

J H Jowett-Daily Meditation 8

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MY DAILY MEDITATION for the Circling Year

by John Henry Jowett

AUGUST

AUGUST The First GOD AS OUR ALLY!

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

IF God is for us!" But we must make sure of that. Is God on the field, taking sides with us? Have we been so busy with our preparations, so concerned with many things, and everybody, that we have forgotten our greatest possible Ally? Is He on the field, and on which side! My soul, go on thy knees, and settle this in secret. That purpose of thine! That choice of thine! That work of thine! Is it hallowed with thy Lord's approval and seal?

And "if God is for us, who can be against us?" Nothing else counts. It is ever a foolish and futile thing to count the heads in the opposing ranks. "God is always on the side of the big battalions!" It is a black lie of the devil! We need not fear the big battalions if only we are securely in the right. We are not to count heads, but to weigh and estimate causes. Which of the causes provides a tent for the Lord of Hosts? Where has the truth its waving flag? Stand near that flag, my soul, and thou wilt be near thy Lord! And nothing shall separate thee from His love, and leave thee weak and isolated on the field. Thou shalt be "more than conqueror" in Him who loves thee, and will love thee for evermore.

AUGUST The Second BY JACOB'S WELL

John 8:1-15.

A WEARY woman and a weary Lord! But the Lord was only weary in body; the woman was dry and exhausted in soul. Her heart was like some charred chamber after a destructive fire. All its furniture was injured, and some of it was almost burnt away. For sin had been blazing in the secret place, and had scorched the delicacies of the spirit, and the inward satisfaction was gone. And now she was very weary, and her daily walk had become a most tiresome march.

And the Lord, with sympathetic insight, discerned the inward dryness. There was no sound of holy contentment, no melody of joyful, spiritual desire. There was only the cold, clammy silence of death. "He knew what was in man." And there was no "river of water of life" making glad the streets of this woman's soul.

And so He would bring to her the waters of spiritual satisfaction, the holy well of eternal life. "In the wilderness shall waters break out, and springs in the desert." The Lord is about to work a miracle of grace, changing dull pang into healing peace, and suffocated desire into soaring fellowship with God. He is about to transform an outlawed woman into one of the "elect saints." How will He do it? Let us watch Him.

AUGUST The Third CHANGING ASKING INTO THIRSTING

“Go, call thy husband!”

—John 8:16-30.

I NEVER supposed that the transformation would begin here. I thought that there were some words which would remain unspoken. But here our Master speaks a word which only deepens the weariness of the woman, and irritates the sore of her galling yoke. What is He doing?

He is seeking to change the sense of wretchedness into the sense of sin! He is seeking to change weariness into desire! He wants to make the woman thirst! And so He puts His finger upon her sin. He cannot give the heavenly water to lips that merely ask for it. “Sir, give me this water!” No, it cannot be had for the asking, only for the thirsting! And so the gracious Lord turns the woman’s eyes upon her own sinful life, in order that in the heat of a fierce shame she might cry out, “I thirst for God, for the living God!” And sure I am that, before the Lord had done with her, this quiet, lone cry leapt from her lips, and in immediate response to the cry she was given a deep draught from the eternal well.

And, good Lord, arouse my sense of my sin that I, too, may thirst for Thy water! Now, make me thirst for it, and in the thirst receive it!

AUGUST The Fourth

HIDDEN MANNA

“I have meat to eat that ye know not of.”

—John 8:31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

AND what sort of meat is this? The Lord found secret refreshment in feeding other people. In vitalizing the woman of Samaria He restored His own soul. The disciples were amazed when they returned to find that the weariness had gone out of His face, and that He looked like one who had been at a feast!

And that is the law of life. “My meat is to do the will.” There is a secret nutriment in the bread we give away. The Lord gives us to eat of the “hidden manna” whenever we are seeking the refreshment of our fellows. Distributed bread has a sacramental efficacy for our own souls. The man who feeds the hungry shall himself be “satisfied as with marrow.”

And these ways of service are open on every side. There are millions of weary people waiting, like the woman at the well. “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to harvest!” Be it mine to be a minister in the mighty service, and in the ways of obedience let me find delights and delicacies for my own soul.

Bread of Heaven,
Feed me till I want no more!

AUGUST The Fifth

BROOKS BY THE WAY

Isaiah 12:1ff.

THE wells of the Lord are to be found where most I need them. The Lord of the way knows the pilgrim life, and the wells have been unsealed just where the soul is prone to become dry and faint. At the foot of the hill Difficulty was found a spring! Yes, these health-springs are lifting their crystal flood in the cheerless wastes of evil antagonisms and exhausting grief.

Sometimes I am foolish, and in my need I assume that the well is far away. I knew a farmer who for a generation had carried every pail of water from a distant well to meet the needs of his homestead. And one day he sunk a shaft by his own house door, and to his great joy he found that the water was waiting at his own gate! My soul, thy well is near, even here! Go not in search of Him! Thy pilgrimage is ended, the waters are at thy feet!

But I must “draw the water out of the wells of salvation.” The hand of faith must lift the gracious gift to the parched lips, and so refresh the panting soul. “I will take the cup of salvation.” Stretch out thy “lame hand of faith,” and take the holy, hallowing energy offered by the Lord.

AUGUST The Sixth

WATERS OF CONTENTMENT

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

THE refreshing waters are offered to “everyone” that is thirsty. The evangel is like some clear bugle peal, sounded on some commanding upland, and which is heard alike in palace and cottage, in school and at the mill, by the child of plenty and by the child of want. “Ho, everyone!” The appeal is to the common heart, whether the setting be squalor or splendour, whether the soul faints in the glare of the prosperous noon, or under the chill of the burdensome night. “Ho, everyone that thirsteth!”

And the waters may be ours “without money and without price.” We have not to earn them by the sweat of body, mind, or soul. We have not to make a toilsome pilgrimage, on bleeding feet, to some distant Lourdes, where the sacred healer abides. No, we are asked to pay nothing, and for the simple reason that we “have nothing wherewith to pay.” The reviving grace is given to us “freely,” and all that we have to present is our thirst.

And yet we spend and spend, we labour and labour, but we buy no bread of contentment, and the waters of satisfaction are far away. The satisfying bread cannot be bought; it can only be begged. The water of life cannot be taken from a cistern; it must be drunk at the spring.

AUGUST The Seventh

RIVERS FROM THE SNOW

Revelation 22:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 17, 18, 19, 20,21.

THE water of life flows out of the throne. Grace has its rise in sovereign holiness. This river is born amid the virgin snow. All true love springs out of spotless purity. “Love” from any other source is illegitimately wearing a stolen name. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!” That is the first note in the song of redemption. In that burning whiteness I discern the possibility of my own sanctification.

For the grace which flows out of sovereign holiness is a minister of the holy Lord to make me holy. If it were not perfectly pure it would itself be an agent of defilement. But it is “clear as crystal,” and therefore it purifies and fertilizes wherever it flows. Rare trees grow upon its banks, and grace-fruits make every season beautiful. “Everything shall live whither the river cometh.”

But without the river my soul shall be “as an unwatered garden.” My life shall be a realm of perpetual drought. Things may begin to grow, but they shall speedily droop and die. The heavenly Husbandman shall find no fruit when He walks amid the garden in the cool of the day. And therefore, my soul, look to the river which flows from the throne! “There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,” and that river is for thee!

AUGUST The Eighth

THE SCARLET SIN

Isaiah 1:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

HOW can we deal with glaring sin, with sin that is “scarlet,” that is “red like crimson”? And when the red stain has soaked into the very texture of the character, and every fibre is stupefied, what can we do then? Let me listen.

“Wash you.” But ordinary washings will not suffice. The ministry of education will fail. Art, and literature, and music will leave the internal stain undisturbed. They may impart a polish, but the polish shall be like the gloss on badly-washed linen. And the ministry of work will fail. Work never yet made a foul soul clean. There is “a fountain opened for all uncleanness.” I must wash “in the blood of the Lamb.” That red sacrifice can wash out the deep red stain.

“Cease to do evil.” Yes, I must turn my back on the roads of defilement. There must be a sharp decision, and an immediate reversal of my ways. “Halt!” “Right about turn!” “Quick march!”

“Learn to do well!” Yes, let me diligently learn, like a child at school, until the deliberative becomes the instructive, and “practice makes perfect.”

AUGUST The Ninth

GOD’S REQUIREMENTS

“What doth the Lord require of thee?”

—Micah 6:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

O do justly.” Then I must not be so eager about my rights as to forget my duties. For my duties are just the observance of my neighbour’s rights. And to see my neighbour’s rights I must cultivate his “point of view.” I must look out of his windows! “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

“And to love mercy.” And mercy is justice plus! And it is the “plus” which makes the Christian. His cup “runneth over.” He gives, like his Lord, “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.” There is always “a little extra” for Christ’s sake! And “blessed are the merciful.”

“And to walk humbly with thy God.” And there I am at the root of the two graces which have been enjoined upon me. The lowly friend of the Lord will most surely be both just and merciful. He cannot help it. The fragrance will cling to him as the fragrance of the orange clings to him who labours in the fruitful groves of Spain.

AUGUST The Tenth

GOOD FRUIT

Luke 6:43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49.

MY Lord seeks “good fruit.” It must be sound. No disease must lurk within it. My virtues are so often touched with defilement. There is a little untruth even in my truth. There is a little jealousy even in my praise. There is a little superciliousness even in my forbearance. There is a little pride even in my piety. It is not “whole,” not holy. God demands sound fruit.

And “good fruit” demands “a good tree.” We must not look for truth from an untrue soul. If the bullet-mould is deformed, all the bullets will share its deformity. First get the mould right, and every bullet will share its rectitude. When the soul is “true,” all our words, and deeds, and gestures will be “of the truth,” and will be true indeed. “Make the tree good.”

And that is just what our Lord proclaims His willingness to do. He does not begin with effects, but with causes; not with fruit, but with trees. He does not begin with our speech, but with the speaker; not with conduct, but with character. And, blessed be His name, He can transform “corrupt trees” into “good trees,” until it shall be said: “He that hath turned the world upside down has come hither also.”

AUGUST The Eleventh

THE CONSECRATION OF THE WILL

John 5:1-18.

MY Lord demands my will in the ministry of healing. “Art thou willing to be made whole?” He will not carry me as a log. When my schoolmaster put a belt around me, and held me over the water with a rope, and taught me to swim, I had to use my arms. The condition of help was endeavour. And so in my salvation. I have always will-power sufficient to pray and to try. In the effort of faith I open the door to the energies of God. Grace flows in the channels of the determined will. “O, God, my heart is set!”

And my Lord demands my will in the living of the consecrated life. “Sin no more!” I must “will” to be whole, and I must will to remain holy. And here is the gracious law of the kingdom, that every time I exercise my will I add to its power. Every difficulty overcome adds its strength to my resources. Every enemy conquered marches henceforth in my own ranks. I go “from strength to strength.”

“God worketh in me to will!” The gracious Lord ever strengthens the will that is willing. He transforms the frail reed into an iron pillar, and makes trembling timidity bold as a lion.

Mighty Spirit, dwell with me,
I myself would mighty be.

AUGUST The Twelfth

MY LIFE AND HOPE

John 5:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.

HERE is my reservoir. “The Son hath life in Himself.” All vitality has its source in Him. He is the enemy of death and the deadly. I can paint the dead to look like life; I can use rouge for blood, and make the white lips red, but it all remains clammy and cold. I can galvanize, but I cannot vitalize. I can “break the ball of nard,” and make perfume, “but still the sleeper sleeps.” “In Him is life.” “In Christ shall all be made alive!”

And here is my hope. “The Son also quickeneth.” He is not only a reservoir, He is a river. He is “the river of water of life.” And His blessed purpose is to flow into desolate places, converting deserts into gardens, and making wildernesses to blossom as the rose.

And He will come my way if only I will “hear” and “believe.” There is a flippant hearing which, while it listens, laughs Him to scorn. There is a cheap hearing which will venture nothing on His counsel. And there is the hearing of faith, which simply “takes Him at His

word,” and in the glorious venture experiences the unsealing of the fountain of eternal life. “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

AUGUST The Thirteenth

THE INNER ROOMS

John 5:31-47.

WHAT should I think of a man who was contented to remain in the outer halls and passages of Windsor Castle, when he was invited into the royal precincts to have gracious communion with the King? And what shall I think of men who are contented to “search the Scriptures” and “will not come” to the Lord? They spend their life exploring the lobbies, when the Host and the feast are waiting in the upper room!

And some men spend their days in criticism and they never advance to worship. They are like unto one who should give his strength to the deciphering of some time-worn inscription on the outer wall of some grand cathedral, and who never treads the sacred floor in fruitful and enriching awe.

And some men live in the senses, and not in the conscience, in the awful presence of the great white throne. They are for ever seeking sensations, and avoid the fellowship of duty. They ride about in the channel, and they never come to the harbour. They have no settled moral home.

My Lord, help me to regard all good things as merely passages leading to Thee! Let all good things bring me into intimate fellowship with Thee.

AUGUST The Fourteenth

THE PARALYSIS OF THE SOUL

Luke 5:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

THE miracle done in the body is purposed to be a symbol of a grander miracle to be wrought in the soul. “That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, then saith He... !” He heals the paralyzed body that we may know what He can do with a paralyzed soul. He liberates the man who is bound by palsy that we may know what He can do for a man who is bound by guilt. We are to reason from the less to the greater, from the material type to the spiritual reality.

And so it is with all my Lord’s doings in nature. They are a glorious symbolism of what He will do in the spirit. “That ye may know how beautiful the Son of Man can make the heart of man, then saith He to the seeds of the spring-time, Come forth!” And so nature becomes a literature, in which we see our possible inheritance in the Spirit.

But on our side it is all conditioned by faith. “There He could do no mighty works because of their unbelief.” Even in the miracles of the Spirit our faith must co-operate. Divine grace and human faith can transfigure the race. “Lord, increase our faith!” And everywhere, let palsied souls be delivered, and attain to glorious freedom!

AUGUST The Fifteenth

WITHERED LIMBS

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

THERE are withered limbs of the spirit as well as of the body. There are faculties and powers which are wasting away, sacred endowments which have lost their vital circulation. In some lives the will is a withered limb. In others it is the conscience. In others, again, it is the affections. These splendid moral and spiritual powers are being dried up, and they hang comparatively limp and useless in the life. They have been withered by sin and sinful negligence.

And the Lord is the healer of withered limbs. He can deal with imprisoned affections as the warm spring deals with the river which has been locked in ice. He can minister to a stricken will, and make it as a benumbed hand when the circulation has been restored. He can give it grip and tenacity. And so with all our powers. He, who is the Life, can vitalize all!

But here again the remnant of our withered endowment must be used in the healing. We must surrender to the Healer. We must obey. If the Lord says: “Stretch forth thy hand,” we must attempt the impossible! In this region the impossible becomes possible in sanctified endeavour.

AUGUST The Sixteenth

THE CHURCH AS AN INFIRMARY

Luke 13:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

WHAT infirmities gather together in the synagogue! What moral and spiritual ailments are congregated in every place of worship! If the veil of the flesh could be removed, and the inward life revealed, how we should pity one another, and how we should pray! In how many lives should we behold a spirit “bound together,” who “could in no wise lift herself up!” Wills like crushed reeds, consciences like broken vocal chords, hopes like birds with injured wings, and hearts like ruined homes!

But the blessed Lord still goes into the synagogue; nay, He anticipates our coming. And He is present “to heal the broken in heart,” and to “bind up his wounds.” His touch “has still its ancient power.” Still does the gracious Master speak with authority. “Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity!” And immediately she is “made straight.”

Then why do so many spiritual cripples leave the synagogue cripples still? Because they do not give the Healer a chance. No one can remain crooked and broken in conscience and will who grips the hand of the Lord of Life.

AUGUST The Seventeenth

THE PSALM OF PRAISE

Psalms 107:1-15.

THE miracle of deliverance must be followed by the psalm of praise. There are multitudes who cry, “God be merciful!” who never cry, “God be praised!” “There were none that returned to give thanks save this Samaritan.” Ten cleansed, and only one grateful! “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!” Many a blessing becomes stale because it is not renewed by thanksgiving. Graces that are received ungratefully droop like flowers deprived of rain. Yes, gratitude gives sustenance to blessings already received. Therefore “in everything give thanks.”

But emancipated lives are not only to break into praise before God, they must exercise in confession before men. “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!” Unconfessed blessings become like the Dead Sea; refused an outlet they lose their freshness and vitality. I am found by the Lord in order that I, too, may be a seeker. I receive His peace in order that I may be a peacemaker. I am comforted in order that I “may comfort others with the comfort wherewith I am comforted of God.” Have you ever received a blessing; “pass it on!” Tell the story of thy deliverance to the enslaved, that he, too, may find “the iron gate” swing open, and so attain his freedom.

AUGUST The Eighteenth

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.”

—Psalm 122:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,

No devotional comments for this Psalm - See [Spurgeon's Comments on Psalm 122](#)

AUGUST The Nineteenth

IN GREEN PASTURES

Psalms 33:1-22

THIS little psalm has been called the nightingale of the psalms. It sings “in the shade when all things rest.” It makes music in the darkness; it gives me “songs in the night.” And what does it sing about?

It sings of God’s bounty in food and rest. “Green pastures”; “still waters.” My Lord knows when my heart is faint, when it needs His reviving food. He knows when my heart is tired and needs His sweet rest. “He restoreth my soul.”

And it sings of the God-appointed way across the hill. “He leadeth me in paths of righteousness.” He makes the right way clear. He walks the path of duty with me. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.”

And it sings of the feast which the Lord serves in the very midst of my foes. “He spreadeth a table before me in the midst of mine enemies.” He gives me the fat things of grace in the very presence of frowning circumstances.

And it sings of the providence which guards the rear. “Goodness and mercy shall follow me!” God’s grace comes between me and my yesterdays. It cuts off the heredity from the old Adam, and no far-off plague comes nigh my dwelling.

AUGUST The Twentieth

FEEDING THE FLOCK

Isaiah 40:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

HERE is the gracious promise of provision. "He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd." He knows the fields where my soul will be best nourished in holiness. I am sometimes amazed at His choice. He takes me into an apparent wilderness, but I find rich herbage on the unpromising plain. And so I would rest in His choice even when it seems adverse to my good.

And here is the gracious promise of gentle discrimination. "He shall gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom." Says old Trapp, "He hath a great care of His little ones, like as He had of the weaker tribes. In their march through the Wilderness He put a strong tribe to two weak tribes, lest they should faint or fail." Yes, "He knoweth our frame." He will not lay upon us more than we can bear. At the back of every commandment there is a promise of adequate resource. His askings are also His enablings. The big duty means that we shall have a big lift. And when we are tired He will lead on gently. Such is the grace and tenderness of the Lord.

AUGUST The Twenty-first

SATISFACTION

"My people shall be satisfied with My goodness."

—Jeremiah 31:10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

AND how unlike is all this to the feasts of the world! There is a great show, but no satisfaction. There is much decorative china, but no nutritious food or drink. "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." We rise from the table, and our deepest cravings are unappeased. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" We know. We have had a condiment, but no meat; a showy menu-card, but no reviving feast.

Nothing but the goodness of the Lord can satisfy the soul. Whatever else may be on the table of life, if this be absent we shall go away unfed. We may have money, and pleasure, and success, and fame, but they are all delusive husks if the grace of the Lord be absent.

This is the real furnishing of the feast. There are vast multitudes of things I can do without if only I have the holy bread of life in the gracious Presence of my Lord. In this sphere it is the Guest who makes the table! "Thou, O Christ, art all I want!" "Having Him we have all things." A glorious satisfaction possesses the soul, and though we may not increase our worldly possessions, we do something better, we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

AUGUST The Twenty-second

THE SICK AND THE LOST

Ezekiel 38:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

SURELY everybody is included in this redemptive purpose of the Lord! He is looking for everybody, for everybody finds a place in His holy quest.

He is seeking the "lost" sheep. The one that has wandered far away, and now no longer hears the sound of the Shepherd's voice! The one that is carelessly nibbling the herbage on the very edge of perdition! He is looking for this one. Is He therefore looking for thee and me?

He is seeking "that which was driven away." Some hireling, some enemy of the shepherd, drove it far away from the fold. "A thief and a robber," for his own purposes, hath done this. And the Lord's sheep are driven away by "principalities and powers," and by the violence of wicked men. Some impure and unworthy professor of religion can drive a whole household from the fellowship of the Church. And the Good Shepherd is seeking these. Is He therefore looking for thee or me?

And He is seeking "that which was sick." And some of the Lord's sheep are sickly. The chill of disappointment, or failure, or bereavement has blown upon them, and they are "down." Or they have been feeding on illicit pleasure. And the Lord is seeking such. Is He therefore seeking thee or me?

AUGUST The Twenty-third

NOT LOST IN THE FLOCK

"I know My sheep, and am known of mine."

—John 10:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

THERE is mutual recognition, and in that recognition there is confidence and peace.

“I know my sheep.” He knows us one by one. My knowledge of the individual wanes in proportion as the multitude is increased. The teacher with the smaller class has the deepest intimacy with her scholars. The individual is lost in the crowd. But not so with our Lord. There are no “masses” in His sight. However big the crowd, even though it be “a multitude which no man can number,” we still remain individuals, known to the Lord by name, and face, and personal need. If thou art away from the fold, thy face is missed, and the Shepherd is away in search of thee!

“And I am known of mine.” And the knowledge deepens with every day’s experience. There are false shepherds who can subtly mimic the Good Shepherd, and in my early discipleship I am liable to be deceived. The devil himself can array himself like a shepherd, and imitate the very tones of the Lord. Therefore must I watch, and ever watch. But here is my hope and inspiration. Every day I spend with my Good Shepherd sharpens my discernments, enables me to see through the outer show of things, and to discriminate between the false and the true.

AUGUST The Twenty-fourth

THE LORD’S BODY

“I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.”

—John 17:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

THIS quiet confession is in itself a token of our Lord’s divinity. The serenity in which He makes His claims is as stupendous as the claims themselves. “Finished,” perfected in the utmost refinement, to the last, remotest detail! Nothing scamped, nothing overlooked, nothing forgotten! Everything which concerns thy redemption and my redemption has been accomplished. “It is finished!”

“And now ... I come to Thee.” The visible Presence is withdrawn. There is no longer in our midst a Jesus whose body we can bruise and crucify. “But these are in the world.” Yes, and His disciples are now His body. He becomes incarnated in them. If they refuse Him a body, He has none! He looks through their eyes, listens through their ears, speaks through their lips, ministers through their hands, goes on sacred pilgrimages with their feet! “Know ye not that ye are the body?”

Does my discipleship offer my Lord a limb? Can He communicate with the world through me? Does my discipleship multiply His powers of expression? Has He more eyes, more ears, more hands because I am a member of His Church? Or——?

AUGUST The Twenty-fifth

IMPOTENT ENEMIES

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

—Romans 8:31-39.

WHO can get between the love of Christ and me? What sharp dividing minister can cleave the two in twain, and leave me like a dismembered and dying branch?

Terrible experiences cannot do it. “Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword!” All these may come about my house, but they cannot reach the inner sanctuary where my Lord and I are closeted in loving communion and peace. They may bruise my skin, nay, they may give my body to be burned, but no flame can destroy the love of Jesus which enswathes my soul with invisible defence.

And terrible ministers cannot do it. “Angels, nor principalities, nor powers.” These mysterious agents of darkness, for they must be the legions of the evil one, are unable to quench the light and fire of my Saviour’s love. The devil can never blow out the lamp of grace.

And terrible death itself cannot do it. Death does not separate me from Jesus; death is the Lord’s minister to lead me into deeper privilege and ripe experiences of grace and love. Therefore, “I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest.”

AUGUST The Twenty-sixth

MISSING THE LORD

“Thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.”

—Luke 19:37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44.

YES, that has been my sad experience. I have wasted some of my wealthiest seasons. I have treated the hour as common and worthless, and the priceless opportunity has passed.

There have been times when my Lord has come to me, and I have turned Him away from my door. He so often journeys “incognito,” and if I am thoughtless I dismiss Him, and so lose the privilege of heavenly communion and benediction. He knocks at my door as a Carpenter, and the humble attire deceives me, and I treat Him with scant courtesy, and sometimes with contempt. I know not the time of my visitation.

He comes to me in the guise of needy people—as sick, or hungry, or a stranger, and I cannot be troubled with His presence. I dismissed Him as a pauper, little knowing that I was turning away a millionaire! I knew not the time of my visitation! “I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat,” and so we missed the bread of life.

And so there is nothing for it, but to be always “on the watch.” I must treat everybody as though everybody was the Christ. And I must treat every commonplace moment as though it were the home of the eternal.

AUGUST The Twenty-seventh

WHAT ABOUT TO-MORROW?

Joshua 24:1-15.

IT is not mine to worry about the coming day, but to fill the immediate moment with radiant duty. My Lord is the Pioneer, the great Maker of roads, and He will see to the appointments and provisions of the way. He has His scouts, His advance guard, His miners and sappers opening the highway across the waste! “I will send mine angel before thee!” “I will send hornets before you!” Yes, the Lord will look after the road. What, then, am I called to do? Let me find the answer in 14th verse (Josh 24:14).

“**Fear the Lord!**” The Lord must be the sovereign thought in my life. All true and well-proportioned living must begin in well-proportioned thought. **God must be my biggest thought**, and from that thought all others must take their colour and their range.

“**Put away the gods.**” My supreme homage must not be shared among many, it must be given to One. When the Lord is enthroned as King all usurpers must be banished. When He comes to His own the others go into exile.

“**Serve ye the Lord.**” My strength must be enlisted with my loyalty. I must not merely shout; I must work. I must not merely clap my hands when the King goes by, I must consecrate those hands in sacrificial service.

AUGUST The Twenty-eighth

WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

“The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.”

—Job 28:12-28.

HERE learning will not make me wise. The path to wisdom is not necessarily through the schools. The brilliant scholar may be an arrant fool. True wisdom is found, not in mental acquisitions, but in a certain spiritual relation. The wise man is known by the pose of his soul. He is “inclined toward the Lord!” He has returned unto his rest, and he finds light and vision in the fellowship of his Lord.

“To depart from evil is understanding.” Yes, I need the lens of purity if I am to see the secrets of things. A dirty lens is the explanation of much ignorance and obscurity. I do not think I can ever see a flower if my lens is defiled. Much less can I see “the things of others.” And still less again can I enjoy “the secret of the Lord.” What we want is not so much a theological training as a right spirit, not so much to go to school as to “depart from evil.” When I leave an evil habit worlds unseen begin to show their glory. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

AUGUST The Twenty-ninth

THE RICHES OF SPIRITUALITY

Proverbs 8:1-13.

LET me review some of these riches which are conferred upon the man who has made his soul the guest-room of spiritual religion.

“Love her, and she shall keep thee.” Spirituality is to be my true defence. All other ramparts are vulnerable. They are the happy hunting-ground of the ravages of time; they fail in the crisis; they are the sure victims of moth and rust. But spirituality keeps me from childhood to age, and its shields are invincible, even in the hour of death. “There shall no evil befall thee.”

“Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.” She will lead me in the paths of progress. Every day she will lead me to new conquests, and in constantly enriching character I shall move towards life’s appointed goal. Holiness is the only success worth having. Other successes are like lamps whose trembling flames are blown out in the first gusty, stormy night. “But the path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more even unto perfect day.”

“She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace.” Yes, and her adornments are always beautiful. No beauty ever steals into the human face comparable with the delicate presence of spirituality. It makes plain features lovely, and transfigures them with “the glory of the Lord.”

AUGUST The Thirtieth

HOW TO DELIGHT IN THE WORD

Psalm 119:97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104.

A MAN may measure his growth in grace by his growing delight in the speech of the Lord. When His words are unwelcome in my ears, when they are an intrusion which mars my pleasures, it is clear I am still in the far country of revolt. But if His words make “music in my ears,” if the Lord’s conversation is the very marrow of the feast, then I have entered into the circle of His intimate friends. When His words taste sweet, even with a bare board, I am “in heavenly places with Christ.”

And how can I attain unto this spiritual delight? Well, first of all I must make “His testimonies my meditations.” Our doctors tell us that the only way to taste the real savour of food is to masticate it well. Bolted food never unlocks its essences. And meditation is just mental mastication. To “turn the word over” in my mind will help to disburden its treasure.

And then I must diligently put the word into practice. “I have not departed from Thy judgments.” There is nothing like obedience for setting free a spiritual essence. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.”

AUGUST The Thirty-first

THE REAL GAINS AND LOSSES

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.”

—1Timothy 6:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

AND so I must go into my heart if I would make a true estimate of my gains and losses. The calculation is not to be made in my bank-books, or as I stride over my broad acres, or inspect my well-filled barns. These are the mere outsides of things, and do not enter into the real balance-sheet of my life. We can no more estimate the success of a life by methods like these than we can adjudge an oil-painting by the sense of smell.

What is my stock of godliness? That is one of the test questions. What are my treasures of contentment? What about peace and joy, and hallowed and blessed carelessness? How much pure laughter rings in my life? How much bird-music is heard in the chambers of my heart? Is the note of praise to be found in the streets of my soul? Am I rich in these things or pathetically poor? “By these things men live,” and therefore of these things will I make my balance-sheet and reckon up my gains.