

Our Daily Walk by F B Meyer - May

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by F B Meyer

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May 1

THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER

"Lord, teach us to pray."-- Lk 11:1.

WHERE IS no other such Teacher as Christ. He was the Master in the art of prayer, and has taught all the greatest intercessors among the sons of men. His own example has been their incentive. It was because they saw Him praying that one of the disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray--an example of the power of unconscious influence. If a boy kneels in prayer in the school bedroom, he will be almost sure to start others praying.

Be natural in prayer. Do not repeat prayers the face of which has become worn away by constant usage. Find out approximately what your needs will be; and ask for the needed grace, as a child of a father.

Intercede for others. Do not use exclusively "I," "me," and "my," but "we," "our," and "us." Remember how Christ interwove intercession with every petition of the prayer He taught His disciples.

Be sure to receive as well as ask. No beggar is content with asking. He plies his errand until he receives. Alas, that we are so often content to ask with no thought of receiving. Before we rise from our knees, having pleaded for something that is contained in the Divine promises, we should dare to believe that we do receive the petitions that we have desired. "Have Faith in God" really means reckon on God's faithfulness to you. Do not look at your faith. He who is ever considering his health will become an invalid; he who always looks down at his faith will cut the very roots from which faith grows, will shut out the beam by which faith lives. Look away to the character of God--the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy for ever.

Leave the ultimate answers to your prayer to His infinite wisdom. Not infrequently, to reverse our Lord's words, children ask for stones and not bread; entreat for scorpions and not fish. Under such circumstances it is wise and good of God to say No to our requests, and to give us what we would ask if we knew all as He does. When we get to heaven we shall have to thank Him as much for the unanswered as for the answered prayers.

Be sure to give the Master time to teach you how to pray. It is necessary to wait for Him, when we feel less earnest, as when the fire burns most vehemently. He likes the regular hours for His pupils, and that they should not hurry impetuously away from His gracious words.

PRAYER

Teach me to pray, O Lord, as Thou didst teach Thy disciples of old, and winnow my prayers that I may desire and ask only those things that are according to Thy will. AMEN.

May 2

THE FIRST LESSON

"When ye pray, say 'Father'."-- Luk 11:2.

HEAVEN IS "the Father's House." It is our Home. We are strangers and sojourners here, and on our way home. What fascination is in the word! Home will draw the sailor, soldier, explorer, prodigal from the ends of the earth. God has given to most of us the dear memory of what Home is, that we may guess at what awaits us and be smitten with home-sickness. "Blessed are the home-sick, for they shall reach home!"

But the charm of Heaven will be the manifested presence of our Father. All doubts and misunderstandings will be dissipated. We shall know and see, as we are seen and known. In the closing verses of Jude we are told that we shall be set before the presence of His glory, without blemish and in exceeding joy. It is as though our Saviour will introduce us to the manifested presence of the Father.

But we need not wait till then. If we know our Lord, we know the Father. It troubled Christ that His disciples had been so long with Him in familiar intercourse and yet had not realised that the beauty and holiness which shone from His nature were beams of the Father's character. To have Jesus is to have the Father. To know Jesus is to know the Father. To pray to Him is to pray to God, for He is God manifest in the flesh. He is not simply an incarnation of God, in the sense of the old Greek mythology, adopting a cloak or disguise which was afterwards cast off. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

There must be reverence in our prayer. God is in heaven and we upon the earth. We must not rush unceremoniously into His presence, as though it were a common and too-familiar room, where ceremony and respect are laid aside. There should be the constant remembrance that in prayer we stand in the presence-chamber of the great Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the Universe. We wipe our shoes and remove our hats when we enter the home of our friend; let us not forget our manners in the opening sentences of prayer. Angels veil their faces and cry "Holy!"

But there may be a blessed faith and trust when we pray. The Father of Jesus awaits us. He ascended to His Father and our Father. We pray to One who loves us in His Beloved Son with an everlasting love, and holds out the golden sceptre towards us.

PRAYER

I adore Thee, Heavenly Father! There is no limit to Thy power, or to Thy love. Thou art greatly to be praised! Thou art greatly to be loved! Accept the homage of my soul and life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

May 3

HONORING GOD

"Hallowed be Thy Name."-- Luk 11:2.

GOD'S NAME is His Nature---His attributes, the various qualities that go to make Him what He is. When we ask for it to be hallowed, we ask that all which obscures it should be swept away as mists before the dawn. We thank God for all that is known of His wonderful Being, for the message of Nature, for revelation given to seers and prophets, for the Word who came from Him, and for the Holy Spirit who reveals Him. But there are still vast unexplored tracks in God's Being of which we know nothing, and there are myriads that know still less than we do. By their sinful ignorance and superstition, men have misunderstood and misrepresented the character of God; therefore we need to pray that in this world, and in all other worlds, His glorious personality should be understood, appreciated, and loved.

When we pray "Hallowed be thy Name" it is to remind ourselves of the greatness and glory of God our Father. Before you utter petitions for yourself, be still! Compel the intruding crowd of daily needs and desires to remain outside the fence which surrounds the mountain foot. Go up to meet with God, desiring to look at the needs of the world and of your own little life, as subordinate to your own great desire that God should be loved, honoured, and obeyed. Put God's interests above your own. Enthroned Him in thought and petition.

In a world that neither knew nor hallowed God's Name, Jesus set Himself to reveal and unfold all its wonderful depths. Let us try every day to know more of that Name, and to make it known. It is through ignorance of God that men turn from Him. They have distorted views, obtained from the lives and words of professedly religious people which are often a sad travesty and misrepresentation of God. If only men really knew God, surely the love with which He has loved them would enter and fill their hearts.

It is said that the passion of the French soldiers for Napoleon was so great, that even when mortally wounded they would raise themselves as he came riding past on his charger, and cry: "Long live the Emperor!" It is when we have become wholly absorbed in bringing glory to God in the highest, that we shall know peace in our hearts, and become the channels of goodwill to men, as men of good-will, i.e., the doers of God's Will.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, unveil to me, I humbly ask, the sweet mystery and beauty of Thy Name--Abba Father. AMEN.

May 4

GOD'S GOVERNMENT

"Thy Kingdom come."-- Luk 11:2.

IN ONE of those sublime flights with which the Epistles of St. Paul abound, he tells us that the time is coming when the Son shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall abolish all rule, and authority, and power. From this we are at liberty to infer that the Kingdom was originally the Father's; that by man's sin and fall it has been alienated from His control.

The Lord Jesus became incarnate for the purpose of regaining the Kingdom by His agony, blood, and tears; though it is not as yet His, it is being acquired. When, therefore, we pray: "Father, Thy Kingdom come," we are asking that the complete victory of Jesus Christ may be hastened; that He may speedily triumph over all obstacles and enemies; that truth may reign in government, art, and science; that trade may be free from chicanery and fraud; that tyranny may be extinguished, corruption exposed; that He may send forth His Angels to gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, destroying that last enemy, death, and bringing in the golden age when all men shall know and love the Father, and become His obedient children.

There are many explanations of the Kingdom of Heaven. Perhaps as a rough and ready way of interpreting the phrase, we may say Divine Kingship. When we grasp that idea, it becomes the dominant note of life. It is the master-key which opens every lock. Just to believe, deep down in your soul, that the Father of Jesus--our Father--is King. That the God who is moved by the fall of a little bird from its nest, who is described in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost son, is King of the world and all its forces, and of everything in human life. To know and believe this is to get something which is worth everything else.

Will you not, here and now, place yourself under the government of the King? Let Him govern your heart, that you may love only within the limits which His pure and holy Spirit can permit. Let Him govern your mind, that no unholy thought be allowed to lodge and strike root within you. Let Him govern the books you read, the companionships and friendships you form, the methods of your business, the investment of your money, the way in which you spend your leisure--all must be under the government of His Kingdom, for He will not be King at all unless He is King in all.

PRAYER

Hasten, O God the coming of Thy Kingdom, and the consummation of Thy redeeming work. May the Kingdom of Christ come in us and through us; His voice speaking through our lips; His power working through our touch; His love beating in our heart. AMEN.

May 5

GOD'S WILL

"Thy Will be done, as in heaven, so on earth."-- Mat 6:10.

MANY PEOPLE shrink from God's will. They think that it always means pain, or sorrow, or bereavement. They always feel melancholy when you speak of doing the Will of God. Alas! how the devil has libeled God. The will of God is the will of a Father. It is the Fatherhood of God going out in action. "It is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish." "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

If only the will of God were done on earth, as it is done in heaven, there would be peace between the nations, and love and happiness in all our homes. Love would cement the union of all men in a city of blessedness. The fact of the world's present condition is no argument against the beneficence and blessedness of the will of God. It is because men will not do the will of God that things are as they are!

In our own life we shall never be really fight or happy until we have got to the point of saying: "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." We may not begin there. The first step is to choose it, then we shall come to accept it lovingly and thankfully; but, finally, we shall rejoice and delight in it. If you cannot say "Thy Will be done," say: "I am willing to be made willing that Thy Will should be done." If your will is like a bit of rough and rugged iron, tell God that you are willing for it to be plunged into the furnace of His love, so that all which is unyielding and obdurate may pass away before the ardent heat of the Divine Fire. Depend on it that He will not fail, nor be discouraged with the long process that may be required; and that He will not be rough or violent. He will stay His east wind. He will keep His hand on the pulse, that He may be aware of the least symptom that the ordeal is too strong.

At first there may be a twinge of pain, as when a dislocated limb is pressed back into its proper position, but afterwards there is the blessed restoration of healthy vigour. You will only lose what you would gladly give up if you know as much as God does of what promotes soul-health. "Whosoever," said our Lord, "will do the Will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." "In His Will is our peace."

PRAYER

Most Gracious God, to know and love whose will is righteousness, enlighten our souls with the brightness of Thy presence, that we may both know Thy Will and be enabled to perform it. AMEN.

May 6

GOD'S PROVISION

"Give us this day our daily bread."-- Mat 6:11.

IF YOU want daily bread, and would pray for it aright, you must ask as a child; and you must put first, before your own satisfaction, the Hallowing of God's Name, and the doing of His Will. Implicitly you suggest that if He gives you bread, you will use the strength it gives for His service.

Let us ever think of God as the bountiful and generous Giver. Too often He has been described as hard and austere, and as a result, men dread God, and only think of Him when they have done wrong. But we should describe Him as the All-Giver, who gives all things to all with the most royal generosity. He gives sunbeams and dewdrops, showers and rainbows, grace and glory, His beloved Son and His Spirit, human love and friendship, the daily spreading of our table, the provision of all that we need for life and godliness. Whether we wake or sleep, whether we are evil or good, whether we are pleasing to Him or not; to those who forget and blaspheme Him equally as to the saints and martyrs of the Church, God gives with both hands, pressed down and running over. We cannot buy, we do not merit, we cannot claim, but we may rely on Him to give. God is Love; and Love cannot refrain from giving, or it ceases to be Love.

Yet how low God stoops! He is so great, that His greatness is unsearchable. He dwells in the high and lofty place. His sun is ninety-seven millions of miles away from our earth; He has filled the heavens with countless constellations, for each of which He has a name. He puts the Himalaya into a scale, and the islands are as dust in His balances; but Jesus has taught us to say, "Our Father, give us bread!" When we get troubled about the immensity of heaven and the distances of the universe, let us come back to the discourse, of which this prayer is part, and which tells us that the great God thinks about the clothing of the lilies, the down on a butterfly's wings, the food of the young lions in the forest, the store of acorns that squirrels accumulate for their provision. It is wonderful to remember that from the first days of man's sojourn on earth, our Father has been laying up stores for us. Though we may be among the youngest children of Time, we come to a table as richly plenshed and provided as those who first tasted of His bounty. "Fear not, it is your Father's good pleasure to give."

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, let me not be anxious about to-morrow's provision or path, but trust Thee to provide and lead for to-day. Open Thine hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing. AMEN.

May 7

GOD'S FORGIVENESS

"Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who fails in his duty to us."-- Luk 11:4. WEYMOUTH

FORGIVENESS Is the exclusive prerogative of Christianity. The schools of ancient morality had four cardinal virtues--justice in human relations; prudence in the direction of affairs; fortitude in bearing trouble or sorrow; temperance or self-restraint. But they knew nothing of mercy or forgiveness, which is not natural to the human heart. Forgiveness is an exotic, which Christ brought with Him from Heaven. As long as He abode on earth, He forgave, and He left it as an injunction and example that His people were to forgive even as they had been forgiven.

Our Lord does not mean that God's forgiveness is measured by our own, or that our forgiveness is the cause of God's. Neither of these is the true rendering of this clause; but that God cannot forgive an unforgiving spirit. The only sure index that our contrition and penitence are genuine is that we forgive those who have wronged us. If we do not forgive, it proves that we have never attained that true position of soul before God in which He is able to forgive.

How is it with you? Do you forgive? Or are there men and women that you obstinately refuse to forgive? If there are, it shows that your own soul is not right before God; your love to God is gauged by your love to men; your relationship to God is indicated by your relationship to your fellows. The man who does not love the brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. Discover where you are to-day. If there is anyone in your life that you refuse to pray for and forgive, know that your heart is wrong with God.

Do the first thing, begin to pray for them, and say: "Forgive us--that one who has hurt me, that man who has wronged me; he needs forgiveness, but I need it equally. We are both in the wrong. I might have made it easier for him to do right than I have done." Second, ask for the opportunity to meet him. Third, claim that when you meet, there may be in you the royalty of God's grace, that you may bear yourself with that rare, gracious love which covers the multitude of sins. Be willing that through your lips God's pitying mercy may pass forth in words of human kindness and tenderness.

PRAYER

Forgive us, we pray Thee; put away our sin, as far as the east is from the west. Remember it no more, east it behind Thee as into the depths of the sea. May we be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven us. AMEN.

May 8

GOD'S DELIVERANCE

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."-- Mat 6:13.

OUR LORD couples His own prayer with ours when He says, pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." We remember that He was led into the wilderness by the Spirit, that He might be tempted, and that "in all points" He was tempted like as we are, though in His case there was no sin. It is wonderful to know that by some marvelous oneness of nature the Son of God Himself pursued the dreaded track of temptation.

And while we have this moral nature which links us, upon the one hand, to the eternal Christ, our Captain, who has gone through the same ordeal, we are also linked to every other man, woman, and child the world over. For, though we might suppose that there were such diversities of life that some might be secure of an immunity from temptation, yet a closer inspection of our common lot reveals the fact that it is inevitable to us all.

Temptation creeps into the sick-chamber equally as into the heyday of our health. It finds its way into the seclusion of the student even as it dogs the steps of the man of the world doing his business. It comes to the minister, with its tendency to elation or despondency, as well as to the criminal; to the poor as well as to the rich. There is no life, however guarded, that is not exposed to the blast and sirocco of temptation. Therefore we utter this prayer as one---"as."

But let us take heart! Remember it is the Father to whom this prayer is addressed. He made us, and knows just what we can stand; He loves us, and His tender succour is always by our side. He draws near, saying, "I am with you in this dark valley, and am able to make you stand; I would not have brought you here had I not counted the cost. I am able to be a very present help in this time of trouble. I have carried others through this ordeal, and I can carry you; only keep near my side; look away from the tempter to my face; cease to trust yourself and depend absolutely upon Me, and I, who brought you to this testing-place, will lead you out. Be of good cheer! See, there awaits you the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to each soldier who has stood true to Him in the hour of trial, and you could not get that if you did not bear this. It is because I want you to win that I am giving you the chance of this hard fight."

PRAYER

Father, be it so; my heart and my flesh fail, but Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Forbid that we should be overcome with evil, help us to overcome evil with good. AMEN.

May 9

GOD'S TRIUMPH

**"The Kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."--
Rev 11:15.**

IN THE midst of this babel of varying voices there has never been wanting the cry of the Church: "Thine is the Kingdom!" The rule of men is Christ's by right, but as Absalom made himself king in opposition to David, so has Satan made himself the prince of this world in opposition to Christ. Our earth is the scene of a great revolt under the leadership of Satan, but Christ is the rightful King of men for all that. His Kingdom is spreading from heart to heart, and ere long the prince of this world shall be cast out, and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord. Everyone will then say: "Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory!" But it is our privilege to say it now--when appearances seem all against it; now, when the usurper's power is so strong!

It is not enough, however, to say it in general, we must say it in particular. We must say to Christ our Lord, as the men of Israel said to Gideon: "Rule Thou over us, for Thou hast delivered us."

"Thine is the power." The millionaire says: "Mine is the power of money"; the orator, mine is the power of moving crowds by speech; the author, mine is the power of written words and songs; the scientist claims, mine is the power of extracting the secrets of nature. But after a time wealth vanishes, the tongue is paralysed, the mind decays, and so we learn that we have no inherent power. Visions of what is good, and the desire to do it, come to us, but how to perform, that is the difficulty, and we cry: "Give me power for service, over myself, power to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world." And in answer there comes this word of the ascended Lord: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth"; and as we catch the words, we answer thus: "Thine is the power." It is Thine that it may be mine!

"Thine is the glory." Let us live out the spirit of this prayer. When anyone praises us for some excellence or achievement in life or character, let us never forget to look up to Him and say: "Thine is the glory." Let us so live that men may be arrested by the radiance of our characters, that they may say: "How glorious must the Christ be who has made these so fair," and be constrained to follow Him.

PRAYER

Help us, O God, to enthrone Christ in our hearts, that having glorified Him, we may receive His Spirit as rivers of living water.
AMEN.

May 10

OUR ASSENT

"Saying, Amen!"-- Rev 7:12.

AMEN MEANS, "So be it--certainly." It is the word constantly translated in the Gospels by "verily." It contains the consent of the heart and the response of the life. Amen means that you appropriate each word that is spoken, that your heart says Yes to it and stamps it with the seal of its consent. Let your life say "Amen" to God, "Amen" to Providence, "Amen" to Redemption, "Amen" to the Song of Heaven.

When tried and perplexed with the troubles and problems of life, turn from these--which make the brain dizzy and the heart sick--and consider the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ--"Our Father"--from whom every ray of love in the universe has emanated; and remember that nothing can be permitted or devised by Him which is not consistent with the gentlest and truest dealings that an earthly father could mete out to his child. So shall you be able to say: "Amen, Lord."

We must not dwell upon the dark and perplexing questions that seethe and boil around us. We must look up to the blue sky of undimmed sunshine, our Father's heart. He must be Love, beyond our deepest, tenderest, highest conceptions of what love is. In His dealings with us, and with all men, love is the essence and law of His nature. In proportion as you humbly believe in the Father, you will be able to say "Yes," which is a true rendering of the Greek word in our version, translated "Even so" (Mat 11:26).

Our Lord was able to say, not only "Even so, Father"; but, "I thank Thee," and there shall come a day when the four-and-twenty elders, representing the redeemed Church, shall see the judgment of her great opponent, and say, "Amen, Hallelujah!" (Rev 19:4). Here we can say "Amen," and not often "Hallelujah"; there the two--the assent and the consent; the acquiescence and the acclaim; the submission to the Will of God, and the triumphant outburst of praise and adoration. Let us anticipate that age when we shall know as we are known; when we shall be perfectly satisfied, perfectly jubilant, perfectly blessed; when every shadow of misunderstanding and misapprehension shall be dispelled, and we shall join in the Hymn of the Redeemed Church: "Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the Ages."

PRAYER

O God, there are many things we dread, but we are enclosed in Thee; they cannot touch us except by Thy permission, and if Thou dost permit things that seem evil to enter our life, it must be well. Make us believe that all things are working together for good.

AMEN

May 11

A PSALM OF BLESSEDNESS

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked. But his delight is in the law of the Lord."-- Psa 1:1-2.

THE BLESSED, or Happy, man is described negatively (Psa 1:1). There is a gradation in the attitude, the sphere of influence, and the condition of his companions. In attitude, we may begin by walking, advance to standing, and end by sitting. If we would avoid the sitting, let us guard against walking or standing. In the sphere of influence, the beginning of backsliding is when a man listens to counsel; he then drifts into the path trodden by sinners, and finally is hardened enough to sit where scornful talk surrounds him on every hand. The condition of evil companions. We should be repelled if we were to be plunged suddenly into contact with the scornful, but our moral interests may not be specially outraged by the counsel of the wicked. Indeed, the advice which wicked men give sometimes resembles closely what our heart suggests and our taste prefers. It is so specious, so apparently sensible and natural, that we are captivated by it. Only gradually do we slide from those who forget God to those who set His law at defiance or openly blaspheme Him.

Our motive in going amongst ungodly men must be carefully considered. If it is to help and save them, as our Lord did, no harm will come to us. But if we go into the way of sinners for our own amusement, need we be surprised if the bloom pass off the fruit, and the fine edge from the tool? Let us examine ourselves. Are we startled and shocked now, as we used to be, by an indecent illusion or a blasphemous word? Is there a coarsening process at work? Even where we are not injured by worldliness, we may suffer by contact with the low ideals of our fellow-Christians. Let us watch and pray; let us consider one another and exhort one another day by day, lest any be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13).

The Blessed, or Happy, man is also described positively (Psa 1:2). This delight comes as naturally as appetite for food, when the soul is in a healthy condition. Under the inspiration of that delight, we shall meditate on God's Word continually, storing it in the heart, and reciting it when travelling, or in darkness.

Remember that the Lord knows the way you take. He is sensitive to every jolt and lurch, to the stony hills and the easy valley, to the foes that lie in wait. In His keeping you will never become as the light chaff, or the perishing way of the wicked written in the dust.

PRAYER

We commend ourselves, and those we love, to Thee, dear Lord. We put our hand in Thine, that Thou shalt lead us by the untrodden" way. AMEN.

May 12

A PSALM OF LIFE

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."-- Psa 23:1-6.

THIS IS "the Nightingale" among the Psalmist choristers! The first that we learn in infancy, the last we whisper with dying lips. It implies consecration, for God is this only to the soul which is wholly surrendered to Him. You cannot have all of God, or God in all, until you are willing to surrender your all. Do you want to put "My," the pronoun of possession, before the Name of God? He, then, you must be willing to answer His voice, and follow where He leads. "My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me, but a stranger will they not follow."

Morning! The Shepherd's leading. When He puts forth His sheep from the fold, in the dewy morning, He goes before them over the grass or up the mountain-track towards the pastures. It would never do for the flock to precede him. Whatever roughness you find on your path, remember that the Shepherd has gone before. "He leadeth me." Remember also that His name and character are involved in bringing you through "for His Name's sake."

Noon: The alleviations of rest. In all lives there are times when He makes us to lie down, or leads us by the waters of rest. Sometimes it is a period of convalescence after an illness. Sometimes a holiday, an interval between the pressure of engagements, a respite when the stress and strain of toil is over--these are our quiet pasture-lands. At other times, in the midst of life's rush and turmoil, our soul is kept at rest in God's peace. The heart rests for part of a second between its beats. "He maketh me to lie down!"

Night: the oil and the cup. The flock has reached the fold where it is to shelter. At the doorway stands the Shepherd, watching each one as it passes. This one has grazed and torn its head in getting through a hedge, and for it there is the anointing oil. Near His hand is the food and water, from which He fills the bowl, to wash the face, or give refreshment; and as it overflows, there is evidently enough and to spare!

Goodness and Mercy follow the flock, as the Shepherd precedes. "The House of the Lord" is the Fold from which we shall go out no more, and the Lamb shall be our Shepherd and abiding joy for ever.

PRAYER

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, the busy worm is hushed and the fever of life over and our work is done; then, Lord, in Thy mercy grant us safe lodging, a holy rest and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

May 13

A PSALM OF COMMUNION

"I will take the cup of Salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."-- Psa 116:13.

"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins."-- Mt26:27-28.

EVERY CHRISTIAN disciple should partake of the Lord's Supper regularly. It is a Sacrament. In the days of the Roman republic, the youths were brought to the altar and sworn to serve their country to the death. So our first Communion is our oath of allegiance to our King, It is a proclamation, or confession, of our faith. We bear witness to the death of Christ as our hope of forgiveness and salvation. We testify our desire to put His cross and grave between us and the world. It is also a bond of Christian union.

It is a Pledge of the Covenant. The Death of the Cross was God's sign and seal to the new covenant, the provisions of which are recited in Heb 8:1-13. When we drink the wine it is as though we said: "Remember thy Covenant." Let me appeal to all, and especially to the young disciple, to draw near and take the bread and wine, and to meditate deeply and reverently on that supreme Gift which demands our self-giving. "What shall I render unto the Lord? I will take the cup, I will pay my vows" (Ps116:13-14).

The expression in this Psalm is remarkable: "I will take the cup of salvation." When we enquire what salvation, we read: "Thou hast loosed my bonds" (Ps116:16), and we are reminded of Rev1:5, "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood." We are tied and bound by our sins; our sinful habits bind us fast in our thongs. But our Lord looses us by His cross.

Notice how triumphantly the Psalmist avows his loyalty to his Heavenly Master. Again, and yet again he avows: "O Lord, truly I am thy servant. I am thy servant." And we are the servants or bond-slaves of Jesus. If it be asked what "the sacrifices of thanksgiving" are, we may reply: First, the sacrifice of ourselves (Ro12:1). Next, the sacrifice of our praise and gifts (Heb13:15-16). Not grudgingly or thoughtlessly, but with cheerful eagerness, let us come to the altar of God. Because of all we owe to Him, let us never cease to live and serve, to praise and give.

PRAYER

We pray that we may eat and drink, and do whatsoever we are called to do, in remembrance of Christ, and to show forth His life. May the spirit of worship pervade every act of daily life. AMEN.

May 14

A SONG OF THE SANCTUARY

"Lord, I love the habitation of Thy House, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth."-- Ps26:8.

PROBABLY WE never value the House of God so much as when we are severed from it. The author of this Psalm was evidently in exile.

He envied the very birds that nested in the holy places where he had been wont to worship. The pilgrims who were on their way thither, and the door-keepers who stood on the threshold, seemed to his ardent longing in better case than himself. Robinson Crusoe missed the sound of the church bell when no longer able to obey its call. There is a strange fascination in the sound of worship for those who for years have been deprived of its privilege. Let us be thankful for "the means of grace" and reverently make good use of them whilst they are at our disposal.

In order to find God's Tabernacles "lovely," we must love the Lord of Hosts as our King and God. Put God in His right place in your heart and life, and you will love His Palaces. When God is worshipped as King, we shall be reverent, we shall be punctual, we shall come with prepared and expectant heart. Any detraction in the manner of the minister, the singing of the choir, the atmosphere of the place, will not affect the soul which is occupied with God.

It is blessed when the high ways to Zion have a place in a man's heart--when he is set on them, dreams of them, and loves them because of the goal to which they lead. On our earthly pilgrimage we have our valleys of depression and weeping, as well as our transfiguration heights. Thank God that life is not one long dull monotony. Let us not find fault with the road, but make the best of it. Every phase of our experience has its compensations. Look out for them. If you take the valley you will find the water-spring; if you take the hill, you will get the horizon. But be it valley or hill, either brings you to your desired goal.

This Psalm makes it clear that God is the Shield of His people. In the night He is our Sun; in the day, when the sunbeams strike us like swords, He is our Shield (Ps121:5-6). Whatever your lot God will be its make-weight and equivalent. When the soul has incurred disaster and pursuit, what a comfort it is to hide in God as our Shield. what an iron-plated door is in the rush of fire along the corridor, that God is to the soul that escapes to Him. He besets us behind, as well as before.

PRAYER

Give us grace, we beseech Thee, not to miss, by our apathy or unbelief, aught which Thou waitest to bestow. Teach us how to appropriate what Thou dost offer, and to receive what Thou wouldst impart. AMEN.

May 15

A PSALM OF GRATITUDE

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all His benefits."-- Psa 103:2.

THE PSALMIST is fond of addressing the soul, as though to arouse it from lethargy. Within is a whole choice of minstrels, let them all awake! All that is within should be attuned to God and His praise. Let us not repine for the past, or strain after the future. We often forget the rare benefits of the present moment, because we suppose that there is something more absolutely satisfying ahead. Here and now God is forgiving, healing, redeeming, crowning, satisfying, and executing righteous acts. Live in the present! Live in God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! It is enough. The past records of God's dealings with His people are an incentive to faith. What He was, He is. He is a fountain brimming to the full with pitying love, which flows over in mercy and forgiveness.

There are four comparisons and contrasts in Psa 103:10-18. "As the heaven....As the east....As a Father....As for man." The ancients thought that the sky was solid, a kind of blue ceiling. What an immensity of new meaning we can read in the words: "As the heaven is high above the earth." There is an infinity of distance above us, but not more infinite than God's mercy. To the Eastern mind, east and west were the points at which the sun appeared to rise on earth's surface, "pillowing his chin on the orient wave," and drawing the curtains of the night. For us the telescope reveals the almost inconceivable distance of the earth from the sun, but this is the distance to which God has removed our transgressions. A father's pity for his weak and tiny offspring is very touching. The strongest plea with God is that of helpless weakness! The Son of God was made in the likeness of man, and "He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust."

The last contrast was in our Lord's mind when He pointed to the flowers at His feet (Mat 6:30). Generations of flowers bloom and die in the broad expanse of nature--so frail, so beautiful, so transient. The generations of mankind are not more permanent. But the mercy of the Lord dates from everlasting and endures for ever.

The Psalmist's voice is heard, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" We are reminded of the conductor of a vast orchestra and choir, whose trained ear missed the note of the piccolo. So God will miss your voice if you refrain from His praise.

PRAYER

O Blessed God, ever engaged in giving Thy choicest gifts to us Thine unworthy children, accept the gratitude for which we have no words. May we rejoice in all the good Thou sendest us. AMEN.

May 16

THE PSALM OF PENITENCE

"I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight."-- Ps51:3-4.

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."-- Ro3:23.

THIS PSALM is a temple-staircase, worn by the feet of myriads of penitents. The page is wet with the tears alike of the most saintly and the most sinful. Augustine had them written on the walls of his tiny cell at Hippo, that he might appropriate them constantly. Perhaps they are more precious to us at the end of life than the beginning.

Note the definitions of sin. It is an erasure or blot on the fair page of life; hence the cry, "Blot out my transgressions." Oh that God would blot out the scribbings and smudges of our later years, and bring back the fresh beauty of our youth! It is a stain on the white robe of the soul; hence the petition: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity." There is but one way into the Holy City: "Blessed are they that wash their robes, and make them white in the Blood of the Lamb." It is leprosy; hence the cry, "Cleanse me from my sin; purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." There was special significance, then, for thee and me when Jesus reached forth His hand and touched the leper, saying: "Be thou clean."

Note the condition of forgiveness. It is confession. Transgression must be acknowledged. We must realise that sin is not only against man, but God, to whom man belongs, and who is affronted by all sin as committed directly against Himself. And our confession must not be superficial, but deep and heart-searching. We must go back to our earliest origins, to our connection with a sinful race, to our inward and hidden parts.

Note the cry for purity and righteousness of life. The clean heart has to be created, for there are no materials within us out of which it can be shaped or moulded. Eph 4:24 tells us that full provision has been made for this. We desire a "right," or steadfast spirit, which shall not deviate to the right or left, but bear straight onward to the goal. The Greek word for sin is "missing the mark." We long for a spirit that shall not be deflected. We desire a "free" or willing spirit (R.V. marg.). He, what a transformation is here! But it has been effected in myriads (1Co 6:11).

PRAYER

Heavenly Father! Forgive us our many sins, ignorances, and failures, and cleanse us from all iniquity for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. May we hate sin as Thou dost, and may Thy grace sink deeper into our hearts, purifying the springs of thought and action. AMEN.

May 17

THE SOUL'S THIRST FOR GOD

"My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and weary land, where no water is."-- Psa 63:1.

THE LONGING of the soul for God only makes itself felt when all lesser delights and earthly joys are relegated to their right place. If you are not conscious of this soul-thirst it is because your heart is trying to satisfy itself from the world, and is engaged in digging wells that can hold no water. The woman rightly said to Jesus that she came all the way to draw water, because there was no alternative; but as soon as He satisfied her soul-thirst by opening the spring within her, she "left her waterpot." Most of us are so occupied with business, pleasure-seeking, moneymaking, and trifles, that we have no time or care for God.

"My soul shall be satisfied" (Psa 63:5). It takes very little and very much to satisfy the soul. Very little of this world. As our Lord said to Martha, only one thing is really needful. Yet very much, because anything less than God will not suffice; more, we cannot ask. To desire God is to have Him. To thirst for the water of life is to drink of it. Therefore our Lord says: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Let us not long for things and people which are not here with us. We may be in poverty and deprivation and loneliness, yet all things and all people are ours at this moment, because we have God. Why not, here and now, say: "I have God, and therefore I have all that is good in every one and every thing!" Why should the fish lament, which has the ocean to swim in?

"My soul followeth hard after Thee" (Psa 63:8). God sometimes seems to withdraw from the soul, as the mother will release her hold of the baby who is learning to walk, so that it may be encouraged, without knowing it, to follow her as she retreats with outstretched hands. Did not Christ withdraw from the woman, inclining her to follow hard after Him (Mat 15:21-28). So let us "follow on to know the Lord."

As we close this portion, let us ask if we can truly repeat the first verse. Can we say of God: "Thou art my God"? He is ours, but we must seek Him. We must, so to speak, build the fences of our faith in an ever-enlarging enclosure of God, our Father and Portion. It is not enough for the emigrant to have what he calls "a claim." He must open up the resources that lie buried in his piece of land. The diamonds of the Cape were first discovered through a child playing with a white stone, but they have been sought ever since.

PRAYER

O God, some of us are full of infinite desire. Wilt Thou open Thine hand and satisfy our longings. Be nigh unto us as we call upon Thee. Hear our prayer and save us. AMEN.

May 18

THE PSALM OF INHERITANCE

"I am thy portion and thine inheritance among the children of Israel."-- Nu18:20.

"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him."-- Lam 3:24.

IT IS a wonderful thing when we can look upon God as being our portion, when we can lay our hand upon all His nature and say there is nothing in God which will not in some way contribute to my strength and joy. It makes one think of the early days of the settlement of emigrants in the Far West of Canada or Australia. The settler and his family would slowly travel forward, with their implements and seeds, till they reached the plot of ground allocated to them by the Government. At first the family would encamp on the edge of it, then they would prospect it, and go to and fro over its acres with a sense that it all belonged to them, though it needed to be brought under cultivation. In the first year, within the fence hastily constructed, the farmer and his sons would begin to cultivate some small portion of their newly-acquired territory. This would yield the first crops; next year they would press the fences farther out, until at the end of a term of years the whole would have been brought under cultivation.

So it is with the mighty Nature of God. when first we are converted and led to know Him for ourselves, we can claim to apprehend but a small portion of the length and depth and breadth and height of His Love; but as the years go slowly on, amid the circumstances of trouble and temptation and the loss of earthly things, we are led to make more and more of God, until the immensity of our inheritance, which can never be fully explored or utilised, breaks upon our understanding. No wonder that the Psalmist breaks forth into thanksgiving in Psa 16:6-7, and Psalm 91.

The devout soul rejoices in God as his great Inheritance. When He is always present to our mind, when we are constantly making use of Him, when we find ourselves naturally turning to Him through the hours of the day, then such quiet peace and rest settle down upon us that we cannot be moved by any anxiety of the present or future. Death itself will make no difference, except that the body which has obscured our vision will be left behind, and the emancipated soul will be able more fully to expatiate in its inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading (1Pe 1:4-5).

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O Lord, that all things are ours in Christ, working for us, co-operating with us, and bearing us onward to that glorious destiny for which Thou art preparing us. AMEN.

May 19

THE SILVER LINING IN THE DARK CLOUD

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, Who is the health of my countenance, and my God."-- Ps42:5, Ps42:11; Ps43:5.

THESE TWO Psalms are evidently one. See how the same refrain rings through them both! They are generally allocated to that sad time in David's history, when the rebellion of his favourite son, Absalom, drove him as an exile beyond the Jordan (2Sa 15:14). But amid the great sorrows that rolled over his soul, there was one glad ingredient. Thrice over the Psalmist encourages himself to Hope! For many a sorrowful soul, this is a true emblem. Amid all the disappointment and despair of life, there is always one chord of Hope--God! We may stand amid the wreck of our earthly hopes. Through misconduct or mistake, as the result of folly or sin, we may have reduced ourselves and those dear to us to the last degree of misery; but the soul may always turn from its low estate to God, sure that He will have mercy, will abundantly pardon, and will turn again the adverse pressure of the tide.

See how the broken-hearted may still speak of God! This man had grievously sinned. He seemed to have forfeited all claim on God's recognition and care. He had brought shame and disgrace on the cause of religion. All down the years the story of his wrongdoing would give the enemies of truth abundant reason to blaspheme. And yet see how he dares to speak of God! He describes Him as the God of his life, as his Rock, as the Health of his countenance, the God of his strength, and the Gladness of his joy. This is a great lesson! We may change, but God changes never. We may turn our face from Him, or allow some evil thing to loom between ourselves and the clear shining of His face. But he shines on, and when we confess our sins, and put them away, we find ourselves afresh in the clear shaft of His illuminating rays. You may have lost all hope in yourself, your friends, your circumstances, but you must never lose your hope in God.

The past, which can only be viewed with repentance, is forgiven; the present, in which God is willing to be All-in-all; the future, when again the soul shall praise Him with joyful lips. Hope looks into the future. "I shall yet praise Him."

PRAYER

Our Father, forgive, we pray Thee, our murmuring and discontent, our perverseness and waywardness. Teach us to discern the silver edge of the lowering clouds, and to trust Thy love, which is leading us safely and by a right way to our home. AMEN.

May 20

THE PSALM OF THE DOORKEEPER

"For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."-- Psa 84:10.

THIS PSALM has been a favourite with God's people in all ages when Carlyle was leaving, in doubt and despondency, his quiet mountain home at Craigen-puttock for the untried tumult of London, he quoted this Psalm for comfort to his brother and himself, saying: "I turn my thoughts heavenwards, for it is in heaven only that I find any basis for our poor pilgrimage on earth. As surely as the blue dome of heaven encircles us all, so does the providence of the Lord of Heaven. 'He will withhold no good thing from those that love Him.' This, as it was the ancient Psalmist's faith, let it likewise be ours. It is the Alpha and Omega, I reckon, of all the possessions that can belong to man."

In absence and distance, the heart of the true believer turns to God. He believes that he has direct access to Him, and that his prayer will be accepted (Psa 84:8). David, as the anointed King, had the right to ask that God, who was his Shield, should look upon his face; but we have even a better plea, for we may ask that God would look upon the face of His own glorious and beloved Son, and accept us in Him (Psa 84:9).

Let us imitate the humility of this man, and be willing to take the lowest place (Luk 14:10-11); but we must be on our guard against being proud of our humility. Some people take the back seats that they may be asked to come to the front. They mistake the Lord's words. It is said that there is always room at the top; it is equally true that there is plenty of room at the bottom; and if men and women will really gird themselves with a towel and wash the feet of the disciples, if they are prepared in the literal sense to be doorkeepers and to give themselves in service, they will be allowed to do their work with little praise save that of the King Himself.

To all such lowly souls God gives grace and glory (Psa 84:11). With both hands He will give and give again. Only we must practise the habit of taking. Grace is the bud of which Glory is the flower. If God has given the one, He will not withhold the other from. Psa 84:12). If anything is withheld from us, we may be sure that it is not absolutely for our good. No good thing will the Father withhold; but He will not give us scorpions, however beautiful their appearance; nor stones, though painted to resemble bread.

PRAYER

Teach us to abide with Thee in our daily calling, and to realise that each sphere may be a temple for priestly service. AMEN.

May 21

THE VOICE OF GOD IN NATURE AND REVELATION

"The Heavens declare the Glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Psa 19:1.

VERSES (Psa 19:1-6): Those whose hearts are in tune with God can hear voices in Nature which are inaudible to the ordinary man. The poet Blake says: "When the morning sun ascends the eastern sky, you may behold only a light yellow disc, whereas I shall see and hear the infinite multitude of the heavenly host, crying, Holy, Holy, Holy!" Yet, though there is no speech nor language, is it not true that "their words are gone forth to the end of the world"? There is no nation of men that has not heard the voice of Nature speaking of God (Act 14:16-17; Rom 1:20-21).

In Psa 19:7-11 the Psalmist describes the effect of the Word of God when the Spirit of Truth works through it and by it on the soul. There are many ways of reading the Bible--as a history, as a revelation of man's gropings after God, as a piece of great literature; but the best way is to ask the Divine Spirit to make it a medium through which He may approach our innermost nature. Listen to God's voice speaking within you. Be still, that you may hear. The Spirit searches into the deep things of God, and reveals them to our spirit (1Co 2:10). All that God has ever said or been to others, He will say and be to you, if only your heart is lowly and contrite. "Speak to me, Lord, by Prophet and Psalmist, by lyric and prose, by narrative and appeal. Speak through Thy Word to restore my soul, to rejoice my heart, and to enlighten mine eyes!" When to the quiet and waiting soul God uses His own Word thus, it is more to be desired than fine gold, and is sweeter than the taste of honey from the comb.

The effect of God's Word, when used by the Holy Spirit, is very remarkable (Psa 19:11-14). It convinces of sin. Just as linen is shown to be discoloured against freshly-fallen snow, so we re, arise our errors and cry to be cleansed from hidden and secret sins.

David knew little of the glory and wonder of the Cross, where God spared not His own Son, but in Him stooped to reconcile man to Himself. The starry heavens, telling of the glory of God, and even the Law itself, are not able to tell us what the Cross of Jesus does, of Love that matched itself against hate, and of Grace that would not be turned away by human sin.

PRAYER

I pray Thee, gracious Lord, that I may not miss any of those lessons which Thou art desirous of teaching me by Thy Spirit, Thy Word, and Thy Providence. AMEN.

May 22

THE PSALM OF ASCENSION

"But God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."-- Eph 2:4-6.

THIS 24th Psalm is apparently in two parts, and yet there is one theme, the ascent of the holy soul and the triumphant Saviour into the presence of God. For us, the ascension of our Lord precedes our own; but in the days of the Psalmist that order was reversed.

Our Lord's Ascension. In an outburst of poetry, kindled by the Divine Spirit, the Psalmist anticipates the coming of the King of Glory to the doors of the Eternal City--that ideal City which through the ages has beckoned forward the hearts of saints and patriots, and which in Rev. 21. is seen descending to our earth. It was as though the doors of the Unseen barred His entrance. They had opened to God, but never before to "God manifest in the flesh." It was a new thing that He should take our nature with Him into the unseen and eternal world.

The soul's ascension (Psa 24:3-6). In Christ we have ascended and are seated at God's right hand. No change in your emotions, not even the being overtaken by a fault can alter that. But we have to make our calling sure. What is ours in the divine purpose must be claimed and appropriated as a living daily experience. There are certain qualities of character which are requisite to those who should be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man, not hereafter only, but now and here and always (Luk 21:36).

We must have clean hands. The money that we earn must be clean money. If we are writers, artists, mechanics, professional or commercial men or women, we must never produce anything which would defile the imagination or heart. We must have a pure heart. In Is 33:14-17, which is a parallel passage, the Holy Spirit is compared to a devouring fire, in the presence of which no evil thing can live. Let us ask Him so to possess us, and to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by His inspiration. We must not lift up our soul to vanity, i.e., we must not allow ourselves to be inflated with the applause or rewards of the world. Many sell their souls for these, and only at the end of life awaken to discover how worthless they are. We must not swear deceitfully, i.e., we must be absolutely transparent and sincere, for only the true can stand in the presence of the King of Truth.

PRAYER

May we live as those who have been raised with Christ, and who are seated with Him. AMEN.

May 23

THE SLEEPLESS WATCHER

"He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper."-- Psa 121:3-5.

THIS PSALM has been called the Traveller's Psalm. When the pilgrims started forth from their distant homes to go up to the Temple, not one of them could forecast his experiences before he reached home again. There were perils of rivers, perils of robbers, perils in the wilderness, perils in travel from wild beasts. It was well, therefore, that they should commit themselves and their dear ones to the care of One who neither slumbered nor slept. It is not enough for the body to be kept; we need the soul to be kept from all evil, as we go out into the world with its microbes of temptation, or come back to the luxury and comfort of our dwelling. There is temptation everywhere; not for one moment are we absolutely immune.

There is a difference between slumbering and sleeping. The mother or nurse watching the child may sometimes get a few moments of slumber; it is not very restful, yet there is a brief pause of unconsciousness. But this never comes to God. Not for one moment does He slumber, or ceases His watchful care of us. God keeps us by besetting us behind and before, and lays His hand upon us (Psa 139:5). As a sentry goes to and fro before the palace given to his charge, so God's peace, like a sentinel, keeps watch and ward around the soul. We speak of the castle-keeper, the inner circle of defence; so God's Presence is our Keep. We think also of the safe, around which the fire may play, but cannot touch its contents; so the child of God may walk in the midst of peril and temptation, but God is round about him; he is inside the secret place of the Most High, and no weapons formed against him can reach that inner sanctuary. Let us hand over the keeping of our souls to Him as to a faithful Creator (1Pe 4:19).

The dosing words of this Psalm remind us of Joh 14:1-6. There will be one last going out and coming in, when the house of our life shall be left vacant, and we shall go forth to the Father, to the House of many mansions, to the great company which awaits us on the other side. Then in the transition between this world and the next, and amid all the mysteries that shall crowd upon us, we need fear no evil, for whatever Eternity may bring to us, we shall always be sheltered and kept by Almighty care.

PRAYER

Almighty God! Thou knowest that I have no power of myself to keep myself. Keep me outwardly in my body and inwardly in my soul, that I may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul. AMEN.

May 24

THE SECRET OF THE QUIET HEART

"Be still, and know that I am God."-- Psa 46:10.

"Sit still, my daughter, for the man will not rest, until he have finished the thing this day."-- Rth 3:18.

PARADISE HAS vanished from our world, as the picture of a landscape vanishes when swept by storm. And our race stands in much the same plight as did Naomi and Ruth in this old-world story. We have lost our inheritance, and the one barrier which stands between us and despair is the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, thank God, we need have no doubt as to the sequel. For as Boaz claimed back the estate for Ruth, so may we be confident that Jesus Christ will never be at rest till this sin-stained and distracted world is restored to her primitive order and beauty, as when the morning-stars sang for joy.

Jesus is our near Kinsman by His assumption of our nature. He is the nearest and dearest Friend of our race, who stooped to die for our redemption. And the fact that He carried our nature in Himself to heaven, and wears it there, is an indissoluble bond between us. Sit still! do not fret! He will never fail, as He will certainly never forsake!

Let us seek the quiet heart in our prayers. Prayer must arise within us as a fountain from unknown depths. But we must leave it to God to answer in His own wisest way. We are so impatient, and think that God does not answer. A child asked God for fine weather on her birthday, and it rained! Some one said, "God didn't answer your prayer." "Oh yes," she replied, "He did, God always answers, but He said No!" God always answers! He never fails! Be still! If we abide in Him, and He abides in us, we ask what we will, and it is done. As a sound may dislodge an avalanche, so the prayer of faith sets in motion the power of God.

In times of difficulty--be still! Thine enemies are plotting thine overthrow! They laugh at thy strong confidence! But hast thou not heard His voice saying: "This is the way, walk ye in it"? Then leave Him to deal with thy foes from whatever quarter they come. He is thy Rock, and rocks do not shake. He is thy High Tower, and a high tower cannot be flooded. Thou needest mercy, and to Him belongeth mercy. Do not run hither and thither in panic! Just quietly wait, hushing thy soul, as He did the fears of His friends on the eve of Gethsemane and Calvary. "Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him." "Be still, for He will not rest, until He hath finished the thing this day."

PRAYER

If this day I should get lost amid the perplexities of life and the rush of many duties, do Thou search me out, gracious Lord, and bring me back into the quiet of Thy presence. AMEN.

May 25

DAYS OF GLADNESS

"All the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days."-- Neh 8:12, Neh 8:17, Neh 8:18.

GLADNESS IS health. If you can get a patient to look on the bright side of things, you have done a great deal to bring back the tides of life.

Whenever we are optimistic and glad we are looking at things from the divine side, and imbibing some of God's eternal gladness. And cherishing this temperament, we shall know what Nehemiah and Ezra meant when they said: "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh 8:10).

If you have some secret sorrow, tell it to God, but do not impose it needlessly upon men. Anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not to men to fast, and He who sees the secret tears will comfort you openly (Mat 6:17-18). The pain and sorrow of the world is undeniable, even worse than many of us realise, but this is largely due to the intrusion of sin and selfishness which can only be expelled by Love. But even this gives opportunity for that unselfish ministry and devotion which are the keys of the blessed life. In so far as we dedicate our lives to help Christ in His redeeming work of delivering souls out of the power of darkness and translating them into the Kingdom of Life and Light, we share in His perennial blessedness.

It must have been a time of unusual joy when the returned exiles reviewed the finished wall which now engirded the city. There was the consciousness of a finished work. It is always delightful when we have done to the very best of our ability a piece of work that needed doing. One of the elements of a thoroughly enjoyable holiday is to be able to look back on a bit of good construction, a piece of brick or stone work which will endure in the edifice of our own lives or of other people's.

In addition, there was the Book of the Law of God, in which they read from day to day. Let us take the Bible with us on our holidays! We shall find that it will yield new meaning as we study it by lake or mountain; as we ponder it in country lanes, or by the seashore, One like the Son of Man will walk beside us, and apply its teaching till our hearts burn within us, and we are no more sad.

PRAYER

We thank Thee for eyes that see, and hearts that love, and natures that can enjoy Thy good and perfect gifts. O Father, in Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. AMEN.

May 26

GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

"We are the clay, and Thou our potter; and we are all the work of Thy hand."-- Is 64:8.

THE POTTER'S craft is almost the oldest in the world, and its method has hardly differed through the ages. Jeremiah as well as Isaiah refers to it (Jer 18:1-4). While the prophet was standing watching the potter, he saw him take a piece of moistened clay from the lump that lay beside him, and placing it on the wheel, he began to shape it after a design which was in his thought. As it approached completion, the clay collapsed under his hands, some part falling on the ground, and some on the wheel itself. To Jeremiah's surprise, the potter did not sweep the recalcitrant fragments away, but gathered them up, and made them again into another vessel. This is what God does still.

The Master-workman is our Father. "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father." Some who read these words have themselves been parents. They have tasted the ecstasy of parentage, as the child has been laid for the first time in their arms. At that moment a new passion has arisen in the heart, and new resolves have compelled the soul. To shield, defend, educate, help, love, and teach to love--all this is included in that first embrace. The compulsion of the child's helplessness is a supreme motive to father or mother. Prayers are offered that find an echo in the heart of God, from whom they sprang.

Has God put these sentiments in human hearts, and has He not their original and pattern in Himself? For a moment do not think of yourself as a child, but of God as your Father. Your spirit has come forth from the Father of Spirits. You were called into existence by His word. You carry in your nature some thought or conception to which He desired to give expression. Is He not conscious therefore, of responsibility to perfect that which concerns you? Of course you may thwart Him, as the clay was marred in the hand of the potter. You may take your journey into a far country and waste the precious formative years in selfish indulgence. But if you will let the Great Father work out His full purpose in your training, your unfolding, and your prayer-life specially, you will find with Isaiah, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard such an One as our God, who worketh for him that waiteth for Him.

PRAYER

O God, our Father, may we never doubt Thy enduring mercy. May we not be frightened by the noise of the wheels in Thy great workshop. Enable us to believe that Thou art weaving the fair fabric of our life on the loom of daily circumstance. We beseech Thee to perfect that which concerneth us. AMEN.

May 27

GOD'S PREPARATIONS

"Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him."-- Is 64:4.

THIS CHAPTER is a casket of precious jewels. Let us look at some of them! What wonder that St. Paul loved that fourth verse, which he quotes in 1Co 2:9! Here we read that God works for those who wait for Him; to the Apostle these words conveyed the thought that those who wait for Him must be those who love Him, and that God has thought out His prepared plan, so that they have only to believe in Him and go forward, to find that the path has been levelled for them to walk in. Those that love God are not afraid of the mountains that block their way; they know that God will make them flow down, and will reveal a pathway for their steps. The men of this world, from of old, have never heard with the ear, nor perceived with the eye, what our God will do for His own!

Often, as we tread the pathway of service, rejoicing that He loves us, and working such righteousness as we can, we meet God coming toward us, as the father meets his children, who have gone out to welcome him on his return from work. Or, in the hour which we dread, the hour of that operation, of that dreaded meeting, the hour of bereavement, as we walk along the path--we shall see a light approaching us, growing ever brighter. It is the herald-ray of God's approach. "Thou meetest them that remember Thee in Thy ways!"

It is in the midst of such loving-kindness that we become most conscious of sin. All our righteousnesses, which passed muster in the sunlight, in His searching sight seem as filthy rags, and we realise how evanescent are our resolutions. "We all do fade as a leaf."

Perhaps we are most ashamed at our failure in the life of prayer. We do not stir up ourselves to take hold of God.

Here we must use special caution in speaking to others of those hidden passages of the soul, in which God our Father is pleased to meet with us and refresh us, lest we lead to take the higher path those who have not trod the lower. Each soul knows its own secret from the Lord, and we must live only as we have received. St. Bernard's motto was: "My secret to myself."

PRAYER

There is a secret place of rest,
God's saints alone may know;
Thou shalt not find it east nor west,
Though seeking to and fro;
A cell where Jesus is the door,
His love the only key;
Who enter will go out no more,
But there with Jesus be.

May 28

NIGHT AND MORNING!

"Weeping may tarry for the night, But joy cometh in the morning."-- Psa 30:5 (R.V.).

The Night of Doubt--the Morning of Faith. It is indeed a memorable moment in the history of the human spirit, when we suddenly wake up to see that the Almighty is the All-Loving Father, that the righteousness of God is no longer a ground of anxiety and fear, but of assured hope; that He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. What a glad hour it was to Thomas when, after a week of the blackness of darkness, he stood again face to face with Jesus, and learnt that His heart was beating in sympathy, and that His pierced hands were held out to him. Dare to believe that the Love which died for thee is dealing with all the mysteries, misfits, and dark problems of thy life. Weeping may tarry for the night in which you shut yourself in with yourself, but she is only a lodger! Joy will come in the morning, when you open your heart to Christ.

The Night of Perplexity--the Morning of Vision. We cannot explain all the dealings of God with man, still less the mysteries of the Divine Nature. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, though judgment and righteousness are the habitation of His Throne. But from time to time we obtain some broken vision of His Purpose and Achievement and Objective. Then the voice of Joy rings through our heart; then our mouths are filled with laughter and our tongues with singing! Men call us dreamers, but we count them blind. Sooner or later Christ will come! The power of Satan will be broken and his reign ended. The things that prophets and kings foretold, and died without seeing, shall be realised. The children of Light will lift up their heads, because the time of Redemption will have come. Sorrow and sighing will flee away, and in that glad Morning there will be the shout of Joy!

The Night of Bereavement--the Morning of Reunion. Their stay with us was all too short! We had only begun to fathom their sweetness and beauty. We little dreamed that we would only be allowed to sip the cup of bliss that they had brought into our lives. And then they heard a Voice that called, and saw a beckoning Hand, and they arose and went! He, that height of Weeping! But the Morning of Joy cometh, when we shall see again their radiant faces welcoming us on the other side. In that fair Morning, Joy will be at the full tide, never to recede.

PRAYER

Blessed Christ! The storm is high, the night is dark. Come to me, I beseech Thee. In Thy presence is fulness of Joy. AMEN.

May 29

THE FORTRESS OF THE HEART

"Keep thy heart with all diligence."-- Pro 4:23.

"The peace of God shall keep your hearts."-- Phi 4:7.

IN MOST of the old castles there is an inner keep, which is protected, not only by mighty walls and bastions, but by the portcullis at the gate, and sentries at every approach, who challenged every one that passed in and out. So the heart is continually approached by good and evil, by the frivolities and vanities of the world and the insidious suggestions of the flesh. It is like an inn or hostelry, with constant arrivals and departures. Passengers throng in and out, some of them with evil intent, hoping to find conspirators, or to light fires that will spread until the whole being is swept with passion, consuming in an hour the fabric of years to ashes.

We need, therefore, to be constantly on the watch; we must keep our heart above all else that we guard, for out of it are the issues of life (R.V. marg.). Our Lord says that "out of the heart of man come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts," etc. The devil and the world without would be less to be feared, if there were not such strong tendencies to evil within--many of them inherited from long lines of ancestors, who, alas! pass down to us the worst features of their characters equally with the best.

Keep it Clean. Just as the eye of the body is perpetually washed with tear-water, so let us ask that the precious blood of Christ may cleanse away any speck of impurity. Remember how delicate a thing the heart is, and how susceptible to the dust of an evil thought, which would instantly prevent it becoming the organ of spiritual vision. Sursum Corda! Lift up your hearts! We lift them up unto the Lord!

The Sentinel of Peace. Then the Peace of God will become the warden or sentry of the heart, and it passeth understanding! We can understand the apparent peace of some men. They have made money, and their gold-bags are piled around them as a fortress; they have rich and influential friends, within whose protection they imagine they will be sheltered and defended; they enjoy good health, and are held in high esteem. We can understand such peace, though it often proves ephemeral! But there is a peace that passeth understanding! It is to this that our Lord refers when He says, "My Peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

PRAYER

Keep me, Heavenly Father, as the apple of Thine eye; defend me by Thine Almighty power; hide me from this strife of tongues and the fiery darts of the wicked one. May my heart be as the palace which the Stronger than the strong man keeps in perfect peace. AMEN.

May 30

THE PERSISTENCE OF LIFE

"The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him."-- Luk 20:37-38.

WHAT IS Death? It is not a condition but a transition; not an abiding-place, but a passage; not a house, but a doorway. The Scripture refers to it as a birth--"the first-born from the dead"; as an exodus --"after my exodus," says Peter; as a striking of the tent--"I must shortly put off this tabernacle;" as the weighing of an anchor--"the time for me to loose-off from the shore is come." Each of these metaphors accentuates the fact that Death is but a momentary act. We are absent from the body one moment, present with the Lord the next.

Persistent Personality. In that other field we shall surely recognise each other, and shall be as close akin, yea, closer than we were in long-past happy days, when heart to heart had sweet converse, or co-operated in useful ministry. Abraham will still be Abraham; Isaac, Isaac; and Jacob, Jacob. Not bodiless ghosts, but living personalities etherealised and transfigured. Moses and Elijah were recognised as such by the startled disciples on the Transfiguration mount; and Mary knew the Master in the Garden. What gain would it have been that Jesus promised the dying thief that he should be with Him in Paradise, if, when he reached there, he could not recognise the Lord?

Persistent Love. Love will never fail! But how can it exist without an object; and how can it forget! Why did Jesus promise the "many mansions," unless He meant that there should be homes! He knows that the heart clings, even in the light of Resurrection, to the dear objects of human affection, else He would never have mentioned Peter's name, nor have sent a message to His disciples, nor come a second time for Thomas! And will He ignore those natural cravings for us, whom He has loved better than Himself? How deep and sweet His assurance: "If it were not so, I would have told you!" Charles Kingsley asked that on the grave stone, which stood above his wife and himself, should be inscribed the words: "Amavimus, Amamus, Amabimus"--We loved, we love, we shall continue to love. And who shall challenge the truth or appositeness of these words?

Persistent Activity. "His servants shall serve Him!" The tasks we bungled here with our apprentice-hands will become possible; and unravelling our tangled skeins, we shall weave such fabrics as our wildest dreams never imagined.

PRAYER

I pray Thee, O Lord, to deliver me from the fear of death; and when mine eyes open in the dawn of heaven, may I see Thee standing to welcome me, and may I receive Thy Well-done! AMEN.

May 31

GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE

"Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you" I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.-- Is 46:4.

WHAT A marvellous promise is this! In days of foreboding, when we fear what may lie behind the veil of the impenetrable future!

Disease? Poverty? Suffering? Bereavement? We cannot tell, but we may turn in confidence to our God. He knows just how much we can bear, for He has made us: "I have made, and I will bear, and will deliver you."

Even to old age! The hoar-frost may silver the head, the sound of the grinding may be low, the silver cord may be frayed even to the breaking, lovers and friends may have passed on to the other world; like the last apple on the bough, we may be left alone; but in the second childhood as in the first--"Even to your old age--I will carry you"; "For Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear" (Heb 13:5).

PRAYER

O God, our Father, we are Thine, May we never doubt Thy enduring mercy. We thank Thee! AMEN.