-deceived. They think they have succeeded when they have signally failed. They have the shadow, but they have missed the substance. They may have the applause of the world, but the angels sigh over their defeat. They pride themselves on having "got on"; the angels weep because they have "gone down."

When we grow away from childlikeness we are "in a decline." "God resisteth the proud; He giveth grace to the humble." The lowly make great discoveries; to them the earth is full of God's glory.

JUNE The Twenty-third

THE GREATEST BENEFACTORS

Matthew 10:29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

IT is a very wonderful thing that the finest services are within the power of the poorest people. The deepest ministries find their symbols in "cups of cold water," which it is in the power of everybody to give. The great benefactors are the great lovers, and their coin is not that of material money, but the wealth of the heart. A bit of affection is worth infinitely more than the gift of a necklace of pearls. To kindle hope in a fainting soul is far more precious than to adorn the weary pilgrim with dazzling gems. "He brought me heaps of presents, but I was hungering for love!" Such was the pathetic cry of one who was "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day."

“Cups of cold water,” simple ministries of refreshment, the love-thought, the love-prayer, the love-word—these are the privileged services of all of us. And everybody needs these gentle and gracious services of refreshment, and often there is greatest need where there seems to be least.

JUNE The Twenty-fourth

AT EASE IN ZION

“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!”

—Amos 6:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

I WOULD be delivered from the folly of confusing ease and rest. There is an infinite difference between comforts and comfort. It is one thing to lie down on a luxurious couch: it is a very different thing to “lie down in green pastures” under the gracious shepherdliness of the Lord. The ease which men covet is so often a fruit of stupefaction, the dull product of sinful drugs, the wretched sluggishness of carnal gratification and excess. The rest which God giveth is alive and wakeful, abounding in tireless and fruitful service. “Oh, rest in the Lord.”

But is it not a strange thing that men can be “at ease in Zion”? That they can play the beast in the holy place? Zion was full of holy memory, and abounded with suggestions of the Divine Presence. And yet here they could carouse, and lose themselves in swinish indulgence! A little while ago I saw a beautiful old church which had been turned into a common eating-house!

My soul, be on thy guard. Be watchful and diligent, and busy thyself in the practice of “self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control.”

JUNE The Twenty-fifth

DESOLATIONS WROUGHT BY SIN

“The Lord hath spoken this word.”

—Isaiah 24:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

THE Lord hath spoken this word,” and it is a word of judgment. It unveils some of the terrible issues of sin.

See the effects of sin upon the spirit of man. “The merry-hearted do sigh.” Life loses its wings and its song. The buoyancy and the optimism die out of the soul. The days move with heavy feet, and duty becomes very stale and unwelcome. If only our ears were keen enough we should hear many a place of hollow laughter moaning with troubled and restless sighs. The soul cannot sing when God is defied.

But see another effect of sin. “The earth moaneth.” That is a frequent note in Bible teaching. The forces of nature are mysteriously conditioned by the character of man. When man is degraded, nature is despoiled. The beauty of the garden is checked when man has lost his crown. “The whole creation groaneth in pain,” waiting for the manifestation of the children of God.

Sin spreads desolation everywhere. When I sin, I become the centre of demoralizing forces which influence the universe. And so let me ever pray, “Deliver me from evil.”

JUNE The Twenty-sixth

CRUCIFYING THE FLESH

“Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.”

—1Peter 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

LET not the body be dominant, but the soul. Let me study the example and counsel of the Apostle Paul.

“I keep my body under.” Literally, I pummel it! If it is obtrusive and aggressive, its appetites clamouring for supremacy, I pummel it! Paul was not afraid of severe measures where carnality was concerned. He would fast a whole day in order to put the flesh in its place. And so should it be with all the Lord’s children. We are too self-indulgent. It is well at times to put the body on the cross, and crucify its cravings.

“Give no occasion to the flesh.” Do not give it a chance of mastery! And, therefore, do not feed it with illicit thought. Turn the mind away from the subjects in which the body will find exciting stimulant. It is thought which awakes passion, and thought can do much to destroy it. “Set your mind on things which are above.” Keep the mind pure, and the swine will never enter the holy place.

JUNE The Twenty-seventh

GOD IS LIGHT!

“In Him is no darkness at all.”

—1John 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

THAT wonderful mansion of God's Being is gloriously radiant in every room! In the house of my life there are dark chambers, and rooms which are only partially illumined, the other parts being in the possession of night. Some of my faculties and powers are dark ministers, and some of my moods are far from being “homes of light.” But “God is light,” and everything is glorious as the meridian sun! His holiness, His grace, His love, His mercy: there are no dark corners where uncleanness hides; everything shines with undimmed and speckless radiancy!

And if I “walk in the light,” I, too, shall become illumined. “They looked unto Him and were lightened.” We are fashioned by our highest companionships. We acquire the nature of those with whom we most constantly commune.

And the light He gives is also fire. It will burn away our sin. We may measure the reality and strength of our communion by the destruction of our sin. A great burning will be proceeding in our life, and one evil habit after another will be in the love-furnace of purification. The Lord still “purifies Jerusalem by the spirit of burning.”

JUNE The Twenty-eighth

THE WAITING LIGHT

2Corinthians 6:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

I CAN shut out the sweet light of the morning. I can refuse to open the shutters and draw up the blinds. And I can shut out the Light of life. I can draw the thick blinds of prejudice, and close the impenetrable shutters of sin. And the Light of the world cannot get into my soul.

And I can let in the waiting light of the morning, and flood my room with its glory. And the Light is “a gracious, willing guest.” No fuss is needed, no shouting is required. Open thy casement, and the gracious guest is in! And my Lord has no reluctance in His coming; we have not to drag Him to our table. Open thy heart, and the Lord is in!

And when the light is within there will be radiance at the windows. And when the Lord is shining in our hearts there will be a witness in the life. Men will see that we are “with Jesus,” because we are “light in the Lord.”

Good Lord, deliver me from “the god of this world” lest I be blinded and become unable to see Thee! I open my heart to Thee! Shine in, Thou light of life, and make my soul the radiant witness of Thy grace.

JUNE The Twenty-ninth

EFFECTUAL PRAYERS

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

—James 5:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

OR, as Weymouth translates it, “The heartfelt supplication of a righteous man exerts a mighty influence.” Prayer may be empty words, with no more power than those empty shells which have been foisted upon the Turks in their war with the Balkan States. Firing empty shells! That is what many professed prayers really are; they have nothing in them, and they accomplish nothing. They are just forged upon the lips, and they drop to the earth as soon as they are spoken. Effectual prayers are born in the heart; they are stocked with heart-treasure, with faith, and hope, and desire, and holy urgency, and they go forth with power to shake the world.

What are my prayers like? If I were God, could I listen to them? Are they mere pretences at prayer, full of nothing but sound? Is there any reasonable ground for assuming that they can accomplish anything? Or are my prayers weighted with sincere desire? Do they comprehend my brother's good as well as my own? Are they spoken in faith? Do they go forth in great expectancy? Then do they surely “exert a mighty influence,” and they become fellow-labourers with all God's ministries of grace. The greatest thing I can do is greatly to pray.

JUNE The Thirtieth

GOD MY STRENGTH AND SONG

“The Lord is my strength and my song.”

—Psalm 118:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

YES, first of all "my strength" and then "my song"! For what song can there be where there is languor and fainting? What brave music can be born in an organ which is short of breath? There must first be strength if we would have fine harmonies. And so the good Lord comes to the songless, and with holy power He brings the gift of "saving health."

"And my song"! For when life is healthy it instinctively breaks into song. The happy, contented soul goes about the ways of life humming its satisfactions to itself, and is now and again heard by the passer-by. The Lord fills the life with instinctive music. When life is holy it becomes musical with His praise.

So here I see the appointed order in Christian service. It is futile to try to make people joyful unless we do it by seeking first to make them strong. First the good, and then the truly happy! First the holy, and then the musical. First God, and then the breath of His Holy Spirit, and then "the new song."