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MY DAILY MEDITATION for the Circling Year

by John Henry Jowett

JULY

JULY The First

THE LIFE OR THE LIGHT OF MEN

"In Him was life."

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

NOT merely a pool of life, but the well-spring. All rivers of enriching vitality have their source in Him. Nowhere is there a crystal stream which was not born at the Fountain. Let us make our claim for the Lord all-comprehensive and inclusive. Whatever energizes body, mind, or soul, has its origin in our Sovereign King. "All our springs are in Thee." "Thou of life the Fountain art."

"And the life was the light of men." And what did He not light up? His amazing rays streamed down the darkest ways of men, and illumined the vast, sombre chambers of human circumstance. He lit up sin and showed its true colour! He lit up sorrow, and transfigured it! He lit up duty, and gave it a new face. He lit up common work, and glorified it. He lit up death, and we could see through it! But, above all, He lit up God, and "the people that sat in darkness saw a great light."

"And the darkness apprehended it not." The darkness could not lay hold of it and quench it! It was not overwhelmed and eclipsed by the murkiest fog of prejudice, or by the dingiest antagonism of sinful pride. "The light showeth in the darkness," inviolable and invincible!

JULY The Second

LIGHT AND LIGHTNING

"And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him."

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

AND the spirit is one of light! All the doors and windows are open. His correspondences are perfect and unbroken. He is of "quick understanding," keen-scented to discern the essences of things, alert to perceive the reality behind the semblance, to "see things as they are." All the great primary senses are awake, and He has knowledge of every "secret place."

"He shall smite ... with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay." The spirit of light follows a crusade of holiness. The light becomes lightning! The "breathing," which cools the fever-stricken, can also become a hot breath, which wastes and destroys every plant of evil desire. It is an awful thing, and yet a gracious thing, that "our God is a consuming fire." It was foretold of our Lord that He should baptize "with fire."

And this crusade of holiness is in the ministry of peace. He will burn away all that defileth, in order that He may create a profound and permanent fellowship. When His work is done, there will be a mingling of apparent opposites, and antagonisms will melt into a gracious union. "The sucking child will play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den."

JULY The Third

MY ELDER BROTHER

Hebrews 2.9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

AND doth my Lord call me one of His brethren? Let me leisurely think upon it, until my very soul moves amid my affairs in noble and hallowed dignity. If I steadily remember “who I am,” it will assuredly transfigure “what I am.” I lose the sense of my high kinship, and then I am quite content to be “sent into the fields to feed swine.”

And my elder Brother came to “destroy the works of the devil.” That is the entire ministry of destruction. Nothing beautiful does He destroy, nothing winsome: only the insidious presences which are the foes of these things. He will destroy only the pestiferous microbes which ravage the vital peace of the soul. Our Lord is the enemy of the deadly, and therefore of “him that had the power of death—that is, the devil!”

And in this holy ministry of destruction He can defend my soul as “one who knows,” Himself “having been tempted.” He knows the subtlety of the devil, and where the soul is most perilously exposed, and He is therefore “able to succour them that are tempted.”

JULY The Fourth

EMPTYING ONESELF

“He emptied Himself.”

—Philippians 2.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

IN Mr. Silvester Horne’s garden a very suggestive scene was one day to be witnessed. A cricketer of world-wide renown was playing a game with Mr. Horne’s little four-year-old son! And the fierce bowler “emptied himself,” and served such gentle, dainty little balls that the tiny man at the wickets was not in the least degree afraid! And the Lord of glory “emptied Himself,” fashioning Himself to our “low estate,” and in His unspeakably gentle approaches we find our peace.

And I, too, am to seek a corresponding lowliness of mind in order that I, too, may be of service to my weak and needy brother. It is for me to empty myself of the pride of strength, the brutal aggressiveness of success, the sometimes unfeeling obtrusiveness of health; I must empty myself, and “get down” by the side of weakness and infirmity, and in gentle fellowship humbly proffer my help.

And if the mind is to be in me “which was also in Christ Jesus,” it is needful for me to commune with Him “without ceasing.” His gentleness can make me great.

JULY The Fifth

THE DISCIPLESHIP THAT TELLS

“He that followeth Me.”

—John 8.12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

YES, but I must make sure that I follow Him in Spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24). It is so easy to be self-deceived. I may follow a pleasant emotion, while all the time a bit of grim cross-bearing is being ignored. I may be satisfied to be “out on the ocean sailing,” singing of “a home beyond the tide,” while all the time there is a piece of perilous salvage work to be done beneath the waves. To “follow Jesus” is to face the hostility of scribes and Pharisees, to offer restoring friendship to publicans and sinners, to pray in blood-shedding in Gethsemane, to brave the derision of the brutal mob, and to be “ready” for the appalling happenings on Calvary! Therefore, following is not a light picnic; it is a possible martyrdom!

But if I set my face “to go,” the Lord Himself will visit me with “the light of life.” And the resource shall not be broken and spasmodic: it shall be mine without ceasing. “Be thou faithful ... and I will give thee ... life.” That life will flow into my soul, just as the oxygenating air flows down to the diver who is faithfully busy recovering wreckage from the wealth-strewn bed of the mighty sea. Let me be faithful, and every moment the Lord will crown me with His own vitalizing life!

JULY The Sixth

LIFE AS A VOICE

John 1:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34.

THIS man humbly desires to be “a voice.” He has no ambition to receive popular homage. He does not covet the power of the lordly purple. He does not crave to be a great person; he only wants to be a great voice! He wants to articulate the thought and purpose of God. He is quite content to be hidden, like a bird in a thick bush, if only his song may be heard.

And in order that he may be a voice he retires into the silent solitudes of the desert. He will listen before he speaks. Come thou, my soul, into his secret! The air is clamorous with speech behind which there has been no hearing. Men speak, and in their words there is no pulse of the Infinite. In their consolations there is no balm. In their reproaches there is no sword. Their words are empty vessels, full of sound! Let my voice be hushed until I have heard the voice of the Highest. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

And when he spake, it was in clear and definite testimony, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The "voice" succeeded, for men began to look away from the herald to the herald's Lord. In forgetting John they found the King. They passed the signpost, and arrived at home!

JULY The Seventh

IN THE GOLDEN AGE

Isaiah 40:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

AND so these things are to happen when the Lord has come to His own, and His decrees are honoured in our midst.

Certain inequalities are to be ended. Valleys are to be exalted, and mountains are to be made low. There is to be a levelling! Men are to be equal in freedom and opportunity.

Certain crookednesses are to be ended. They are to be "made straight." Society has become warped with the heat of lust, and the fierce fever of competition, and the hot, devouring fires of greed. When the Lord is enthroned the fires will be put out, the heat will pass, and the twisted fellowships will be rectified.

Certain roughnesses are to be ended. Class works against class with jagged edge, like the teeth of a saw. They tear and rend one another, and the family of God is always bleeding. These "rough places" are to be "made plain." We are to "work in to one another," smoothly, congenially, in a frictionless peace.

And this Lord is coming, coming every day, and "His arm shall rule for Him." "Say unto the cities of Judah—Behold your God!"

JULY The Eighth

WHAT MANNER OF MAN?

Matthew 11:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15

HERE are some men who are only as desert reeds! They move to the breath of the desert wind. They bend before it, no matter in what way it may be blowing. They never resist the wind. They never become "hiding places from the wind," stemming a popular drift. They are the victims of passing opinions, and are swayed by the current passions.

And some men are "clothed in soft raiment"! They shrink from the rough fustian, the labourer's cotton smock, the leather suit of George Fox. They are ultra-"finicky." They are afraid of the mire. They touch the sorrows of the world with a timid finger, not with the kindly, healing grasp of a surgeon.

And other men are "prophets"! They have a secret fellowship with the Infinite. When we listen to them it is like putting one's ear to the seashell: we catch the sound of the ocean roll. "The voice of the Great Eternal dwells in their mighty tones."

And others are "children of the Kingdom." They are greater than the old prophets, because the mystic voice has become a Presence, and they have "seen the Lord." The veil has been rent, and they "walk in the light" as "children of light."

JULY The Ninth

SCHOLARS IN CHRIST'S SCHOOL

"He taught His disciples."

—Mark 9:30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.

AND my Lord will teach me. He will lead me into "the deep things" of God. There is only one school for this sort of learning, and an old saint called it the Academy of Love, and it meets in Gethsemane and Calvary, and the Lord Himself is the teacher, and there is room in the school for thee and me.

But the disciples were not in the mood for learning. They were not ambitious for heavenly knowledge, but for carnal prizes, not for

wisdom, but for place. "They disputed one with another who was the greatest." And that spirit is always fatal to advancement in the school of Christ. Our petty ambitions close the door and windows of our souls, and the heavenly light can find no entrance. We turn Gethsemane into "a place of strife," and we carry our clamour even to Calvary itself. From this, and all other sinful folly, good Lord, redeem us!

They who would be great scholars in this school must become "as little children." Through the child-like spirit we attain unto God-like wisdom. By humility is honour and life.

JULY The Tenth

THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

Matthew 17:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

WHAT if the Transfiguration was the type of the purposed consummation of every life? If we had remained "without sin," it may be that we should have gradually ripened up to a moment when we should have become transfigured, and in the surpassing brilliance have been translated to higher planes of being. Perhaps our Lord had reached this material consummation, and was now on the wonderful border land, and could by choice slip into "the glory!"

But He made another choice. And this was, of a truth, the "great renunciation!" He turned His back on the glory, and deliberately faced the darkening way which led to Calvary and the grave. I do not wonder that His mysterious visitors spake with Him "of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." He could talk about nothing else! He "set His face to go."

And in my Master's choice of death I find my hope of life. Through "the dark gate" I can find "the mount." My transfiguration is made possible in His humiliation. If my Lord had never descended I could never have ascended. If He had abode on the mount I should have remained in my sin. He has "opened to me the gates of righteousness."

JULY The Eleventh

THE FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom."

—John 3:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36.

WE ministers sometimes speak of "my church." I occasionally read of Mr. So-and-So's church! I know that the phrase is colloquially used, but nevertheless, it is unfortunate. Words that are perversely used tend to pervert the spirit. And this phrase tends to displace the Bridegroom. It helps to make us obtrusive, unduly aggressive, when we ought to be reverently hiding our faces with our wings. The Bride is His!

"But the friend of the bridegroom." That is my place, and that is my dignity. And what a title it is, making me a member of the finest and most select aristocracy in heaven or on earth! The "friend of the bridegroom" used to carry messages to the bride, to share in the wooing, and to help to bring the wedding about. And that, too, is my gracious office, to be a match-maker for my Lord, to testify concerning Him, to speak His praises, until the soul "fall in love" with Him.

"He must increase, but I must decrease." Yes, when the sun is rising the moon becomes dim! When the glory of the Bridegroom breaks upon the bride He becomes "all in all," "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely."

JULY The Twelfth

PREPARING HIS SERVANTS

John 13:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18-51.

OUR Lord does not stumble upon His disciples by accident. His discoveries are not surprises. He knows where His nuggets lie. Before He calls to service He has been secretly preparing the servant. "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me."

He knew all about Simon. "Thou art Simon"—just a listener, not yet a strong, bold doer: a man of many opinions not yet consolidated into the truth of experimental convictions. "Thou shalt be called Peter." Simon become Peter! Loose gravel become hard rock! Hear-says become the "verities" of unshakable experience! The Lord proclaims our glorious possibilities.

And He knew all about Nathanael. "When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee." "In that secret meditation of thine, when thy wishes and desires were being born, 'I saw thee!'" "When others saw nothing, I had fellowship with thee in the secret place."

And He knows all about thee and me. "I know My sheep." We do not take Him by surprise. He does not come in late, and find the performance half over! He is in at our beginnings, when grave issues are being born. "I am Alpha."

JULY The Thirteenth

PLAIN GLASS

"They were fishers."

—Matthew 4:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

AND so our Lord went first to the fishing-boats and not to the schools. Learning is apt to be proud and aggressive, and hostile to the simplicities of the Spirit. There is nothing like plain glass for letting in the light! And our Lord wanted transparent media, and so He went to the simple fishermen on the beach. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world."

And by choosing labouring men our Master glorified labour. He Himself had worn the workman's dress, and the garment which the King wears becomes regal attire. Yes, the workingman, if he only knew it, is wearing the imperial robe. He is one of the kinsmen of the Lord of Glory!

Our Lord took the fisherman's humble calling, and made it the symbol of spiritual service. "I will make you fishers of men." And He will do the same for thee and me. He will turn our daily labour into an apocalypse, and through its ways and means He will make us wise in the ministry of the kingdom. He will make the material the handmaid of the spiritual, and through the letter He will lead us into the secret places of the soul.

JULY The Fourteenth

THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE UNLIKELY

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

A DISCIPLE from among the publicans! In what waste places our Lord Jesus finds His jewels! What exquisite possibilities Ruskin saw in a pinch of common dust! What radiant glory the lapidary can see in the rough, unpolished gem! The Lord loves to go into the unlikely place, and lead forth His saints. "In the wilderness shall waters break out!"

We must prayerfully cultivate this sacred confidence in the possibilities of the unlikely. We can never be successful helpers of the Lord unless we can see the diamond in the soot, and the radiant saint in the disregarded publican. It is a most gracious art to cultivate, this of discerning a man's possible excellencies even in the blackness of his present shame. To see the future best in the present worst, that is the true perception of a child of light.

"O give us eyes to see like Thee!" Well, this is the medium of vision:—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," and the god-like, even in the wilderness of sin. "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou may'st see!"

JULY The Fifteenth

THE DAILY CROSS

Luke 9:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

OUR Lord never bribes His disciples by promising them ways of sunny ease. He does not buy them with illicit gold. He does not put the glittering crown upon the entrance-gate, and hide the cross behind the wall. No: on the very first stage of the sacred pilgrimage there falls "the shadow of the Cross." "Let him take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

And yet, the Lord's blessing is hidden in the apparent curse. In the act of bearing the cross we increase our strength. That is the heartening paradox of grace. Virtuous energies pass from our very burdens into our spirits, and thus "out of the eater comes forth meat." We bravely shoulder our load, and lo! a mystic breath visits the heart, and a strange facility attends our goings! The dead cross becomes a tree of life, and a secret vitality renews our souls.

How foolish, then, O heart of mine, to avoid and evade Thy cross! Refuse the burden, and thou declinest the strength! Ignore the duty, and thou shalt feel no inspiration! Carefully husband thy blood, and thou shalt remain for ever anæmic! But lose thy life, and thou shalt find it!

JULY The Sixteenth

THE VINE AND THE BRANCH

John 15:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

I NEED the Lord. What can a branch do apart from the vine? It may retain a certain, momentary greenness, but death is advancing apace. And there are multitudes of professing Christians who are like detached branches; their spiritual life is ebbing away: they do not startle the beholder and cause him to exclaim, "How full of life!" They do not strike at all! They have no splendid "force of character," and they therefore exercise no arresting witness for the King. They are not "abiding" in the Eternal, and therefore there is no powerful pulse from the Infinite. "Apart from Me ye can do nothing!"

And my Lord needs me. For the vine has need of the branch! The vine expresses itself in the branch, and comes to manifestation in leaf, and flower, and fruit. And my Lord would manifest Himself in me, and cause my branch to be heavy with the glorious fruits of His grace. And if I deprive Him of the branch, and deny Him this means of expression, I am "limiting the Holy One of Israel." "My son, give Me thine heart!"

Lord, help me to abide in Thee! Save me from the follies of a fatal independence! Good Lord, "Abide in me."

JULY The Seventeenth

THE DYING OF SELF

John 12:12-23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36.

EXCEPT a corn of wheat ... die!" Yes, it is through death we pass to life. Discipleship in which there is no death can never be truly alive. The nipping winter is essential to the green and flowery spring. No tomb, no resurrection glory! In every life there must be a grave, and self must be buried within it.

We must die to self in our prayers. In many prayers self is obtrusive and aggressive from end to end. It is self, self, self! That self must be crucified. We must make more room for others in our supplications. On our knees the egotist must die, and the altruist be born. And "if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"! There are multitudes of professing Christians who would experience a wonderful resurrection if they were more "given to hospitality" in their communion with the Lord.

And if self die in our prayers, nowhere else will it be seen. That which is truly slain when we are upon our knees will not reassert itself when we return to common ways of work and service. And, therefore, let the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die!

JULY The Eighteenth

THE MESMERISM OF THE WORLD

Matthew 19:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.

MATERIAL possessions multiply our spiritual difficulties. It is hard for a rich man "to enter into the kingdom of heaven." For what is the kingdom? It is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is easy for a rich man to appear respectable, but how hard is it to be holy! He may surround himself with comforts, but how hard to get into peace! He may move in the cold gleam of a glittering happiness, but how hard to get into the rich, warm quietness of an abiding joy! Yes, our material possessions so easily range themselves as ramparts between us and our destined spiritual wealth.

And if we find that any material thing so mesmerizes us that we are held in fatal bondage, we are to sacrifice it. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee!" Whatever interposes itself between us and our Lord must go! It is a hard way, but it leads to a sound and boisterous health. We verily "receive an hundredfold!" We lose "a thing," and gain a grace. We lose fickle sensations and gain abounding inspiration. We lose the world, and gain the Lord!

JULY The Nineteenth

THE WRATH OF THE LAMB

John 2:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

THE narrative of the cleansing follows the story of the wedding-feast. In the one the Lord has taken the spirit of the sanctuary into a worldly feast, and thereby illumined and glorified the feast. In the other, the spirit of the world has invaded the sanctuary, and thereby defiled and dishonoured it. The spirit of worldliness, like an unclean, insurgent flood, would enter and possess the entire realm of human life and service. And here it converted a legitimate convenience into an unhallowed business. It transformed a needful expedient into an unholy end. It fixed its tables in the very courts of the Temple, and exalted the quest of money above the worship of God.

“And He made a scourge of cords.” And is this “the Lamb of God”? Yes, “the Lamb of God” is also “the lion of Judah.” The mild sunshine can become focussed into scorching flame! As soon as blessings touch sin they become curses. “For this was the Son of Man manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

My soul, remember thou the scourge of thy Lord, and do not trifle in His holy place! Seek thou the clean hands and the pure heart, and the thunders of Sinai shall come to thee as beatific music from the hill.

JULY The Twentieth

DEFILING THE HOLY PLACE

Mark 11:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.

IT was a teaching of the old Rabbis that no one should make a thoroughfare of the Temple, or enter it with the dust upon his feet. The teaching was full of sacred significance, however far their practice may have departed from its truth.

Let me not use the Temple as a mere passage to something else. Let me not use my religion as an expedient for more easily reaching “the chief seats” among men. Let me not put on the garments of worship in order that I may readily and quickly fill my purse. Let me not make the sanctuary “a short cut” to the bank!

And let me not carry the dust of the world on to the sacred floor. Let me “wipe my feet.” Let me sternly shake off some things—all frivolity, easeful indifference, the spirit of haste and self-seeking. Let me not defile the courts of the Lord.

And let me remember that “the whole earth is full of His glory.” Everywhere, therefore, I am treading the sacred floor! Lord, teach me this high secret! Then shall I not demean the Temple into a market, but I shall transform the market into a temple. “Lo, God is in this place, and I knew it not!”

JULY The Twenty-first

PURIFYING THE SANCTUARY

2Chronicles 29:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.

WORSHIP has vital connections with work. There are nerve-relationships between the heart and the hand. The condition of the sanctuary is reflected in the state of the empire. If there is uncleanness in “the holy place,” there will be blight and degeneracy among the people. The fatal seeds of national instability and decay are not found in economics; they are found in the sanctuary. “Until I went into the sanctuary ... then understood I!”

Hezekiah cleansed “the house of the Lord.” He cast forth the filthiness out of the holy place. He ushered in his golden age with the reformation of worship. He recalled exiled and white-robed Piety to her appointed throne. He began the re-establishment of right by recognizing the rights of God. He gave the Lord His due! All our rights are born out of our “being right” with God! We begin to be rich when we cease to rob God!

“And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also.” That is ever so. Our real songs begin with our sacrifices. We enter the realm of music when we enter the realm of self-surrender. A willing offering, on a clean altar, introduces the soul into “the joy of the Lord.”

JULY The Twenty-second

VISIONS AND TASKS

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

JOSIAH “began to seek after God.” (2Chr 34:1 contrasted with Ps 10:4) The other day I saw a young art student copying one of Turner’s pictures in the National Gallery. His eyes were being continually lifted from his canvas to his “master.” He put nothing down which he had not first seen. He was “seeking after” Turner!

And thus it was with Josiah. His eyes were “ever toward the Lord!” (contrast Lk 12:20, 21) He studied the “ways” of the Lord (cf Ps 103:7), in order that he might incarnate them in national life and practice. Wise doings always begin in clear seeing. We should be far more efficient in practice if we were more diligently assiduous in vision. It is never a waste of time to “look unto Him.” Looking is a most needful part of our daily discipline. “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!” (Mk 13:37)

And because Josiah saw the holiness of the Lord he saw the uncleanness of the people. He had a vision of God's holy place, and he therefore saw the defilement of the material worship.

"In the twelfth year he began to purge Judah." (2Chr 34:3) Yes, that is the sequence. The **reformer** follows the **seer**. We shall begin to sweep the streets of our own city when we have gazed upon the glories of the holy city, the New Jerusalem (Re 3:12, Re 21:2).

JULY The Twenty-third

A GREAT SOUL AT PRAYER

2Chronicles 6:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

LET me reverently study this great prayer in order that, when I go to the house of God, I may be able to enrich its ministry by the wealth of my own supplications.

Solomon prayed that the eyes of the Lord might be open toward the house "day and night." Like the eyes of a mother upon her child! Like the eyes of a lover upon his beloved! And therefore it is more than protective vision; shall we reverently say that it is inventive vision, devising gracious surprises, anticipating needs, preparing love-gifts; it is sight which is both insight and foresight, ever inspecting and prospecting for the loved one's good.

And Solomon prayed that God's ear might be open to the cry of His people's need. "Hear Thou from Thy dwelling-place." He prayed that the house of God might be the place of open communion. That is ever the secret of peace, and therefore of power. If I know that I have correspondence with the Holy One, I shall walk and work as a child of light. If God hear me, then I can sing!

And Solomon prays for the grace of forgiveness. He prays for the sense of sweet emancipation which is the gift of grace. It is the miracle of renewal, and it ought to happen every time we open the doors of the sanctuary.

JULY The Twenty-fourth

LOVE OF THE SANCTUARY

Psalms 84:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

GRACIOUS is the strength of this man's desire for the holy place. He covets the privilege of the very sparrow which builds its nest beneath the sacred eaves! When he is away from the Temple its worship and music haunt his mind and soul. It woos him in the market-place. Its insistent call is with him by the fireside. Yes, "in his heart are the highways to Zion!"

And the permanency of this devotional mood transfigures every place. It turns "the valley of weeping" into "a place of springs." The colour of any place is largely determined by our moods. It is surprising what treasures we find when our soul is full of light. What discoveries old Scrooge made when the Christmas mood possessed his own heart! When we carry about the spirit of the sanctuary, we convert every spot into rich and hallowed ground.

"I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Better to have the temple-spirit, even as a menial, than the unhallowed heart in the glittering high places of sin. "God's worst is better than the devil's best."

JULY The Twenty-fifth

NO TEMPLE THEREIN

"And I saw no temple therein!"

—Revelation 21:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

AND that because it was all temple! "Every place was hallowed ground." There was no merely localized Presence, because the Presence was universal. God was realized everywhere, and therefore the little meeting-tent had vanished, and in place of the measurable tabernacle there were the immeasurable and God-filled heavens.

Even here on earth I can measure my spiritual growth by the corresponding enlargement of my temple. What is the size of my sanctuary? Am I moving toward the time when nothing shall be particularly hallowed because all will be sanctified? Are the six days of the week becoming increasingly like the seventh, until people can see no difference between my Monday manners and my Sunday mood? And how about places? Do I still speak of "religion being religion," and "business being business," or is something of the sanctuary getting into my shop, and is the exchange becoming a side-chapel of the Temple?

"And the Lamb is the light thereof." When we have done with the local temple we can dispose of its candles. When we pass out of

the twilight into the morning “the stars retire.” The fore-gleams will change into the wondrous glory of the ineffable day.

JULY The Twenty-sixth

THE WELLS OF SALVATION

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

HE springs of our redemption are found in infinite love. “God is love!” Redemption was not inspired by anger, but by grace. We do not contemplate an angry God, demanding a victim, but a compassionate Father making a sacrifice. At one extreme of our golden text is eternal “love,” and at the other extreme is “eternal life.” What if the two are one? Etymologically, “love” and “life” are akin. What if they are only two names for the same thing?

To “believe” in the love is to receive the life. For when I believe in a person’s love I open my doors to the lover. And to believe in the love of God is to let the heavenly Lover in. And with love comes a wonderful tropical air—light, and warmth, and air; and “all things become new!” It is the letting in of the spring, and things which have been in wintry bondage awake, and arise from their graves.

And so I “enter into the kingdom of God.” I become a native of a new and marvellous country. I begin to be acclimatized in the realm of the blest. And I “see the kingdom of God.” Spiritual perceptions become mine, and I gaze upon the mystic glories of the home of God.

JULY The Twenty-seventh

THE WORK OF FAITH

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

AND so by belief I find life. I do not obtain the vitalizing air through controversy, or clamour, or idle lamentation, but by opening the window! Faith opens the door and window of the soul to the Son of God. It can be done without tears, it can be done without sensationalism. “If any man will open the door, I will come in.” “And he that hath the Son hath the life.”

And by belief I gain my victories. “Who is he that overcometh ... but he that believeth?” It is not by flashing armour that we beat the devil, but by an invincible life. On these battlefields a mystic breath does more destruction than all our fine and costly expedients. To believe is to obtain the winning spirit, and every battle brings its trophies to our feet.

And by belief I gain assurance. “He that believeth ... hath the witness in him.” So many Christians fight in doubt and indecision, and their uncertainty impairs their strength and skill. It is the man who can quietly say “I know” who is terrible in battle and who drives his foes in confusion from the field.

JULY The Twenty-eighth

ALL THINGS NEW!

2Corinthians 5:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

HERE is a new constraint! “The love of Christ constraineth me.” The love of Christ carries me along like a crowd. I am taken up in its mighty movement and swept along the appointed road! Or it arrests me, and makes me its willing prisoner. It lays a strong hand upon me, and I have no option but to go. A gracious “necessity is laid upon me.” I must!

And here is a new world. “Old things are passed away.” The man who is the prisoner of the Lord’s love will find himself in new and wonderful scenery. Everything will wear a new face—God, man, self, the garden, the sky, the sea! We shall look at all things through love-eyes, and it is amazing in what new light a great love will set familiar things! Commonplaces become beautiful when looked at through the lens of Christian love. When we “walk in love” our eyes are anointed with “the eye-salve” of grace.

And here is a new service. “We are ambassadors ... for Christ.” When we see our Lord through love-eyes, and then our brother, we shall yearn to serve our brother in Christ. We shall intensely long to tell the love-story of the Lord our Saviour. What we have seen, with confidence we tell.

JULY The Twenty-ninth

NAMES AND NATURES

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

MEN will recognize my Christianity by the sign of the Spirit of Christ. And they will accept no other witness. I saw a plant-pot the

other day, full of soil, bearing no flower, but flaunting a stick on which was printed the word "Mignonette." "Thou hast a name to live and art dead." The world will take no notice of our labels and our badges: it is only arrested by the flower and the perfume. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His."

And in the Spirit of Christ I shall best deal with "the things of the flesh." There are some things which are best overcome by neglecting them. To give them attention is to give them nourishment. Withdraw the attention, and they sicken and die. And so I must seek the fellowship of the Spirit. That friendship will destroy the other. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." If I am in communion with the Holy One the other will pine away, and cease to trouble me.

Lord, make my spirit a kinsman of Thine! Let the intimacy be ever deeper and dearer. "Draw me nearer, blessed Lord," until in nearness to Thee I find my peace, my joy, and my crown.

JULY The Thirtieth

SIN AS POISON

Numbers 11:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

AND this is the familiar teaching, that sin is a serpent. It possesses a deadly poison. We may give it pleasant names, but we are only ornamenting death. A chemist might put a poison into a chaste and elegant flask, but he has in no wise changed its nature. And when we name sin by philosophic euphemisms, and by less exacting terminologies—such as "cleverness," "smartness," or "fault," or "misfortune," we are only changing the flask, and the diabolical essence remains the same.

And, then, sin is a serpent because it is so subtle. It creeps into my presence almost before I know it. Its approaches are so insidious, its expedients so full of guile. "Therefore, I say unto all, Watch!"

But in Christ the old serpent is dead! Christ "became sin," and in Him sin was crucified. The thing that bit is bitten, and its nefarious power destroyed. But out of Christ the serpent is still busy and malicious, claiming what he presumes to call his own.

Let me, then, dwell in Christ, where sin "has no more dominion." "Whosoever believeth shall not perish but have life."

JULY The Thirty-first

THE CLEAN FLAME OF LOVE

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

THIS aged apostle cannot get away from the counsels of love. All his mental movements circle about this "greatest thing in the world." Once he would "call down fire upon men"; now the only fire he knows is the pure and genial flame of love. Beautiful is it when our fires become cleaner as we get older, when temper changes to compassion, when malice becomes goodwill, when an ill-controlled conflagration becomes a homely fireside.

And all the love we acquire we must get from the altars of God. "We love because He first loved us." We can find it nowhere else. "Love is of God." Why, then, not seek it in the right place? Why seek for palms in arctic regions, or for icebergs in the tropics? God is the country of love, and in His deep mines there are riches "unsearchable."

And the gracious law of life is this, that every acquisition of love increases our powers of discernment. "He that loveth knoweth...!" It is as though every jewel we find gives us an extra lens for the discovery of finer jewels still. And thus the love-life is a continual surprise, and the surprise will be eternal, for the object of the wonder is the infinite love of God.