

Our Daily Walk by F B Meyer - Dec

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December 1

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

"God said, Let there be Light; and there was Light."--- Gen1:3.

"Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: Walk as children of Light."-- Eph 5:8.

ST. PAUL makes use of this passage in Genesis, when He says, that "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He seems to go back in his experience to that remarkable vision on the road to Damascus, when the light shone, and he saw the face of the Lord Jesus. It was as though he had passed through the experience of chaos, while kicking against the goad of conviction, and at that moment, which he could never forget, God said: "Let there be light." Looking up, he saw the light of the glory of God reflected in that dear Face that looked down on him with ineffable love. It was life out of death; light replaced darkness, and peace chased away the last vestige of storm.

This is ever the result and climax of the work in our hearts wrought by the Holy Spirit. He leads us out of darkness; He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. His one aim is to glorify our Saviour, and to make Him the Alpha and Omega of our faith, as we walk in the light.

When I was in Tasmania, I was shown a great mountain range on which was a vast lake, fifty-two miles in circumference. The overflow yielded a perennial waterfall of a thousand feet, the force of which was translated into electricity which made light and power cheap for great factories and for domestic needs. It seemed to me, as I thought about it, that the great sheet of water resembled the Love of God, in its longing to help mankind; that the descending waterfall might be taken to illustrate the Incarnation of our Saviour, who was the Sent-One of the Eternal Trinity; and that the electric current, invisible but mighty, was typical of the Holy Spirit, who brings to our hearts the Light and Power of the Divine Nature. The lesson is obvious, that as the manufacturer or the scientist invents machinery to meet the conditions on which alone the electric current can do its work, so must we learn to adapt ourselves to receive and transmit the power and light of God, which comes to us through our union with Jesus.

PRAYER

May the Holy Spirit keep us ever walking in the light of Thy countenance. May He fill our hearts with the sense of Thy nearness and loving fellowship. Order our steps in Thy way, and then walk with us, for in Thee is no darkness at all. AMEN.

December 2

JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

"I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."-- Jn 8:12.

THE STAR Sirius is so far away from our little earth, that its light, travelling at the rate of 186,000 miles per second, has to travel for eight long years before it can reach our eyes; and yet it is so bright that, when its ray shines down the telescope, the eye of the astronomer is dazzled as though by the sun. But if the light of a single created world is thus in the physical sphere, what shall we say of Him of whom we are told "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all?" Yet we may live and work in that search-light, and have fellowship with Him!

Present-tense cleansing. Years ago in my congregation there was a sweep who was a friend of mine. On Sundays he sang in our choir, and his face shone with the love of God. But if I happened to call at his home close on his return from work, his face was begrimed as to be almost unrecognizable! Yet even then there was one part as clear and bright as on the Sunday! The pupils of his eyes set in pearly white! It seemed as though these were impervious to the soiling-touch of the smoke-dust. And why! Because Nature, which is the glove on the hand of God, has provided eyelids, eye-lashes, and above all, tear-water, so that whatever be our environment, the eye is kept washed and clean. Is not this an illustration of what the Apostle meant by the "Blood of Jesus Christ cleansing from all sin?" It is the same truth as our Lord taught, when, having washed the disciples' feet, He said that he who had bathed in the morning needed only to wash his feet.

The ultimate purpose of the soul, therefore, should be to walk in the Light as He is in the Light. God covers Himself with light as with a garment. It is an emblem of purity and love and joy. And our life is meant to be like that, even when we are compelled to spend the hours of the day in the company of those who know not God, and perhaps blaspheme His Name. That Light may shine in heart and face, and fall on those around. That fellowship and communion with Him may be unbroken! The song of the Lord may rise in our hearts without a jarring note! It seems incredible and impossible, especially when one is conscious of so much sin and failure! Nay, it is not impossible, if once we have learnt the secret of this present tense---"the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

PRAYER

Fill me with Thy light and joy, O Lord, that I may have wherewith to give to my home and friends, and to the dark world around me. Keep me from hiding my light under the bushel of my own anxieties. AMEN.

December 3

ILLUMINATED LIVES

"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord."-- Pr 20:27. "For Thou wilt light my candle."-- Ps 18:28.

THE TABERNACLE constructed by Moses, and Solomon's Temple were modelled on the divine pattern, and consisted of three parts, outer Court, with its altar and laver, facing the world of human life; the Holy of Holies, facing the unseen and divine; between them, the Holy place, with its candlestick, altar, and table. Transfer that picture to your own nature. The body is the outer court, and through it we touch the world around us; the spirit is our most holy place, and through it we enter into fellowship with God; the soul lies between the two, the seat of our personality, including conscience, will, intellect, and emotion.

Our text tells us that "the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." The candle is for illumination, but there are many unlit candles! Has the Divine Spirit kindled your spirit, and is the flame burning clear? The windows of your spirit command a view of the Delectable Mountains and the City of God, but have the blinds been drawn up all round, so that the sunshine may shed its radiance into the common places of daily living? In other words, Is your religious life in living touch with the Person of Jesus Christ?

In its ultimate essence, Christ is the All and In-All of our holy religion. Not creed, nor ceremonials, nor the life of active philanthropy, but His personal life and presence in the heart are the supreme goal of the New Testament. What the Father was to Him, He desires to be to us. Remember He said: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth (receiveth) Me, he also shall live because of Me," but this indwelling can only be experienced when we have learnt to find all our fresh springs of life, love, and inspiration from Him with whom our life is hid in God.

When we sit before the Lord in meditation, or kneel in our accustomed place, we shall know that the Lord, whom we seek, has suddenly come to His Temple, and the glory of the Lord will illuminate the house of our life, and shed its radiance on the world around. Our life will still retain its characteristic nature, but it will be infilled by the "second man, the Lord from Heaven."

PRAYER

O Holy Spirit, Love of God, infuse Thy grace, and descend plentifully into my heart; enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling, and scatter there Thy cheerful beams; dwell in the soul that Pangs to be Thy temple. AMEN.

December 4

THE SOLAR LOOK

"Light is sown for the righteous, And gladness for the upright in heart."-- Psa 97:11.

WRITING OF Emerson, Margaret Fuller says in her diary: "Emerson has been here this morning with a sunbeam in his face." It is recorded of Daniel Rowlands, the famous Welsh preacher--to hear whom on the Sunday morning people would travel through the entire Saturday night--that when he was preaching there was "a solar look" on his face. Like Moses, he wist not that his face shone. Is not this what our Lord meant when He bade His disciples anoint their heads and wash their faces that they might not appear to men to fast! We have no right to go through the world looking dour and dark, as though our religion had a depressing and saddening effect on its professors. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

Of course, there are the darker aspects of human life, and hours when we must endure chastening. Each heart has its own bitterness, every home its skeleton, every year its autumn. What family is without the empty chair, and its memory of a voice that is still? But these moods should be reserved for God alone. In the quiet hours of thought and prayer, we may talk to Him who seeth in secret, of our sins and sorrows, the cares that oppress and the forebodings that molest. But when once we have rolled our burden on God, we must leave it there, and go forth, like Hannah, "whose countenance was no more sad" (1Sa 1:18).

But Light must be sown! No farmer calculates on a harvest for which he has not prepared the soil. Those who refuse the terms of peace, offered us in Jesus Christ, purchased by His Blood, and sealed by His Resurrection, cannot know the uprising of that fountain of joy and gladness which casts a radiance on the face, and a beauty on every act. It is only when we receive the At-one-ment, that we can rejoice in God. It is only when we are justified by faith, that we can have the peace which passeth understanding. It is only when we walk in the light, as He is in the light, that we have fellowship one with another, and His Light will begin to glimmer on our faces and transfigure our lives. "The redeemed of the Lord shall come with singing unto Zion. They shall obtain gladness and joy; sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

PRAYER

Thou hast given me gladness, Lord; help me to make others glad, and pass on to them the comfort wherewith Thou hast comforted me. At whatever cost, may I have fellowship with Thee in Thy redemptive purpose and ministry. AMEN.

December 5

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of deep darkness, upon them hath the light shined."-- Isa 9:2 (R.V. marg.).

AS EVERY one is affected by the first man, Adam, so every one has a direct claim upon Jesus Christ, the second Man, whose Death and Resurrection and Ascension affect us all. He is the Light who has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Because Christ lay upon Mary's breast, and was cradled in her arms, we have been delivered from darkness, and it is possible for us to climb, by the staircase of His Cross, over angels, principalities, and powers, to be seated with Him on His Throne of Glory.

"Unto us a Child is born!" He is Wonderful, because in Him the most marvellous extremes meet. He is the Babe just born, but He is the Ancient of Days who fills space. He grows in knowledge, but in Him are stored the riches of eternal wisdom. He hangs in mortal agony upon the Cross, but He gives life to uncounted myriads. He is laid in a borrowed tomb, but He lives for evermore, and death hath no power over Him!

He is Counselor. Tell Him thy heart's problems. Ask His counsel, and He will not mislead thee. He is the Prince of Peace, and "of the increase of His government" over new regions of the inner life, over new departments of the soul, over new openings, out of your existence, the increase deepening, heightening, widening, of the increase of His government as the years pass, there shall be no end, because the soul of man is infinite, and it will take eternity to bring out all the meaning of the Empire of Christ over our nature.

What is your reply to the claim of Christ? I urge you to-day to humbly put the government of everything that concerns your life upon the shoulders of Christ, and then you will find the joy and peace will increase. Such joy as thou hast never known! Such peace as has never before uttered its benison upon thy heart (Isa 9:3).

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O God, for the Son of Thy Love; for all that He has done for us, and will do; for all that He has been to us, and will be. We know that He holds us in His strong hand, that He loves us with a love that cannot let us go, that we are one with Him in a union which nothing can break. AMEN.

December 6

MAN'S WAY! GOD'S DIRECTION

"A man's heart devises his way: but the Lord directs his steps."-- Pr 16:9.

THE WAYS of a man, we justify them to ourselves, and think that they are necessarily right, but we are liable to be self-deceived. We must employ our sanctified common-sense, or, to adopt the phrase of our text, our heart must seriously and thoughtfully devise our way. First pray for direction; then weigh the pros and cons; then view the matter from the standpoint of trusted friends; see that your eye is single to do only the will of God; be sure that no selfish or evil consideration is allowed to bias or divert you: then make your decision, asking God to block you in whatever would be hurtful, foolish, or perilous. You will not make a mistake if you sincerely and prayerfully adopt these rules. If your eye is single (i.e., straight), your whole body will be full of fight.

There is every reason why we should employ the faculties of judgment and choice. When Samuel sent the young Saul away, he said, "Thou shalt do as occasion shall serve thee"; we are also told of Peter, that when the angel left him, he considered the matter, and came to Mary's house.

But God's purpose is behind all human decisions. There must be room for man to devise his steps, else we should become automatons. But all our volitions and choices must be ultimately subjected to the Rule and Will of the Most High. Let us commit our works and ways to God. We must roll our burden and ourselves on our faithful Creator. Of what use is it to worry over past mistakes? We cannot undo them, but we can ask God to bring good out of evil. He will put right the mistakes, and compensate for the failures. Let the Father's hand direct your steps. If with all your devising and planning, you cannot settle the matter, throw the whole responsibility back on Him and ask Him to undertake it.

Let us seek so to live that our ways may please the Lord (Pr 16:7). "We beseech you," said St. Paul, "that as ye received of us how ye ought to walk and please God, even so ye do walk." We need to wait on God that He may show us the right way, and there is a sure sign--Via Crucis, via lucis. Jesus said, "I am the Way: Follow Me!"

PRAYER

Lead us, O God, bypaths we have not known. Make the darkness light before us, the crooked places straight, and the rough places plain. Let Thine Angel lead us forth into the liberty of the sons of God. AMEN.

December 7

THE QUEST FOR THE ETERNAL

"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."-- Psa 63:1.

THIS PSALM has a special fascination for those who can no longer gather with the assemblies of God's people. David was in flight from Absalom, wandering in the wilderness. The land around is waterless and weary, and his enemies are on his track. But all this seems secondary to his longing for God. Weary and thirsty though he is, his most agonizing desire is for God, the living God, as he had seen and known Him in the tent, which he had reared on Zion for His worship. The barren wilderness, seemed to reflect the craving of his soul for God.

In many hearts and lives his mood is reflected today. Our soul thirsts and pines for the vision of the power and glory of God, for the communion of saints. Perhaps David lays greater emphasis on the Sanctuary than we do on our places of worship. We must remember that the Glory of the Shekinah shone between the Cherubim in that hallowed Shrine.

In Psa 63:5, 6, 7, the longing soul seems satisfied. As we long for God, we find Him. As we seek, we possess (Isa 41:17, 18). As we remember Him, we break into song. The fact is that our yearnings after God are the response of our hearts to the beat of His heart and to the knock of His hand. Prayer is the response of our nature to the circulation of His lifeblood within us. When we seek His face, it is in answer to His own summons. "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." As one has stated it: "Our desires and aspirations are responses to the outflowings of the Holy Spirit in silent or expressed communion."

The climax of the Psalm is reached in Psa 63:8. Notice the three-fold steps: my soul thirsts; my soul is satisfied; my soul followeth hard after Thee. Remember Him upon thy bed! Meditate on Him through the night-watches! Hide thyself under the shadow of His wings! Keep step with His purposes! Follow close behind Him! Whosoever follows hard on God's track, trusting in Him, rejoicing in His companionship, reaching out toward Him, will feel his own outstretched hand enclosed in a strong and tender grasp, steady against weariness and failure, and making His own footsteps a way for our feet.

PRAYER

Bestow upon me also, O Lord my God, understanding to know Thee, diligence to seek Thee, wisdom to find Thee, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace Thee. AMEN.

December 8

THE MIRROR OF TRUTH

"If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."-- Jas 1:23-24.

THERE IS an old fable of a palace, in which one room was remarkable above all others because it was lined with glass of a special quality.

Whenever a person entered whose life was inconsistent with truth, a mist blurred the surface of the mirrors so that he was unable to see himself clearly. It was when the Apostle Paul compared his own self-centred goodness with the love and purity of Christ, he lost all hope of justifying himself, and confessed that the things which he had counted gain were only loss.

Truth and Love are indissolubly connected. Love is of God, and so is Truth. If you have the one, the other must follow. If the soul, looking into the mirror of God's Word, perceiving that there is a blur, and sets itself to remove all that has caused it; and if it continues in this attitude, not being a hearer who forgets, but a doer that works, he shall be "blessed in his doing."

The blessedness of doing and becoming. It is only as we do, that we become. Even to behold Christ will not make us Christlike in character, unless we translate into action what we have discovered in Him. The impressions made on the hearer through the ear are very vagrant, like the breeze on the water. We look at ourselves in the mirror held up before us, and straightway go off and forget what manner of persons we were. It is only as we cease to be hearers who forget, and become doers that work, that we can make any progress in the Christian life and walk.

Listen attentively to the Word of Truth, written or spoken. Be quick to notice the smallest symptom of inconsistency between your life and the perfect beauty of Jesus, and set yourself immediately to correct it. Be merciful to the failings of everyone else, but be merciless to your own. Let no fault remain uncorrected, and no call to duty unanswered. For you to live, let it be Christ. Your blessedness and happiness will come in choosing the Christ-life, in doing, and continuing to do what He would have you do.

PRAYER

Help us to cast out all those things which are contrary to Thy peace, or that are not according to Thy will, so that ours may be the quiet life of trust, and faith, and obedience, longing for Thy truth, and walking in the light thereof. AMEN.

December 9

CHRIST'S REVELATION OF GOD

"Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us, Jesus saith .. he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."-- Jn 14:8-9.

PHILIP'S INQUIRY bore witness to the growth of a human soul. Only three short years before Christ had found him. At that time he was probably much as the young men of his standing and age, not specially remarkable, save for an interest in the earnestness about the advent of the Messiah. His views, however, were limited and narrow; he looked for Christ's advent as the time for the re-establishment of the Kingdom of David, and deliverance from the hated Roman yoke. But three years of fellowship with the Master had made a wonderful difference. He is not now content with beholding the Messiah--he is eager to know the Father: "Show us the Father, and it suffices us."

But surely this request was based on a mistake. He wanted to see the Father. But how can you make Wisdom, or Love, or Purity visible, save in a human life? Philip was so absorbed in his quest for the transcendent, that he missed the revelation of the Father which for three years had been passing before his eyes. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?"

Our Lord revealed the Father in His works (Jn 14:10, 11). The story of His miracles are leaves from God's diary. The right way to read them is not to say: This is what Christ did; but, Thus God is ever doing--always healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, restoring the leper, and raising the dead.

He reveals the Father in answering our prayers (Jn 14:13). He is ever anxious to answer our petitions, that He may reveal the nature and glory of God our Father.

Christ reveals the Father by communicating the Holy Spirit, who comes to abide in us. No miracle could tell us so much of God as the Spirit does when He communicates the Divine nature. When our Lord says that He will manifest Himself to the soul that obeys Him, and that the Father will come in to make His abiding-place with us, He not only shows, but He gives to us the Father (Jn 14:21, 22, 23). The life and ministry of our Lord during His earthly life, and throughout the ages, unfolds to us the Father, in the sweetness, tenderness and strength of that glorious Being, whose Love pervades the universe.

PRAYER

We bless Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou hast revealed to us the Father, and hast brought us nigh unto God. Make us pure in heart, not only in our walk, but in our inward temper, that we may never lose sight of God by reason of the obscurity of our own nature. AMEN.

December 10

THE BROAD AND THE NARROW WAY

"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life."-- Mat 7:13, 14.

AT THE beginning of life, each soul stands before these two paths. In each of us the love of life is strong, and in each is the desire to get as much as possible out of the years which may be given. Amiel expresses this strong passion for life when he says: "A passionate wish to live, to feel, to express, stirred the depth of my heart. I was overpowered by a host of aspirations. In such a mood one would fain devour the whole world, experience everything, see everything, learn everything, tame everything, and conquer everything."

In our early years each of us wakes up to the throb of strong natural impulses, and we are tempted to argue, if God has given me these strong desires, why should they not be gratified? Why should I not throw the reins on the necks of these fiery steeds, and let them bear me whither they may? To do this, is to go through the wide gate, and to take the broad road. It is the way of society, of the majority--the "many" go in there, It is pre-eminently the way of the world, and no one who goes by this way, allowing his course to be dictated by strong natural impulses, need fear that he will be counted strange or eccentric!

It must be admitted that, in its first stages, the broad way is generally easy and rather delightful. The boat launched on the flowing stream sweeps merrily and pleasantly along the gradient of the road slopes so as to make walking easy, the sun shines, and the path is filled with bright flowers. But to a life given up to self-indulgence, there is only one end, destruction.

There is a more excellent way, but it is too narrow to admit the trailing garments of passionate desire, too narrow for pride, self-indulgence, greed, and avarice, it is the Way of the Cross, but it leads to Life! We all want to see life, and the remarkable thing is that those who expect to get most out of it by self-indulgence miss everything; whilst those who seem to curtail their lives by following Christ, win everything. Few find and enter this path, is the lament of our Lord. Let us put our hand in His, that He may lead us into the path of life, "that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

PRAYER

Dear Lord, as Enoch walked with Thee of old, so would we walk each day, choosing the narrow path; order our steps in Thy way, and graciously walk with us. AMEN.

December 11

TAKING SIDES

"Who is on the Lord's side!"-- Exo 32:26.

"How long halt ye between two opinions! If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, follow him. And the people answered him not a word."-- 1Ki 18:21.

MOSES AND Elijah uttered practically the same call, which is always being spoken to each fresh generation. As soon as we can think for ourselves, we are accosted by the challenge of the Divine Voice- Art thou for Me or against Me? Which side dost thou take? From the lips of our blessed Lord comes the additional challenge, which compels us to face the alternative as one that may not be trifled with or put aside: "He that is not with Me is against Me."

How long halt ye between two opinions? We must take one side or the other. When the division-bell rings in the House of Commons, the Ayes must go to the right and the Noes to the left. A man must choose which he will take! If Jehovah, If Baal, We cannot be neutral without being stultified.

Who, then, is prepared to take sides, and to come out to Christ, without the camp, bearing His reproach? (Heb 13:13). To be on the Lord's side is to acknowledge Him as our King as well as Saviour. It is to render to Him our reverence, obedience, love and devotion. It is to abandon all refuges and resorts to our own works and ways, and to strive for heart, mind, and life to be assimilated to His will and character. This is what our Saviour expects and asks of each of us! We are to belong wholly to God, to give Him all that we are capable of giving, to choose His cause, and to find in Him the beginning and ending, the first and last.

Jesus Christ possesses an unimpeachable and absolute right over us--the right of Creator, "it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves"; the right of Benefactor, not only in the realm of temporal but of spiritual existence; the right of Redeemer, and this is the greatest claim of all.

Our decision demands declaration. Christ will not have His followers live in secret. In the days in which we live, when there are so many temptations to compromise between the disciples of Jesus and the votaries of the world, there is overwhelming reason why we should take His side. And in that great day, He will take our side and acknowledge us before His Father and the Holy Angels!

PRAYER

O Lord, we acknowledge Thy dominion over us; our life, our death, our soul and body, all belong to Thee. Grant that we may willingly consecrate them all to Thee, and use them in Thy service. AMEN.

December 12

IN THE BEGINNING GOD

"In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth."-- Gen 1:1.

"In the beginning was the Word... all things were made by Him."-- Jn 1:1, 2, 3.

GENESIS MEANS Beginning. Here we discover the source of many streams, some crystal, some turbid, which are still flowing through the world. It tells us of the beginning of the heavens and the earth; of the human race; of sin and redemption; of marriage and the institution of the home; of the sciences and arts that have built up the fabric of our civilisation; of the existence of the Hebrew race, and of the division of the human family into the various nationalities of the world. All of these cannot be attributed to the originating of God, for with regard to the sin and pain and sorrow of the world, it must be conceded that "an enemy hath done this."

In Hebrew the word for God is plural, the verb conjoined to it is singular, indicating that God is One, but the noun is plural, indicating the mystery of the Holy Trinity. In His earthly life, our Lord asked the Father to glorify Him with the glory that they had together before the world was.

Let us make God in Christ our beginning, the beginning of the book of our life, of our heaven, with its prayer, meditation, and devotion; of our earth, with its practical daily business; of our marriage and home; of our interests and pleasures. Here is the chief corner-stone in which alone the whole building of life can be fitly framed together. Here is the chord of harmony, with which the subsequent oratorio must be consistent. Here is the perfect circle of happiness, in which all that is fairest, sweetest, and strongest must be found.

God is a Faithful Creator. What He begins He finishes. He fainteth not, neither is weary. You may exhaust the dearest human love, but you can never wear out God. If you have never entered on the Divine life, begin with putting God in His right place, as Alpha, the First. If we cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He will answer, "Behold I make all things new." Listen to the Divine assurance: "I am Alpha and Omega... the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely."

PRAYER

O God, my Father supremely Good. Beauty of all things beautiful. To Thee will I intrust whatsoever I have received from Thee, so shall I lose nothing. Thou made me for Thyself, and my heart is restless until it repose in Thee. AMEN.

December 13

GOD'S THOUGHT OF ME

"Thou art a God that seeth me."-- Gen 16:13 (R.V. marg.).

"How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God."-- Psa 139:17.

HAGAR WAS an Egyptian slave-girl, who had been brought up amid the idolatries of Egypt, and had no sort of idea that the gods had any personal interest in so insignificant a human atom as she was. Probably in Abraham's encampment she had heard of Jehovah, but would doubtless think of Him as being equally outside the limits of her little life. What care should the God of her master and mistress have for her, as she fled from the harsh treatment of Sarah, and was in danger of perishing in the lonely desert! Then, suddenly, in her despair, she heard the voice of the Angel-Jehovah speaking to her, and she called Him "The Living One who seeth me".

To her the thought was an inspiration and comfort, enabling her to return and submit herself to Sarah. But to many these words have been a note of fear and judgment. They have thought of God as spying upon their evil ways, and have shrunk from the thought of His eye seeing them. That thought, however, is not the significance of these inspiring words, but that we can never wander into the far country, or take one weary step in loneliness without the tender notice of God our Father, who notices even the sparrow that falls to the ground.

The Psalmist had the same thought when he wrote the 139th Psalm. When he says that God knows his downsitting and uprising, that his thoughts and ways are all open to His Almighty Friend, it is in a tone of rapturous gladness. It is the prerogative of friendship to love the presence and thought of a friend, and the crowning characteristic of Christianity is that we are admitted into personal friendship with our Lord. He knows our thoughts afar off. With an instant sympathy He enters into our anxieties and discouragements. Wherever we go He precedes and brings up the rear; we are beset by His care behind and before. Let every reader open the door to this great Friend, remembering that His one test is obedience: "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Thus you will find His presence the delight of your life (Rev 3:20).

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O God, that Thou hast been about our path, considering all our ways, and encompassing us with blessing. Thine eye has been upon us to deliver our soul from death, and to be our help and shield. For all Thy gracious care we thank Thee. AMEN.

December 14

COMMUNION AND TRANSFORMATION

"Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him."-- Ex 34:29.

"We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image."-- 2Co 3:18.

MOSES, AS he returned from the mountain of vision, where he had beheld as much of God's glory as seems possible to man, caught some gleam of the Light which he beheld. There was a strange radiance on his face, unknown to himself, but visible to all. He remained long enough in the presence of God to become saturated with the light and glory of the Lord. What wonder that he sparkled with it and was compelled to cover his face with a veil!

St. Paul refers to this incident, and shows that the light which shone upon the face of Moses is the symbol of the luster of character which shines from those who behold or reflect the glory of the Lord. As we behold the glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ, we are changed into His likeness.

There are two laws for Christian living: keep looking at Jesus until you become like Him, and beholding are changed into the same image; then reflect Him to others, and as you endeavour to reflect Him, the work of transformation goes on. "Tell me the company a man keeps, and I will tell you his character"; so runs the old proverb. We might go further and say, tell us what are the subjects of his habitual consideration--art, literature, theology, law, commerce, philanthropy--and we shall be able to anticipate the expression that will come upon his face.

If we desire to be pure and good, Christ-like and God like, we must live in fellowship with Christ; beholding and reflecting His glory, even the lowliest and most sinful may become changed into His image. How different to Moses is the unveiled glory of Christ. Let us beware of anything that might bring a veil between Him and us, and nothing will so soon do this as sin, and inconsistency. Moses wist not that his face shone, and Samson wist not that the Lord had departed from him (Jdg 16:20). There is a tragic as well as a blessed unconsciousness. Let us see to it that we watch and pray, that we may not be taken unawares, and deprived of our purity and strength whilst wrapt in unconsciousness.

PRAYER

We long to be holy as Thou art holy; to love as Christ also loved us; to be patient and uncomplaining as He was, and so to resemble Him that men may love Him for what they see of His likeness in us. AMEN.

December 15

CONFESSING OUR SINS

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."-- 1Jn 1:8,9.

TO SIN is to miss the mark! Such is the meaning of the original word.

When the prodigal returned, his first words were; "Father, I have missed the mark." Are we not always missing the mark, coming short? Sin is negative as well as positive. The Confession of the Church of England and the Shorter Catechism both agree in this: "We have done the things that we ought not; we have left undone the things that we ought to have done." Sin consists, not only in the positive transgression of the law of God, but in the want of conformity to His Will. It is needful to use this two-pronged fork. If a number of men are on their way to the recruiting-station and the standard is to be exactly six foot. They are all under that height, but the tallest of them glories in the fact that he is a clear two inches above the rest of his fellows. It may be so, but he will be as certainly rejected as the shortest, because even he comes below the standard. You may be better than scores of people in your circle, but you will need Christ's forgiveness and salvation equally with the worst!

In dealing with sin, therefore, there must be confession. "Do not hide, nor cloak them before the face of your Heavenly Father, but confess them with a patient, meek, and contrite heart." Do not wait for the hour of evening prayer, nor even for the opportunity of being alone, but in the busy street, in the midst of daily toil, lift up your heart to Christ if you have done wrong, and say: "I have gone astray: seek Thy servant."

It is not enough to confess to Christ, if you have sinned against another, you must first go and be reconciled to him, and then come and offer your gift at the altar. Confess, and make good! It is not enough to be extraordinarily pleasant, or suggest a solarium (a room in a hospital used especially for therapeutic exposure to light); you must definitely ask forgiveness!

When God forgives He forgets (Isa 43:25). As David puts it, and he had reason to know, "He restores my soul." Remember that He delights in mercy. He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse. Through the Sacrifice of Calvary God can be absolutely just, and at the same time the Justifier of them who believe in Jesus.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for Thy forgiving, pitying love. I gratefully realise that my sin cannot alter Thy love, though it may dim my enjoyment of it. But I pray Thee to set me free from the love and power of sin, that it may not intercept the light of Thy countenance. AMEN.

December 16

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

"Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you."-- Jn 15:16.

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, And, lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age."-- Mat 28:18, 19, 20 (R.V.).

IT IS a wonderful thing to hear these words from the lips of our Lord, when we remember what the Devil said to Him at the beginning of His ministry (Lk 4:6). Evidently the sceptre had been wrested from the hand of the prince of this world. Our Lord is supreme in heaven, and equally so on earth. He has authority over winds and waves; over the natural world with its laws and elements; over gold mines and harvest fields; over the minds and souls of all men who have been purchased by His precious blood. It would greatly facilitate our obedience to His Command if we realized that the whole world is His by creation and redemption, and that wherever we go throughout its vast territory we are within His domains.

Notice the care with which Christ insists that those who were disciples should be taught to observe all His commands (Mat 28:20). He chose the Apostles that they might receive His commands, not for their own obedience alone, but that they might impress them upon others. Obedience is the law of spiritual growth and blessedness. Let us resolve, first to observe whatsoever the Master has appointed; the second, to teach others to do the same. Whenever the task seems too great for our strength, let us remember the precious promise that He is with us always, as the margin puts it--"all the days," Never a day can come with its demands, its call for dutiful obedience, but He will be at hand to bear our burden, to help us by the right hand of His strength, to inspire us by the light of His face.

Christian life, after all, comes to this--how much will you obey Christ? If you refuse, you shut yourself out of His best, for He can do nothing for you or with you. But if you surrender yourself to obey, there is no limit to the usefulness and blessedness that must ensue (Ge 18:18,19). To live like this, we must abide in Him, and allow His words, by meditation and prayer, to abide in us. Then obedience ceases to be an effort, but it is the fruit of an exuberant life.

PRAYER

Help us to abide in our calling with Thee, to detect Thy presence in every place. May we realise that every place may be a temple, every duty a service, and that we are part of Thy great host, who do Thy bidding, hearkening to the voice of Thy word. AMEN.

December 17

QUIET RESTING PLACES

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."-- Isa 32:18.

ISAIAH'S CONCEPTION of these quiet spots in our lives is set forth in Isa 32:2 of this chapter, as also by the Psalmist in the Psa 23:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. It is scorching noon. The glare from the limestone rocks is almost unbearable. The sunbeams strike like sword-blades. Every living creature has fled for shelter from the pitiless heat, with the exception of the little green lizards that dart to and fro in play, or searching for food. The shepherd has led his panting flock down into the valley, where great rocks cast dark shadows. Listen to the musical ripple of the brown-hued brook, as it glides lazily between the mossy banks, and breaks against the little pebbles that line its bed! These are the green pastures and the water of rest!

Have they not their counterpart in our lives! The happy days of childhood, when as yet we hardly knew temptation, and had not felt the unceasing strain of life's tasks; perhaps it is the Sunday rest, with its blessed pause from the fever of activity, the calm and restful atmosphere of the House of God, the quiet stillness of worship and meditation; perhaps a period of convalescence after long illness, when we come slowly back to health and strength; or, it may be the annual holiday, when we spend long happy days by the sea, or in the country, amid the Alps or on the Broads. For physical, mental, and spiritual well-being we need days and weeks when the machinery of life has time to cool, and the water to drop its silt.

But if we would have an entrance to this peaceful habitation, we must fulfil the conditions. We must make Jesus our King, and put the scepter of our life absolutely into His hands. We must hide under the shadow of the crucified Man of Nazareth, Who offers Himself as a hiding-place from the scorching sirocco, and a coven from the tropical tempest (Isa 32:1, Isa 32:2). Isaiah says this quietness and confidence rests on Righteousness and Justice. They are not the gift of caprice or arbitrary choice. "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," because in the Person of His Son all possible claims have been met (Ro 5:1-note).

PRAYER

O God, may there be a pause in the busy rush of daily life, not only in outward seeming, but in our inward temper. May our anxieties and cares be borne by Thyself on Whom we cast them, that there may be nothing to break the repose and serenity of our hearts. Ordain peace for us, because Thou hast also wrought all our works in us. AMEN

December 18

A NEW NAME!

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel."-- Gen 32:28.

"He that overcometh, I will write upon him Mine own New Name."-- Rev 3:12.

THROUGH THE Bible, name stands for nature. In those wise old days, names were not given because of their euphonious sound, but as revealing some characteristic trait. Shepherds are said to name their sheep by their defects; in some cases Old Testament names seem to have been given on the same principle. It was so with Jacob. When the Angel said: "What is thy name?" he answered, "Jacob," supplanter: Never shrink, in your dealings with God, to call yourself by your own specific title, whether it be the least of all saints, the chief of sinners, or the dissembler and cheat!

The first condition of losing our old nature is to confess to its possession; the next is to yield to God. Be conquered by God, yield to Him, submit to His Will, especially in that one point where His Spirit presses thee hard. Life is full of the approaches of the wrestling Angel, only we rebut instead of allowing ourselves to be vanquished by Him. Each time we allow God to have His way in some new point of our character, we acquire the new name. In other words, a new phase of character is developed, a new touch of the Divine love passes into our being, and we are transformed more perfectly into His likeness, whose Name comprehends all names. Jacob becomes Israel; Simon becomes Peter the Rock-man; Saul becomes Paul the Apostle.

When God calls us by a new name, He communicates to us a new Name for Himself. In other words, He gives us a deeper revelation of Himself. He reveals attributes which before had been concealed. The Apostle in the Apocalypse tells us that every time we overcome, God gives to us a white stone, in which His new name is written, in evident reference to the pure diamond of the Urim and Thummim, by which He spoke to Israel, and on which Jehovah was engraved (Ex 28:29, 30; Rev 2:17). Each victor over sin has his own stone of Urim, knows God's will at first hand, and has revelations of God's character, which only he knows to whom they are made (Mat 11:25).

PRAYER

Give unto us, O God, the white stone with the new Name written on it, that he only knows who receives it. Manifest Thyself to us as Thou dost not to the world. AMEN.

December 19

THE ELDER BROTHER

"He was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he said unto him, Son thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."-- Lk 15:28, 29, 30, 31.

OF THE two, I think the prodigal attracts more interest and affection than his elder brother. Esau seems a more attractive character than Jacob; the publican than the Pharisee, who rejoices that he is not as others! Probably it is because we are conscious of a closer affinity to the life of sense and passion, than to that of outward decorum and respectability.

The elder son had a goodly heritage. He had his father's companionship in all the changing seasons of the year, and all the following years of his life; he had the comfortable assurance that he had never at any time transgressed the commands and directions which his father gave, so that he was saved from the inward canker of bitter remorse; he was at liberty to help himself, not only to a share of all that his father possessed, but to it all--all that I have is thine.

This is our heritage also, as the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. We may live always in the presence and with the companionship of God, talking over with Him all that concerns our lives and His work; we, too, are at liberty to draw on His vast resources, for whatever we require, since all that He has is ours in Christ, to be claimed by constant faith.

How loveless and selfish was the spirit of the elder brother! He was jealous of the welcome accorded to the prodigal, and complained that so much should be lavished on one whose conduct had been so great a contrast to his own. His selfish spirit alienated him from his father, who had to go out and intreat him to come in, for selfishness always isolates. The spirit which magnifies itself for its own virtues is not the spirit of true religion, however correct the exterior life may be.

Let us each ask ourselves: Can God our Father address us in such words as these? Can we be regarded with His grace and heavenly benediction, the sons of God without rebuke? If not, we are really as much prodigals as our brethren, for we are throwing away opportunities which angels covet. Let us arise and come back to our Father. Let us enter into His joy; let His joy enter our hearts, that we may make merry and be glad.

PRAYER

Father, I have sinned.., bring me back again into the old blessed companionship and fellowship, that I may live with Thee on earth, until Thou callest me to live with Thee in Heaven. AMEN.

December 20

FIDELITY TO OUR PLEDGES

"For Thou, O God, hast heard my vows: Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear Thy Name." "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of His people."-- Psa 61:5; Psa 116:18.

THE PSALMIST had been brought very low by the sorrows of death, but God had mercifully intervened to deliver him in answer to his cry, and he now walked before Him in the land of the living. It seemed as though the cup of salvation had been put into his hand, overflowing with blessing. He tells us that God had loosed his bonds, as though he had been some wild creature of the woods, who had been entrapped, but was now set free and able to realise its former glad buoyancy of life.

Under such circumstances, it is natural to ask, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His mercies toward me?" The first and most reasonable thing is to pay the vows which we promised when we were in trouble. Nothing so deadens the heart as to vow and not to pay.

We ought to fulfil our vows for many reasons. First, because it is dishonouring to God to play fast and loose with Him; second, it deteriorates character to resolve and not to do, for such failures render the next resolutions still more brittle; third, it is a great hindrance to those who may have heard us make our vows, when we go back on them; fourth, the vow which is not kept shows that we have failed, both in vowing and performing, to rely on the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. When a deed, from the inception of the first thought to its ultimate performance, is wrought in God, there can be no fear that it will not become permanent (Jn 3:21).

If you have vowed to be God's servant, see that you are as you have vowed; if you have promised service, money, gifts, amendment, or lifelong devotion, be sure that your promise is kept. What a glorious affirmation is in Psa 116:16 : "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant." The duplication of the sentence is very significant, especially when joined to Psa 118:27. Do we not need to be tied by the cords of faith and hope and love of the mercies of God, and by the keeping grace of the Holy Spirit. Our own resolutions and pledges are so frail and uncertain, but God's grace is sufficient to make us what we long to be in our best moments (Rom 12:1, 2).

PRAYER

Defend us, O Lord, from the treachery of our unfaithful hearts. We are exceeding frail and indisposed to every virtuous and gallant undertaking, Grant that we may bring our vessel safe to shore, unto our desired haven. AMEN.

December 21

THE PROMISE OF RESURRECTION

"The third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." -- Hos 6:2.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." -- 1Co 15:22.

DEATH IS the precursor of life, and we cannot truly reach Easter unless we first descend into the grave. Blessed are they who descend thither in hope; their soul shall not be left in the land of shadow, nor will God permit His holy ones to see corruption. God will revive them, and they shall live. On the third day our Lord Jesus rose from the dead, and this is the foundation-hope for the world.

"Come, let us return unto the Lord." There is always resurrection, hope, and joy for those who repent of their sins. True repentance is a humble return to God; and as we draw nigh to Him, He meets us with healing and salvation. The result of His coming is like the dawn, or as the spring-rains. Light and joy, fertility and beauty are the immediate response of the soul to His advent.

Do you find yourself in the dark grave of circumstances? Be of good cheer. One of God's angels is on his way to roll away the stone. Though our Lord was crucified, yet on the third day God raised Him up, and He lives and reigns at the right hand of God; and we also may live with Him, by the same power, not in the other world only, but in this. God will raise you up, and you shall live in His sight. The best is yet to be!

"Let us follow on to know the Lord." We may always count on Him. If there is any variation in our relations with Him, it is on our side, not on His. Just as surely as we return to Him, we shall find Him coming to meet and greet and receive us with a glad welcome. When the prodigal was a great way off, his father saw him, and ran to meet him! Is there any doubt about our reception? No, there cannot be! God our Father is always waiting for us. In Him there is no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. As certainly as we count on the day-spring may we count on God. Let your soul move towards Him out of the grave of doubt and despair, and on the third day--the Day of Resurrection, He will be revealed.

PRAYER

May our self-life be crucified with Christ, that His life may be manifest in us; and out of the grave may there spring a more complete resemblance to our Risen Saviour, so that all may see in us daily evidence of the Resurrection of our Lord. AMEN.

December 22

PRAISING THE LORD

"Praise ye the Lord; for it is good to sing praises unto our God."-- Psa 147:1.

IT IS a comely and befitting thing for us to blend praise and prayer.

There is a difference between praise and thanksgiving. We thank God for what He has done for us; we praise Him for what He is in Himself. In praise we come nearest to the worship of Heaven, where the Angels and the Redeemed find the loftiest exercise of their faculties in ascribing praise, and honour, and glory to God. In my private devotions, I find nothing more helpful than to recite the Te Deum before asking for any gift at the hand of God. It seems to put God in His right place, and to bow the soul before Him in the attitude of adoration and praise. "It is good to sing praises, and praise is comely."

Let us praise His condescending love (Psa 147:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). He counts the number of the stars as a shepherd tells his sheep. The Psalmist likens the constellations to a flock of sheep, which their shepherd is driving through space. What a sublime conception of suns, planets, and asteroids! Yet this wonderful and infinite God can bend over our little lives, and take special notice of the outcasts, the broken-hearted, the sorely wounded, and the meek. None are too small and insignificant for His notice. Just as a mother is most careful and thoughtful for the smallest and most ailing child in her family, so God's tenderest, strongest, and most efficient help is displayed towards the neediest and most helpless of His children. He always seeks the lost sheep and the prodigal child.

Let us praise God's work in providence. Notice the present tenses in this Psalm. The Psalmist felt that God was always working in nature, and that everything was due to the direct action of His Providence. And Jesus confirmed this when He said that no sparrow fell to the ground without the Father's notice. The pure in heart, the child-like, and the meek have this prerogative of seeing God's hand in all things. God is; God is everywhere active and energetic; and therefore there is no point of space, and no moment of time, in which He does not operate. "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name" (Heb 13:15).

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, give us that due sense of all Thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we shew forth Thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to Thy service, and by walking before Thee in holiness and righteousness all our days: through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

December 23

GLADNESS AND THANKSGIVING

"It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us...we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."-- Isa 25:9.

THIS SONG of praise was composed by Isaiah to be sung when the proud city of Babylon, which for so many years had menaced the liberty of the Hebrew people, should be overthrown. The prophet is so certain that the oppression of evil will ultimately come to desolation, and that the world shall be relieved of the awful incubus of its tyranny, that he prepares the song which was presently to break out in joyful thanksgiving. As certainly as the torrid heat of the meridian sun is reduced by the interposition of the shadow of a cloud, so should the pride and boast of the terrible ones be brought low.

The full significance of this song of praise will be realized only in Heaven, when we sit down at the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb (Isa 25:6, 7, 8). All the Babylon's which have menaced the well-being of mankind will have been destroyed then. The veil of unbelief and uncertainty, which now lies so heavily over the world, will have been torn from top to bottom. Death will have been swallowed up in life; tears will have been wiped away, and our reproach will be over. What abounding joy will be our portion then. Let the anticipation of it excite our thanks.

Are you poor? Make God your stronghold. Are you needy and in distress? Make Him your hiding-place. Does the storm beat on you? Flee to Him for refuge. Are you scorched by the heat of temptation? Stand beneath His shadow. God your Father will not leave you alone. Your need is your best argument; your helplessness an all-sufficient plea. For you, too, there shall be song and feasting (Isa 25:4, 5, 6).

Praise is our highest exercise. In prayer we often approach God for more or less selfish reasons; in praise we adore Him for what He is in Himself. However tired and weary you may be, see to it that the morning hour of devotion begins with the key-note of thanksgiving and adoration. It is marvellous how this quickens the pulse of the soul, and reacts upon every moment that follows. "Awake, psaltery and harp," said the Psalmist; "I myself will awake right early."

PRAYER

O Lord, Thou art my God. I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name; for Thou hast done wonderful things for my soul. Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. AMEN.

December 24

CHRISTIAN COURTESY

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."-- 1Pe 3:8.

IT WOULD be a marvel to find in any community under heaven a complete embodiment of the injunctions contained in this and the following verses. Yet nothing less than this is the Christian ideal, and it would be well if, without waiting for others, each one would adopt these precepts as the binding rule and regulation of daily life. This would be our worthiest contribution to the convincing of the world, and to the coming of the Kingdom of our Lord. Does not the Apostle's use of the word "finally" teach us that all Christian doctrine is intended to lead up to and inaugurate that life of love, the bold outlines of which are sketched in these words?

The general principle. "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another." This oneness of mind does not demand the monotony of similarity, but unity in variety. We shall never be of one mind in the sense of all holding the same opinions; but we may be all of one mind when, beneath diversities of opinion, expression, and view, we are animated by a common devotion to Christ.

Note the specific applications.

Love as brethren. Love is not identical with like. Providence does not ask us whom we would like to be our brethren, that is settled for us, but we are bidden to love them, irrespective of our natural predilections and tastes. Love does not necessarily originate in the emotions, but in the will; it consists not in feeling, but in doing; not in sentiment, but in action; not in soft words, but in unselfish deeds.

Be pitiful Oh, for the compassion of our blessed Lord! How often it breaks out in the Gospel narrative to the weak and erring, to the hungry crowds, and to the afflicted who sought His help!

Be courteous. Be ready to take the least comfortable seat, or to let others sit while you stand. Let the manners of your Heavenly Father's Court be always evident in your daily life, so that the world may learn that Christianity produces not simply the heroism of a great occasion, but the minute courtesies of daily living.

PRAYER

Blessed Lord, I beseech Thee to pour down upon me such grace as may not only cleanse this life of mine, but beautify it a little, if it be Thy will Grant that I may love Thee with all my heart and soul and mind and strength, and my neighbour as myself. AMEN.

December 25

THE GLORY OF CHRIST

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."-- Jn 1:14.

THE GLORY of Christ is apparent, as we study the titles which are given to Him in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel.

The Word (Jn 1:1). As the words we speak reveal our character, so Jesus is the speech of the invisible God. He has uttered or declared God (Jn 14:9). The Psalmist said that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork to the ends of the earth, but in the fairest panorama of the starry heavens, or sunset clouds, there was never such a presentation of God in nature as we have in Jesus.

The Creator (Jn 1:2, 3). In the strongest language he could command, the apostle inscribes the Name of Jesus on all things that are in heaven above and in the earth beneath. The iron of which the nails were made that transfixed Him to the Cross; the wood of which it was composed, the thorns which composed His crown, all were due to His creative fiat.

Life and Light (Jn 1:4). It pleased the Father that life should reside in His human nature, as its cistern and reservoir, so that from Him we should derive eternal life, communicated through faith. In His life is light.

The Messiah (Jn 1:10, 11). "He came unto His own."

The Shekinah (Jn 1:14). Now and again, during our Lord's earthly career, the curtain of His human nature seemed to part and to emit some gleams of the radiant splendour of His Being. It was so on the Transfiguration mount, and again in His Resurrection and Ascension. The glory was full of grace and truth.

The Only-Begotten Son (Jn 1:12, 13, 14). We may be sons thank God, but He was The Son. Whatever is implied in that phrase "Only-Begotten," He is separated from the noblest of the children of men by a measureless and impassable chasm. Yet how wonderful it is, that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Let us give glory and homage to Him.

PRAYER

Love infinite, love tender, love unsought;

Love changeless, love rejoicing, love victorious!

And this great love for us in boundless store;

God's everlasting love! What would we more.

December 26

A COMFORTING LETTER

"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end."-- Jer 29:11.

WE HAVE much to learn from the good advice given in this letter.

These exiles were unwilling to settle in the land to which they had been transported. They were always fretting and planning; talking of the past and contriving plans for returning to their own land and to the inheritance which they had forfeited. Therefore this letter was sent, not only to them, but to all in similar circumstances.

Are you in captivity? Your circumstances are the restraint and fetters that hold you. No prisoner in a cell could be more helpless than you are. You cannot do as you would, but you can be. Be the best you can where you are, and wait the Lord's leisure. It is by fidelity in discharging present obligations that you become fitted for better work.

Consider the needs of those around you (Jer 29:7). In this the story of Joseph is a remarkable example. When he was cast into prison, he set to work to minister to the prisoners there. What a light and comfort emanated from him, as he went to and fro among them, taking a personal interest in each--"Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?" (Gen 40:6, 7). In the peace of those to whom we minister, we shall find Our own peace.

Words of comfort and hope were spoken to the captives. Hard though their outward lot seemed, God was thinking thoughts of peace, not of evil, with respect to them. So with us; we may be having a bad time; it may appear as though everything were against us, hard, comfortless, uninviting. But in His holy heaven God is thinking about you, and His thoughts are those of peace, and not of evil. Therefore the horizon is flushed with hope. There is a good time coming, and you will forget this present, as waters that pass away. There is an allotted time to your present trouble. God will surely visit you, and perform His good word towards you.

In the meanwhile, we must live a life of constant prayer. "Ye shall call upon Me, and I will hearken unto you; ye shall seek Me, and I will be found of you" (Jer 29:12, 13, 14). We must live in a spirit of prayer and faith and converse with God. For all these things God will be enquired of, to do them.

PRAYER

For all Thy gracious care of us we reverently thank Thee, and if Thou hast permitted things to happen which have tried us sore and filled us with bitterness, help us to believe in Thine infinite love which chastens us, that through the discipline of our life we may be made partakers of Thy holiness. AMEN.

December 27

THE LORD REIGNETH!

"Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. Clouds and darkness are round about Him; Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His Throne."-- Psa 97:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

BEHIND ALL clouds is the clear pure ether of God's love. We are not dismayed by the storms that sweep the earth's surface, for beneath them are unfathomed depths of stillness. God sees His way through them, and is using them to fulfil His great purpose. Difficulties are nothing to Him. He weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. He is our Father, and we need not fear. The children who are snugly ensconced in the car which their father is driving are not afraid of the hail-storm that rattles on the window and the wild winds that sweep the earth. It is enough for them that their father is with them, and knows his way, and is making swiftly for home. And if we are following hard after God, then His right hand will uphold us, and we can leave all the rest with Him.

None of them that wait for Him shall be ashamed. Revolution and anarchy may devastate the land. Storms of deluge may sweep the world. The savings of a life-time may disappear, but we shall be kept in perfect peace. The Lord reigneth, and He will ever be mindful of His covenant. We shall not want for sustaining grace. If we cleave unto God, we shall be upheld by His right hand, and no man is able to pluck us from the Father's hand. God, not selfish ease, nor human confederacies, is our end and aim; and He will not, cannot fail those who have left all for His companionship. Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, and the labour of the olive shall fail, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, yet we will rejoice in the Lord; for the Lord God Shall supply all our need, and will make our feet, like hind's feet, to walk even on the edge of the precipice.

The world is full of tumult. The floods have lifted up their voice, but above the noise of many waters, the Lord on high is mighty; and He must reign till He hath put all enemies beneath His feet. Remember that when He was mocked in Pilate's hall, His enemies placed a reed in His hand. They were nearer the truth than they knew, for He who opens the sealed book of destiny, is the Lamb that was slain. He rules with the reed as the symbol of His government.

PRAYER

Our Father, let us hear Thee say to us, as we step forth into the untried day, that Thou art with us, holding our right hand. Keep us in the midst of the storm, and guide us by the untrodden path. AMEN.

December 28

JESUS AS KING

"Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a King, then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King."-- Jn 18:37.

OUR LORD'S Royalty is suggested by the opening paragraphs of St. Matthew's Gospel, which emphasizes His descent from David; the wise men asked for Him who is born King of the Jews, and Herod feared His rivalry. All through the Gospel narrative, stress is constantly laid on the fact that He was King of the Jews and King of Israel, and it ends with the regal claim that all power and authority in heaven and earth had been entrusted to Him.

Jesus never abated His claim to Kingship, but always made it clear that His ideal was very different from that which was current among the Jews. His conception of Royalty was borrowed from Psa 72:4, where the King is said to judge the poor of the people, and save the children of the needy. It was the collision between His idea of Kingship and that of the Pharisees, which brought Him to the Cross.

For us the lesson is clear. We must begin with the recognition of the royal claims of Christ to our homage and obedience. He only becomes Saviour, in the fullest meaning of the word, when He has been enthroned as King in our hearts. With invariable precision He is described, first as Prince, then as Saviour, and that order cannot be altered without injury to our soul-life (Acts 5:31; Ro 10:9; Heb 7:2). The whole content of the New Testament is altered when we view the Royalty of Christ as the chief cornerstone, not only of that structure, but of the edifice of character.

Let us not be afraid of Christ as King. He is meek and lowly, and full of understanding of the problems of our life. He shared our life, and was so poor that He had to trust in the kind offices of a friend to supply His physical needs, and in the palm branches of the peasant crowd for His palfrey and the carpeting of His royal procession; but as we watch it pass, the lowly triumph swells in proportions until it represents the whole race of mankind; and the generations that preceded His advent, and those that follow, sweep down the Ages of human history, proclaiming and acclaim-hag Christ as King. (Rev 15:3, 4, R.V).

PRAYER

O God, may our hearts indite good matter, that our mouth may speak of our King. Whilst we adore Him as Wonderful may He become to us the Prince of Peace. Enable us to put the government of our lives upon His shoulder, and of His government and of our peace let there be no end. AMEN.

December 29

THE MARCH OF GOD'S PROGRESS

"Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign."-- 1Co 15:24.

WHITHER IS God moving? When we speak of the eternal progress of the Almighty, it must be remembered that we are adopting human speech, because God lives in the eternal present. He is Jehovah--"I AM!"

God is moving to the supreme exaltation of our Saviour. Christ must and will reign, and the Father's power is even now engaged in putting all things under His feet. He has given Him the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. It is true that we see not yet all things put under Him, but God is even now engaged in hastening the fulfilment of His eternal plan. The rise and fall of rulers and kingdoms within the last few years; the clamour for new methods of government has menaced the ancient order; the vortex of elections; the babel of voices; the rivalry of statesmen and parties! What of these? They are the clouds of His feet, the movement of His pieces on the board, the successive stages in the unfolding of His plan. Watch the Divine strategy! God raises up one, and puts down another; there is not an item in the newspaper, nor a change on the map, nor a revolution among the people, however obscure, that is not contributing to that final scene, when the Son of Man shall come to the Ancient of Days, and there shall be given Him dominion and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages shall serve Him!

There is need for us all to know God's movements, especially in this momentous era, because only so can we enter into His Rest. We can look out calmly on a world in confusion when once we have learnt to understand the Divine programme of gathering up all things in Christ, who is the Head. To the careless world His way is in the sea, and His paths in the deep waters, and His footsteps are not known; but to those who love and follow Him. The heavens may depart, the hills be removed; but His kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of His peace be removed.

PRAYER

Hasten the coming of Thy Kingdom, O Lord, the fulfilment of Thy purpose. Keep us watchful and alert, that at any moment we may discern the movement of Thy hand, and detect Thy will and guidance in the providence of little things. AMEN.

December 30

MORTALITY SWALLOWED UP OF LIFE

"For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens."-- 2Co 5:1.

THIS CHAPTER begins with We know. There is no shadow of uncertainty. From first to last it is saturated with unwavering conviction. When it was written Faith and Hope had almost faded out of the world. Men and women were groping in the wilderness of atheism, with no star in their sky, and no oasis in their march. In the midst of a decadent civilization and vanished hope, Paul, and others who stood with him, dared to avow that there were certain facts of which man might be absolutely sure. They were not proved by argument or analogy, but discerned by the Spirit's intuition, and proved by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We must always distinguish between theories, which change with the various moods of human thought, and the eternal facts, which are established on solid testimony, and are as steadfast as the Throne of the Eternal. "We know"--there was an accent of certainty in those words, which changed the outlook of the world!

God's Objective. It is an immense help in this human life to know the direction in which God's fiery cloud or pillar is leading us. If only we can get a clue to what God is meaning in our life, it will smooth out many perplexities and disentangle many a ravelled skein. What is God doing for you and me? The Apostle answers--He is endeavouring to bring it about that our mortality may be swallowed up of life. God wants to wipe out in each of us all traces of the Fall. It is His purpose to eliminate everything which brands us as members of an exiled race, so that our mortality, whether of spirit, soul, or body, may be swallowed up by Life--"the life of which our veins are scant, the life for which our spirits pant, more life and fuller!" Think of it! For thee, and me, and all who have been translated from the region of darkness, and brought into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love! Mortality engulfed in Life! We cannot fathom it! We know not what we shall be, we only know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Such is God's objective. He is working for us and in us, for this very thing!

PRAYER

Carry me over this last long mile,
Man of Nazareth, Christ for me!
Speak to me out of the silent night,
That my spirit may know, as onward I go,
That Thy pierced hands
Are lifting me over the ford. AMEN.

December 31

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

"What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light."-- Mat 10:27.

CHRIST IS often speaking, in the secret of the heart; in the darkness of the night, "when deep sleep falleth upon men; there the Master tells us things in the darkness! To listen and obey will save us many a bitter hour.

We may question if it be His voice, but we are rarely wrong in detecting that Voice, when it reminds us of duties we have omitted, and calls on us to take up the cross which we have shunned.

There is music, tenderness, love-notes in these dark sayings, like those upon the harp, of which the Psalmist sings (Psa 49:4); the Voice that utters them is not harsh and strident, but tender and gentle. They are intended to teach us how to teach, to enable us to help others who could not understand these hidden things. We have to be taken into the dark, as sensitive paper, to receive impressions that will give pleasure and help to hundreds who could never pass through our experiences.

PRAYER

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak

In living echoes of Thy tone;

As Thou hast sought, so let me seek

Thy erring children lost and lone. AMEN.