

Our Daily Walk by F B Meyer - June

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June 1

MARCHING ORDERS

"Have not I commanded Thee! Be strong and of a good courage: be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."-- Jos 1:9.

IT WAS a host of young men and women that stood on the verge of Jordan, waiting the signal to enter the Promised Land. God had said that He would give them every place upon which the sole of their foot should tread (Jos1:3). What an incentive this was for pressing on! Every time an Israelite put his foot forward on the territory of Canaan, he realized that piece of land would come into the possession of his people.

There is a counterpart of this in our own experience. We must learn to put down our foot upon the Promises of God's Word, and say: "These are mine by right, and shall be mine in actual enjoyment." In General Gordon's journal, he tells us that often before he reached some strange or hostile tribe, it seemed as though they had been given to his faith and subdued before he reached them. In combating your spiritual foes, dare to believe that God has given them into your hand, and go forward assured that not one of them shall stand before you. This is a blessed promise: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Jos1:5). It does not matter how fierce the tempter, how often you have failed, how inveterate the bad habits, if you will dare to believe that God is with you, not one of all the band of besetting sins shall be able to stand before you. God cannot fail, and will not forsake; be strong, and go forward!

The one thing that God asks of all of us is that we should obey up to the hilt.

Here are our marching orders, and we must keep them well before us:

(1) We must meditate upon the Scripture day and night; it must not depart from our heart or mouth.

(2) We must be strong even when obedience seems impossible, and when all influences are brought to bear to weaken our resolution, we must still dare to obey the voice of God. And as we advance we shall find that the dreaded forms of opposition are but shadows; when they are touched with the spear-point of faith, they will divide and we shall pursue our way.

PRAYER

Before we enter upon our work and warfare, wilt Thou graciously equip us with the armour of light, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. May we hear Thee saying: Fear not, I am with thee, I will help thee. AMEN.

June 2

CHRISTIAN LIVING

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal 2:20.

THE HEART of true religion is to believe that Christ is literally within us. We must not simply look to Him as our Mediator, Advocate, and Example, but as being possessed by Him. He is our Life, the living Fountain rising up in the well of our personality. The Apostle Paul was never weary of re-affirming this great fact of his experience, and it would be well if each of us could say every day, before starting forth on our daily duty: "Christ is in me; let me make room for Him to dwell."

We must say No to self, that the life of Christ may become manifest in and through us, and our standing become a reality in daily experience and conduct. When evil suggestions come to us, we must remember that we have entered a world where such things have no place. We are no longer in the realm of the god of this world, but have passed into the realm of the Risen Christ. Let those who are tempted believe this, and assert it in the face of the tempter, counting upon the Holy Spirit to make their reckoning a living experience.

In Eph 6:13-17 is described the armour of the Christian soul; in Col 3:12-14 the habit or dress which he wears beneath his coat of mail. We must be careful to be properly dressed each day. If we lose our temper over trifles, or yield to uncharitable speech, it shows that we have omitted to put on the girdle of love; if we yield to pride, avarice, envy and jealousy, we must not simply endeavour to put off these evils, but take from the wardrobe the opposite graces. It is not enough to avoid doing wrong. Our Master demands that we should always do and be what is right. When we fail in some sudden demand, it is because we have omitted to put on some trait of Christ, which was intended to be the complement of our need. Let us therefore day by day say: "Lord Jesus, wrap Thyself around me, that I may go forth, adequately attired to meet life's demands." In Christ for standing; Christ in us, for life; we with him, for safety.

PRAYER

Set my heart on fire with the love of Thee, and then to do Thy will, and to obey Thy commandments, will not be grievous to me. For to him that loveth, nothing is difficult, nothing is impossible; because love is stronger than death. AMEN.

June 3

ORDERED STEPS

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand."-- Psa 37:23-24.

IT IS a mistake to think of our Lord's sufferings as a fact of history come and gone, an incident of the great past. It is this, but much more. He does not leave us to bear all the burden of life, unaided and alone. He shares everything with us now--our pain, our griefs, our weariness. "In all our affliction He is afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saves us." As another has put it: "Not standing over against me, holding back a hand that might help, but side by side; nay, even, 'closer than breathing.' Within the inmost hiding-place of my sufferings, He suffers also, bears my griefs and carries my sorrows, as though they were His own. If only we will avail ourselves of His sympathy and help, they who watch us shall see One like unto the Son of Man walking in the fiery furnace, by our side."

God is ordering all things in our life to secure the best results here and hereafter. In the darkest sky there are a few inches of blue. Happy is the soul which watches these, and dwells on them, and believes that they will widen until the darkness is passed, and all the sky is clear! We often forget that what seems to be a disaster is really the seed of a joyous harvesting. If we had visited this earth of ours in one of the great eras of the past, we should have found it covered by a dense mass of vegetation. But that era was not destined to last. Volcanic action of the fiercest character overwhelmed those mighty trees, and hurled them into the dark caverns and cellars of the yawning gulfs which seamed the planet. You and I, had we been there, might have cried: "Wherefore this waste?" To our poor and limited vision, it would have seemed a contradiction to the ordered progress of the Creator's plan. Why hurl into the bowels of the earth all this fair growth! But out of that cataclysm, the profuse vegetation, pressed together in the heart of the earth, became coal to give us light and heat.

Once, when staying in the country with a friend, he took me into his garden and showed me the weather-vane over his coach-house, and asked if I could distinguish the sentence woven into its texture. I discovered it to be: "God is Love!....Yes," he said, "for I have found that whatever comes to me is from the quarter of the Love of God!"

PRAYER

Help me to believe, O Lord, that all things are of Thee; and that Thou hast a plan for my life, of which each passing incident is a part. AMEN.

June 4

CO-OPERATING WITH GOD

"For we are labourers together with God."-- 1Co 3:9.

IN THIS chapter the Apostle describes the Church as a garden or vineyard, in which the Divine Spirit is ever at work, superintending, directing, inspiring, and calling to co-operate with Him all His servants, whether they be Paul, Apollos, or Cephas; or as a vast temple, rising through the ages, requiring labourers to lay the foundations, others to build the walls, and others to put the final touches in the light of an accomplished purpose. In each case, the design, the successive stages of advancing progress, the engagement of the workers, the direction of their labours and their reward is entirely with the Husband-man and the Master-BUILDER. It is not our work, but His; we are not responsible for the results, but only to do His Will; He repays us by generous rewards, but there our responsibility ends. When the Garden stands in the mature beauty, and yields the prolific fruitage of autumn; when the Building is completed and stands in symmetrical glory amidst the wrecks of time, then those who have co-operated will stand aside, and "God will be All in all."

All through human industry there is this co-operation between God and man. He stores the cellars of the earth with gold or coal, and it is for man to excavate it; He fills the hedgerows and woodlands with wild fruits and flowers, it is for man to cultivate them; He fills the earth with iron, copper, and other priceless treasures, it is for man to work them into all manner of useful implements. In every harvest-field, garden, orchard, industry, and employment of natural law for the purpose of civilization, there is this combined effort of God and man. God's energy works according to laws, which man must study as the key to the unlocking of the forces which he uses to flash his messages, guide the aero plane or motor, or speed him across the ocean.

In the Church the same law prevails. God has given the Word, but the company of preachers has been needed to proclaim it. The Words of inspiration burn with the fire of God, but man is called in to translate them into every language under heaven. The saving power of Christ waits to heal and bless, but He needs the co-operation of the human hand and life as the medium through which His virtue passes. Those whom God calls into fellowship in serving others may count on Him for the supply of all their needs (1Co 3:21-23).

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, show me how I may work with Thee, and in what direction are Thy energies going forth that I may walk and work in fellowship with Thyself. AMEN.

June 5

GLORYING IN INFIRMITIES!

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."-- 2Co 12:9.

THE APOSTLE seems to have enjoyed wonderful revelations of God. Not once or twice, but often he beheld things that eye hath not seen, and heard words that ear cannot receive, and God felt it was necessary for him to have a make-weight lest he should be exalted beyond measure (2Co 12:7).

What the thorn or stake in the flesh was it is impossible to say with certainty. He may have suffered from some distressing form of ophthalmia. We infer this from the eagerness of the Galatian converts to give him their eyes (Gal 4:13-17), and from his dependence on an amanuensis. His pain made him very conscious of weakness, and very sensitive of infirmity, and kept him near to the majority of those to whom he ministered, who did not live on the mountain heights, but in the valleys, where demons possess and worry the afflicted. Be willing that your visions of Paradise should be transient, and turn your back on the mountain summit, where the glory shines, as our Lord did, in order to minister to souls in anguish (2Co 12:4; Mt 17:14-18).

On three separate occasions the Apostle besought the Lord for deliverance from his infirmity, and finally received the assurance that though the thorn could not be removed, yet sufficient grace would be given to enable him to do his life-work, and he was more than content. On the one hand, there was the buffeting of this messenger of Satan; but on the other, there were the gains of meekness, humility, and of greater grace than would have been possible if he had not needed it so sorely--and he gladly accepted an infirmity for which there were such abundant compensations.

Do not sit down baffled by your difficulties and infirmities, but run from them to claim Christ's abundant grace and strength, that at the end of life you may have done all that was set you to do, and more, because the greatness of your need made you lean more heavily on His infinite resources. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength."

PRAYER

Help us, O Lord, to look on the bright side of things; not on the dark cloud, but on Thy rainbow of covenant mercy; not on the stormy

waters, but on the face of Jesus; not on what Thou hast taken, or withheld, but on what Thou hast left. Enable us to realise Thine all-sufficiency. AMEN.

June 6

HOW TO MEET DISCOURAGEMENTS

"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."-- 2Co 4:17-18.

NOTICE THE marvellous antithesis of this chapter: light and darkness; life and death; pressure, perplexity, pursuit, and persecution; but side by side, victory, elastic hope, and the brightness of Christian faith. The decay of the outward man and the renewal of the inward; the light affliction and the weight of glory; the brief moment of earth's pilgrimage contrasted with the eternity of reality and bliss.

It is very important that we should not miss the mighty blessing which is within the reach of every troubled soul. Of course it is quite possible to sit down before troubles and afflictions, hopeless and despairing, confessing that we are over-powered and defeated; it is also possible to be hard and stoical, bearing adversity because we cannot help or avoid it, but the highest Christian way is to be thankful that the earthen vessel is breaking if only the torch will shine out; to be content that the dying of Jesus should be borne about in our mortal body, if only His life will thereby become manifest.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of grief shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee in trouble to bless;
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

PRAYER

Fix my heart, O Lord, on Thyself, that amid the changes and chances of this mortal life I may be kept steadfast and unmoveable and ever abounding in Thy work. AMEN.

June 7

THE HOME OF GOD IN THE HEART OF MAN

"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite spirit."-- Isaiah 57:15.

THIS VERSE has reference to God's two Homes--the macrocosm of the great universe and the microcosm of the human heart. Our God is so great that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but He is so lowly and humble that He will stoop to fill the heart of a child. He bids us learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart.

The humble and contrite heart. It seems almost too wonderful to believe that the Eternal One will care to come and live with the child of Time; that the Infinite and Holy God will descend to the narrow limits of a human heart! (see John 14:23).

PRAYER

Spirit of purity and grace,
Our weakness, pitying, see;
O make our hearts Thy dwelling-place,
And worthier of Thee. AMEN.

June 8

A CURE FOR ANXIETY

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."-- Psa 37:5.

THIS PSALM from which our text is taken breathes the spirit of optimism. The Psalmist says: "Do not fret. Evil is transient, evil-doers shall be cut off, in a little while the wicked shall not be." You will not remove the evils of the world by all your anxiety, or by wrath. It is not worth while to lose your peace of mind. Be quiet in your heart, full of prayer, looking up to God that He would interpose to deliver.

In this Psalm there are excellent preservatives of the inward tranquillity of the soul when face to face with anxiety, or with high-handed wrong.

Trust in the Lord (Psa 37:3). Reckon on Him. Expect great things from your Almighty Guide and Friend. He cannot fail you.

Delight in the Lord (Psa 37:4). If your life twines about earthly things, of course you will be at the mercy of externals. Familiarise yourself with God's way of thinking and looking at things. If this is the bent of your life, you will lose your taste for things of the earth, while you will have great desires for the things of eternity, and God will give you perfect satisfaction in these, because He will give you Himself! The petitions of the heart (R.V. margin) are very sacred to God, and He never, never forgets them. "He shall give thee the petitions of thine heart."

Commit thy way unto the Lord (Psa 37:5). The margin suggests "Roll thy way upon the Lord." It is not enough to roll the responsibility of selecting our way on God in the great crises of our life. We must do so in the small decisions of every hour. Our lives are made up of trifles. To neglect these is to leave it to drift at haphazard. We need perpetually to look up to our Heavenly Friend, saying, "I cannot see over the hedge, I must leave with Thee the decision whether I should go this way or that."

Rest in the Lord (Psa 37:7). "Be silent to the Lord" (R.V. margin). There is so much clamour in the world, and often our heart becomes filled with its noise, so much so that we cannot hear His still small voice. But when every sound has died down into silence, we shall hear the voice of God telling us of things which will answer our questionings and still our doubts. Let your requests be made known unto God, and His peace shall sentinel your heart against all intruders.

PRAYER

My God and Father, enable me to roll my way upon Thee, to trust Thee, and to believe that when I stand with Thee in the perfect daylight I shall understand what now I take on trust. AMEN.

June 9

CHEERING PROMISES

"Whereby are given unto us great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine Nature."-- 2Pe 1:4.

PRECIOUS FAITH and precious promise are necessarily linked together (2Pe 1:1-4). The promises excite the faith, and faith reckons upon the fulfilment of promise. One is sometimes asked why it is that God's Word seems to fail, and that the righteous do appear to be forsaken! But surely the reason is, not that there is any failure on God's side to fulfil His promises, but that the promise is not claimed. It is possible to carry around a pocket-full of bank notes and cheques, and to die of starvation because they have not been cashed. When you have found a promise that just fits your need, do not rest content until you have laid it before God, and claimed its fulfilment.

Note that everything which is needed for life and godliness is already granted to us in Jesus our Lord (2Pe 1:3). We have not to pray to our Father for things which He has not anticipated, but to claim those which He has already given. The one purpose of God's preparation is that we should not only escape the corruption which is in the world, but become "partakers of His Divine Nature." What a marvellous promise is this, which almost passes human thought and comprehension, that we should become animated and filled by the very nature of God!

Note the recurrence of the phrase "these things" in the following verses. When they abound in us we cannot be idle or unfruitful. The octave of qualities enumerated reminds us of those Chinese boxes, each of which contains a smaller one, until we finally arrive at some precious article enclosed in the innermost. Faith apprehends everything else--manly courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, kindness, and above all, love. To be deficient in "these things" is to be short-sighted (R.V.).

The Apostle says that the soul which has incorporated into itself these qualities of character will be welcomed into the Eternal Kingdom. It will enter the Harbour royally, with every sail set and pennant flying, and receive a choral entrance from the eager crowds that await its approach (2Pe 1:11). Let us be diligent in our appropriation of God's great and precious promises, so that we shall never fail.

PRAYER

Grant us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, always to seek Thy kingdom and righteousness; and of whatsoever Thou seest us to stand in need, mercifully grant us an abundant portion; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

June 10

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE

"Seek not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God;

and all these things shall be added unto you."-- Luk 12:29-31.

AT THE time when our Lord spoke these words, the fields of Palestine were carpeted with wild flowers, and the air was redolent with their fragrance, bespangling the pastures, clustering in the hedge-rows, and hiding in the woodland glades. There was as careless a life as that of the birds which were flying overhead. "They toil not, neither do they spin." For some plants, like the exotics of the greenhouse and nurseries, there must be extreme care and expense in their cultivation, in the provision of heat and the experienced skill of the horticulturist. But our Lord was not alluding to these, but to the flowers of the grass, which grow amid the wilds of nature, or in the gardens of the poor, and to Him these were very beautiful.

This prodigious growth teaches us that God loves beautiful things, and expends thought and skill in their production. He might have made the world without a daisy, and human life without the beauty of childhood. But since He clothed with beauty the short-lived flowers of the wilds; the ephemeral insects of a summer day; the shells of the minute creatures that build up the solid fabric of the rocks--surely this prodigality, this lavishness, this prolific superabundance of creativeness, must mean that He can and will withhold no good thing from them that trust Him.

Of course we must fulfil our part! We are not to be careless and improvident; we must certainly sow and reap, and toil and spin; but when we have done all, we must rely upon our Heavenly Father whose good pleasure it is to give, believing that it is vain for us to rise up early, and sit up late, and to eat the bread of sorrows, for our God will give us all that we need, even whilst we sleep. He will not allow His trusting children to starve, or to go unsheltered, unclothed, and unshod. "Fear not, little flock," says the comforting voice of the Good Shepherd, "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

PRAYER

Gracious Lord, grant to me, Thy poor needy creature, sometimes at least to feel, if it be but a small portion of Thy hearty affectionate love; that my faith may become more strong, my hope in Thy goodness may be increased, and that love, once kindled within me, may never fail. AMEN.

June 11

LIFE AND DEATH

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."-- Phi 1:21.

HOW CLOSE life and death are! In this verse there is only a comma between them, and every one of us stands where that comma stands, between life and death. Life is the vestibule of death, and death is close on the heels of life. The systole and diastole; the throb and beat of the pulse; the swing of the pendulum this way or that!

St. Paul is enamoured with the joys of life. He was a toiler and a traveller, and lived amid the busy throng that jostled him in the streets. The philosopher, as he passed, carrying his scrolls of learning, said: "To me to live is knowledge"; the soldier, passing, looked with contempt on the man of letters, and said: "To me to live is fame"; the merchant in passing, said, with pride: "To me to live is riches"; the toiling masses passed by, saying: "To us to live is toil and trouble." Amid all these, the Apostle strikes in with no bated breath, saying joyously: "To me to live is neither wealth, nor labour, nor fame, nor glory, but Christ." If you had asked him just what he meant, he would probably have replied, as Tyndale brings out in his translation, that "Christ was the origin of his life."

If we would become partakers of the Divine Nature, we also must have such a definite experience. We can trace our natural life back to our parents, and our spiritual life must begin in the hour when, in early childhood, or later, we are made partakers of the Nature of the Risen Saviour (John 1:12-13; 2Pe 1:4).

Christ must be the model of our life. Every man works to a model. Consciously or not, we are always imitating somebody, and every true follower of Christ seeks to approximate to the measuring of the stature of our Lord--"Beholding, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

Christ must be the aim of life. That His will may be done on earth as in heaven; that others may know and love and serve Him as we do; that He may be the crowned King of men--that must be our purpose and aim. External things have no power over the one who can say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"; then we can triumph over Death itself, and say: "To die is gain."

PRAYER

The mountain peaks of the Christ-life that we would live call to us, but they often seem too steep and high for us to reach, but Thou knowest and hast an infinite compassion for Thy children. Fulfil in us the good pleasure of Thy will, and realise in us the ideals Thou hast taught us to cherish. AMEN.

June 12

DECISION FOR CHRIST

"Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."-- Lk 14:27.

NOTICE THE threefold repetition of these solemn words: he cannot be My disciple (Lk 14:26, Lk 14:27, Lk 14:33). There is a sense in which the Way of Salvation is easy. One look of faith in Christ, and we receive eternal life and are assured by Him that we can never perish; but that faith must carry in its heart the germ of discipleship, the tenacity, determination, indomitable resolve to learn everything that the Master has to teach. We are not only saved from sin, but we are saved to learn, redeemed to be taught. The education is free, but there are certain things which we must be prepared to forego if we would be entered in His School. The disciple must bring the unbiased and disengaged mind to the grace of God, which comes disciplining us, teaching us to deny ungodly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world.

What are the things which we must cultivate for discipleship?

A supreme love (Lk 14:26). Our Lord does not ask us really to hate those related to us by natural ties, but to give to Himself so much love that compared with all else, it should be as sunlight to starlight; that for love of Him we should be willing to act as one who hates all other loves when they conflict with obedience. We are first converted from the natural to the spiritual, and then from the spiritual to the natural again.

The denial of self (Lk 14:27). We are not simply to cut off this or the other indulgence, but to put the Cross of Christ between ourselves and the gratification of our own will. We must be willing to follow the Lamb, though the old Abraham cries out in grievous pain.

Renunciation (Lk 14:33). We must be prepared to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. As a matter of fact, Jesus gives us back all that is right and beautiful to use for Him, but there must be a definite losing hold on things, and the placing of all in His pierced hands. Abjuring our ownership, we must be willing to act as His almoners and trustees. It is this that gives savour to life, making it sparkle and resist decay.

PRAYER

Accept us as we now yield to Thee our entire being with all that we possess. It is our one desire to be utterly, only, and always for Thee. AMEN.

June 13

PROFIT AND LOSS

"Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee! Jesus answered, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel's but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time and in the world to come eternal life."-- Mark 10:28-30.

THE PRINCIPLES of this world, and those of our Lord are widely different. The world is set on grasping all it can accumulate, on self aggrandizement, on the piling up of fortunes, on the gradual or speedy climb up the ladder of fame and on the gathering of hosts of friends. Looking after "number one" is the readiest way of expressing this principle of life! But it is unsatisfactory and disappointing. The soul which is the centre of its own circumference is doomed to realize that there are more forfeits than prizes, more bitterness than success, more dark hours than bright ones.

On the other side, Christ's principle of life is to give, to trust, to bless! His measure must be always pressed down and running over. The cloak must follow the coat; the second mile must be gladly thrown in with the first. To be willing to surrender all for the sake of others, is the ordinary claim of the King on those who own Him as their Lord.

In every age there have been thousands who have gladly accepted this as their rule of life. Peter and the rest of the Apostles were the leaders of a host which no man can number, who have left all to follow Jesus. He had nowhere to lay His head, and they have been homeless, wandering in the world, with no settled abiding-place; He was poor and they have gone amongst their fellows, saying: "Silver and gold have we none, but such as we have we give." But how great has been their reward. Before we can understand what Christ is willing to do for us, there must be not only a taking-hold, but a letting-go. We must step out from the boat, and withdraw our hand from it. It is even good, like St. Paul, to need all things, since by faith we come to possess all. Read the wonderful series of paradoxes to which he gives utterance in 2 Cor. 4:1ff.

The Lord promises eternal life as the crown of all. When we kneel at the Cross, and see Jesus as our own Saviour, we have eternal life, but we cannot realise all it implies until this mortality is swallowed up of life.

PRAYER

Thou hast called us to minister and witness, to go amongst men as our Saviour went, bearing in our hands the balm of Gilead. May we not be disobedient to this heavenly vision. AMEN.

June 14

THE ONE-TALENTED MAN

"He also that had received the one talent came." Mt 25:24.

THE FIVE TALENTED men, are the geniuses of the world, successful in everything they touch. The two-talented men, on the one hand, are not exposed to the temptations of genius, but are not quite at the minimum. But why did the man with the one talent make such ill use of his gift? Surely, this is a true touch of life! One-talented people can do so little, that they do nothing. They are crushed and enfeebled by a sense of their own insignificance and inferiority. Many start life with high and pure aims, but presently they find their opportunities so meager, their influence so limited, their power so scanty, that after a few struggles they give up in despair.

But the world will never be saved and helped unless the one-talented people, who are the great majority, can be aroused to a sense of their responsibility. Five men can put the whole energy of their manhood behind their single talents, whilst the one man with five talents has only the driving power of one. It is probably a greater thing in God's sight to use one talent faithfully than many. No one notices the man with his humble one talent. There is no outburst of praise or cheering. It is a greater test of the quality of the soul to go on doing one small thing well, than to be able to turn with brilliant versatility from one talent to another. The monotony of life presses hard on those who have only one string to their bow, one tune to play, one act to perform in the great factory where labour is carefully subdivided.

But the one thing that our Lord demands of each of us is to be faithful--faithful in a very little. He is watching each of us with great eagerness as we live our daily life, because He knows, as we cannot realise, how much our position in the other world depends on our fidelity in this. It is for our sake that He is so anxious that we should make good use of our one talent.

Have you only one talent? Are you doing anything with it? Remember it is the ounce-weight that may turn the scales where hundred-weights are balanced; it is the tiny tug that can move the great liner. Be thou faithful in thy very little, and thou shalt receive the "Well done" of thy Lord.

PRAYER

O Lord, at the end of every day, may we stand before Thee to hear Thy verdict, and when all the toil and labour of our life is ended, may we hear Thee say: "Well done, good and faithful servant! thou hast been faithful in a few things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" AMEN.

June 15

JESUS, THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT

"He is the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. He is faithful that promised."-- Heb 8:6; Heb 10:23.

THIS IS called the Better Covenant. There are no ifs; no injunctions of "observe to do"; no conditions of obedience to be fulfilled. From first to last it consists of the I Wills of the Most High.

I will put my laws into their minds, refers to the intellectual faculty, which thinks, remembers, and reasons.

I will write them upon their hearts, the seat of the emotional life and affections. What a man loves, he is pretty certain to follow and obey. "A little lower," said the dying veteran, as they probed for the bullet, "and you will find the Emperor." So with the Christian who has been taken into the Covenant with God, the law is inscribed on the deepest affections of his being. He obeys because he loves.

I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. This last clause is even better than the first, because it implies the keeping power of God. If we are to be a people for His peculiar possession, it can only result from the operation of His gracious Spirit, who keeps us, as the sun restrains the planets from becoming wandering stars.

All shall know Me. Oh, wonder of wonders. Can it be? To know God! To know Him as Abraham did, to whom He told His secrets; as Moses did, who conversed with Him face to face; or as the Apostle John did when he beheld Him in the visions of the Apocalypse. And that this privilege should be within the reach of the least!

I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more. As a score is forgotten when blotted from a slate, so shall sin be obliterated from the memory of God. It will be forgotten as a debt paid years ago.

Do you ask how God can call this a covenant, in which there is no second covenanting party? The answer is easy: Jesus Christ has stood in our stead, and has not only negotiated this covenant, but has fulfilled in our name, and on our behalf, all the conditions which were necessary and fight. He has become our Sponsor and Surety, so God is able to enter into these liberal terms with us, if we will identify ourselves with Him by a living faith. This is the new and better covenant.

PRAYER

Holy Father! I claim from Thee the fulfilment of Thy Covenant Promise, that Thou shouldst write Thy law upon my heart, and remember my sins and iniquities no more. May I hear Thee say: "Thy faith hath saved thee; Go, and sin no more!" AMEN.

June 16

CAST DOWN? WHY?

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me."-- Psa 42:6.

THE LAMENT of the soul, its cause! Many have been brought to this condition--Jacob said "all these things are against me"; Job complained that God had refused to listen to his prayer, and had fenced up his way; Elijah prayed that he might die; John the Baptist had his doubts; even our Lord Himself cried: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

It may arise from physical weakness. Our nature is like a finely-attuned harp, and may easily become tangled and discordant. When we are in good health, and the zest of living is strong within us, the soul sings songs without words, and the heart suns itself in the consciously-realized love of God; but when the lamp of life burns low--the joy of the Lord, the sense of His Love are apt to decline.

It may arise from temperament. Some seem born in the dark, and carry through life a predisposition to melancholy. Their nature is set to a minor key. They gaze on the lowering clouds, rather than on the patches of blue. Thomas had such a temperament, yet our Lord called him to be an apostle! Rightness of heart generally shows itself in gladness of heart; but there are those who mourn in Zion, and are more prone to tears than smiles! The valley of shadow is part of the highway to the Holy City; and the souls that are called to tread it may yet find the valley of Baca to be a place of springs.

Now as to the cure. Make much of your standing in Christ! Our feelings are as fickle as April sunshine. But our standing in Jesus is unalterable. John Bunyan used to say that he had two sorts of money. That which was deposited in the bank, and that which he had in his pocket. The former was, on the whole, permanent, while the other was always changing. Thus he said it was between him and the Saviour. His feelings, like the loose coins in his pocket, were always changing, but his capital was lodged safely in the strong keeping of Christ.

Cease introspection and live in the progress of Christ through the world. He is ever going forth to new conquests, and we must not stand as loiterers, feeling our pulse. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Canst thou not take thy place in His ever victorious army! Miss Feeblemind, and Mr. Ready-to-halt, in the care of Great-heart, will go over the River singing!

PRAYER

Gracious God, give me to behold the rainbow of Hope on the dark storm-clouds that brood over my life: may I rest confidently on that Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which was sealed by the precious Blood of Christ. AMEN.

June 17

COURAGE IN LIFE'S STORMS

"There stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve, saying, 'Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Caesar: and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee.' Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me."-- Act 27:23-25.

SAID A boy to his mother, "What is fear like? I have never seen him."

Paul might have said as much, because his life was hid with Christ in God. He had learned to detect the voice of Christ. Some cannot do so, for it needs the practised ear and the obedient will. But all through his Christian career the Apostle seems to have derived comfort and strength from special revelations. Through the murky darkness of the storm, Christ's ministering angel sped to his hammock, and standing beside him, bade him be of good cheer. And there is no storm that beats on our life which does not bring God's angels also to our help, though we may not see their forms or hear their voice. The one condition of Angel-help is that we belong to their Master. We must be able to say: "Whose I am, and Whom I serve."

The Prayer of Faith. In Acts 27:24 the R.V. rendering is "granted." It signifies that Paul had asked and God had granted his prayer, and given him his request. What a promise this is! It is said of Miss Havergal that she went to stay with a family not one of whom was definitely for Christ. On the first night of her stay she wrote her well-known hymn, "Take my life, and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to Thee." And during her short sojourn under that roof she won for her Lord the entire household. So we may claim that all who sail with us in the ship of our life shall become God's children.

The Courage of Faith is consistent with Commonsense. Even though Paul had God's assurance, he felt that he must do what he could, as though all depended on his sagacity. Faith ought not to make us act presumptuously or foolishly. Holy calm and stillness rule in the heart of him whose mind is stayed on God.

We are likely to encounter many storms in our life before we anchor in the Fair Haven of Eternity, but in the heart of every cyclone there is a point of rest; and in the fiercest storm that sweeps our world, we may hide in the secret place of the Most High, and sing Psa 46:1-11.

PRAYER

By day and by night, in life and in death, may I ever be true to Thee, O Lover of my Soul, my ceaseless Friend, my unchangeable Saviour. Into Thy hands I commit my spirit! AMEN.

June 18

GOD'S SALVATION AND COMFORT

"Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song."-- Isaiah 12:2.

THIS EXQUISITE Psalm of Hope seems prepared, for the day when Jew and Gentile, gathered into one Church, shall stand on the shores of Eternity with palms of victory. Here is the Song of Moses and the Lamb!

Salvation was peculiarly associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, which was the type of that consummation of God's purpose, which shall take place when His Tabernacle is with men, and He shall dwell with them (Rev 21:3). Do not fear, God is with us, as Strength, and Song, and Salvation. He shares our wilderness march; we are folded under the shadow of His tent; we are permitted to reckon on Him as our Partner and Companion. Notice the emphasis on the word my. The weakest saint can claim all needed supplies from God; and He admits the plea, saying: "Child, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine" (Luke 15:31).

Unfailing supplies--"wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles the priests drew water in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Siloam, and poured it forth in the Temple, while the Choir chanted this verse in memory of the rock-water that followed the desert march. Every attribute of God, every means of grace, every helpful and loving ministry, every promise of Scripture is a Well, and faith is our pitcher (John 7:37).

But we must draw. Faith is the bucket, which we let down into the fulness of the Divine supply. It is not simply the general belief that God hears and answers prayer, but the specific and particular belief that God has answered or will answer your prayer for some special needed grace, and that it is yours. Believe that ye have received. Draw water out of the well!

"Thou comfortest me" (Isaiah 12:1). There is no such Comforter as God. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." He is expressly described as "the God of all Comfort." Is it not too much to ask that Thou shouldst stoop out of Thy high heaven to comfort me, whose heart is heavy with grief and whose eyes are red with weeping? He wipes the tears from all eyes, and staunches the very fountains of grief. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." I shall yet praise Thee!

PRAYER

Make us to know, O God, the riches of the glory of Thine inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of Thy power toward them that believe. We would so live that sweet music may come to Thee. AMEN.

June 19

A SHELTER FROM THE TEMPEST

"And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest...as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."-- Isaiah 32:2.

WE ARE reminded that this prophecy was uttered in a time of great unrest. The clouds of war were gathering dark on the horizon, and Israel was looking for help from the arm of flesh. In this emergency the voice of the prophet was heard, saying: "Look not to

Egypt, but to God" (Isaiah 31:1). The kingdom depends on the king: "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes rule in judgment." When all politics and commerce, social and domestic life are under the sway and guidance of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God will come, and the Will of God shall be done on earth, as in heaven. The Lord Jesus is many-sided enough to meet all the varied needs of His people. Some need a covert from the tempest, others rivers of water to quench their thirst, others the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. But He is all and equal to all. When a man or woman owns the sway of Christ, eyes and ears are cleansed, there is no longer the hesitation of stammering confession, the judgment becomes rectified and the heart opened to a new generosity. First righteousness, then peace--such is heaven's eternal order.

This is a marvellous chapter! Note the words of warning to the women of Jerusalem. After all, the religious and political life of a nation is very much what the women make it, and there can never be a widespread deepening of religious life unless the women, who have such great capacity for God, turn to Him in repentance and faith.

Are our conditions similar? Surely they are! For if in the days of Solomon it was true that all things were full of labour and stress, how much more true is it in our time! The tides of human life are high and stormy, and there is no sense of security. We may surely plead that we need the quiet resting-places and sure dwellings, in which our souls may shelter! The promise is made to "My people"--to those who have heard and obeyed the voice of the Good Shepherd. If you are one of the weakest and lowliest of these, you may draw comfort here (Isaiah 32:18).

PRAYER

Bring us, O Lord, through the troubled waters of life into a haven of repose. Hide us secretly in Thy pavilion from the strife of tongues and the fiery darts of the wicked one. May we be at peace with Thee, with ourselves, and with all. AMEN.

June 20

THE ROCK OF AGES

"Trust ye--the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting rock."-- Isaiah 26:4 (R.V).

THE LOVE of God, like a cleft rock, is the age-long shelter of His people, and rears itself above the tumultuous waters of time. The lightning the lighting that flashed from the thunder-clouds of Calvary has riven it. A cleft was made in it by the spear that pierced the heart of our Lord, and this was followed, as it was withdrawn from the gaping wound, by blood and water. But there sinful souls may hide! God had said to Moses: "Behold, there is a place by Me, and it shall come to pass that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by, for thou canst not see My face, and live." So he speaks to us all, and promises that the water and the blood shall be the double cure from the wrath and power of sin.

It is freer The sinner need not seek to acquire the shelter of that Rock of Ages by the labour of his hands, or the fulfilling of the demands of the law. It is not required that he should burn with a zeal that knows no respite, or flow with tears that refuse to be staunch. To be helpless and forlorn, to be in peril of condemnation, to be contrite and humble---this is all that is required. To have no Mediator, no Refuge, no Helper beside, and to lift the eyes of faith to the Saviour--that is the sole condition of being lifted by unseen hands into the cleft of that Rock.

It holds all that the soul needs. Is the soul naked? There is dress for it. Is it helpless? There is grace for it. Is it blackened by sin? There is cleansing for it. Is it sick? there is healing for it. Toplady, the Calvinist, and Wesley, the Arminian, agree here: "Thou, O Christ, art all I want; more than all in Thee I find."

It is for ever. It is the Rock of Ages! Time may beat upon it, but it cannot alter it or impair it. Whilst this fleeting breath is drawn, when eyes close in death, when unknown worlds are entered, when the judgment throne is set, always and for ever the soul may shelter in the cleft Rock of the unchanging Redeemer, and Peace, like a double window, intercepts alarm from the heart which is stayed on God and trusting in Him.

PRAYER

Rock of Ages! cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee. Let the water and the blood, From Thy riven side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure, Save me from its guilt and power. AMEN.

June 21

PRAYER THAT OBTAINS

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."-- Luke 11:9

THERE ARE many conditions of true prayer. For instance, it must be earnest. There are times when we know we are on the line of

God's purposes, when we may dare to be importunate. Prayer must be offered in the Name of Christ, i.e., it must be in harmony with the nature of Christ, which was devoted to the glory of God and to the blessing of men. That Name will eliminate the ingredient of selfishness which will mar any prayer by whomsoever offered. Prayer must also be based on some promise of God, which is presented to Him as a cheque or note is presented to a bank.

All these are but steps to the faith that obtains, for it is, after all, not prayer but faith that obtains promises. That is why our Lord lays so much stress on receiving. Much of our prayer fails because we forget that He said, "Every one that asketh, receiveth"; and again, "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

So far as one can describe the process, it seems something after this fashion. The soul reverently kneels before God, glorifying and praising Him for His greatness and goodness. It is conscious of needing some very special gift which is promised. In the Name of Christ it presents the request with the confidence of a child. With earnestness of desire and speech it unfolds the reasons why the gift sought is so necessary. But it does not leave prayer at this point to go away in uncertainty as to what the issue shall be. By an act of the spirit, the suppliant seems to receive definitely the spiritual or even the temporal gift; and realises that it has received, that the special grace has been imparted, to be discovered and used under stress of need; that the temporal gift has also been received, though it may be kept back until the precise moment when it can be delivered, in much the same way as a present may be purchased long before the time of handing it to its destined possessor (1Sa 1:15, 1Sa 1:18, 1Sa 1:27).

This is what Christ meant by "receiving," and it has a mighty effect upon prayer, because it makes it so much more definite. It leads to praise, because we are able to thank God for His gift. You must take as well as pray.

PRAYER

We rejoice that our Saviour ever lives to intercede as our High Priest and Mediator. Through the rent veil, let our prayers ascend to Thee mingled with the fragrance of His merit in whom Thou art ever well pleased. AMEN.

June 22

ANSWERED PRAYER

"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you."-- John 15:7

OUR LORD expected answers to His prayers, and in all His teaching He leads us to feel that we shall be able to obtain, through prayer, what otherwise would not come to our hand. He knew all that was to be known of natural law; but notwithstanding His perfect acquaintance with the mysteries of His Father's government, He said: "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My Name."

When we consider the lives of some who have wrought mightily for God, it is clear that they learned a secret which eludes many of us. This is from the biography of Dr. Burns Thomson: "When much together as students," writes his friend, "we agreed on special petitions, and the Lord encouraged us by giving us answers, so early and so definite, as could only have come from Himself, so that no room was left for the shadow of doubt that God was the Hearer and Answerer of prayer. Once the answer came the same day, and at another time whilst we were yet speaking. My friend often spoke of our agreement, to the glory of Him who fulfilled to us His promise; and I refer to it to encourage others." This is but one leaf out of the great library of prayers, intercessions, and supplications, which stand recorded before God.

Prayer which is to prevail must be: For the glory of the Father. Whatever petition we offer must be tested by this thought: will it be for the glory of God? It is for this that our Saviour lives and pleads (John 14:13).

It must be in Christ's Name, which stands for Nature. In other words, when we pray it must not be as our self-nature but as the Christ-nature indicates. It is not enough to mention His Name at the end of our prayer: His Spirit must pervade every petition.

We must bear fruit (John 15:16). Answers to prayer largely depend on our ministry to others. If we are living for the accomplishment of God's purpose and the coming of His Kingdom, we may ask whatever is necessary for the achievement of our endeavour.

We must abide in Christ; then the sap of the Holy Spirit rising from the hidden root will produce desires and petitions like those which Christ ever presents to His Father (John 15:7).

PRAYER

All our desire is known unto Thee, therefore perfect what Thou hast begun, and what Thy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer. We seek Thy face, show us Thy glory. AMEN.

June 23

THE POWER OF SMALL THINGS

"Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed nothing shall be impossible unto you."-- Mt 17:20.

THE GRAIN of mustard seed is the smallest of seeds, but Jesus says that it is a fitting emblem of the Kingdom of God, and the unostentatious beginnings of the Christian era. The number and social position of the disciples was insignificant in the extreme. And the first germ of truth sown in the heart of man, woman, or child, is sometimes equally insignificant. It may be just a sentence, a text, a passing remark which results in a mighty harvest (Mark 4:30-32).

What is it that enables this tiny seed to make such a prodigious increase? It lies in its receptive power, as it receives into its nature the mighty forces which slumber in the soil, the effect of sunbeams, moisture, and air. So long as a little aperture is kept open, there is no limit to the fertility and usefulness of the plant. You may be but a child, and your life seem weak and ineffective, but if you will open your heart to God by faith, He will pour in His mighty fullness, and the tiny seed become a great tree of strength and usefulness, grace and beauty.

Let us not despise the day of small things. Faith may be as a grain of mustard seed, but as it is used it will grow. Your effort to do good may seem so insignificant that it would be hardly missed, if it were discontinued, and yet out of it may emanate some mighty work which will bring help and comfort to thousands. How many orphanages, schools, and philanthropic efforts have owed their origin to the most infinitesimal beginnings. One destitute child cared and ministered to for Christ's sake has led to another, until finally thousands of little ones have received a good start in life. What could be more insignificant than the beginnings of the Gospel message in many a heathen country. Do not be discouraged. Like Gideon, you may be only a cake of barley bread, but by faith you may overturn the tents of Midian. Like the little lad, you may only be able to place five tiny loaves and two small fish in the hands of Jesus, but He will bless them and make them sufficient to feed the multitude. A stone may bring Goliath to the dust; an arrow may pierce through the armour of the mailed warrior. Have faith in God; Reckon on God's faithfulness to you!

PRAYER

Lord, increase our faith. Give us a child-like faith to receive what Thou dost offer, and from this moment may a new sense of the presence and power of God, through the Holy Spirit, come to us. AMEN.

June 24

THE BASIS OF PEACE

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."-- Rom 5:1.

"Having made peace through the blood of His Cross."-- Col 1:20.

THE BASIS of redemption and peace was laid on Calvary, when our Lord died for the sins of the world. In Lev 17:11, we learn that "the life, or soul, of the flesh is in the blood" (R.V. marg.); from which we infer that the forth-flowing of the blood of Christ was the forth-pouring of His soul as a sacrifice for sin.

It may be asked: Granted that the blood of Christ represents His soul which was poured out for sinful men, how did this marvellous act of self-sacrifice constitute a basis for peace? The full answer to that question is impossible in our present limited knowledge. It is one of the secret things which belong to the Lord our God, hidden from us now, to be revealed when we are full-grown.

But never suppose that the shedding of Christ's blood was necessary to make God love us, to appease His wrath or wring from His unwilling hand an edict of redemption. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." The Father does not love us because Jesus died, but He went to the Cross because of God's love for us who chose us to be joint-heirs with His Son.

But there is one condition to be fulfilled. The access into Peace is open only to those who believe. We are justified by faith; we have peace through believing. The Apostle says that "through our Lord Jesus Christ we have now received the Atonement" (Col 1:11). The redemption is accomplished; we have but to receive it. The atonement of peace is made, it is only for us to take it. "For as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." As we receive eternal life, and the Holy Spirit with open and thankful hearts, relying on the Divine assurance by faith, we enter into the great inheritance of Peace, and the gifts of God in Grace and Nature become our own.

PRAYER

O Most Merciful Lord, Grant to me, above all things that can be desired, to rest in Thee, and in Thee to have my heart at peace. Thou art the true peace of the heart, Thou its only rest; out of Thee all things are hard and restless. In this very peace that is in Thee, the one Eternal God, I will sleep and rest. AMEN.

June 25

THE RECEPTIVITY OF FAITH

"Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."-- Heb 10:22.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."-- Eph 3:17.

FAITH IS our power of appropriation. The pity is that we are so slow to make use of our Lord's resources! He does not force Himself upon us. Though He brings with Him gold tried in the fire that we may be enriched, and white raiment for our clothing, and eye-salve for our blindness; and though He knows how urgently we need these things, He will not force them on our acceptance. Rather, He stands and knocks, as a travelling merchant knocks at the door, who has wares to dispose of, and we need to open the door and receive the gifts which are offered, without money and without price (Rev 3:18-20; Isaiah 55:1-2).

Faith is our reception of the spiritual to make good the lack of the physical. It is a drawing on the Eternal for the deficiencies of our earthly pilgrimage. Probably when we look back on our present life, we shall find that our deficiencies were permitted, and even assigned, that we might be driven to avail ourselves of the fullness of the Lord Jesus (John 1:16; Eph 3:19). We were allowed to wander in the sultry heat, that we might know Him as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land; we were exposed to wild tempests and storms, that we might make for alcoves and harbours in Him that we should otherwise have missed.

It has been truly observed that Job's rebellious moods arose when he thought that God was afar off, but there was a difference when he realised that God was suffering with him. Remember that you are not divided from God by a deep chasm. He knows your sorrows. In all your afflictions He is afflicted. We have not a High Priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. When Jesus saw the sisters weeping, He not only succoured them, but entered into their distress, and wept with them.

Are you weary with burdens that are crushing you? Is your lot cast with them that hate peace? Is your heart oppressed with loneliness? Take Jesus into account. Don't face your difficulties alone, but meet them in the fellowship of your Saviour. Have faith, i.e., reckon on God. Let the Lord Christ dwell in your heart, and He will be responsible for all, as you reckon on Him for all.

PRAYER

O Lord, I open my nature, and since my capacity is small, I pray that by love and faith, by patience and suffering, Thou wilt enlarge my heart, that it may be filled with all the fullness of God. AMEN.

June 26

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."-- Jam 2:26.

JAMES IS described as "the Lord's brother" in Gal 1:19. He was surnamed "the Just," and was much respected beyond the limits of the Christian Church for his saintly life. While St. Paul deals specially with doctrine, James is concerned with practice; Paul expounds the wonderful significance of Christ's death and resurrection; James expounds the teaching of our Lord, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. Paul insists on faith as the means of justification before God; James lays stress on the works to which faith must lead.

It seems likely that James had seen Paul's Epistles, for he uses so many of the same phrases and examples, and probably set himself to combat those who abused the teaching of the great Apostle. There were plenty in his time who believed about Christ, and prided themselves in the orthodoxy and accuracy of their creed; and James maintains that this is not sufficient to save the soul.

As far as orthodoxy goes, no creed can be more absolutely orthodox than that held by evil spirits. Repeatedly, during our Lord's life, they acknowledged that He was the Holy One of God, but their belief had no effect on their character; it only filled them with fear and dread (James 2:19).

"Faith without works is dead." It is good to test ourselves. We must see to it that our heart is pure and our way absolutely transparent. In our dealings with those around us, we must always seek to realize our highest conceptions of love and duty. Even when our efforts of goodwill and affection are not reciprocated, we must never lower the high standard of our action, but always keep before us the conception of our Saviour's life in the Home at Nazareth. Be merciless to yourself, but always merciful to others, always bearing the burdens of those around you, always moderating your pace to the weak and weary, as Greatheart did for the pilgrims. Even Rahab was justified by a faith which wrought itself out in beautiful and unselfish action (James 2:25; Heb 11:31). Remember our Lord's words in Mt 7:20-21.

PRAYER

Help us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to add to our faith, brotherly kindness, and pardon the unkind word or impatient gesture; the hard and selfish deed, the failure to give kindly help where we had the opportunity. Enable us so to live that we may daily do something to lessen the tide of human sorrow and need, and add to the sum of human happiness. AMEN.

June 27

THE GREAT SHEPHERD

"Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will."-- Heb 13:20-21.

IT IS most comforting that our Heavenly Father is "the God of Peace." He is the God of the gentle zephyr, of the evening glow, of the mother's brooding care; and may be trusted by His gentleness and patience to make us great. Bruised reeds are not trampled beneath His feet, and the smoking flax is fanned into a flame. Do not be afraid of God--He is the God of Peace!

He brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep. As our Lord descended into the Valley of Death, He breathed His departing spirit into the Father's hands. He knew that the path of life would unfold before Him. He knew that the Father's welcome awaited Him. And God did not fail Him! However low He went, when He descended into Hades, the Everlasting Arms were always beneath Him; and Him did God raise up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

And will God do less for the Flock! There are many of the sheep that have been scattered in the cloudy and dark days. Will every sheep and lamb be recovered, and led to the green pastures and beside the quiet waters of Paradise? Yes, every one! The great Shepherd would not be content if one were missing of those whom the Father has given Him (John 10:28-29). Remember His own parable of the Shepherd who left the ninety and nine to recover the one. If you have come to Him by your will and choice, you are included in the Father's gift.

We are secure in the position which His grace has given us. It is secured not only by the promise of God, but sealed by the Blood of the Cross. That is the meaning of the words: "The Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant." Note that word eternal, which carries us back to the timeless past, when this compact was made. We may therefore humbly believe that our names are written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8; Rev 21:27). But we are saved to save others! It is thus that we make our calling and election sure (2Pe 1:10).

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O blessed Master, not only that Thou hast cleansed us from our sins, but that Thou hast entered into, and ratified by Thy precious blood, the eternal covenant which has made us Thine for ever. AMEN.

June 28

AN AUTOGRAPH LETTER

"Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God."-- 2Co 3:3.

THE APOSTLE Paul's life was made weary by the incessant opposition of his enemies and critics, who sowed discord in the churches which he had formed in Europe. Amongst others, they visited Corinth and challenged him to produce letters of commendation from the leaders of the Church. With justifiable indignation he cries: "Why should I carry letters, when my converts, given me by the Lord, are circulating everywhere, with the attesting signature of Christ upon them?" Surely they are a sufficient guarantee and proof that I have been commissioned and sent forth by the Lord Himself.

St. Paul gave utterance to a true and striking description of a Christian disciple. He is an autograph letter, the Author and Writer is the Lord Himself--"an epistle of Christ." The ink is "the Spirit of the Living God." The pen is the teacher or preacher of the Gospel, "ministered by us." The material is the heart and life--"not on tables of stone, but on hearts of flesh."

We ought to be Christians in large type, so that it would not be necessary to be long in our society, or to regard us through spectacles, in order to detect our true discipleship. The message of our lives should resemble the big advertisements which can be read on the street-boards by all who pass by. The merit of good letter-writing is to state what the writer wants to say as clearly and concisely as possible. Sometimes we have to wade through long and weary pages before we can get at the gist of our correspondent's meaning. Let us take care that the message of our lives is clear, concise, and unmistakable.

We are to be pens in the hand of Christ--our sufficiency is of God, who makes us ministers. Milton's pen had only to yield itself

relentlessly to the hand of the daughter or amanuensis, to whom the blind master dictated his immortal words. And the messages which we are to inscribe on the hearts and lives of men do not originate in us, but with Christ. If others are used more than we are, it is because they are more meet for His use (2Ti 2:15-21).

PRAYER

Live in us, blessed Lord, by Thy Holy Spirit, that our lives may be living epistles of helpfulness and blessedness. May the Name of the Lord Jesus be glorified in us. AMEN.

June 29

SONGS OF PRAISE

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people."-- Luke 1:46-47, Luke 1:68.

THESE TWO songs have floated down the centuries, stirring human hearts with the ecstasy of their triumph. It is not given to all to be able to express their exultation in words so eloquent and musical, but all may become as saturated with the words of Scripture as Mary was, and all may triumph in Jesus Christ as gladly as did Zacharias, and show forth His praise, as did these two holy souls.

The most wonderful thing for us all is that God looks upon our low estate. The greater His blessing, the more unworthy we feel of it. There is no reason why He has stooped to our lowliness and obscurity except that He would. He does great things for the weakest and merciful things for the unworthiest, for His Name's sake--"Holy is His Name." In other words, there is no accounting for the putting forth of God's power and love, except His own glorious character.

Princes are put down from their thrones, because they have become proud and tyrannical; whilst those of low degree are exalted by God, because in obscurity they have been educated in virtue, which cannot but rise to the level of its specific gravity. The rich are often sent empty away, because they have no taste or desire for true riches which alone can satisfy. Whether the hunger be for love, or for the power to do good, or for the best gifts that the Spirit of God can bestow, whoever fulfils the conditions of humility and faith--these are "filled with good things." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

The little babe, known afterwards as John the Baptist, was probably lying in his father's arms, when he burst forth into this glorious song. Let us see to it that we use every opportunity of making known God's wondrous salvation, of pointing men to the only source of forgiveness. Nothing so encourages faith as the proclamation of what God is prepared to do for those who trust Him, and when it dawns upon men that there are treasures in Christ which shall enrich their poverty and dissipate their hopelessness, they will yield themselves to be led into the ways of peace even by a little child!

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O God, for life and light and love; for the light of Thy mercy shining across our path, revealing to us Thy infinite love without beginning or end. May the Name of our Lord Jesus be glorified in us. AMEN.

June 30

LOVE TRIUMPHANT OVER DEATH

"Fear not. I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."-- Rev 1:18.

IT WAS not possible, said St. Peter, that our Lord should be holden of death (Acts 2:24). It behoved Christ to suffer; but all the bitter waters of suffering could not quench his love. He was the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, every man, even those who pierced Him, is included in His great love.

Christ died, not only to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, but to rob death of its terrors, and deprive it of its sting. In death our Lord Jesus destroyed both the Devil and his power; the prince of this world has been judged, and cast out of the seat of power (Heb 2:14-15; John 12:31; John 16:11).

Let us not be afraid of the mystery of death. Christ has shown us that it is the gateway into another life. There is the same spirit, but a different environment. It is a condition of existence in which the same voices are heard, the same human fellowship persists. During the forty days in which Jesus tarried on our earth after His Resurrection, He solved many of the problems of life after death, and illuminated its mystery. To die is to be with Him, and to be welcomed into the great company of loving spirits (2Pe 1:11).

Let us not fear the loneliness of death. The soul passing through the dark valley becomes aware of Another by its side---"Thou art with me." Death cannot separate us, even for a moment, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Jesus died alone;

He felt forsaken; but none of us need pass through that terrible experience; for He has said: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself."

We need not fear what comes after death. The curse and penalty of sin have been put away for ever. "Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again." That which others call death, we dread no more than sleep. Our bodies lie down exhausted with our long working-day, to awake in the fresh energy of the Eternal Morning, while our spirit is presented before the Presence of His Glory, faultless, and with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24).

PRAYER

O God, may we so trust Thee this day, that, when the day is done, our trust shall be firmer than ever. Then, when our last day comes, and our work is done, may we trust Thee in death and forever, in the spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN