

Our Daily Walk by F B Meyer - Aug

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August 1

THE WISE USE OF TIME

"Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise redeeming the time, because the days are evil."-- Eph 5:15-16 (R.V.).

GOD DESIRES to give each life its full development. Of course, there are exceptions; for instance, in some cases the lessons and discipline of life are crowded into a very brief space of time, and the soul is summoned to the Presence-chamber of eternity. But, on the whole, each human life is intended to touch all the notes of life's organ. There is an appointed time when it shall be born or die, shall weep or laugh, shall get or lose, shall have halcyon peace or storm cast skies. These times have been fixed for you in God's plan; do not try and anticipate them, or force the pace, but wait thou the Lord's leisure. In due time all will work out for thy good and for His glory. Say to Him "All my times are in Thy hand."

Times and seasons succeed one another very quickly. Milton, in his glorious sonnet on the Flight of Time, bids her call on the leaden-stepping hours, referring to the swing of the pendulum; and, indeed, as we look back on our past life it will seem as though each experience was only for a moment, and then had vanished, never to return. We are reminded of the cobbler, who, as he sat in his kitchen, thought that the pendulum of his clock, when it swung to the left, said For ever; and to the right, Where? For ever--where? For ever--where? He got up and stopped it, but found that, although he had stopped the questioner, he had not answered the question. Nor could he find rest until, on his knees, he had been able to face the question of the Eternal, and reply to it.

We must be on the alert to meet the demand of every hour. "Mine hour is not yet come," said our Lord. He waited patiently until He heard the hours strike in heaven, and then drawing the strength appropriate to its demand, He went forth to meet it. Each time and season is kept by the Father in His own hand. He opens and none shuts; He shuts and none opens. But in that same hand are the needed supplies of wisdom, grace, and power. As the time, so is the strength. No time of sighing, trial, temptation, or bereavement is without its special and adapted supplies. Take what is needed from His hand, and go forth to play the part for which the hour calls.

PRAYER

Oh, that Thou wouldst bless us indeed and enlarge our coasts of useful service. Let Thine hand be with us, and keep us from all evil that would grieve Thee. AMEN.

August 2

THE WISE USE OF INFLUENCE

"Ye are the light of the world.... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."-- Mat 5:14-16.

INFLUENCE MAY be defined as the flowing in of our soul to enthuse and help, or to debase others. The law of action and recreation, of attraction and repulsion is always at work, in virtue of which it may be truly said that no one liveth or dieth to himself. The position of each atom of sand upon the seashore affects the position of all others, and the quality of our personal character is more pervasive than a good or ill odour. What we are affects others much more deeply than what we say. Probably waves of spiritual influence are continually going forth from our inmost nature, and it is the impact of these upon those around us which makes it easier or harder for them to realize their highest ideals.

The first circle which we can touch and influence is that of our friends. Our counsel may be sweetness or bitterness, but whatever we do or say, we must see that we are absolutely true and faithful (Pro 27:6-9). Sincerity means to be without the wax which the cabinet-maker may put into the cracks of the wood to make it appear sound. It is the true and pure soul that most readily and forcibly helps another. Do not be selfish in your friendship, but always give out as much and more than you expect to receive. Love is a tender plant, and needs culture. We must not suppose that it is able to thrive without light and truth.

The second circle of influence is that of our associates. The great world of men may not appreciate our reproduction of the Beatitudes of the Kingdom, but still reproach, persecute, and say all manner of evil falsely; nevertheless, we must continue to bless the world by the silent and gracious influence of holy living. Reviled, we must bless; persecuted, we must endure; defamed, we must entreat. We must be as salt to our persecutors and as light to our defamers. It is wonderful how love, and consistent, patient, prayerful influence finally prevail.

We are to be as salt; i.e. our consistent holy living will act as antiseptic to arrest evil. We are to be the light of the world. Inconsistency and cowardice are like bushels which are put over the lamp. Let us put all these hindrances away, that the light which is within us may shine out on the dark world.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O God, that our behaviour may be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. May the savour of Christ be in our influence, His light in our face, His love in our hearts. AMEN.

August 3

THE WISE USE OF MONEY

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."-- 2Co 9:7-8.

WE MUST not look on money as our own, for on every coin you may discern the letters: DG., By the Grace of God. Therefore money is God's gift to us. "Both riches and honour come of Thee. David was right when he said, after his people and he had made a noble gift to God's work: "Of Thine own have we given Thee."

But you say: "I earn my money by the sweat of my brow." Granted; but "thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." It is God who enables us to keep our situations; who delivers us from paralysing disease, maintains the balance of reason, and renews our daily strength. Is it not our constant profession that we have devoted to Christ all that we are and have, and surely this consecration, if it means anything, means that concerning all that belongs to us we would say to our Lord: "What wouldst Thou have me to do?"

It is our duty to provide for our own (1Ti 5:8). It is also right to hold a certain amount as capital, for the increase of business and the employment of labour. When a man uses his capital rightly, taking no more than a legitimate profit for his time, experience, and responsibility, and allowing his employees to share with him in the overplus, he is doing more real good in the world than if he gave away his property by distributing a pound each to a vast number of beggars. We are to be stewards of the Lord Jesus. This is His own comparison (Mat 25:14).

In order to guard against the love of money, we should be careful to give a stated proportion to the cause of Christ. It may seem needless to insert this caution for those who should use all for Christ. But our hearts are so fickle that we sometimes imagine that we are giving away a larger share of our income than is the case, unless we are accurate in adjusting the balance between Christ and ourselves. It is not possible for one to assign for another the proper proportion, but whatever we fax, it should be rigorously deducted when we receive our income or wages. In the first place, give your own selves to Christ, and then all else will fall into line (2Co 8:5).

PRAYER

Help me, dear Lord, to walk in the footsteps of Thy holy life. Teach me how to gain by giving, and to find by losing, according to Thy word. AMEN.

August 4

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

"Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."-- Psa 107:43.

THERE ARE many ways of understanding the lovingkindness or mercy of the Lord. We may know it as a matter of doctrine. The best way of increasing our knowledge of God's infinite nature, is by the reverent study of His Word. It is a flimsy religion which discounts doctrine. What the bones are to the body, doctrine is to our moral and spiritual life. What law is to the material universe, doctrine is to the spiritual. The doctrines of grace are the jewelled foundations of a holy life. Seek the ministry that builds on them; read the books that acknowledge them! We may know it by meditation. Would that we yielded more silent hearts to the Holy Spirit, that He might fix our vagrant thoughts on the love of Christ that passeth knowledge! The love that loved us in Eternity, that has never let us go in Time, and that has shown its uttermost intensity by the wounds of Calvary! We may also know it sympathetically. Kepler, the great astronomer, exclaimed one day: "I have been thinking over again the earliest thoughts of God"; and surely every time we sacrifice ourselves for others, or carry another's cross, in the glow of a warm heart, we are feeling a tiny pulsation of His love.

Do we sufficiently praise God for His lovingkindness and truth? We are keen to pray, to cry out for help, but do we stop to enumerate the mercies and to render praise for them? "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psa 107:8, Psa 107:15, Psa 107:21, Psa 107:31). How often I have awoke tired and out-of-heart, the harp on the willows, the soul like a lark beaten down by an east wind; and when the usual Bible-study has failed to grip, or prayer has seemed cold and mechanical, the disconsolate heart has started to praise, to give thanks for mercies received, and to adore the majesty and glory of God. As one has thus continued, the soul has thawed, the spirit has found wings, the horizon has cleared, and the angel-song has broken in with its Hallelujah! We are thus transported into the Divine Presence-Chamber; we have obtained joy and gladness, our night is gone, and "sorrow and sighing have fled away."

PRAYER

Father, Thou hast loved us; Thou dost love us; Thou wilt love us for evermore. Thy love passes knowledge. It is like a warm, sunlit ocean enwrapping the tiny islet of my life. I bathe in it, but can never reach its limits. I thank Thee for its depths and lengths. AMEN.

August 5

NUMBERING OUR DAYS

"Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." Psa 90:12-14.

THIS PSALM was evidently composed towards the end of the wilderness wanderings, and records some of the sadness which must have oppressed the heart of Moses, as he saw the companions of his earlier life being buried amid the sand-dunes.

He compares the centuries to the memory of yesterday, which fades so quickly from our mind; to a watch spent by the camp fires; to the short rush of the mountain flood; to the dream which flashes for a moment before the mental eye; to the short-lived grass, which flourishes in the morning and is cut down at night. Each emblem full of significant beauty, and evidently culled from the incidents of the long march through these vast solitudes. It was as though the heart of this mighty servant of God turned from the fleeting ages and the decay of human life, to God, whose Being is timeless, unchangeable, and eternal. Here is transition and change; there is the Rock of Ages, with its everlasting stability and glory.

Let us number our days against the eternal ages of God's Being; against the age of the mountain and the universe; against the rise and fall of great nations. It is when we realize how short life is that we set ourselves in good earnest to redeem the time, to buy up each golden opportunity.

The heart of wisdom will show itself in giving God a just proportion of our time. Every day it is wise to set apart time for the reading of His Word, for prayer and holy fellowship; in every week it is wise to reserve a seventh part for His holy service. We may learn deep lessons from the amount of time that the Hebrews gave to their religious institutions. "Prayer and provender hinder no man," says the old proverb. It is specially wise to make God to be our Guide, that He may show us how to use this precious thing called life. Apart from Him all our desire to use our time aright will be in vain, but when the soul walks in fellowship with God every action tells, every day adds something to the growing power and influence of existence. Nothing is little, nothing trivial, nothing unworthy, if your soul holds fellowship with God. Then will come satisfaction and gladness, and the work of our life will be established by the Divine Hand.

PRAYER

O Faithful Lord, teach us to trust Thee for life and death, and to take Thee for our All in All. AMEN.

August 6

THE COMING KINGDOM

"Yet I have set My King upon my holy hill of Zion. Happy are all they that take refuge in Him."-- Psa 2:6-12 (R.V. marg.).

THE BASIS of this magnificent Psalm is the Reign of Christ. No king of David's line realized its sublime ideal, but the mind of the singer is borne forward to the reign of the Messiah, to whom it is applied in the New Testament (Act 13:33; Heb 1:5).

There are four strophes of three verses each. In Psa 2:1-3, the nations are depicted as assembling and planning revolt. A widespread conspiracy has arisen against the authority of Jehovah, exercised through the Messiah.

In Psa 2:4-6, by a bold metaphor, the absurdity of man's rebellion is made clear; but the laughter of the Most High is not inconsistent with the tears and sorrow of Jesus, as He beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it. The strenuous resistance by man can never alter the Divine purpose. The hammer cannot break the anvil!

In Psa 2:7-9, the Anointed King discloses His relationship to the Almighty, and claims universal dominion. The Divine Sonship was an eternal fact, but it was openly certified by the Resurrection (Rom 1:3-4). As He left our earth to ascend to His Throne, our Saviour claimed that all power was given to Him in heaven and on earth. His rule is founded, not only on the glory of His essential Deity, but on His suffering and sacrifice. "He became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross... therefore God also hath highly exalted Him."

In Psa 2:10-12, the Psalmist urges the rebellious to accept the findings of common sense. It is madness to dream of thwarting God's purpose. Kiss the hand of Jesus outstretched to you in love and forgiveness, and take shelter in Him from the wrath to come on the disobedient (Rev 6:16-17).

PRAYER

Behold, Thou commandest that I should love Thee with all my heart and soul, with all my mind and strength: Grant Thou me what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt. AMEN.

August 7

THE BIBLE AS A DICTAPHONE

"When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."-- Psa 27:8.

THE BIBLE reminds us of a dictaphone. God has spoken into it, and as we read its pages, they transfer His living words to us. There are many things in the Bible, which, at first, we may not be able to understand, because, as the heaven is higher than the earth, so are God's thoughts higher than ours. Mr. Spurgeon used to say that when he ate fish, he did not attempt to swallow the bones, but put them aside on his plate! So when there is something beyond your understanding, put it aside, and go on to enjoy that which is easy of spiritual mastication and digestion.

The Bible contains ten thousand promises. It is God's book of signed cheques. When you have found a promise which meets your need, do not ask God to keep His promise, as though He were unwilling to do so, and needed to be pressed and importuned. Present it humbly in the name of the Lord Jesus! Be sure that, so far as you know, you are fulfilling any conditions that may be attached; then look up into the face of your Heavenly Father, and tell Him that you are reckoning on Him to do as He has said. It is for Him to choose the time and manner of His answer; but wait quietly, be patient, and you will find that not a moment too soon, and not a moment too late, God's response will be given. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him" (Psa 62:5); "Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things that were told her from the Lord" (Luk 1:45).

Whether for the body, the soul, or spirit, there is no guide like Holy Scripture, but never read it without first looking up to its Author and Inspirer, asking that He will illuminate the page and make you wise unto salvation. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

PRAYER

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I Thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies. AMEN.

August 8

LIFE IS WORTH WHILE

"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."--- Col 3:17.

NOTHING IS more disastrous than aimless drift! God endows each soul for a distinct purpose. Probably in every life there is a lucid moment, when we take our bearings, and there flashes before us a glimpse of the life-work for which we were sent forth. We stand on the mount of vision, like Moses, and see the pattern of the tabernacle, which we are presently to erect. God has a purpose for the soul, as well as for the body, all the members of which were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them (Psa 139:16). Is it conceivable that He should spend thought and care on the body, and have no purpose for the soul? But if that be so, He will reveal His will; He will gradually unfold our life-purpose step by step. Let us go steadily forward reckoning on our Almighty Friend to supply the needed grace, wisdom, and strength.

When the captain of a cricket team leaves the pavilion for the wicket, the crowds watching his every movement, he is probably saying to himself: "I am going to score my hundred, to say the least!" As he faces the man yonder, who may be one of the swiftest and cleverest bowlers in the county, it is as though he says: "You may do your best, but I am going to win out!" It is in such a spirit that each of us should step out to face life: "I am going to win through, by God's grace."

Never forget that God is working with you. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." He will not desert the work of His own hands! In my long life of eighty-one years, I have experienced more fluctuations and difficulties than fall to many, but I unhesitatingly assert that where God gives the plan He stands Surety for the result! Dare to trust Him and keep in step with Him as He leads you onward.

PRAYER

O God, the God of all Goodness and all Grace, Who art worthy of a greater love than we can either give or understand; fill my heart with such love towards Thee as may cast out all sloth and fear, that nothing may seem too hard for me to do or to suffer in obedience to Thee. AMEN.

August 9

THE PILGRIM OF THE UNSEEN

"The Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee And I will bless thee, and make thy name great." Gen 12:1-2.

THE CLUE to the beginning of this chapter is given in various parts of the Bible. From Act 7:2-5, we learn that the Call to Abram to go forth, which originally came in Ur of the Chaldees, was repeated in Haran, after his father's death. Probably Terah delayed his son's obedience. Let us help our children to realize God's call, even though we be left lonely on the other side of the river.

In Heb 11:8, we realize that this Pilgrim of the Eternal stepped out on the wide expanse of the desert, only learning his course day by day; he was like a Columbus, sailing month after month through unknown seas, never knowing at what moment the dim outline of the shore might appear.

In Rom. 4. we are told that these promises were vouchsafed to him while still a Gentile. Thirty years passed before he became the founder of the Hebrew nation. The Apostle therefore argues that these promises are guaranteed to all his children, not only to those under the Law, but also to us who have his faith (Gen 12:16). Turn back, my reader, to that ancient page, and realize that it includes thee in its amplitude of blessing! Gal 3:8, Gal 3:9, Gal 3:14, assures us that all these blessings are included in the one gift of the Holy Spirit. The blessing of Abraham is for all of us who are in Christ Jesus, as we walk in the steps of this great Pilgrimage.

A vast gulf of Time lies between us and the far-away days of Abraham's life; but recent discoveries have shown that Ur of the Chaldees enjoyed a high State of civilisation a thousand years before his exodus. His experiences and ours meet across the gulf of ages!

PRAYER

O God, may the great cloud of witnesses, who have trodden the Pilgrim Way before us, be to us an example of a godly life, so that we may run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus. AMEN.

August 10

THE SUPREME CHOICE

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere., as the garden of the Lord. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan... and they separated themselves the one from the other."-- Gen 13:10-11.

THE SOUL that has taken God as its portion can afford to be generous!

As the older man, Abraham might well have claimed the priority of choice, leaving the rest to Lot; but he was quite content to waive his rights, since his Almighty Friend had fixed the place which he was destined to receive for his inheritance. Let Lot choose as he might, he could not obtain an inch of the land which God had included in His Divine purpose for His faithful and obedient servant. "Wait on tee Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land."

It was, therefore, in quiet confidence that the Patriarch stood beside his kinsman and watched him, as he lifted up his eyes to take and claim the fullest advantage of his uncle's unexpected offer. When Lot chose for himself the Plain of Sodom, which was well watered everywhere and lovely as Paradise itself, Abraham acquiesced in the choice with unperturbed equanimity. Looking into the face of God, he said in effect: "Thou art the portion of mine inheritance; Thou maintainest my lot; the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Then--the separation having taken place--God called His servant back to the hill-top, and gave him all the land in a covenant for ever, and bade him pass whither he wished over the soil, for it was all his own (Gen 13:14-17).

Let God choose for you! Especially, at the beginning of life, as you stand on its threshold and view the land, dare to follow the promptings of " His inner Voice. His Call still comes ringing down the ages: "Follow Me." "Lo, I am with you all the days!"

PRAYER

O God, I believe that Thou knowest just what is best for me. I can ask nothing better than this, to be Thy care, not my own. Through Thy grace, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. AMEN.

August 11

GOD'S IN HIS HEAVEN

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork."-- Psa 19:1.

GOD IN the Heavens (Psa 19:1-6). The Psalmist knew little or nothing of modern astronomical discovery, but his words can still be applied to the glorious march of suns and mighty planets toward their distant goal. Voices still speak to us from the vault of heaven, though no sound breaks on our listening ears.

The sun was not a god, but a creation. He can only pursue his destined path and retire at night to the tent of darkness. This is evidently metaphor, but is not the orb of natural day a true emblem of the Sun of Righteousness, the Bridegroom of human souls, who once tabernacled amongst men? Let us warm our cold hearts in the heat of His life-giving rays.

God in the Scriptures (Psa 19:7-11). In the first division of the Psalm He is known as EL; here as Jehovah. Nature may reveal His strength, but the Bible tells of His redeeming love. Notice that each sentence contains a name for Scripture, an attribute, and one of its effects. Perfect--no flaw; sure, reliable; right, a straight road; pure, as sunlight; clean, making impurity loathsome; true, as a reflection of God; righteous, revealing His demands, and the way in which we may become righteous. Ponder its effects! The Old Testament, as David knew it, was only a fragment of Divine revelation. What would he have said of our Bible! Alas, for those who instead of enjoying its fragrance are content with merely dissecting it.

God in the heart (Psa 19:12-14). He reads its innermost secrets, and His Blessed Spirit longs to cleanse us from secret faults, and to hold us back from presumptuous sin.

PRAYER

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. AMEN.

August 12

GOD'S EVEN-HANDED GOODNESS

"Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"-- Mat 20:7-15.

YES, GOD is good! Our eye may be evil; the thick atmosphere of this earth-sphere makes our vision oblique, but our warped judgment avails nothing against the verdict of the Universe. So good is God that He will give full wages to those who would have been glad to fill their lives with helpful service, if only they had had the opportunity. All day long they may have waited for their chance, but the sun slowly crept from horizon to horizon, and no opportunity was offered to them. Or, if finally their chance came, it lasted but for one brief hour! Nevertheless, their reward will be counted not only for the service of the hour, but for what they would have done if they had been called in the early dawn.

This is not after the manner of men, but it is God's way of dealing with men. He gives of "His own" to those labourers who have been faithful to their opportunity, whether the hours were longer or shorter. "His own!" His own Love! His own Joy! His completed Satisfaction!

But all who are admitted to that inner circle must be prepared to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with His baptism (Mat 20:23). Those who shall sit on the right and left of His throne in glory are the ones who have stooped lowest in bond-slave service. The followers of Jesus are not to be ministered to, but must be willing to follow their Lord even to the giving up of their lives. They must resemble their Master who, when He was on His way to redeem mankind, was willing to stand still and relieve the misery of two blind beggars (Mat 20:34).

PRAYER

Oh, Son of God, pour Thy gentleness into our hearts, Thy compassionate touch into our fingers, Thy tender sensitiveness to human need and sorrow into our cold and callous human senses. AMEN.

August 13

THE DAY OF RECKONING

"After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them."-- Mat 25:19.

THE THREE parables recorded in this chapter are of vast importance.

Each contains a striking contrast, and in each there is the possibility of supreme joy or the inevitable sentence of deprivation and rejection. In each there is instruction and encouragement on the one side, and on the other we are solemnly warned.

In the parable of the Virgins, we learn the necessity of having adequate reserves; of possessing more than the lamp of profession, however chaste and rare; and of procuring without money or price the oil of the gracious indwelling and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That religion is entirely valueless which is not due to His kindling and maintenance.

In the parable of the Talents, we learn that the gravest peril in Christian experience attaches not to the highly, or even the moderately-gifted people, but to the poorest and humblest one-talented folk! Because they can do so little they often do nothing. The one talent, which it is death to hide, is lodged with them as utterly useless. But with God the smallest things count! He does not crush the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. He chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

In the Judgment of the Nations, we learn that the ultimate test of Christianity is not in profession or doctrine, but our care for those with whom our Lord has always identified Himself--the outcast and helpless, the sick and sorrowful, the stranger and prisoner. Love to God has for its reverse Love to man. Even now the nations are standing before His judgment-bar, and some are being cast on the rubbish heap before our eyes.

PRAYER

Let me not be put to shame, O my Lord, but make me to love and fear Thee with all my heart. Help me to be faithful in the very little things, and to hear Thy well-done at the last. AMEN.

August 14

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." -- Mat 16:19.

ALTHOUGH THESE words were spoken to the Apostle Peter, there is a profound sense in which every true disciple of Christ can exercise the power of locking and unlocking the door of Faith, Hope, or Love to another soul. You may be aware of some one who is carrying a heavy burden, is oppressed with some over-mastering dread, or is fighting some besetting sin. You try to gain that person's confidence, endeavour to find some way of escape, promise some much-needed assistance, speak words of cheer and encouragement, and in this way unlock the door of the dark cell in which he has been incarcerated. The manifestation of your ready sympathy and help have emancipated him. Is not this a true use of the power of the keys of the Kingdom?

Or it may be some one who is suspected of evil things which are untrue. You listen carefully to the story, and endeavour to put the matter right; you take steps to bring out the purity and sincerity of motives before those who have misunderstood and misjudged.

Perhaps it is a boy or girl whose life is clouded by some entanglement from which it seems impossible to get free. By your friendly counsel and experience you are enabled to unlock the prison door and emancipate this young soul.

Look out for these opportunities of Christian service, for the life which is hidden with Christ in constant fellowship has an extraordinary power in setting free lives which are bound in fetters of iron. Above all, we can point the fettered soul to Christ our Lord.

PRAYER

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,

He sets the prisoner free;

His Blood can make the foulest clean,

His Blood avails for me. AMEN.

August 15

WHAT IS RELIGION?

"And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?" -- Mat 15:16.

IN THIS chapter our Lord teaches that true Religion is certainly not a matter of eating and drinking or outward ceremonial. It is the intention of the soul, the continual drawing from Christ the life-power needed for our work and ministry to others. It may be illustrated by the experience of the diver, who explores the ocean-bed, but draws upon the breeze that sweeps the ocean-surface.

Our Lord did not under-estimate the outward observance of the forms of religion; He set us a definite example by His attendance at the Synagogue and the Temple services, by nights spent in prayer, by constant reference to Holy Scripture--but these were only the outward and natural expression of His unbroken fellowship with His Father. Human love does not consist merely in outward expression, but in the hidden purpose of the heart, and yet, if there be no outward expression the spring will dry up!

Perhaps the two greatest definitions of pure religion are these--the first from the Old Testament: "Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with thy God." And the second from the New Testament: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." But to fulfil each of these we need the aid of the Holy Spirit.

To be truly religious is within the reach and scope of us all; but we must avail ourselves of what Jesus Christ has done to bring us to God. In Him there is absolute forgiveness for all the past, and infinite help and grace for the future. He is willing to be our Surety, Friend, and Helper. Through Him we may become partakers of the Divine Nature, and escape the corruption which is in the world through lust.

PRAYER

Give unto me, gracious Lord, the pilgrim spirit that I may be in the world and not of it. Give me Thy grace to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. May I ever walk worthy of the heavenly calling. AMEN.

August 16

THE SOUL'S VENTURE

"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that were with him in the ark."-- Gen 8:1.

IT IS very helpful to ponder these words, for it gives the assurance that not only will God take care of cattle, and birds, and every living thing, as we learn from Deu 25:4; Psa 104:11-22; Jon 4:11; Mat 6:26; but that He will much more think of and care for us, His children! Like Noah and his family, you may be shut away from all human help. It may be as impossible for you, as it was for him, to extricate yourself. You may have the responsibility of providing for those in need. Your supplies may be continually decreasing before your eyes, but God remembers you amid the waste of waters, and beneath those dark cloud-covered skies. As a mother cannot forget her sucking child, so God cannot forget you.

The ark grounded on the lower slopes of Ararat on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, and the waters decreased so rapidly, that, as Noah had reaped the harvest before the Flood came, he left the ark in time to sow for the succeeding year. Dare to trust the times and seasons of your life to your Heavenly Father's care. He only waits to be trusted, and then life becomes woven into a beautiful mosaic of His loving forethought and care.

Be sure to guard against raven-like thoughts, which are restless and evil-feeding; seek to cultivate meek, gentle, pure, and dove-like thoughts that cull the olive-leaves of promise from the Word of God. Presently He who said "Come in," will say "Go forth!" Then build your altar of self-sacrifice and self-giving.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, strengthen me that I may look, not on the dark cloud, but for Thy rainbow; not on what Thou hast taken or withheld, but on what Thou hast left; not on the stormy waters, but on the face of Jesus. AMEN.

August 17

THE PROVIDENCE OF THE TRIFLE

"O Lord, the God of my Master Abraham, send me, I pray Thee, good speed this day., thereby shall I know that Thou hast shewed kindness to my master."--- Gen 24:12-14.

FROM THIS beautiful incident we can learn much of God's guidance of the soul. Evidently Eliezer, the faithful servant, had absorbed something of his master's faith and method; so that, as we read this artless narrative, we can realize some of the principles on which the entire camp was conducted. Four times he speaks of "the God of my master Abraham." When he had been taken into Abraham's confidence, he entered into the plan with as much zeal and interest as if it were his own private concern. Would that we were equally intent on our Heavenly Master's business, and that those who are our dependants and associates were equally impressed by the reverence and prayerfulness of our lives!

Each step was taken in fellowship with God; but that did not prevent him from exercising his own careful management of the successive steps for ascertaining the disposition of this young girl who was so suddenly summoned from the obscurity of Haran to become a link in the Messianic chain. Eliezer's faith in the Providence of a trifle is most interesting and instructive. He held his peace as the girl drew the water; then, in the assurance of faith that his prayer for guidance had been answered, without further hesitation he placed the bracelets on her arms. Be on the outlook to see God's hand in everything!

Count up the number of times in which this worthy man contrives to bring in the two words, "My master!" We may learn from him how to speak of our Saviour, whenever we get the opportunity--"Rabboni, which being interpreted, is, My Master!"

When asking for good speed to be sent to himself, he alleged as his plea that it would be showing kindness to his master Abraham. So when we ask great things from God, we can plead in the Name of Jesus and be sure that He will show kindness to us for His sake (Joh 15:16). This old-world story is a beautiful lesson for those who call Jesus Master and Lord.

PRAYER

Send me, O Lord, I humbly ask, good speed this day. May I know when to speak and when to be silent; when to act or refrain from action. In all details of daily life may I faithfully serve Thee, my Master and Friend. AMEN.

August 18

RELIGION AND RIDICULE

"When Sanballat . . . and Tobiah . . . and Geshem . . . heard it, they laughed us to scorn and despised us, and said what is this thing that ye do? Then answered I them, The God of Heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build. So built we the wall; for the people had a mind to work." -- Neh 2:19-20; Neh 4:6.

THE BUILDING of the ruined walls of Jerusalem, as the record shows, was undertaken in troublous times. Some of the petty rulers in the neighbourhood, exulted in the low estate of the city, because it left room for the exercise of their authority, and they viewed these renewed activities with chagrin. They plotted for the overthrow of the work, and had to be met by incessant watchfulness.

If you are endeavouring to do God's work in the world, to clear away the rubbish of sin, to rebuild the walls that are broken down, and to seek the welfare of God's people, do not be surprised if your steps are beset with scorn and ridicule, by the secret or open malice of Sanballat and Tobiah. For some it is easier to face bitter opposition than to bear mockery and ridicule. If only these scornful and carping tongues were silenced, we could make more headway, but such persecution drives us back on God, makes Him a living fact in life, and opens the door to the manifestation of the saving health of His right hand (Neh 4:4, Neh 4:9, Neh 4:20). How good it is, at such times, to cease from man, and to remember the Lord who is the great and terrible One (Neh 1:5; Isa 51:12-13). Be quite sure that you are on His plan, doing His work in His way; then go forward in His Name, and he will make all the mountains a way.

The lesson for us all is the threefold aspect of the Christian life. There is our up-look into God's face--"I prayed to the God of Heaven." We must never forget to pray, for more things are wrought by prayer than we realize. Second, there is our up-look against our foes and the foes of God--"we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night." We must watch as well as pray. Lastly, there is our dawn-look towards the work entrusted to us, at which we must labour with unslacking devotion, in fellowship with our Lord (1Co 3:9). Let each inquire: "Am I inside the city amongst its builders, or outside amongst its detractors and foes?"

PRAYER

O God, teach us day by day what Thou wouldst have us to do, and give us grace and power to fulfil the same. May we never from love of ease, decline the path which Thou pointest out, nor, for fear of shame, turn way from it. AMEN.

August 19

THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP

"Two are better than one.., for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow."-- Ecc 4:9-10.

WE CANNOT have many inner friends, but sad is the life that has not its other self. The friendship of David and Jonathan, of Damon and Pythias, has passed into the current talk of the world. It is especially good for the Christian disciple to travel to heaven with a comrade, Hopeful with Christian, and Mercy with Christiana.

A friend is invaluable if we stumble or fall on the path of life. "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth."

"Brethren," says the Apostle, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." Let us watch for each other's souls; if any is falling away from the truth, or into some insidious trap, let us lift him up. Let us exercise the brotherly solicitude that Barnabas did for Paul.

Friendship ought to make our spirits glow. "How can one be warm alone?" Of course, in a spiritual sense there are divine sources of caloric. The love of Christ kindleth to vehement heat. But it is certainly easier to keep up the temperature when we have a kindred heart beside us. Perhaps this was one reason why our Lord sent forth His disciples by two and two (Mk 6:7).

Without companionship material things cannot satisfy. The ties of nature, friendship, and religious communion give a zest to a poor man's life, which the miser with all his wealth forfeits. It is all-important, not only in ordinary life, but pre-eminently in the pilgrimage of the spirit, to have fellowship with some kindred soul.

In temptation a true friend makes us more able to withstand the devil. It is a real help in the hour of trial to have a friend who will appropriate the words of our Lord, saying: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." There is no fellowship like that of Jesus, our Faithful Friend, who lifts us when we fall, chafes us when chilled with cold, and succours us against the Tempter. Does He not make the third in the threefold cord--"Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mat 18:20).

PRAYER

We pray for our companions in life's pilgrimage. Help us to hearten them with our courage, cheer them with our love, and bear their burdens so far as we may. For ourselves may we find in Jesus the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. AMEN.

August 20

DIGGING WELLS

"He removed from thence, and digged another well... and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." -- Gen 26:22.

ISAAC SEEMS to be rather a disappointing character, and we sometimes wonder that he should be classed with Abraham, the father of all who believe; and Jacob, who prevailed with the Angel and became a Prince! He was passive, quiet, given to thoughtful meditation (Gen 24:63). God's purpose includes all sorts and types of men, and Isaac dug wells of which men have drunk for thousands of years.

He was constantly pursued by enmity, jealousy, and strife, as the names of his wells attest. But each time he consistently retired from the conflict, and yielded his well to dig another. Finally, his enemies had to confess that he was mightier than they (Gen 26:16). Best of all, God appeared to him "the same night," and promised that He would be with Him and bless him.

Let us learn to sublimate our resistance to evil, and lift it from the physical to the moral and spiritual level. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty" (Pro 16:32). Go on digging wells--the wells of Family Prayer, of love for the Bible, of holy exercises and habits! You will find spring water (Gen 26:19). That is God's side of your life. You are called to dig wells, but God's Holy Spirit will rise up in your soul, and in the souls of others, like the geyser-springs in Arctic regions (Joh 4:14). Let us present to Him ourselves--our souls and bodies, to be the wells and channels, along and through which His eternal God-Head and Power, arising from the fathomless depths of His own nature, may reach this thirsty and parched world!

God is Love: Love is Self-Giving: but God depends on the co-operation of us, the well-diggers, to make outlets for the outflow of His Love and Goodness.

PRAYER

Most Merciful Father, give us grace that we may never be drawn to do anything that may dishonour Thy Name; but may persevere in all good purposes, and in Thy holy service, unto the end of our life. AMEN.

August 21

THE CLUE TO LIFE'S MAZE

"There was a man whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil....Satan said, Doth Job fear God for nought?"-- Joh 1:1-9.

THIS MARVELLOUS poem, one of the profoundest studies in the Bible, deals with the great problem of evil. At some time or other in our lives, we come back to study it, as a clue to life's maze, the expression of our heart's out-cry, and the solution of life's mystery in the Will and Love of God.

From first to last, the supreme questions in this wonderful piece of literature are: "Can God make man love Him for Himself alone and apart from His gifts?" and "Why is Evil permitted, and what part does it play in the nurture of the soul of man?" These questions are always with us. In fact, the Book of Job may be said to be a compendium of the existence and history of our race.

The first chapter teems with helpful lessons. The anxiety of parents for their children should expend itself in ceaseless intercession on their behalf. The great Adversary of souls is always on the watch, considering our conduct so as to accuse us before God, not only for overt sins, but for unworthy motives. We cannot forget our Lord's words to Peter: "Satan asked to have you, but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luk 22:31, R.V.). Christ never underestimated the power of Satan, the "prince of this world," but He is our great Intercessor (Heb 4:14-16; Heb 7:25).

In circumstances of prosperity and happiness, we must never forget that it is God who plants a hedge about us, blesses our work and increases our substance. It is good to realize that whatever be the malignity of our foes, there is always the Divine restraint, and we are not tempted beyond what we are able to bear. It is not enough to endure our griefs sullenly or stoically. It should be our aim not only to hold fast to our integrity, but to trust God. There is a clue to the mystery of human life, which comes to the man who differentiates between the Real and the Unreal; the Seen and the Unseen.

PRAYER

My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. AMEN.

August 22

GOD'S DELAYS ARE NOT DENIALS

"Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for Him."-- Isa 30:18.

THERE ARE many illustrations of this Divine method in the Word of God. The Angel at the Jabbok-ford waited till Jacob could wrestle no more, being completely exhausted by his struggles; and then, as his helpless antagonist clung to Him for support, He whispered in his ear His mystic name and blessed him there.

Our Lord waited till the Syrophenician woman fell helpless at His feet, with the cry: "Lord, help me!" that He might grant to her the boon she craved for her child. From His throne in Heaven He pursued the same method, waiting to be gracious till the apostles and others in the upper room had reached such a condition of helplessness that He could give them their Pentecost; waiting till the little group of disciples had exhausted every other expedient, that He might release to them Peter from his prison; waiting till Paul had renounced all creative energy, that He might take him strong in His almighty power, while He whispered: "My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Too often we have misinterpreted God's dealings with us. When He has tarried beyond the Jordan, in spite of our entreaties that He should hasten to save Lazarus, we have concluded that He was strangely neglectful. But, in fact, He was waiting, at no small cost to His heart, till we had come to the end of ourselves, and the way was clear for Him to work a more astounding miracle than we had dared to hope.

God's delays are not denials; they are not neglectful nor unkind. He is waiting with watchful eye and intent for the precise moment to strike, when He can give a blessing which will be without alloy, and will flood all after life with blessings so royal, so plenteous, so divine, that eternity will be too short to utter all our praise.

PRAYER

We ask from the treasures of Thy grace for a more childlike trust, a more faithful spirit, a more loyal will. May our obedience open to us all spiritual knowledge. AMEN.

August 23

THE EQUILIBRIUM OF LIFE

"And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people."-- Act 2:46-47 (R.V.).

IN EVERY life there should be the worship of the Temple and the service of the Home. Do we realize that God is directing and locating our life-plan? The Home is His arrangement for us equally with the Temple, and the daily meal may be an ordinance as the Lord's Supper. Do you take your food "with gladness and singleness of heart," or do you grumble over your meals? Do you perform common tasks gladly and gratefully? This is only possible when we come to understand that the greatness of life consists, not so much in doing so-called great things, but in doing small things greatly! "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

We have been compared to the weavers of the Gobelin tapestry, who may have to work a number of apparently drab and sombre, uninteresting and common things into the pattern on the wrong side of the woof. It is only when the texture is completed that they can see and admire the design that is worthy of the palace of the king! So it is with your life and mine: "We work, we suffer, and see neither the end nor the fruit. But God sees it, and when He releases us from our task, He will disclose to our wondering gaze what He, the great Artist, has woven out of those toils that now seem so sterile."

There was great joy in the lives of these early Christians. They parted with their worldly possessions, but they were filled with gladness, and probably this gave them favour with the people. There was true helpfulness among them. Each went shares with the rest. The give and take of life is so important. We are all glad enough to take what we can get, but how about to give! We like to be waited on, but how about the serving? Yet true gladness and happiness depends, not on being ministered to, but in ministry. When we have learnt the secret of praising God in and for everything; when we refuse to shut ourselves up in our own griefs, but compel our dull spirits to enter into the joys of those around, then we shall have no difficulty in living joyfully and gladly.

PRAYER

O Lord, renew our spirits and draw our hearts unto Thyself that our work may not be to us a burden, but a delight; and give us such a mighty love to Thee as may sweeten all our obedience. AMEN.

August 24

GOD'S RESPONSE TO OUR CRY

"He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee."-- Isa 30:19.

THIS IS one of the most exquisite chapters in Isaiah's prophecy. Notice its profound teaching. God permitted the Assyrian to come because of the deep lessons it would teach the king and people that certain abuses must be checked. The siege would surely come, and they would know something of the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, but the Almighty would be near, speaking to His people not only by their sorrows, but by His servants, and by the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. Thus we have an example of the persuasive providence of God. His grace surrounds and keeps His people, but if we wilfully sin, we break the cordon of His protection. When we repent and turn back again to cry to Him, the gentle hand of the Lord will bind up our wounds and soothe our spirits; songs break forth in the night, and our heart is filled with gladness.

The latter part of this chapter (Isa 30:27-33) describes the coming of Sennacherib's troops. They are terrible, and yet there was a sense in which they were called into existence with God: "Behold the Name of the Lord cometh from afar." The advance is compared to a terrific thunderstorm, and then to the rush of a mountain torrent. In Isa 30:28 the final check is given, as when a wild animal is lassoed and brought to its knees. Presently the enemy would vanish silently, and once more the stricken land would be ploughed up for sowing the seed, streams would flow as before, and joyful harvests reaped.

How tender and gracious are these words to those in pain and distress. Be of good cheer, God has not forgotten to be gracious to you! Take to heart these sweet promises, and ask that the counterpart of these blessings may be granted in your experience.

PRAYER

Our Father, we realize that Thou dost need to discipline us when we cease from walking in Thy faith and fear! Make us more sensitive and responsive to the voice of the Holy Spirit, saying: this is the way, walk ye in it; that with gladness of heart we may once more return to Thee. AMEN

August 25

GOD OUR DEFENCE AND DELIVERER

"As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also He will deliver it, and passing over He will preserve it."-- Isa 31:5.

WE HAVE in this chapter three beautiful synonyms for God. He is Wise (Isa 31:1-3). The politicians of that time were boasting of their wisdom-in having secured the Egyptian alliance, but their cleverness and strategy were not destined to be of any help to them. Why did they not consult the Holy One of Israel, and seek the help of the Almighty? Was His wisdom only in heavenly and religious matters? Had He not the power to infuse men like Isaiah with a wisdom for earthly and human politics? Surely the boast of wisdom was mockery in the leaders of the people, at that dread hour of Jerusalem's history, when they turned away from the Light and Glory of the Shekinah to seek human counsellors and worldly stratagems. Not only in religious matters, but in the daily ordering of our human life, "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting!" (Jam 1:5.)

He is as a Lion (Isa 31:4). The lion is more than a match for the groups of shepherds who endeavour to stand against him with their crooks. He is not afraid of their shouting and views them with contempt. Does not this mean that the mighty presence and power of God would shelter the soul that trusts Him? All the nations might assail the city in vain whilst the Lion of the Tribe of Judah stood as sentry! If you are fearful of heart, and dread the attack of man, flee to God for refuge and defence (Psa 46:1).

He is as a mother-bird and her nest (Isa 31:5). How wonderful these words are! How near God comes to each one of us! We are reminded of our Saviour who longed to gather Jerusalem under His wings! Amid all the fret and worry and anxiety of your life, dare to believe in a Love that will not let you go!

PRAYER

O God our Father, how can we thank Thee for Thy Holy Word, and the many methods by which Thou wouldst gain our confidence and love! Give us grace to return unto our rest beneath the shadow of Thy wings! AMEN.

August 26

WALKING WITH JESUS

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him."-- Col 2:6.

THE DAILY walk of the Christian soul is so absolutely important because it is our witness to the world. Our character, as exemplified in our behaviour, is the world's only Bible and sermon (2Co 3:2-3). Let us learn to walk so as to please God, and to bless mankind. To walk is at first a matter of considering every little step, but afterwards it becomes the habit of the soul (Col 1:10).

We received Jesus into our hearts by faith. He entered through the open door and became our Lord and Master. In the same manner we must live always and everywhere, receiving from Him, by faith, grace upon grace, and allowing what He works in to work out in all manner of godliness, tenderness, and Christlikeness. This practice of looking to Jesus for grace in every circumstance of life tends to become more and more habitual--and this is what the Apostle means when he says, "Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith."

But such a walk is only possible when we have learned to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24). The flesh is the assertion of our self-life, whether in lesser or grosser forms, but whenever self intrudes it exercises a baleful influence on our behaviour and Conversation. Just as the iron of the steamer will deflect the needle of the compass, so the intrusion of our self-life will act as a drag upon our character and walk.

How can we crucify the flesh? Only by allowing the Holy Spirit to have supreme control. He makes the Cross every day dearer and more effective. He will conquer evil habits in us and for us, while we stand by as more than conquerors through His grace. If we will be led by Him, there will not only be deliverance from the self-life, but He will produce in us the fruit of holy living which will please God and refresh men.

PRAYER

Let Thy Holy Spirit be continually with us, and may we feel the powerful effects of Thy Divine Grace constantly directing and supporting our steps. AMEN.

August 27

THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

"Serve the Lord with gladness: Come before His presence with singing."-- Ps 100:2 ([notes](#)).

"Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of lips which make confession to His Name."-- Heb 13:15-note

THE HUNDRETH Psalm is rightly entitled "A Psalm of Thanksgiving" (R.V.). The Psalmist calls for a "joyful noise," i.e. an audible expression of worship. Do not be content with a thankful heart, but express it! It is good to let God have "the fruit of our lips." As a bird will awaken the whole choir of a woodland glade, so the soul really aglow with loving adoration will spread its own contagion of song. How often Christian people hinder the progress of Christianity by their dullness, gloominess, and depression. His service is perfect freedom, and if we delight ourselves in the Lord, we should serve Him with gladness!

It is very important to maintain the habit of regular church-going because of its opportunity for worship (He 10:24, 25-note). Let us "enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise!" By **meditation** and prayer let us ask that we may be accounted worthy to stand in His Presence, and offer praise and adoration to the Most High God (El Elyon, Sovereign Over All), mingled with the fragrance of our Saviour's Name (Rev 8:3, 4-note).

"The Lord is good!" There are many mysteries, and much pain and sorrow in the world. We must dare to believe and affirm the **goodness** of God beneath all the distressing elements of modern life. With His goodness are combined His **mercy** and His **Truth**. Let men do their worst, "His truth endureth to all generations." It is an impregnable Rock (notes), on which the waves of sin can make no sensible impression. What comfort there is in knowing that equally His mercy is everlasting. We need so much patience, forbearance, and longsuffering, that if God's mercy were anything less we should despair, but it is extended to every generation till Time shall be no more!

PRAYER

Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits. AMEN. (Ps 103:4-note)

August 28

PROPOSALS AND DISPOSALS

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." --- Luk 12:15.

MEN ARE often more eager to get God's help in temporalities than in spiritualities. The man in the crowd, who appealed to Christ, was more anxious that He should interpose on his behalf in a family dispute than to give him the life of the ages. But our Lord refused to be Judge and Arbitrator. His ministry went deeper to the springs of action, and He knew that in each brother there was the root of covetousness, which led the one to wrong the other. He struck at the sin which lay at the root of all such disputes about property.

Our Lord insisted that life does not consist in the abundance of things of which we may happen to be possessed. We say: "So and so is worth a million pounds!" Heaven estimates a man's worth by the courage, faith, purity, self-control, and love to God and man, which have grown up in the soul by the careful discipline of the years! Acceptance and rank in the Kingdom of God depends on character not on possessions.

How often man proposes and God disposes! We say, "We shall yet live for many years, and enjoy the fruit of our labours"; but God says: "'To-night!'" Listen to the Apostle James, speaking to those who said, "To-day or to-morrow we will go to this city or that, and spend a year there, and carry on a successful business! All the while you do not even know what will happen to-morrow. For your life is but a mist, which appears on the hill-side, but vanishes at the touch of dawn. Surely, we ought to say: If it is the Lord's will, we shall live, and do this or that" (Jam 4:13-17).

Many talk of seeing life who see only its most sordid and ugly side. If a man really wishes to see life, and know happy days, the secret is given in 1Pe 3:10-19. This is the message of the Gospel, "That God has given us the Life of the ages, and that this life is in Christ Jesus. He who has the Son has the Life" (Joh 3:36; 1Jo 5:12).

PRAYER

Lord, I know not what is before me, but Thou knowest. Choose Thou my portion for me. Lead me by Thine own hand; and keep me close to Thee, day by day, and night by night. AMEN.

August 29

OUR DUTY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." -- Mat 22:39; Lev 19:9-18.

OUR NEIGHBOUR is the next person who needs our help, man, woman, or child. It is enough that your help is needed, and that you are near! As we read this paragraph from the old Jewish law we see who are our neighbours, and what we are to do for them.

We must give them a chance to live (Mat 22:9-10). We have no right to waste anything that may be of service to others, or to use for ourselves all our possessions. There must always be a margin left which we can give to those who are in need. Well would it be if each reader of these lines would set apart a certain proportion of produce and increase, as well as money, for the cause of Christ and His poor.

We must not withhold payments which are due (Mat 22:13). How many tradesmen and others have been ruined by the long delays of customers in settling their accounts. If only all Christian people would insist on paying cash, especially to small shopkeepers, what a blessed revolution would ensue. It is neither honest nor just to withhold payment from those to whom it is due.

We must be very gentle and considerate to those who suffer from any infirmity (Mat 22:14). God's Love is always endeavouring to make up in some way to those who are handicapped. The blind Milton sings of Paradise, and Helen Keller has been enabled to triumph over insuperable obstacles. We are to become ears to the deaf and eyes to the blind.

We must not hesitate to rebuke sin (Mat 22:17). This needs deep humility, tact, the removal of the beam from one's own eye, the love of Christ for souls; but how much might be done if we would stay the little rift within the lute!

We must not bear a grudge (Mat 22:18). All, this is hard! To feel hurt, to take offence, to be cold and stiff, to stand at a distance, how many of us fail here! But we must act and speak to others in the power of God's Love, as we would do if there were no grudge within.

The lawyer asked Christ: "Who is my neighbour?" suggesting that some one should neighbour him. Our Lord reversed his inquiry, saying in effect: "Whom will you neighbour?" If you go through life seeking people to neighbour you, life will be full of disappointment; but blessed is he who seeks to neighbour others; he shall not lack those who, in the hour of trial, will neighbour him.

PRAYER

O Lord, soften our hard and steely hearts, warm our icy and frozen hearts, that we may wish well to one another, and may be the true disciples of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

August 30

VICTORY OVER DEATH

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."-- Isa 25:8.

"O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"-- 1Co 15:55.

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."-- Rev 7:17.

IN THIS marvellous chapter, Isaiah sings a Song of Hope, as he sees the return of the Hebrew people from captivity, and the overthrow of their foes. The Apostle Paul takes up this thought in 1 Cor. 15. He shows that death is the penalty of sin, and it is by the demands of the law that sin is stirred to activity. But Christ has satisfied and met the claims of the law, and gives power by which we are enabled to obey it; therefore the strength of sin is broken, and the sting of death is gone.

The Christian need not dread to die. For him there is no uncertainty about the future. There is no fear of what may come after death, for the condemnation of the law has been met and borne. We may apostrophise death in these exultant words. The viper has been deprived of its fangs! the prison-house cannot hold its inmates! Bunyan describes Satan as exhorting Captain Sepulchre to be sure to hold Christ, but the injunction was useless. No bars or bolts, no seal or sentry would suffice.

Notice that we are to "Put on" incorruption and immortality (1Co 15:53-54). It is as though the new body will be put on over the old, and as this takes place, all the elements of the old body will be swallowed up and absorbed. when the Holy Spirit completes his work in our souls, there will be no trace of the old rags left in the shining robes in which we shall be arrayed as we go forth to meet the welcome of our Lord. Death to those who believe in Christ is now only a Home-going; the falling asleep to open the eyes in the City of God; the loosening of the anchor, to float down stream in the full tide. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

PRAYER

O God, whensoever Thy ways in nature or in the soul are hard to be understood, then may our quiet confidence, our patient trust, our loving faith in Thee be great, and as children knowing that they are loved, cared for, guarded, kept, may we with a quiet mind at all times put our trust in the unseen God. So may we face life without fear, and death without fainting. AMEN.

August 31

THE GROWTH OF THE SOUL

"My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me."-- Psa 63:8.

THERE ARE three notes in this Psalm which betoken the stages of the soul's growth: "My soul thirsteth for Thee"; "my soul shall be satisfied"; "my soul followeth hard after Thee." We may be passing through a wilderness of spiritual drought, the dark night of the soul, the seasons of dryness and depression which are apt to befall. In some cases, as when Elijah asked to die, or when John sent his despairing question to Christ from his prison, it is the result of physical or mental overstrain. But at such times, let us never hesitate still to speak of God as "my God." Nothing can sever you from His everlasting Love. You may not have the glad consciousness of it, but you must never surrender your belief in it. Go on blessing Him, as long as you live, and lift up your hands in prayer.

But we can never be satisfied with what we have attained. God is ever moving forward! Let us follow hard after Him.

PRAYER

Living or dying, Lord, I would be Thine. Draw me day by day nearer to Thyself, until I be wholly filled with Thy love, and fitted to behold Thee face to face. AMEN.