

Our Daily Walk by F B Meyer - Mar

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March 1

WALKING IN GOD'S WAYS AND PATHS

"Shew me Thy ways, O Lord; Teach me Thy paths." -- Psa 25:4.

"He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths." -- Mic 4:2.

THERE IS a clear difference between a Way and a Path. The one is filled with the throb and stir of the world's life; the other is comparatively lonely and unfrequented. The roll of vehicles and noisy traffic fills the one, whilst the other is, for the most part, trodden by the individual, being too narrow and quiet for the crowd. It is a great comfort that God has paths as well as ways.

God's Ways are the great principles on which He acts, the mighty thoroughfares of Creation, Providence, Revelation, Human History, and final Judgment. On these His goings-forth have ever been of old, even from everlasting. To know them is the passionate desire of the purest and loftiest natures. Moses prayed: "Shew me now Thy ways, that I may know Thee," and God graciously granted his request, for to Moses He made known His Ways, but to Israel only His Acts. There is need for us all to know God's Ways, especially in this momentous era; because only so can we enter into His rest. In the Old and New Testaments the same warning is repeated: "they shall not enter into My rest, because they have not known My ways" (Psa 95:11; Heb 3:10). We can look out calmly on this troubled world when once we have learnt to know the divine programme of gathering up all things in Christ, who is the Head; when we walk with Him who is the Way to God (Joh 14:6).

The Paths of the Lord may be taken to describe His personal dealings with the individual, who through sickness, or the care of others, or by lonely duty, is isolated from the ordinary worship of the Church, and shut away from fellowship and Christian Ministry. All such may expect and reckon upon the saving help which will come through God's private communications.

God is faithful to the soul that utterly trusts Him. He always comes on time, not a moment before, nor a moment too late. Remember that all His Paths are Mercy and Truth. Dare to believe that He is coming along a secret pathway to bring the assurance of His mercy and grace to help in this time of need.

PRAYER

Be with me, Lord, as I step out on the untrodden way of this month. I know not what it may bring of joy or sorrow, of temptation or service; but I humbly commit myself and my way to Thee. Make the best that Thou canst of me for Thy glory. AMEN.

March 2

KNOWING AND FOLLOWING

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."-- Hos 6:3.

SOME PEOPLE do not seem to desire to advance in the knowledge of God. They have not seen the heavenly vision. Religion to them consists in saying, over and over again, the same prayers that they have used for years, and reading a prescribed portion of Scripture. This is better than nothing, but they cannot appropriate David's comparison between himself and the hunted deer that pants for the water-brook, or our Lord's blessing for those that "hunger and thirst after righteousness."

But with others, there is a longing for a further advance. Like the Apostle, they are pressing toward the mark, though it seems to evade them and to recede! They are like the blind man, on whom our Lord wrought the miracle. First, he saw men as trees walking, dimly appreciating the glory of perfect vision; but, presently, as those dear hands touched him again, he saw clearly. Is there one who reads this page who does not long for this clear vision, this knowledge of God! Let us not desist in our quest, but follow on! When the last lesson is learned, the last and deepest surrender taken, the final act of faith accomplished, the partition will remove, and we shall know what Pascal meant when he wrote: "The world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee. Joy! Joy! Joy! Tears of Joy!" "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1Co 13:12).

God has a Way of His own for each of us. "His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain." Some are smitten by a sudden sense of the reality and vision of the Eternal World, that hides behind the veil of sense. Others, as they partake of the Bread and Wine of Communion, have such a vision of the love of Jesus, that they are more than satisfied. At any time a heavenly door may open before the knock of the seeker; or, we may suddenly look up and see His face, and exclaim with St. Paul: "The Lord is at hand!" We shall see His hand beckoning to us, and we shall arise and follow into that world of reality and love that is so near, but sometimes seems so far!

PRAYER

Lord Jesus! Give us this second sight, we beseech Thee! Lift us up, by Thy strong arm, above the mists and darkness of the valley, to walk with Thee on the high level of Thy manifested presence and glory. AMEN.

March 3

THE VIEWPOINT OF THE SANCTUARY

"It is good for me to draw near to God."-- Psa 73:28.

THE GOOD Asaph was greatly troubled about the prosperity of the wicked of his time. He refrained from speaking to others on the matter, lest it should impair their religious life; but the iron went deep into his soul! Here were people, who seemed always at ease, though they set their mouths against the heavens, while he, though he cleansed his heart, and washed his hands in innocence, was plagued all day long. It was in a very perturbed and distressed condition of mind, therefore, that he went one day into the Sanctuary of God. It was there that God spoke to him and unveiled the future, and showed the glorious contrast between the wicked and himself, when Time had given place to Eternity, and heaven had corrected the uneven balances of earth.

Each of us has, or should have, a sanctuary--the House of God, or it may be a quiet room, or some sacred spot in the woods or garden or beside the sea. Greatly is the soul to be pitied that has no sanctuary, where it can shelter from the rush and noise of life. Like Abraham, we need to have some place where we can stand before the Lord (Gen 18:22-23).

Let us remember the injunction to build according to the sanctuary pattern (Exo 25:8, Exo 25:9, Exo 25:40). We must not drift aimlessly through life, at the mercy of every current and every gust of wind; nor must we be content to be our own pattern-makers, or mere copyists. Before we enter upon some change or fresh objective in our life, let us ascend into the sanctuary of God's mountains, and get to know His Mind and Will. Be sure that He has a plan and programme for each of us, extending even to the cords and tassels of our life; and if we are true to the leadings of His Spirit, we shall be led out and on to things that eye hath not seen, nor heart conceived.

Frances Ridley Havergal writes

I am struck with the possibilities of the Christian life! In my own case, what once were far-off possibilities are now actualities; while a new horizon opens before me of possibilities, which also in God's time shall become actualities.

Forget the past! Your failures and sins; the fading laurels of past successes; the bitter memories of abortive efforts. Leave them with God! Let the dead bury their dead! Work out your life-plan knowing that God is able and willing to make the necessary grace abound toward you.

PRAYER

Grant unto me, O Lord, the blessedness of the one whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee. AMEN.

March 4

GOD'S CONDESCENSION TO MAN

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"-- Psa 8:3-4.

A CERTAIN writer ridiculed the idea that the Almighty Ruler, who inhabits the stellar spaces, can have any knowledge of such a cheese-mite as man. He says: "Put yourself in the planetary space, a mere dot, and do you think that the Almighty Maker can have discernment of thee!" But bigness is not greatness! The infant in the cradle is worth more to the parents and the nation than the royal palace in which he was born. The age which discovers the telescope, with the infinite abyss above, discovers also the microscope, with the infinite abyss beneath.

How absolutely different is the outlook of the Psalmist! He stands under the Eastern heavens, blazing at midnight with myriads of resplendent constellations, and cries: "O Jehovah, my Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth, who has set Thy glory above the heavens! They are Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers; as for moon and stars, Thou hast ordained them. How great Thou art!" Then he turns to think of man, and says: There must be something more in man than a superficial gaze is competent to discover. He must surely possess an unrealized dignity and worth, since the great God, the Maker of these worlds, stoops to call him friend.

But the question arises: How can God find pleasure in visiting, i.e. in having fellowship with a race so full of evil as ours? Granted that He might have fellowship with Moses or Elijah, with Daniel or John, but how can He stoop to intercourse with ordinary people like ourselves? What is Zaccheus, that the Son of Man should visit at his house--is he not a publican? Yes, but of late he had been restoring his ill-gotten gains, and Jesus sees in him the possibility of a son of Abraham! What is Simon Peter, that Christ should visit him? He, but he will one day become the rock-man, the foremost leader of the Church! So does Christ our Lord see what we may become, and He stands at the door of our life, seeking admission. Let us heed His knock and bid Him come in.

PRAYER

O God, may our whole nature be consecrated for Thine indwelling and use. Let there be no part in us dark, but may the clear shining of Thy Presence dispel all shadows, and fill us with peace and joy. AMEN.

March 5

STANDING BEFORE GOD

"Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"-- 1Sa 6:20.

THE PHRASE "to stand before God" designates a high-toned religious life; it includes the knowledge of God, the faculty of executing His commands, and the power of interceding for others. The phrase was a favourite one with Elijah, as expressing the spirit of his great career, and we surely desire that the spirit and attitude of our life may be designated thus. But if this is to be something more than a vague wish, or idle dream, there must be a close adhesion to great principles.

Amongst many it is the general tendency to follow the practice of the majority. We drift with the current, and allow our lives to be settled by our companions or our whims, our fancies or our tastes. If we have a momentary qualm, in contrasting our lives with the standards of primitive simplicity, of which Scripture, or the biographies of the saints are full, we excuse ourselves by saying that so long as the main purpose of life is right the details are unimportant. But what we are in the smallest details of our life, that we are really and essentially.

What a revolution would come to us all, if it became the one fixed aim and ambition of our lives to stand before God, and to do always those things that are pleasing in His sight. It would not make us less tender in our friendships, or less active in our service. It would not take the sparkle from the eye; the nerve from the grasp; or the warm glow from the heart. But it would check many a vain word, arrest many a silly jest, stop much selfish and vainglorious expenditure, and bring us back to whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely and of good report.

We must hold lightly to the things around us. It is difficult to say what worldliness consists in, for what is worldly to some people is an ordinary part of life's circumstance to others. But all of us are sensible of ties that hold us to the earth. We may discover what they are by considering what we cling to most; what we find hard to let go, even into the hands of Christ. Whatever it is, flit hinders us from living on the highest level; if it is a weight that impedes our speed heavenward, it should be laid deliberately on God's altar, that we may be able, without let or hindrance, to be wholly for God.

PRAYER

May the Holy Spirit enable us to realise in daily life our true position in Thy purpose. May we in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell. May our affections be set on things above, not on things of the earth. AMEN.

March 6

THE SECRET PLACE OF PRAYER

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to Thy Father which is in secret."-- Mat 6:6.

IN PRAYER there must be deliberateness, the secret place, the inner chamber, the fixed time, the shut door against distraction and intruders. In that secret place the Father is waiting for us. He is as certainly there as He is in Heaven, Be reverent, as Moses when he took the shoes from off his feet! Be trustful, because you are having an audience with One who is infinite sympathy and love! Be comforted, because there is no problem He cannot solve, no knot He cannot untie!

God knows even better than we do what we need and should ask for. He has gone over every item of our life, every trial, every temptation--the unknown and unexpected, the glints of sunshine on the path, and the clouds of weeping. He listens to our forecast and requests, and rejoices when they accord with His infinite foreknowledge; or He may give us something better and more appropriate to our case.

"He will recompense thee." If He does not remove the cup, He will send an angel to strengthen; if the thorn remains unremoved, He will give more grace. You may be sure that, in some way or other, your Heavenly Father is going to meet your particular need. It is as certain as though you heard Him say: "Go your way, your prayer is heard: I will undertake, trust Me, leave all in My hand!" When you have once definitely put a matter into God's hands, leave it there. Do not repeat the committal, for that suggests that you have never made it. Your attitude thenceforward is to look into God's face, not to ask Him to remember, but to say: "Father, Thou knowest, understandest, carest! I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that Thou wilt not fail."

There is a prayer which is without ceasing; but surely that is not the reiterated request for the same thing, but the blessed interchange of happy fellowship. Use not vain repetitions, as do the heathen, who think that they will be heard for much speaking, but count Him faithful that promised! This reckoning of faith is probably the loftiest attribute of prayer, for faith is the quiet assurance of things not yet seen!

PRAYER

Lift us into light and love and purity and blessedness, and give us at last our portion with those who have trusted in Thee, and sought in small things as in great, in things tempered and things eternal, to do Thy Holy Will. AMEN.

March 7

THE MODEL PRAYER

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name."-- Mat 6:9.

THE LORD'S PRAYER is a temple reared by Christ Himself--the embodiment of His ideal, and as we repeat these simple and wonderful sentences, we cannot but think of the myriads who have been moulded by them, and have poured into these petitions their hearts' desires.

Our Lord was not always insisting on prayer, but was constantly praying to His Father Himself. His disciples knew His habit of getting away for secret prayer, and they had on more than one occasion seen the transfiguring glory reflected on His face. Happy would it be for us if the glory of fellowship and communion with God were so apparent that men would come to us saying, "Teach us to pray" (Exo 34:35).

Prayer must be simple, The Jewish proverb said, "Everyone who multiplies prayer is heard," but our Lord forbade senseless repetition by His teaching of the simple, direct, and intelligible petitions of this prayer.

Prayer must be reverent. The tenderest words, the simplest confidences, the closest intimacy will be welcomed and reciprocated by our Father in Heaven. But we must remember that He is the great King, and His Name is Holy. Angels veil their faces in His Presence. Let us remember that "God is in Heaven, and thou upon earth; be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God."

Prayer must be unselfish. Our Lord so wove intercession into the structure of this Prayer that none can use it without pleading for others. Sorrow or sin may isolate us and make us feel our loneliness and solitude, but in prayer we realize that we are members of the one Body of Christ, units in that great multitude which no man can number.

Prayer must deal with real needs. Daily bread stands for every kind of need, and the fact that Jesus taught us to pray for it, suggests that we may be sure that it is God's will to give.

Prayer must be in faith. We cannot but believe that we are as certain to prevail with God, as the good man of the house with his friend; and if among men to ask is to get, how much more with Him who loves us with more than a father's love (Luk 11:9-13).

PRAYER

O God our Father, help us to live in the spirit of prayer to-day. Breathe Thy Spirit into us as we kneel before Thee, subduing the selfishness that makes discord, and uniting our hearts in the fear of Thy Name. AMEN.

March 8

TURNING PASSION INTO PRAYER

"Elijah Was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently."-- Jam 5:17 (R.V.).

WHEN WE read that Elijah was a man subject to the same passions as selves, we are apt to suppose that we have the clue to the driving force of his life. But Scripture shows that the results of his wonderful career were achieved, not by his passion, but by his prayer! Elijah, though capable of the same vehement earnestness with which we are all endowed, refused to accomplish his life-work by the employment of lower energies, but set himself to obtain the results he desired, through prayer. He was a man of like passions with ourselves, but he prayed earnestly. He turned his passion into prayer.

There was no salient element of a strong nature of which his was destitute. There was the passion of patriotism, as when he was prepared even to witness the sufferings of his people, if these would bring them back to God; of tenderness, as when he bore the dead body of the child to his room; of righteousness, as when he slew the false prophets; of love for Nature, as when he fled into the wilderness to die; of devotion to God's glory, as when he cried, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts." All these passions dwelt strongly within his breast, but if he had relied on them alone, his life-work would have faded as the mirage on the glistening sand.

There is a marvellous contagion in vehement feeling. As a tiny pith-ball, light as a feather, by continually impinging on a suspended bar of iron, will make it move, so one soul can move others. The brain is able to create waves of thought, and the heart waves of emotion. But we must learn to secure through God results which some try to achieve by the energy of their own nature. Let us pray more. Let us seek to be filled with a passionate love to our Lord Jesus, and to the world of men---with a love so hot that the most passionate words of St. Bernard or Faber may not seem extravagant. Then let us divert the glowing metal into the mould of prayer--which may express itself in an intense silence of intercession, or with strong cryings and tears. At least let us not dare to be tepid and apathetic in the midst of this wonderful universe which is electric with living energy! (Rev 3:15-16.)

PRAYER

O Christ, who baptizest with fire, kindle in our hearts the flame of Thy love, that we may not be lukewarm or cold. We would not trust in the force of our emotions, lest they fail us, but in the power of prayer and of Thine intercession for us. AMEN.

March 9

RESOLVE AND DEFEAT

"Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake."-- Joh 13:37.

PETER'S IMPULSIVE spirit could ill brook delay--"Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?" Easier far is it to rush into the battle, where excitement and passion may be trusted to render us oblivious to pain and discomfort, than to stand at our post through the long cold nights on sentry duty.

He made the mistake of miscalculating the might and power of the Adversary. It was the hour of the power of darkness. The moment was at hand in which the prince of this world would make the supreme effort to hold his own, and refuse to be cast out.

He miscalculated his own strength, and relied upon the fervour of his emotion. He had no conception of how much need there was for something more than the strong fervour of passionate affection.

He miscalculated the weapon by which to overcome. He had a literal sword, and thought that it would be sufficient to draw it and smite with all his might, as he did cutting off the ear of Malchus. He expected that with his fervent passion for Christ on the one hand, and cold steel on the other, he would be able to follow wherever Jesus led. But it is not possible for human enthusiasm to sustain the soul, when it comes to close grips with the great Adversary of the Kingdom of God.

He miscalculated the help that comes through prayer. So confident was he that he slept instead of praying. Thrice the Lord came to remind him of the urgent need for watching against the hour of trial, but His words were unheeded, because the advice seemed needless. Why should he pray, when he had already made up his mind!

Then the crash came, and he went out a broken-hearted man! He, we too have failed in like manner. We have brandished the cold steel of strong resolve. But the disillusioning process has set in, and we have sorrowfully proved that it is not by flesh and blood that we can enter the Kingdom. Let us not forget our Lord's comforting words to Peter: "Thou shalt follow Me afterwards."

PRAYER

Lord, we would follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, but we are weak and helpless, and our own strength will fail in the final test. May we not trust in our own resolutions or vows, but in the saving strength of Thy right hand. AMEN.

March 10

BROKEN CISTERNS

"They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."-- Jer 2:13.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."-- John 7:37.

WHAT AN infinite mistake to miss the fountain freely flowing to quench our thirst, and to hew out broken cisterns, in which is disappointment and despair. Many such may read these words---each with soul-thirst craving satisfaction; each within reach of God, whose nature is as rock-water for those that are athirst, but they are attempting the impossible task of satisfying the craving for the infinite and Divine, with men and the things of sense.

There is the cistern of Pleasure, engraved with fruits and flowers, wrought at the cost of health and peace; the cistern of Wealth, gilded and inlaid with costly gems; the cistern of Human love, which, however fair and beautiful, can never satisfy the soul that rests in it alone---all these, erected at infinite cost of time and strength, are treacherous and disappointing.

At our feet the fountain of God's love is flowing through the channel of Jesus Christ, the Divine Man. He says to each of us: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." We must descend to the level of the stream, if its waters are to flow over our parched lips to slake our thirst. We must come back to Calvary, take our stand at the foot of the Cross, hear again the words of Him who died there for us, saying "I thirst," that He might be able to give the Water of Life freely to all who come to Him.

You who are weary of your toil, drop your tools, and come back to God. Forsake the alliances, the friendships, the idolatries, the sins which have alienated you from your best Friend. Open your heart, that He may create in you the fountain of living water, leaping up to eternal life. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! And let him that heareth say, Come! And let him that is athirst, Come! And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that Life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him."

PRAYER

Teach us, O Lord, the art of so living in fellowship with Thyself that every act may be a Psalm, every meal a sacrament, every room a sanctuary, every thought a prayer. AMEN.

March 11

FOR ME AND THEE

"Not withstanding, lest we should offend them, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee."-- Mat 17:27.

PETER HAD been fairly well-to-do. He had his house, and boat, and nets. There was no lack in the fisherman's house. But when Jesus said, "Come after Me," he left all, and there was an immediate cutting off of the former sources of supply, so that when the tax gatherer came, there was nothing to meet his claim. Our Lord maintained that He personally was under no obligation to meet the demand. As a child, to use His own words, He was free; but He immediately identified Himself, as He always does, with His troubled disciple. We can never leave anything for Christ, without His recognition, and His being ready to defray whatever cost may accrue from obedience.

The identification was so absolute between the Master and His disciple, that He refrained from providing two coins, which might have indicated some severance of interest. Was it not His intention to put beyond all controversy that He and His are one, and that in every act of His on our behalf, in His willingness to meet the demands made upon us, there is no severance of interests, no mere patronage, but an absolute identification with all that concerns us.

There are profound lessons here. Demands are constantly knocking at the door of life, which we find it hard, sometimes impossible, to meet. There are needs of food and clothing, of the rent collector and the tax gatherer. But is not Christ aware? Is He not faithful? Will He let us go under in the struggle? Never! Whatever demand made on the servant is assumed by the Master--That take, He says, and give unto them for Me and thee.

As He enters the wilderness of temptation, He reminds us--it is "for Me and thee." As He hangs upon the Cross, and passes forth from the grave, radiant with triumph, He turns to us and says: "This victory over death and the grave is for Me and thee." Yes, and through all the ages that are yet to be, amid the marvels of unfolding new worlds, nothing shall accrue to Him of which He will not say: "That take, and give, or use, for Me and thee." Only remember, we must take, and give. We must appropriate the unsearchable riches of Christ, we must impart them, or they will not profit us.

PRAYER

We thank Thee, our Father, for our union with the Risen Christ. May we share more largely in His glorious life, and live as the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. AMEN.

March 12

THE POSSIBILITY OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

"Lord, increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would have obeyed you."-- Luk 17:5-6 (R.V.).

YOU ARE asking me to perform the impossible; I am sure that I can never become a great tree, said a tiny mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds, as it lay on the soft mould where it had dropped.

Suddenly it was caught up with a spadeful of earth, and buffed, it seemed, fathoms deep; in reality but a few inches! There it lay in darkness and neglect. After some weeks, a tiny green shoot appeared above the ground, and looked up to where the great parent-tree was growing; it whispered softly to itself, "Perhaps I shall be able to do it after all." "Do what?" "Perhaps I shall become a great tree in which the birds may shelter." "But a few weeks ago you said it was impossible then I had no idea that Mother Nature would work in me as she has done; if she goes on pouring herself into me as she has been doing of late, there is nothing that I cannot do; yet not I, but her life which dwelleth and worketh in me."

There is no need to explain or enforce the meaning of the allegory. Our Lord had bidden His disciples forgive "until seventy times seven," and they had replied that such a thing would be impossible, without a great increase of faith. "No," said the Master, "you do not need quantity but quality."

All God's fullness will flow through the tiniest channel that faith opens out on His Almighty power. Faith is the open heart towards Him, and through the channel of faith Christ lives in and through us. Hudson Taylor heard God say: "I am going to evangelize inland China, and if you will walk with Me, I will do it through you." D.L. Moody said that the beginning of his marvellous ministry was the remark made in his hearing: "The world has yet to learn what God can do through a man wholly yielded to Him." It is not what we do, but what God does through us, that counts; and His mighty power, passing through the tiniest aperture of faith, keeps hollowing it wider.

PRAYER

Most Gracious Lord, Thou didst truly say, "Without Me ye can do nothing." We know that this is so by our past failures, when we have wrought in our own strength. Help us to use the little faith we have that it may become the channel for Thy wondrous power. AMEN.

March 13

MAIMED: BUT FULLER LIFE

"If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off." it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire."-- Mar 9:43 (R.V. marg.).

OUR LORD calls all who love and would follow Him to present themselves as living sacrifices, even though in the process they should be exposed to salt, with its searching sting, and fire, with its consuming flame (Mar 9:49). In such moments He reminds us of something which He sees to be hindering our highest ideals, and there is only one alternative--though it be dear as right hand or foot, we must cut it off! Of course it is best to retain the members and faculties of our body in purity and righteousness; they are most important assets to the working-force of a successful life. No one has a right to perform an amputation, unless it is the only alternative to death, or the uselessness of Gehenna which was the rubbish-heap of Jerusalem.

Our Lord well advised, when He said, "Cut it off!" The one swift, irrevocable blow is the easiest in the end. It may be a friendship which is causing us to stumble; or an evil habit, sapping our nervous energy; or a form of amusement, which may be innocent enough in itself--but whatever hinders us in our spiritual progress, if we cannot master it and keep it in bounds, must be yielded to the knife. We often expose ourselves to more anguish in our effort to retain and restrain, than to remove absolutely and for ever.

Maimed lives are nevertheless strong and full. Notice those words: "Enter into life maimed." Some lay the emphasis on their losses, sacrifices, and privations; others dwell upon life, and refuse to consider the straitness of the gate through which they press. True, they are maimed, but by the forfeiture of the lower they gain the higher, and by the way of the Cross enter into the Joy and Glory. There are great compensations for us all, if we dare to follow the ideals that beckon to us from the snow-capped pinnacles above. Surrender all that impedes and hinders your highest life, and fountains will burst forth in an abundance that will make the desert blossom and sing. Is not this better than to be a castaway from the hands of Christ as unclean and useless?

PRAYER

Most Blessed Lord, may we drink so deeply of Thy Spirit that we shall be willing to surrender all that hinders us in following Thee absolutely and always. AMEN.

March 14

DIVINE DELIVERANCE

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust."-- Psalms 91:2.

IT IS supposed that this Psalm, like the preceding one, was composed by Moses, "the man of God," and that each may be applied to the flight of Israel from Egypt. To "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" reminds us of the words of our Lord, when He said: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not." Bunyan says that the hen has four calls--the call when night is near; the call for food when she has found some dainty; the call of peril when the hawk is nigh; and the call of brooding love, when she wants to feel her nestlings under her wings. To-day God is calling to each of us, saying: Come My children, make the secret place of My presence, of My environment, of My constant keeping, your home; for he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the wings of God. When night is nigh, when money and food is scarce, when the hawk is in the air ready to pounce on us, when loneliness or desolation oppresses, let us hear the brooding cry of God our Father, and nestle beneath His shadow.

God is prepared to keep us in all our ways. Many of us believe that somehow God will bring us out at last, but we have no expectation that He can keep us in blamelessness of soul; we expect to be brought to Heaven, but that we shall be battered, and beaten, and despoiled on the way. But surely our God can do better for us than that! He can keep us from yielding to passionate temper, jealousy, hatred, pride, and envy, as well as to the grosser forms of sin.

The promise is clear: "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways"--the business ways, the social ways, the ways of service into which God may lead us forth, the ways of sacrifice or suffering. Let us simply and humbly ask for the fulfilment of the promises in this Psalm. He will answer your prayers. He will be with you in trouble. He will satisfy you with many years of life, or with living much in a short time, and He will show you the wonders of His salvation.

PRAYER

Lord, be Thou within me, to strengthen me; without me, to keep me; above me, to protect me; beneath me, to uphold me; before me, to direct me; behind me, to keep me from straying; round about me, to defend me. AMEN.

March 15

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

**"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."--
- Act 2:4.**

ON THE day of Pentecost all who were gathered together in the upper room were filled with the Holy Spirit--women as well as men, obscure disciples, as well as illustrious apostles. Deacons called to do the secular business of the Church must be men filled with the Holy Ghost. That he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, was a greater recommendation of Barnabas than that he had parted with his lands.

The majority of Christians have seemed to suppose that the filling of the Holy Spirit was the prerogative of a few--they have never thought of it as within their reach; and the Church has been paralysed for lack of the only power that can avail in the conflict against the world, the power which was distinctly pledged by her ascending Lord. Pentecost was meant to be the specimen and type of all the days of the years of this present age, and we have fallen far below this blessed level, not because of any failure on God's part, but because the Church has neglected its privilege.

We must desire to be filled for the glory of God. We must seek the Spirit's power, not for our own happiness and comfort, nor even for the good that we may be the better able to effect, but that "Christ may be magnified in our bodies, whether by life or death."

We must bring cleansed vessels. God will not deposit His precious gift in unclean receptacles. We must be washed in the blood of Christ from all conscious filthiness and stain, ere we can presume to expect that God will give us what we seek.

We must appropriate Him by faith. There is no need for us to wait, because the Holy Spirit has been given to the Church. We need not struggle and agonize in the vehemence of entreaty, but have simply to take what God is waiting to impart. He gives the Holy Spirit to them that obey Him (Act 5:32).

We must be prepared to let the Holy Spirit do as He will with and through us. There must be no reserve, no holding back, no contrariety of purpose. Let us believe and reckon that we are being filled with new power and joy which shall be for the glory of God and the service of man.

PRAYER

We pray, O God, that the Holy Spirit may so infill us, that sin and self may have no dominion over us, but that the fruits of the Spirit may abound to Thy honour and glory. AMEN.

March 16

OUR ETERNAL DESTINY

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach.., and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the consummation of the age."-- Mat 13:47-49 (R.V. marg.).

THERE IS a contrast, and yet a similarity, between this parable and that of the tares. In the latter we learn that it is impossible in the present age to separate the evil from the good in the professing Church of Christ; in the former we see that with an inevitable pressure, we are all being drawn towards the discrimination of the judgment-seat of Christ.

What a confused mass of dead and living things are brought to shore by a net--weed, mud, shells, unwholesome things as well as those which are good for food, lie in a confused heap together. So it is with the professing Church. It embraces every variety of character--good fish amid a certain amount of rubbish, and there is no society of men and women in which this mixture does not obtain. Our Lord teaches that when the great net of the Gospel dispensation has been drawn in to the shores of eternity, then, with unerring judgment, the angels will begin their work of separation.

The distinction which separates the good and the bad is determined by the service we can render in God's Kingdom. He wants those who will co-operate with Him in the work of redemption, who are living unselfish and consecrated lives, through which His Spirit may work for the highest purposes of salvation. Those whom He rejects are the selfish, worldly, and sense-bound natures, who refuse to be the implements and instruments of His redemptive purpose.

To which of these two classes do we belong? Are we willing to be identified with Christ in His Cross and shame? Do we delight in mercy, self-sacrifice, and holy service? If so, we may anticipate the future without fear. But if, on the other hand, we are shut up within ourselves, even though it be the enjoyment of religion, without tears for men's sorrows, or yearning for their salvation, we may question whether it may not be our lot to be cast away on the rubbish heap (1Co 9:27).

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.

March 17

GOD WRESTLING WITH MAN

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."-- Gen 32:28.

THIS STORY of the angel wrestling with Jacob is an instance of God's earnest desire to take from us all that hinders our best and highest life, whilst we resist with might and main. There was much evil in Jacob that needed to be laid aside, and so the love of God drew near to him in the form of an angel to wrestle with him. At first he held his own, but whatever it is that enables a soul whom God designs to bless to stand out against Him, God will touch. It may be as natural as a sinew, but if it robs us of spiritual blessing, God will touch it; it may be as small as a sinew, but its evil influence will compel the Almighty Lover of our souls to take notice of it, to cause our scheming to miscarry, and the sinew of our strength to dry up.

Then Jacob abandoned the posture of defence and resistance, and clung to his Adversary. It is good when we come to this attitude, for there is nothing which God will not do for the soul that clings to Him in absolute weakness (2Co 12:7-9).

Three things happened: The changed name, which indicated a changed character. Israel means "prince with God." The supplanter, cheat, and weak vacillator became royal! There is only one road to royalty, it is the path of self-surrender and faith. Power: as a prince hast thou power with God, and with men thou shalt prevail. (R.V. marg.) He who would have power and authority with his fellows must first secure it by yielding to God. The Beatific Vision: "I have seen God face to face." Our moments of vision come after the night of wrestling. The price is high, but the vision more than compensates. Our sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed. Such is life! As the dawn of heaven breaks we see the Angel of Love, and as Christ meets us we awake to the royalty of the sons of God.

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O God, that our backslidings and transgressions, our failures and inconsistencies, cannot turn aside Thy compassionate love. We would yield ourselves to Thee. Make us as rock to the seducing influences of the world and of the flesh, but soft as clay to the least touch of Thy hand. Strive mightily in us by Thy Holy Spirit, and perfect that which concerneth us. AMEN.

March 18

CONSECRATION

"Know ye not that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body."-- 1Co 6:19-20 (R.V. marg.).

THE FACT that we have been bought with a price, not with corruptible things, as silver or gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ, lies at the foundation of all consecration (1Pe 1:18). In consecration we do not make ourselves Christ's but recognize that we are His by an unalienable right. In the slave market human beings were sold like cattle; but this institution is set forth as the first step in our devotion to the service and person of Jesus Christ, the Lord who bought us. Slaves pass from one master to another. Among the Hebrews an Israelite would sometimes sell himself into slavery until the year of Jubilee, or until one of his kinsmen redeemed him (Lev 25:47-50). So our Kinsman, Christ, bought us back from sin and guilt and condemnation; He says, as He buys us: "Ye shall be for Me, ye shall not be for another."

Our Lord's claim upon us is built on His own supreme sacrifice. "He gave Himself for us," says the Apostle Paul, "that He might redeem us from all iniquity" (Tit 2:14). He gave Himself up to the Death of the Cross, that we might reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin. The Apostles constantly speak of themselves as "the slaves of Jesus Christ." Oh, that we might all live like this, counting nothing as our exclusive possession, but believing that all we have has been given to us to use in trust for our Lord and Master. He assigns to us each and all the work that we can do best. Some are called to work for Him in the high places of the Church, and others to toil in lowly obscurity, but everything is important in the great House of the Master, and all He requires is faithful service. I shall never forget when I first entered into the realization of the Ownership of my Lord; that I was His chattel, and had no longer any option or choice for one's enjoyment or emolument. The life which was commenced then has been one of perfect freedom, for this is the enigma of His service, that Christ's slaves are alone free; and that the more absolutely they obey Him, the more completely do they drink of the sweet cup of liberty!

PRAYER

O Lord, I give myself to Thee. I am born to serve Thee, to be Thine, to be Thy instrument. I ask not to see--I ask not to know--I ask simply to be used. AMEN.

March 19

RISEN WITH CHRIST

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God."-- Col 3:1 (R.V.).

IF! SOME one will say, "He, there's the rub! I'm afraid that is not true of me; my life is sinful and sorrowful; there are no Easter chimes in my soul, no glad fellowship with the Risen Lord; no victory over dark and hostile powers." But if you are Christ's disciple, you may affirm that you are risen in Him! With Christ you lay in the grave, and with Christ you have gone forth, according to the thought and purpose of God, if not in your feelings and experience. This is distinctly taught in Eph 2:1-10 and Rom. 6. The whole Church (including all who believe in our Lord Jesus) has passed into the light of the Easter dawn; and the one thing for you and me, and all of us, is to begin from this moment to act as if it were a conscious experience, and as we dare to do so we shall have the experience.

Notice how the Apostle insists on this: "You died, you were raised with Christ, your life is hid with Christ. Give yourself time to think about it and realize it."

The Cross of Jesus stands between you and the constant appeal of the world, as when the neighbours of Christian tried to induce him to return to the City of Destruction. This does not mean that we are to be indifferent to all that is fair and lovely in the life which God has given us, but that the Cross is to separate us from all that is selfish, sensual, and savouring of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1Jo 2:15-17).

Set your mind on things above (Col 3:2). "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." With many of us there is little attempt to guard our thoughts. The door of our heart stands open, with none to control the ingress or egress of the tumultuous throng of thoughts that wander in and out. If only we would ask the Holy Spirit to control our thoughts, so that we might think only the things that are true and of good report, a wonderful change would pass over our life (Phi 4:7-8).

Realize that Christ is your life--He is in you! See to it that nothing hinders the output of His glorious indwelling. Never mind if the world of men misunderstand you. Some day your motives and reasons will be manifested (Col 3:4).

PRAYER

Grant, most gracious God, that we may love and seek Thee always and everywhere, and may at length find Thee and for ever hold Thee fast in the life to come. AMEN.

March 20

STOOPING TO RISE

"Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him."-- Phi 2:8-9.

WE WAKE up from the unconsciousness of infancy to find ourselves in a world of revolt, and learn that so far as the memory of man reaches back into the past, this convict has been recognized as existing between man and himself, man and his fellow, man and God. Is there no help? Will not God some day bring peace and good will into these troubled scenes? Yes, indeed! This paragraph tells us that the time will come when every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Christ is Lord, and that God will be glorified. And this is being effected by Christ through means that we did not expect.

When our Lord stooped to live visibly amongst men, He refused to avail Himself of the homage due to His original nature. He had been in the form of God, but was content to veil His glory, to assume the form of a servant, to be made in the likeness of men. In the cradle of Bethlehem, in the home of Nazareth, in the voluntary limitations of His earthly ministry, in His obedience to the death of the cross, there was the hiding of His power. He refused to use the attributes of His intrinsic Deity, that He might manifest the Love of God, that He might bear away the guilt of the world, and work out and bring in an eternal righteousness. Therefore He is exalted and bears evermore the name of Jesus---the Saviour of the world.

The Apostle says, let this same mind be in you; think these-thoughts; follow in the steps of Jesus. We must show a holy emulation as to who shall stoop the lowest, and follow the master the closest. The most urgent matter for each of us to consider is not whether we are orthodox in our creed (though that is not unimportant), but whether at any cost we have the mind which was in Christ, whether at any cost to ourselves we are manifesting the love of God to those around us.

PRAYER

Our Heavenly Father, Give us the patience, the tender pity, the humility of Jesus our Lord; who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor. Make us obedient even to the death of the cross. Help us not to save ourselves, that we may save others. AMEN.

March 21

A NEW BEATITUDE

"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me."-- Mat 11:6.

OUR LORD put within the reach of His noble Forerunner the blessedness of those who have not seen and yet have believed; of those who trust Him though they are slain; of those who wait the Lord's pleasure; and of those who cannot understand His dealings, but rest in what they know of His heart. This is the beatitude of the unoffended, of those who do not stumble over the mystery of God's dealings with their life.

This Blessedness is within our reach also. There are times when we are overpowered with the mystery of life and nature. The world is so full of pain and sorrow, strong hearts seem breaking under an intolerable load. God's children are sometimes the most bitterly tried. For them the fires are heated seven times; they suffer, not only at the hand of man, but the heavens seem as brass to their cries and tears. The enemy of souls has reason to challenge them with the taunt, "Where is now your God?"

You and I have perhaps been in this plight. We have said, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" We are tempted to stumble; we are prone to fall over the mysteries of God's dealings with us. But it is then that we have the chance of inheriting this new beatitude. If we refuse to bend under the mighty hand of God--questioning, chafing, murmuring at His appointments--we miss the door which would admit us into rich and unalloyed happiness; we fumble about the latch, but it is not lifted. But if we will quiet our souls like a weaned child, anointing our heads and washing our faces, then light will break in on us from the eternal morning. The peace of God will keep our hearts and minds, and we shall enter upon this blessedness of which our Lord speaks.

PRAYER

Forgive our sins, our faithless tears, and our repining murmurs. Lift us on the tide of Thy love into fuller, richer, deeper experiences. May we know what it is to have Christ in us, the Hope of Glory. AMEN.

March 22

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."-- Phi 2:5.

FAITH IS not simply an intellectual experience of a statement of fact, but it is our personal trust and confidence in Him of whom the fact is true. We are not saved merely because we believe that Jesus Christ died for us on the Cross, but because we trust in Him who died. It is the personal touch between Christ and ourselves that causes His life to pass into our nature, making us sound and healthy, as well as secure and safe.

What does the Cross mean to you and me? Does it not mean that there our Lord gave Himself absolutely to the Father's will. Never in any way did He make Himself the origin and fountain of His action, but was ever the empty channel through which God poured Himself. "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It seemed as if He went down lower and lower, on rung after rung of the ladder until He reached Hades, giving up everything only to follow the Will of God; but out of the lowest depths God raised Him to the Eternal Throne.

In each one of us there is strong self-will. You say, "I am resolved to be a good man or woman, to live a noble life, to give up bad habits--I will" But it can never be accomplished in that way. It is only when we are willing to see ourselves, our own energy, our good self as well as our bad self brought to an end on the Cross of Jesus, that we shall be able to enter into and live His eternal life.

At this moment I would summon you to stand beneath the Cross and to see there One who entirely yielded up His own will. More than that, I want you to see your self-life nailed there, and turn from it to God in adoration, saying that you are prepared to be weak and helpless so far as your own energies are concerned, that He may put forth in your life the mighty energy of that power which raised Christ from the dead. It is only when we are weak that we are really strong; it is only when we surrender ourselves to the power of the Cross, so that we realize that we have been crucified with Christ, that we are able to share in His eternal victory over the devil and the power of evil.

PRAYER

O God, Thou hast revealed Thyself to us in Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. We love Him, because He endured the Cross, and despised the shame in order to save us. May we follow Him by the way of the Cross, bearing His reproach, sharing His griefs, obedient even unto death, that we may also live and reign with Him here, and more perfectly at last. AMEN.

March 23

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

"Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."--

Rom 6:4.

THE KEYNOTE of this inspiring paragraph is life in union with the Risen Christ. Behind us lies the Death of our Lord, which severed for His people their fellowship with the world. As the voice of praise or blame cannot reach the dead, but are arrested at the fast-closed ears, so it is intended that the murmur of the world should not affect us, but that we should be set only on the Will of God.

It is not wise, however, to dwell always on the negations of the Christian life. It is true that they are always present, but to dwell on them is to miss the power by which self-sacrifice and self-denial become easy. Do not live on the dying but the risen side of the Saviour's work. Behold Him as He goes forth upon His upward way to the Throne of Glory. Seek to experience union with Him in the likeness of His resurrection (Phi 3:10).

There ought to be a finality in our experience. It is good for us to recognize the break with our past life. It must be clearly defined; we must have done with it for ever. It is possible that we may be tempted, and come temporarily beneath the dominion of old sins; but in principle, like the Israelites, we have passed from Egypt, never to return to it, and the Red Sea of Christ's redemption severs us from our former condition. We do not reckon ourselves to be dead to sin in the sense that our nature is henceforth incapable of sinning. If we think thus, we shall soon be disillusioned, and find that tendencies and strivings are within us which prove the contrary. But we must reckon that we have died to sin, and whenever temptation comes, that it has no claim upon us. Nelson turned his blind eye to the signal to retreat from action, and we are to turn blind eyes and deaf ears to the tempter.

The Apostle says that we are to present our members as instruments of righteousness to God. Do not look at the tempter, but at Christ; yield the eyes, ears, heart, and mind to Him, that He may make the best possible use of them; and that which becomes the habitual practice of the outward life will inevitably affect the soul and spirit.

PRAYER

Constrained by Thy love, O Lord, we would here present ourselves, spirit, soul, and body, not to live unto ourselves, but unto Thee who didst die, and rise again. AMEN.

March 24

FOOLISH EXCUSES

"Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse."-- Luk 14:17-18.

IN THIS parable our Lord seems to show that the temptations of life lie in three directions. Our Property. So long as we are pilgrims and strangers, with no settled piece of land to call our own, with no stake in the country, with no accumulation in the bank, we reach out our hands towards the city that hath foundations (Heb 11:10-13). But when we buy a field, we are often preoccupied and engrossed with it, and all it stands for. We must lay it out for building, or plan the crops we are to raise; we think how we can sell it again at some advantage; we hope the railway company may need it. And so, though we may be outwardly punctilious in our religious observance, yet our affections are not set on things above (Col 3:1-4).

Our Activities. There is nothing wrong in having a team of oxen; on the contrary, it is a great and noble thing to plough up the virgin soil, and to make corn grow for the sustenance of the toiling millions of our fellow men. The oxen of Christ's time have their counterpart in the machinery of to-day--the traction engine and the motor-car. All these things marvellously preoccupy our minds. Men become so deeply interested, that they have no time or energy for anything else. They may not give an absolute negative to the invitations of Christ, but their urbane and polite excuse covers a practical refusal--"I pray Thee have me excused."

Our Home and Family Life. Our Lord said no word against these. Did He not honour a wedding feast with His Presence and first miracle? But He knows that we are apt to set aside the claims of the spiritual life when we are surrounded by all the joys and comforts of material happiness.

The excuses which were offered were very shallow--the land would not have disappeared if its owner had postponed visiting it for a day; the cattle had surely been proved already, or they would not have been bought. As to the newly-married wife, there was no reason why she should not have accompanied her husband, there was plenty of room for both. Let us respond to the love which Christ offers to us, lest we be refused by Him at the last (Heb 12:25).

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, our most gracious God, to preserve us from the cares of this life, lest we be too much entangled therein.
AMEN.

March 25

MUSIC AND DANCING!

"As he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing And he was angry, and would not go in."--- Luk 15:25-28.

THE ELDER brother heard the sounds of music and dancing as he drew nigh to the house. They were the chord of the house, because they were the chord which was ringing through the heart of the Master and Father. Every household is more or less attuned to the spirit of those who are at its head. There is a warning here for us not to carry our moods and worries home, lest we lower and depress the tone of all the inmates of our family circle!

The father's joy at the return of his younger son was highly infectious. As the Greek suggests, there were three grades of servants in the house, evidently a great household--and the whole of them were abandoned to exuberant joy. Not a girl who did not smarten up and dress herself in her best; not a lad who did not polish his buttons. The effect was the more remarkable as contrasted with the dark clouds which, during the last few years, had enveloped them all, the reflection of the sorrow of the master!

But ought there not to have been a similar outburst of joy in respect to the elder brother? Not that he had come back, but that he had never gone astray! not that he was a forgiven wastrel, but that he had never transgressed at any time his father's commandment! But no fatted calf was killed in his honour; no music and dancing celebrated his adherence to the home! Was this quite fair?

But there were compensations. "Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is Thine." "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." All things are ours in Him. Like Enoch, we may always walk with God and have fellowship with Him. The prodigal may have his music and dancing, but is it not better to have a life cultured in love, radiant with peace and joy, unbroken in its even tenor and happiness? No! we will not grudge him one hour of exultation, but give us God's best and sweetest gift--an unclouded heart, rest, serenity, peace, the daily love of God our Father shed abroad within us, as we live in His dear presence!

PRAYER

Take from my heart, Heavenly Father, all hatred and malice, all envy and jealousy, and everything which would cause a breach between me and others; that nothing may prevent the inflowing of Thy love to my heart, and its outflowing towards others. AMEN.

March 26

THE MORNING COMETH

"And the evening and the morning were the first day."-- Gen 1:5.

SIX TIMES these words are repeated, and the one lesson that rings out is that God counts His periods, not as man does from night to night, but from evening till morning. ' Not first the light, and after that the dark; but first the dark, and after that the light." God saw that each night would end in daylight, and that the end of all the nights and all the days would be the eternal day in which there can be no darkness at all. This is what St. John saw: "There shall be no night there, for the Lord God giveth them light" (Rev 22:5). The sun of materialism sets in a black ocean, unlit by the star of hope. But as long as God is, we believe that He will make a new heaven and new earth; and from out of what seems disappointing and hopeless He will bring a fairer creation than before. Creation shall participate in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Watchman what of the night? The morning cometh! The darkness will finally pass away before the radiance of the dawn, and this because God is God; He is Love and Light and His Word creates.

So it is with the individual. Life may be dark. Sin is darkness; sorrow is darkness; ignorance is darkness, and these three may be part of your daily lot. But the night is far spent, the day is at hand. For you the morning star is in the sky. The education of your soul is like that of a child at school. How hard and difficult those first days, but when the rudiments were mastered; when the discipline had played its part, then were reaped the harvests of sowing, and darkness was turned to day. Be of good cheer! Even in death there is nothing to fear. "That night they caught nothing; but when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore." The dark waves, as they break around the boat of your life, are bearing you onward to the morning meal upon the golden sands, where you will find that Love has gone before you with its preparations! It shall be evening and morning and lo! the day without night.

PRAYER

O God, the darkness and light are both alike to Thee, and the night shineth as the day. Help us to follow Thee even through the valley of the shadow, and to trust Thee whatever be our lot; until the day dawns, and the shadows flee away. AMEN

March 27

THE LORD IS AT HAND

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Mat 28:20.

THERE IS an added beauty and meaning in these words when we translate the Greek into literal English: "I am with you all the days."

How fresh and vital and inspiring they are! Though familiar as household words, they refresh us like the breath of a spring morning laden with the ozone of the sea.

We shrink back from the mysteries of life, and dread its pain, less for ourselves than for those who are so closely twined into our life. We need wisdom, strength, guidance, a brother's love, a Saviour's intercession--but all is here, if only we can appreciate and receive the benediction of the wonderful fact of the perpetual presence of Christ.

There are conditions which we must fulfil. Obedience. If a man keep My words... I will manifest Myself unto him. The path of your life is marked out by the Providence of God, either in the levels of ordinary existence, or in some special mission and calling. As you bravely tread it, you become aware of a glorious Presence coming to meet you, and walking by your side.

Purity; "the pure in heart see God." This is the finding of the Holy Grail, of which Tennyson sang! A quiet heart. I do not say a quiet life---that may be impossible, but a heart free from care, from feverish passion, from the intrusion of unworthy ambition, pride or vanity. The habit of meditating on God's Word helps to induce the quiet heart and devout spirit which realizes the Lord's presence. The Bible is like the garden in which the Lord God walked in the cool of the day; read it much and prayerfully, and you will meet Him in its glades.

Recollection. There will be times when the sense of His presence will be wafted into your soul. At other times, it is a great secret to say: "Thou art here, O Lord! I do not feel or enjoy Thee. My heart is desolate, but Thou art beside me!" Faith, not feeling, is the realizing faculty. Without it, you would not have perceived His presence, though you had been beside St. John on Patmos; with it we may find Him as near in London to-day as in Palestine, long years ago!

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, Thou art with us all the days. Give us eyes to see Thee and ears to hear Thy voice, that Thou mayest become more real than the dearest and closest of our friends. AMEN.

March 28

THE SOUL'S AMEN

"Then answered I, and said, Amen, O Lord."-- Jer 11:5 (R.V.).

JEREMIAH WAS conscious of the special current of Divine energy which was passing into and through his soul. The word had come to him "from the Lord," and he felt it as a burning fire which he could not contain. He must needs give vent to it, but when it has passed his lips, and he has time carefully to consider it, he answers the Divine message by saying--"So be it, O Lord!"

The soul's affirmation. Let us guard against mistake. It is not always possible to say "Amen"--Yes--to God, in tones of triumph and ecstasy. Sometimes our response is choked with sobs that cannot be stifled, and soaked with tears that cannot be repressed. It was probably so with Abraham, when he tore himself from Ur of the Chaldees; when he waited weary years for his son; when he climbed the steep of Moriah. These words may be read by some who suffer year after year constant pain, by those whose earthly life is tossed upon the sea of anxiety, over which billows of care and turmoil perpetually roll. It is not improbable that these will protest as to the possibility of saying "Amen" to God's providential dealings, or they will ask: Of what avail is it to utter with the lips a word against which the whole heart stands in revolt?

In reply, let all such remember that our blessed Lord, in the garden, was content to put His will upon the side of God. He knew it was enough if, in the lower parts of the earth to which His human nature had descended, He was able, unflinchingly to affirm, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Dare to say "Amen" to God's providential dealings. Say it, though heart and flesh fail, and you will find that if the will doth acquiesce, the heart comes ultimately to choose; and as the days pass, some incident, some turn in the road, some concurrence of unforeseen circumstances, will suddenly flash the conviction on the mind and reason that God's way was right, the wisest, and the best. "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter," is the assurance of our Guide. Dare to trust Him, and in the strength of that trust to say, "Amen, O Lord."

PRAYER

For all things beautiful, and good, and true;
For all things that seemed not good yet turned to good;
For all the sweet compulsions of Thy Will
That chased, and tried, and wrought us to Thy shape--
We thank Thee, Lord.

March 29

THE CHILD IN THE MIDST

"He called to Him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily! say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."-- Mat 18:2-3 (R.V.).

OUR LORD desired to show wherein true greatness consists. First of all, it begins with Humility. Without this, no one can be His disciple (Mat 18:4). A child is naturally humble until parents and friends begin to spoil it by directing its attention to itself. For us, as for the proud Naaman of old, our flesh must become as a little child. Some people are rather proud of their humility, and expect to be praised for it, but that is not the genuine humility of which Christ speaks.

The next qualification for greatness is Love. We must recognize and welcome Christ-like souls, however lowly their lot. What a contrast between the boy, whose pitiful ease is described in the previous chapter (Mat 17:14-18) and this little child. But to each the Lord Jesus proved Himself to be a loving Friend. The one He restored to sanity and health, the other He gathered in His arms. Probably the child was standing or playing quite near to Him, so that it only needed a very slight gesture to bring him to the Master's side, and he became the text of the sermon that followed. We must not despise one of the least, for they are the objects of Christ's special regard. Our Lord draws aside the veil from the eternal world, and shows that the youngest and weakest ones are they to whom the loftiest angels are allotted as their guardians. The holy ones of the Presence-Chamber, who always beheld the face of God, are set to watch over the children.

The third step to true greatness is in the disposition which is unsparing of self, and thoughtful for all others. We dare not put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall before one of Christ's weakest disciples; we must be prepared to cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye rather than grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Our attitude about many things which might appear perfectly harmless must be determined by the effect of our influence upon others.

PRAYER

Give unto us, O Lord, true humility, a loving and friendly, a holy and a useful manner of life; bearing the burdens of our neighbours, denying ourselves, and studying to benefit others, and to please Thee in all things. AMEN.

March 30

THE PERFECTING OF CHRIST

"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."-- Heb 5:8-9.

FOR THE long and steep ascent of life, our Father has given us a Companion, a Captain of the march, a Brother, even Jesus our Lord, who passed through the suffering of death, and is now crowned with glory and honour (Heb 2:9-11). He has passed along our pathway, and climbed our steep ascents, that He might become our merciful and faithful Friend and Helper. In this sense He was perfected, and became unto all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation.

As regards His Nature, it was impossible for Him to be otherwise than perfect. In Him all the fullness of the Divine Nature dwelt without let or hindrance. But since the children partook of flesh and blood, He also Himself partook of the same; it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren. To each of us He says: "I have trodden this path before Thee, and know every inch of the way." Christ is the Great-Heart, the Companion for all pilgrim souls.

But if we are to walk with Him, and realize His eternal salvation, we must learn to obey. This is the lesson taught to the scientist by Nature. He must be exact, minute, microscopic in his attention and obedience to details. If he should fail in one tiny point, his best-conceived plans and experiments must fail. Exact obedience is essential to the engineer. The slightest inadvertence will clog and stop the mightiest machine that human ingenuity ever invented. It is, however, in the spiritual sphere that disobedience brings the greatest and most momentous catastrophes. We must learn to obey, even in the dark! Not ours to make reply, or to question God's dealings. He withholds His reasons, but demands our obedience.

The strength to obey is God given. There appeared an angel from Heaven to strengthen Christ, and to each of us treading dark and hard paths, that angel comes still. But you never know the angel till you reach your Gethsemane. It is because our Lord learned these things by experience, that He is perfected to impart eternal salvation to every soul of man.

PRAYER

Eternal Saviour, who knowest each step of this difficult pathway of life, we come to Thee for Thy gracious help; enable us to obey Thy promptings, and in every hour of mortal weakness and fear stand beside us to be our very present help. AMEN.

March 31

THE LIFE-GIVING STREAM

"Every thing shall live whithersoever the river cometh." -- Eze 47:9.

"And He shewed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." -- Rev 22:1 (R.V.).

IN THIS wonderful chapter in Ezekiel the influence of restored Israel is compared to a life-giving stream issuing from the Divine dwelling-Place (Eze 47:1). When the waters rise in the heart, they flow out, as our Lord promised, in ever-deepening, widening rivers of blessing to mankind (Joh 4:14; Joh 7:37-39). The ankles may mean the steps of daily life; the knees our prayers and intercessions; the loins our affections and passions. Our influence for God should perpetually deepen and extend. In every life, there must be the unfathomable depth of fellowship with God--"a river that cannot be passed" (Eze 47:5).

PRAYER

O God our Father, the Ocean of Love to whom all streams tend, but in whom there is no ebb! The depth of our need calls to the depth of Thy grace, but Thy grace is deeper than our need. May we drink deeply of the river of the water of life and overflow in blessing to the thirsty worm around. AMEN.