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DEVOTIONALS ON PSALMS

by C H Spurgeon

from "Morning and Evening"

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Morning, April 7

"O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?" — Psalm 4:2

An instructive writer has made a mournful list of the honours which the blinded people of Israel awarded to their long expected King.

1. They gave him a procession of honour, in which Roman legionaries, Jewish priests, men and women, took a part, he himself bearing his cross. This is the triumph which the world awards to him who comes to overthrow man's direst foes. Derisive shouts are his only acclamations, and cruel taunts his only paeans of praise.

2. They presented him with the wine of honour. Instead of a golden cup of generous wine they offered him the criminal's stupefying death-draught, which he refused because he would preserve an uninjured taste wherewith to taste of death; and afterwards when he cried, "I thirst," they gave him vinegar mixed with gall, thrust to his mouth upon a sponge. Oh! wretched, detestable inhospitality to the King's Son.

3. He was provided with a guard of honour, who showed their esteem of him by gambling over his garments, which they had seized as their booty. Such was the body-guard of the adored of heaven; a quaternion of brutal gamblers.

4. A throne of honour was found for him upon the bloody tree; no easier place of rest would rebel men yield to their liege Lord. The cross was, in fact, the full expression of the world's feeling towards him; "There," they seemed to say, "thou Son of God, this is the manner in which God himself should be treated, could we reach him."

5. The title of honour was nominally "King of the Jews," but that the blinded nation distinctly repudiated, and really called him "King of thieves," by preferring Barabbas, and by placing Jesus in the place of highest shame between two thieves. His glory was thus in all things turned into shame by the sons of men, but it shall yet gladden the eyes of saints and angels, world without end.

Evening, September 11

“Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies.” — Psalms 5:8

Very bitter is the enmity of the world against the people of Christ. Men will forgive a thousand faults in others, but they will magnify the most trivial offence in the followers of Jesus. Instead of vainly regretting this, let us turn it to account, and since so many are watching for our halting, let this be a special motive for walking very carefully before God. If we live carelessly, the lynx-eyed world will soon see it, and with its hundred tongues, it will spread the story, exaggerated and emblazoned by the zeal of slander. They will shout triumphantly. “Aha! So would we have it! See how these Christians act! They are hypocrites to a man.” Thus will much damage be done to the cause of Christ, and much insult offered to his name. The cross of Christ is in itself an offence to the world; let us take heed that we add no offence of our own. It is “to the Jews a stumblingblock”: let us mind that we put no stumblingblocks where there are enough already. “To the Greeks it is foolishness”: let us not add our folly to give point to the scorn with which the worldly-wise deride the gospel. How jealous should we be of ourselves! How rigid with our consciences! In the presence of adversaries who will misrepresent our best deeds, and impugn our motives where they cannot censure our actions, how circumspect should we be! Pilgrims travel as suspected persons through Vanity Fair. Not only are we under surveillance, but there are more spies than we know of. The espionage is everywhere, at home and abroad. If we fall into the enemies’ hands we may sooner expect generosity from a wolf, or mercy from a fiend, than anything like patience with our infirmities from men who spice their infidelity towards God with scandals against his people. O Lord, lead us ever, lest our enemies trip us up!

Morning, October 30

“I will praise thee, O Lord.” — Psalm 9:1

Praise should always follow answered prayer; as the mist of earth’s gratitude rises when the sun of heaven’s love warms the ground. Hath the Lord been gracious to thee, and inclined his ear to the voice of thy supplication? Then praise him as long as thou livest. Let the ripe fruit drop upon the fertile soil from which it drew its life. Deny not a song to him who hath answered thy prayer and given thee the desire of thy heart. To be silent over God’s mercies is to incur the guilt of ingratitude; it is to act as basely as the nine lepers, who after they had been cured of their leprosy, returned not to give thanks unto the healing Lord. To forget to praise God is to refuse to benefit ourselves; for praise, like prayer, is one great means of promoting the growth of the spiritual life. It helps to remove our burdens, to excite our hope, to increase our faith. It is a healthful and invigorating exercise which quickens the pulse of the believer, and nerves him for fresh enterprises in his Master’s service. To bless God for mercies received is also the way to benefit our fellow-men; “the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.” Others who have been in like circumstances shall take comfort if we can say, “Oh! magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together; this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.” Weak hearts will be strengthened, and drooping saints will be revived as they listen to our “songs of deliverance.” Their doubts and fears will be rebuked, as we teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. They too shall “sing in the ways of the Lord,” when they hear us magnify his holy name. Praise is the most heavenly of Christian duties. The angels pray not, but they cease not to praise both day and night; and the redeemed, clothed in white robes, with palm-branches in their hands, are never weary of singing the new song, “Worthy is the Lamb.”

Evening, April 27

“The Lord is King for ever and ever.” — Psalm 10:16

Jesus Christ is no despotic claimant of divine right, but he is really and truly the Lord’s anointed! “It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” God hath given to him all power and all authority. As the Son of man, he is now head over all things to his church, and he reigns over heaven, and earth, and hell, with the keys of life and death at his girdle. Certain princes have delighted to call themselves kings by the popular will, and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ is such in his church. If it could be put to the vote whether he should be King in the church, every believing heart would crown him. O that we could crown him more gloriously than we do! We would count no expense to be wasted that could glorify Christ. Suffering would be pleasure, and loss would be gain, if thereby we could surround his brow with brighter crowns, and make him more glorious in the eyes of men and angels. Yes, he shall reign. Long live the King! All hail to thee, King Jesus! Go forth, ye virgin souls who love your Lord, bow at his feet, strew his way with the lilies of your love, and the roses of your gratitude: “Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all.” Moreover, our Lord Jesus is King in Zion by right of conquest: he has taken and carried by storm the hearts of his people, and has slain their enemies who held them in cruel bondage. In the Red Sea of his own blood, our Redeemer has drowned the Pharaoh of our sins: shall he not be King in Jeshurun? He has delivered us from the iron yoke and heavy curse of the law: shall not the Liberator be crowned? We are his portion, whom he has taken out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow: who shall snatch his conquest from his hand? All hail, King Jesus! we gladly own thy gentle sway! Rule in our hearts for ever, thou lovely Prince of Peace.

Evening, September 3

“The Lord trieth the righteous.” — Psalm 11:5

All events are under the control of Providence; consequently all the trials of our outward life are traceable at once to the great First Cause. Out of the golden gate of God's ordinance the armies of trial march forth in array, clad in their iron armour, and armed with weapons of war. All providences are doors to trial. Even our mercies, like roses, have their thorns. Men may be drowned in seas of prosperity as well as in rivers of affliction. Our mountains are not too high, and our valleys are not too low for temptations: trials lurk on all roads. Everywhere, above and beneath, we are beset and surrounded with dangers. Yet no shower falls unpermitted from the threatening cloud; every drop has its order ere it hastens to the earth. The trials which come from God are sent to prove and strengthen our graces, and so at once to illustrate the power of divine grace, to test the genuineness of our virtues, and to add to their energy. Our Lord in his infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon his people's faith that he will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like unto fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked you to and fro, and made you take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant grace. Worldly ease is a great foe to faith; it loosens the joints of holy valour, and snaps the sinews of sacred courage. The balloon never rises until the cords are cut; affliction doth this sharp service for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortably in the husk it is useless to man, it must be threshed out of its resting place before its value can be known. Thus it is well that Jehovah trieth the righteous, for it causeth them to grow rich towards God.

Morning, June 17

“Help, Lord.” — Psalm 12:1

The prayer itself is remarkable, for it is short, but seasonable, sententious, and suggestive. David mourned the fewness of faithful men, and therefore lifted up his heart in supplication—when the creature failed, he flew to the Creator. He evidently felt his own weakness, or he would not have cried for help; but at the same time he intended honestly to exert himself for the cause of truth, for the word “help” is inapplicable where we ourselves do nothing. There is much of directness, clearness of perception, and distinctness of utterance in this petition of two words; much more, indeed, than in the long rambling outpourings of certain professors. The Psalmist runs straight-forward to his God, with a well-considered prayer; he knows what he is seeking, and where to seek it. Lord, teach us to pray in the same blessed manner.

The occasions for the use of this prayer are frequent. In providential afflictions how suitable it is for tried believers who find all helpers failing them. Students, in doctrinal difficulties, may often obtain aid by lifting up this cry of “Help, Lord,” to the Holy Spirit, the great Teacher. Spiritual warriors in inward conflicts may send to the throne for reinforcements, and this will be a model for their request. Workers in heavenly labour may thus obtain grace in time of need. Seeking sinners, in doubts and alarms, may offer up the same weighty supplication; in fact, in all these cases, times, and places, this will serve the turn of needy souls. “Help, Lord,” will suit us living and dying, suffering or labouring, rejoicing or sorrowing. In him our help is found, let us not be slack to cry to him.

The answer to the prayer is certain, if it be sincerely offered through Jesus. The Lord's character assures us that he will not leave his people; his relationship as Father and Husband guarantee us his aid; his gift of Jesus is a pledge of every good thing; and his sure promise stands, “Fear not, I will help thee.”

Morning, May 20

“Marvellous lovingkindness.” — Psalm 17:7

When we give our hearts with our alms, we give well, but we must often plead to a failure in this respect. Not so our Master and our Lord. His favours are always performed with the love of his heart. He does not send to us the cold meat and the broken pieces from the table of his luxury, but he dips our morsel in his own dish, and seasons our provisions with the spices of his fragrant affections. When he puts the golden tokens of his grace into our palms, he accompanies the gift with such a warm pressure of our hand, that the manner of his giving is as precious as the boon itself. He will come into our houses upon his errands of kindness, and he will not act as some austere visitors do in the poor man’s cottage, but he sits by our side, not despising our poverty, nor blaming our weakness. Beloved, with what smiles does he speak! What golden sentences drop from his gracious lips! What embraces of affection does he bestow upon us! If he had but given us farthings, the way of his giving would have gilded them; but as it is, the costly alms are set in a golden basket by his pleasant carriage. It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of his charity, for there is a bleeding heart stamped upon the face of all his benefactions. He giveth liberally and upbraideth not. Not one hint that we are burdensome to him; not one cold look for his poor pensioners; but he rejoices in his mercy, and presses us to his bosom while he is pouring out his life for us. There is a fragrance in his spikenard which nothing but his heart could produce; there is a sweetness in his honey-comb which could not be in it unless the very essence of his soul’s affection had been mingled with it. Oh! the rare communion which such singular heartiness effecteth! May we continually taste and know the blessedness of it!

Evening, April 9

“thy gentleness hath made me great.” — Psalm 18:35

The words are capable of being translated, “thy goodness hath made me great.” David gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but the goodness of God. “Thy providence,” is another reading; and providence is nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is the bud of which providence is the flower, or goodness is the seed of which providence is the harvest. Some render it, “thy help,” which is but another word for providence; providence being the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Or again, “thy humility hath made me great.” “Thy condescension” may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas mentioned, including that of humility. It is God’s making himself little which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little, that if God should manifest his greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under his feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies, and bow to see what angels do, turns his eye yet lower, and looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. There are yet other readings, as for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, “thy discipline”—thy fatherly correction—“hath made me great;” while the Chaldee paraphrase reads, “thy word hath increased me.” Still the idea is the same. David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness of his Father in heaven. May this sentiment be echoed in our hearts this evening while we cast our crowns at Jesus’ feet, and cry, “thy gentleness hath made me great.” How marvellous has been our experience of God’s gentleness! How gentle have been his corrections! How gentle his forbearance! How gentle his teachings! How gentle his drawings! Meditate upon this theme, O believer. Let gratitude be awakened; let humility be deepened; let love be quickened ere thou fallest asleep tonight

Evening, March 16

“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.” — Psalm 19:13

Such was the prayer of the “man after God’s own heart.” Did holy David need to pray thus? How needful, then, must such a prayer be for us babes in grace! It is as if he said, “Keep me back, or I shall rush headlong over the precipice of sin.” Our evil nature, like an ill-tempered horse, is apt to run away. May the grace of God put the bridle upon it, and hold it in, that it rush not into mischief. What might not the best of us do if it were not for the checks which the Lord sets upon us both in providence and in grace! The psalmist’s prayer is directed against the worst form of sin—that which is done with deliberation and wilfulness. Even the holiest need to be “kept back” from the vilest transgressions. It is a solemn thing to find the apostle Paul warning saints against the most loathsome sins. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” What! do saints want warning against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The whitest robes, unless their purity be preserved by divine grace, will be defiled by the blackest spots. Experienced Christian, boast not in your experience; you will trip yet if you look away from him who is able to keep you from falling. Ye whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not, “We shall never sin,” but rather cry, “Lead us not into temptation.” There is enough tinder in the heart of the best of men to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell, unless God shall quench the sparks as they fall. Who would have dreamed that righteous Lot could be found drunken, and committing uncleanness? Hazeel said, “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” and we are very apt to use the same self-righteous question. May infinite wisdom cure us of the madness of self-confidence.

Morning, April 15

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — Psalm22:1

We here behold the Saviour in the depth of his sorrows. No other place so well shows the griefs of Christ as Calvary, and no other moment at Calvary is so full of agony as that in which his cry rends the air—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” At this moment physical weakness was united with acute mental torture from the shame and ignominy through which he had to pass; and to make his grief culminate with emphasis, he suffered spiritual agony surpassing all expression, resulting from the departure of his Father’s presence. This was the black midnight of his horror; then it was that he descended the abyss of suffering. No man can enter into the full meaning of these words. Some of us think at times that we could cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” There are seasons when the brightness of our Father’s smile is eclipsed by clouds and darkness; but let us remember that God never does really forsake us. It is only a seeming forsaking with us, but in Christ’s case it was a real forsaking. We grieve at a little withdrawal of our Father’s love; but the real turning away of God’s face from his Son, who shall calculate how deep the agony which it caused him?

In our case, our cry is often dictated by unbelief: in his case, it was the utterance of a dreadful fact, for God had really turned away from him for a season. O thou poor, distressed soul, who once lived in the sunshine of God’s face, but art now in darkness, remember that he has not really forsaken thee. God in the clouds is as much our God as when he shines forth in all the lustre of his grace; but since even the thought that he has forsaken us gives us agony, what must the woe of the Saviour have been when he exclaimed, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Morning, April 14

“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.” — Psalm22:7

Mockery was a great ingredient in our Lord’s woe. Judas mocked him in the garden; the chief priests and scribes laughed him to scorn; Herod set him at nought; the servants and the soldiers jeered at him, and brutally insulted him; Pilate and his guards ridiculed his royalty; and on the tree all sorts of horrid jests and hideous taunts were hurled at him. Ridicule is always hard to bear, but when we are in intense pain it is so heartless, so cruel, that it cuts us to the quick. Imagine the Saviour crucified, racked with anguish far beyond all mortal guess, and then picture that motley multitude, all wagging their heads or thrusting out the lip in bitterest contempt of one poor suffering victim! Surely there must have been something more in the crucified One than they could see, or else such a great and mingled crowd would not unanimously have honoured him with such contempt. Was it not evil confessing, in the very moment of its greatest apparent triumph, that after all it could do no more than mock at that victorious goodness which was then reigning on the cross? O Jesus, “despised and rejected of men,” how couldst thou die for men who treated thee so ill? Herein is love amazing, love divine, yea, love beyond degree. We, too, have despised thee in the days of our unregeneracy, and even since our new birth we have set the world on high in our hearts, and yet thou bleedest to heal our wounds, and diest to give us life. O that we could set thee on a glorious high throne in all men’s hearts! We would ring out thy praises over land and sea till men should as universally adore as once they did unanimously reject.

“Thy creatures wrong thee, O thou sovereign Good!

Thou art not loved, because not understood:

This grieves me most, that vain pursuits beguile

Ungrateful men, regardless of thy smile.”

Morning, April 11

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint." — Psalm 22:14

Did earth or heaven ever behold a sadder spectacle of woe! In soul and body, our Lord felt himself to be weak as water poured upon the ground. The placing of the cross in its socket had shaken him with great violence, had strained all the ligaments, pained every nerve, and more or less dislocated all his bones. Burdened with his own weight, the august sufferer felt the strain increasing every moment of those six long hours. His sense of faintness and general weakness were overpowering; while to his own consciousness he became nothing but a mass of misery and swooning sickness. When Daniel saw the great vision, he thus describes his sensations, "There remained no strength in me, for my vigour was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength:" how much more faint must have been our greater Prophet when he saw the dread vision of the wrath of God, and felt it in his own soul! To us, sensations such as our Lord endured would have been insupportable, and kind unconsciousness would have come to our rescue; but in his case, he was wounded, and felt the sword; he drained the cup and tasted every drop.

"O King of Grief! (a title strange, yet true
To thee of all kings only due)
O King of Wounds! how shall I grieve for thee,
Who in all grief preventest me!"

As we kneel before our now ascended Saviour's throne, let us remember well the way by which he prepared it as a throne of grace for us; let us in spirit drink of his cup, that we may be strengthened for our hour of heaviness whenever it may come. In his natural body every member suffered, and so must it be in the spiritual; but as out of all his griefs and woes his body came forth uninjured to glory and power, even so shall his mystical body come through the furnace with not so much as the smell of fire upon it.

Morning, April 12 Go To Evening Reading

"My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." — Psalm 22:14

Our blessed Lord experienced a terrible sinking and melting of soul. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Deep depression of spirit is the most grievous of all trials; all besides is as nothing. Well might the suffering Saviour cry to his God, "Be not far from me," for above all other seasons a man needs his God when his heart is melted within him because of heaviness. Believer, come near the cross this morning, and humbly adore the King of glory as having once been brought far lower, in mental distress and inward anguish, than any one among us; and mark his fitness to become a faithful High Priest, who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Especially let those of us whose sadness springs directly from the withdrawal of a present sense of our Father's love, enter into near and intimate communion with Jesus. Let us not give way to despair, since through this dark room the Master has passed before us. Our souls may sometimes long and faint, and thirst even to anguish, to behold the light of the Lord's countenance: at such times let us stay ourselves with the sweet fact of the sympathy of our great High Priest. Our drops of sorrow may well be forgotten in the ocean of his griefs; but how high ought our love to rise! Come in, O strong and deep love of Jesus, like the sea at the flood in spring tides, cover all my powers, drown all my sins, wash out all my cares, lift up my earth-bound soul, and float it right up to my Lord's feet, and there let me lie, a poor broken shell, washed up by his love, having no virtue or value; and only venturing to whisper to him that if he will put his ear to me, he will hear within my heart faint echoes of the vast waves of his own love which have brought me where it is my delight to lie, even at his feet for ever.

Evening, April 8

“I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.” — Psalm 23:4

Behold, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Ghost can make the Christian! What a bright light may shine within us when it is all dark without! How firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be, when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! Even death itself, with all its terrible influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart, but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly, till the last kind act which death can do is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus, the temporal joy into the eternal bliss! Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed Spirit's power to comfort us. Dear reader, are you looking forward to poverty? Fear not; the divine Spirit can give you, in your want, a greater plenty than the rich have in their abundance. You know not what joys may be stored up for you in the cottage around which grace will plant the roses of content. Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily powers? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain? O be not sad! That bed may become a throne to you. You little know how every pang that shoots through your body may be a refining fire to consume your dross—a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul. Are the eyes growing dim? Jesus will be your light. Do the ears fail you? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music, and his person your dear delight. Socrates used to say, “Philosophers can be happy without music;” and Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn. In thee, my God, my heart shall triumph, come what may of ills without! By thy power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceeding glad, though all things should fail me here below.

Evening, July 4

“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”

— Psalm 24:4

Outward practical holiness is a very precious mark of grace. It is to be feared that many professors have perverted the doctrine of justification by faith in such a way as to treat good works with contempt; if so, they will receive everlasting contempt at the last great day. If our hands are not clean, let us wash them in Jesus' precious blood, and so let us lift up pure hands unto God. But “clean hands” will not suffice, unless they are connected with “a pure heart.” True religion is heart-work. We may wash the outside of the cup and the platter as long as we please, but if the inward parts be filthy, we are filthy altogether in the sight of God, for our hearts are more truly ourselves than our hands are; the very life of our being lies in the inner nature, and hence the imperative need of purity within. The pure in heart shall see God, all others are but blind bats.

The man who is born for heaven “hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.” All men have their joys, by which their souls are lifted up; the worldling lifts up his soul in carnal delights, which are mere empty vanities; but the saint loves more substantial things; like Jehoshaphat, he is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He who is content with husks, will be reckoned with the swine. Does the world satisfy thee? Then thou hast thy reward and portion in this life; make much of it, for thou shalt know no other joy.

“Nor sworn deceitfully.” The saints are men of honour still. The Christian man's word is his only oath; but that is as good as twenty oaths of other men. False speaking will shut any man out of heaven, for a liar shall not enter into God's house, whatever may be his professions or doings. Reader, does the text before us condemn thee, or dost thou hope to ascend into the hill of the Lord?

Evening, December 3

“The Lord mighty in battle.” — Psalm 24:8

Well may our God be glorious in the eyes of his people, seeing that he has wrought such wonders for them, in them, and by them. For them, the Lord Jesus upon Calvary routed every foe, breaking all the weapons of the enemy in pieces by his finished work of satisfactory obedience; by his triumphant resurrection and ascension he completely overturned the hopes of hell, leading captivity captive, making a show of our enemies openly, triumphing over them by his cross. Every arrow of guilt which Satan might have shot at us is broken, for who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Vain are the sharp swords of infernal malice, and the perpetual battles of the serpent's seed, for in the midst of the church the lame take the prey, and the feeblest warriors are crowned.

The saved may well adore their Lord for his conquests in them, since the arrows of their natural hatred are snapped, and the weapons of their rebellion broken. What victories has grace won in our evil hearts! How glorious is Jesus when the will is subdued, and sin dethroned! As for our remaining corruptions, they shall sustain an equally sure defeat, and every temptation, and doubt, and fear, shall be utterly destroyed. In the Salem of our peaceful hearts, the name of Jesus is great beyond compare: he has won our love, and he shall wear it. Even thus securely may we look for victories by us. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us. We shall cast down the powers of darkness which are in the world, by our faith, and zeal, and holiness; we shall win sinners to Jesus, we shall overturn false systems, we shall convert nations, for God is with us, and none shall stand before us. This evening let the Christian warrior chant the war song, and prepare for to-morrow's fight. Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

Evening, July 8

“Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.” — Psalm 25:5

When the believer has begun with trembling feet to walk in the way of the Lord, he asks to be still led onward like a little child upheld by its parent's helping hand, and he craves to be further instructed in the alphabet of truth. Experimental teaching is the burden of this prayer. David knew much, but he felt his ignorance, and desired to be still in the Lord's school: four times over in two verses he applies for a scholarship in the college of grace. It were well for many professors if instead of following their own devices, and cutting out new paths of thought for themselves, they would enquire for the good old ways of God's own truth, and beseech the Holy Ghost to give them sanctified understandings and teachable spirits. “For thou art the God of my salvation.” The Three-One Jehovah is the Author and Perfecter of salvation to his people. Reader, is he the God of your salvation? Do you find in the Father's election, in the Son's atonement, and in the Spirit's quickening, all the grounds of your eternal hopes? If so, you may use this as an argument for obtaining further blessings; if the Lord has ordained to save you, surely he will not refuse to instruct you in his ways. It is a happy thing when we can address the Lord with the confidence which David here manifests, it gives us great power in prayer, and comfort in trial. “On thee do I wait all the day.” Patience is the fair handmaid and daughter of faith; we cheerfully wait when we are certain that we shall not wait in vain. It is our duty and our privilege to wait upon the Lord in service, in worship, in expectancy, in trust all the days of our life. Our faith will be tried faith, and if it be of the true kind, it will bear continued trial without yielding. We shall not grow weary of waiting upon God if we remember how long and how graciously he once waited for us.

Evening, April 11

“Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.” — Psalm 25:18

It is well for us when prayers about our sorrows are linked with pleas concerning our sins—when, being under God’s hand, we are not wholly taken up with our pain, but remember our offences against God. It is well, also, to take both sorrow and sin to the same place. It was to God that David carried his sorrow: it was to God that David confessed his sin. Observe, then, we must take our sorrows to God. Even your little sorrows you may roll upon God, for he counteth the hairs of your head; and your great sorrows you may commit to him, for he holdeth the ocean in the hollow of his hand. Go to him, whatever your present trouble may be, and you shall find him able and willing to relieve you. But we must take our sins to God too. We must carry them to the cross, that the blood may fall upon them, to purge away their guilt, and to destroy their defiling power.

The special lesson of the text is this:—that we are to go to the Lord with sorrows and with sins in the right spirit. Note that all David asks concerning his sorrow is, “Look upon mine affliction and my pain;” but the next petition is vastly more express, definite, decided, plain—“Forgive all my sins.” Many sufferers would have put it, “Remove my affliction and my pain, and look at my sins.” But David does not say so; he cries, “Lord, as for my affliction and my pain, I will not dictate to thy wisdom. Lord, look at them, I will leave them to thee, I should be glad to have my pain removed, but do as thou wilt; but as for my sins, Lord, I know what I want with them; I must have them forgiven; I cannot endure to lie under their curse for a moment.” A Christian counts sorrow lighter in the scale than sin; he can bear that his troubles should continue, but he cannot support the burden of his transgressions.

Evening, September 21

“Gather not my soul with sinners.” — Psalm 26:9

Fear made David pray thus, for something whispered, “Perhaps, after all, thou mayst be gathered with the wicked.” That fear, although marred by unbelief, springs, in the main, from holy anxiety, arising from the recollection of past sin. Even the pardoned man will enquire, “What if at the end my sins should be remembered, and I should be left out of the catalogue of the saved?” He recollects his present unfruitfulness—so little grace, so little love, so little holiness, and looking forward to the future, he considers his weakness and the many temptations which beset him, and he fears that he may fall, and become a prey to the enemy. A sense of sin and present evil, and his prevailing corruptions, compel him to pray, in fear and trembling, “Gather not my soul with sinners.” Reader, if you have prayed this prayer, and if your character be rightly described in the Psalm from which it is taken, you need not be afraid that you shall be gathered with sinners. Have you the two virtues which David had—the outward walking in integrity, and the inward trusting in the Lord? Are you resting upon Christ’s sacrifice, and can you compass the altar of God with humble hope? If so, rest assured, with the wicked you never shall be gathered, for that calamity is impossible. The gathering at the judgment is like to like. “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” If, then, thou art like God’s people, thou shalt be with God’s people. You cannot be gathered with the wicked, for you are too dearly bought. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, you are his for ever, and where he is, there must his people be. You are loved too much to be cast away with reprobates. Shall one dear to Christ perish? Impossible! Hell cannot hold thee! Heaven claims thee! Trust in thy Surety and fear not!

Evening, June 16

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” — Psalm 27:1

“The Lord is my light and my salvation.” Here is personal interest, “my light,” “my salvation;” the soul is assured of it, and therefore declares it boldly. Into the soul at the new birth divine light is poured as the precursor of salvation; where there is not enough light to reveal our own darkness and to make us long for the Lord Jesus, there is no evidence of salvation. After conversion our God is our joy, comfort, guide, teacher, and in every sense our light: he is light within, light around, light reflected from us, and light to be revealed to us. Note, it is not said merely that the Lord gives light, but that he is light; nor that he gives salvation, but that he is salvation; he, then, who by faith has laid hold upon God, has all covenant blessings in his possession. This being made sure as a fact, the argument drawn from it is put in the form of a question, “Whom shall I fear?” A question which is its own answer. The powers of darkness are not to be feared, for the Lord, our light, destroys them; and the damnation of hell is not to be dreaded by us, for the Lord is our salvation. This is a very different challenge from that of boastful Goliath, for it rests, not upon the conceited vigour of an arm of flesh, but upon the real power of the omnipotent I AM. “The Lord is the strength of my life.” Here is a third glowing epithet, to show that the writer’s hope was fastened with a threefold cord which could not be broken. We may well accumulate terms of praise where the Lord lavishes deeds of grace. Our life derives all its strength from God; and if he deigns to make us strong, we cannot be weakened by all the machinations of the adversary. “Of whom shall I be afraid?” The bold question looks into the future as well as the present. “If God be for us,” who can be against us, either now or in time to come?

Morning, August 30

“Wait on the Lord.” — Psalm 27:14

It may seem an easy thing to wait, but it is one of the postures which a Christian soldier learns not without years of teaching. Marching and quick-marching are much easier to God's warriors than standing still. There are hours of perplexity when the most willing spirit, anxiously desirous to serve the Lord, knows not what part to take. Then what shall it do? Vex itself by despair? Fly back in cowardice, turn to the right hand in fear, or rush forward in presumption? No, but simply wait. Wait in prayer, however. Call upon God, and spread the case before him; tell him your difficulty, and plead his promise of aid. In dilemmas between one duty and another, it is sweet to be humble as a child, and wait with simplicity of soul upon the Lord. It is sure to be well with us when we feel and know our own folly, and are heartily willing to be guided by the will of God. But wait in faith. Express your unstaggering confidence in him; for unfaithful, untrusting waiting, is but an insult to the Lord. Believe that if he keep you tarrying even till midnight, yet he will come at the right time; the vision shall come and shall not tarry. Wait in quiet patience, not rebelling because you are under the affliction, but blessing your God for it. Never murmur against the second cause, as the children of Israel did against Moses; never wish you could go back to the world again, but accept the case as it is, and put it as it stands, simply and with your whole heart, without any self-will, into the hand of your covenant God, saying, “Now, Lord, not my will, but thine be done. I know not what to do; I am brought to extremities, but I will wait until thou shalt cleave the floods, or drive back my foes. I will wait, if thou keep me many a day, for my heart is fixed upon thee alone, O God, and my spirit waiteth for thee in the full conviction that thou wilt yet be my joy and my salvation, my refuge and my strong tower.”

Evening, July 2

“Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.”
— Psalm 28:1

A cry is the natural expression of sorrow, and a suitable utterance when all other modes of appeal fail us; but the cry must be alone directed to the Lord, for to cry to man is to waste our entreaties upon the air. When we consider the readiness of the Lord to hear, and his ability to aid, we shall see good reason for directing all our appeals at once to the God of our salvation. It will be in vain to call to the rocks in the day of judgment, but our Rock attends to our cries.

“Be not silent to me.” Mere formalists may be content without answers to their prayers, but genuine suppliants cannot; they are not satisfied with the results of prayer itself in calming the mind and subduing the will—they must go further, and obtain actual replies from heaven, or they cannot rest; and those replies they long to receive at once, they dread even a little of God’s silence. God’s voice is often so terrible that it shakes the wilderness; but his silence is equally full of awe to an eager suppliant. When God seems to close his ear, we must not therefore close our mouths, but rather cry with more earnestness; for when our note grows shrill with eagerness and grief, he will not long deny us a hearing. What a dreadful case should we be in if the Lord should become for ever silent to our prayers? “Lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.” Deprived of the God who answers prayer, we should be in a more pitiable plight than the dead in the grave, and should soon sink to the same level as the lost in hell. We must have answers to prayer: ours is an urgent case of dire necessity; surely the Lord will speak peace to our agitated minds, for he never can find it in his heart to permit his own elect to perish.

Evening, April 15

“Lift them up for ever.” — Psalm 28:9

God’s people need lifting up. They are very heavy by nature. They have no wings, or, if they have, they are like the dove of old which lay among the pots; and they need divine grace to make them mount on wings covered with silver, and with feathers of yellow gold. By nature sparks fly upward, but the sinful souls of men fall downward. O Lord, “lift them up for ever!” David himself said, “Unto thee, O God, do I lift up my soul,” and he here feels the necessity that other men’s souls should be lifted up as well as his own. When you ask this blessing for yourself, forget not to seek it for others also. There are three ways in which God’s people require to be lifted up. They require to be elevated in character. Lift them up, O Lord; do not suffer thy people to be like the world’s people! The world lieth in the wicked one; lift them out of it! The world’s people are looking after silver and gold, seeking their own pleasures, and the gratification of their lusts; but, Lord, lift thy people up above all this; keep them from being “muck-rakers,” as John Bunyan calls the man who was always scraping after gold! Set thou their hearts upon their risen Lord and the heavenly heritage! Moreover, believers need to be prospered in conflict. In the battle, if they seem to fall, O Lord, be pleased to give them the victory. If the foot of the foe be upon their necks for a moment, help them to grasp the sword of the Spirit, and eventually to win the battle. Lord, lift up thy children’s spirits in the day of conflict; let them not sit in the dust, mourning for ever. Suffer not the adversary to vex them sore, and make them fret; but if they have been, like Hannah, persecuted, let them sing of the mercy of a delivering God.

We may also ask our Lord to lift them up at the last! Lift them up by taking them home, lift their bodies from the tomb, and raise their souls to thine eternal kingdom in glory.

Morning, August 16

“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.” — Psalm 29:2

God’s glory is the result of his nature and acts. He is glorious in his character, for there is such a store of everything that is holy, and good, and lovely in God, that he must be glorious. The actions which flow from his character are also glorious; but while he intends that they should manifest to his creatures his goodness, and mercy, and justice, he is equally concerned that the glory associated with them should be given only to himself. Nor is there aught in ourselves in which we may glory; for who maketh us to differ from another? And what have we that we did not receive from the God of all grace? Then how careful ought we to be to walk humbly before the Lord! The moment we glorify ourselves, since there is room for one glory only in the universe, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High. Shall the insect of an hour glorify itself against the sun which warmed it into life? Shall the potsherd exalt itself above the man who fashioned it upon the wheel? Shall the dust of the desert strive with the whirlwind? Or the drops of the ocean struggle with the tempest? Give unto the Lord, all ye righteous, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto him the honour that is due unto his name. Yet it is, perhaps, one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence—“Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory.” It is a lesson which God is ever teaching us, and teaching us sometimes by most painful discipline. Let a Christian begin to boast, “I can do all things,” without adding “through Christ which strengtheneth me,” and before long he will have to groan, “I can do nothing,” and bemoan himself in the dust. When we do anything for the Lord, and he is pleased to accept of our doings, let us lay our crown at his feet, and exclaim, “Not I, but the grace of God which was with me!”

Morning, May 13 Go To Evening Reading

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” — Psalm 30:5

Christian! If thou art in a night of trial, think of the morrow; cheer up thy heart with the thought of the coming of thy Lord. Be patient, for

“Lo! He comes with clouds descending.”

Be patient! The Husbandman waits until he reaps his harvest. Be patient; for you know who has said, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.” If you are never so wretched now, remember

“A few more rolling suns, at most,
Will land thee on fair Canaan’s coast.”

Thy head may be crowned with thorny troubles now, but it shall wear a starry crown ere long; thy hand may be filled with cares—it shall sweep the strings of the harp of heaven soon. Thy garments may be soiled with dust now; they shall be white by-and-by. Wait a little longer. Ah! how despicable our troubles and trials will seem when we look back upon them! Looking at them here in the prospect, they seem immense; but when we get to heaven we shall then

“With transporting joys recount,

The labours of our feet.”

Our trials will then seem light and momentary afflictions. Let us go on boldly; if the night be never so dark, the morning cometh, which is more than they can say who are shut up in the darkness of hell. Do you know what it is thus to live on the future—to live on expectation—to antedate heaven? Happy believer, to have so sure, so comforting a hope. It may be all dark now, but it will soon be light; it may be all trial now, but it will soon be all happiness. What matters it though “weeping may endure for a night,” when “joy cometh in the morning?”

Morning, March 10

“In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved.” — Psalm 30:6

“Moab settled on his lees, he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” Give a man wealth; let his ships bring home continually rich freights; let the winds and waves appear to be his servants to bear his vessels across the bosom of the mighty deep; let his lands yield abundantly: let the weather be propitious to his crops; let uninterrupted success attend him; let him stand among men as a successful merchant; let him enjoy continued health; allow him with braced nerve and brilliant eye to march through the world, and live happily; give him the buoyant spirit; let him have the song perpetually on his lips; let his eye be ever sparkling with joy—and the natural consequence of such an easy state to any man, let him be the best Christian who ever breathed, will be presumption; even David said, “I shall never be moved;” and we are not better than David, nor half so good. Brother, beware of the smooth places of the way; if you are treading them, or if the way be rough, thank God for it. If God should always rock us in the cradle of prosperity; if we were always dandled on the knees of fortune; if we had not some stain on the alabaster pillar; if there were not a few clouds in the sky; if we had not some bitter drops in the wine of this life, we should become intoxicated with pleasure, we should dream “we stand;” and stand we should, but it would be upon a pinnacle; like the man asleep upon the mast, each moment we should be in jeopardy.

We bless God, then, for our afflictions; we thank him for our changes; we extol his name for losses of property; for we feel that had he not chastened us thus, we might have become too secure. Continued worldly prosperity is a fiery trial.

“Afflictions, though they seem severe,
In mercy oft are sent.

Evening, August 19

“Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.” — Psalm 31:4

Our spiritual foes are of the serpent’s brood, and seek to ensnare us by subtlety. The prayer before us supposes the possibility of the believer being caught like a bird. So deftly does the fowler do his work, that simple ones are soon surrounded by the net. The text asks that even out of Satan’s meshes the captive one may be delivered; this is a proper petition, and one which can be granted: from between the jaws of the lion, and out of the belly of hell, can eternal love rescue the saint. It may need a sharp pull to save a soul from the net of temptations, and a mighty pull to extricate a man from the snares of malicious cunning, but the Lord is equal to every emergency, and the most skilfully placed nets of the hunter shall never be able to hold his chosen ones. Woe unto those who are so clever at net laying; they who tempt others shall be destroyed themselves.

“For thou art my strength.” What an inexpressible sweetness is to be found in these few words! How joyfully may we encounter toils, and how cheerfully may we endure sufferings, when we can lay hold upon celestial strength. Divine power will rend asunder all the toils of our enemies, confound their politics, and frustrate their knavish tricks; he is a happy man who has such matchless might engaged upon his side. Our own strength would be of little service when embarrassed in the nets of base cunning, but the Lord’s strength is ever available; we have but to invoke it, and we shall find it near at hand. If by faith we are depending alone upon the strength of the mighty God of Israel, we may use our holy reliance as a plea in supplication.

“Lord, evermore thy face we seek:
Tempted we are, and poor, and weak;
Keep us with lowly hearts, and meek.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall.”

Evening, August 27

“Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.” — Psalm 31:5

These words have been frequently used by holy men in their hour of departure. We may profitably consider them this evening. The object of the faithful man’s solicitude in life and death is not his body or his estate, but his spirit; this is his choice treasure—if this be safe, all is well. What is this mortal state compared with the soul? The believer commits his soul to the hand of his God; it came from him, it is his own, he has aforetime sustained it, he is able to keep it, and it is most fit that he should receive it. All things are safe in Jehovah’s hands; what we entrust to the Lord will be secure, both now and in that day of days towards which we are hastening. It is peaceful living, and glorious dying, to repose in the care of heaven. At all times we should commit our all to Jesus’ faithful hand; then, though life may hang on a thread, and adversities may multiply as the sands of the sea, our soul shall dwell at ease, and delight itself in quiet resting places.

“Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.” Redemption is a solid basis for confidence. David had not known Calvary as we have done, but temporal redemption cheered him; and shall not eternal redemption yet more sweetly console us? Past deliverances are strong pleas for present assistance. What the Lord has done he will do again, for he changes not. He is faithful to his promises, and gracious to his saints; he will not turn away from his people.

“Though thou slay me I will trust,
Praise thee even from the dust,
Prove, and tell it as I prove,
Thine unutterable love.

Thou mayst chasten and correct,
But thou never canst neglect;
Since the ransom price is paid,
On thy love my hope is stay’d.”

Evening, September 14

“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” — Psalm 32:5

David’s grief for sin was bitter. Its effects were visible upon his outward frame: “his bones waxed old”; “his moisture was turned into the drought of summer.” No remedy could he find, until he made a full confession before the throne of the heavenly grace. He tells us that for a time he kept silence, and his heart became more and more filled with grief: like a mountain tarn whose outlet is blocked up, his soul was swollen with torrents of sorrow. He fashioned excuses; he endeavoured to divert his thoughts, but it was all to no purpose; like a festering sore his anguish gathered, and as he would not use the lancet of confession, his spirit was full of torment, and knew no rest. At last it came to this, that he must return unto his God in humble penitence, or die outright; so he hastened to the mercy-seat, and there unrolled the volume of his iniquities before the all-seeing One, acknowledging all the evil of his ways in language such as you read in the fifty-first and other penitential Psalms. Having done this, a work so simple and yet so difficult to pride, he received at once the token of divine forgiveness; the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice, and he came forth from his closet to sing the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven. See the value of a grace-wrought confession of sin! It is to be prized above all price, for in every case where there is a genuine, gracious confession, mercy is freely given, not because the repentance and confession deserve mercy, but for Christ’s sake. Blessed be God, there is always healing for the broken heart; the fountain is ever flowing to cleanse us from our sins. Truly, O Lord, thou art a God “ready to pardon!” Therefore will we acknowledge our iniquities.

Morning, September 28

“The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.” — Psalm 33:13

Perhaps no figure of speech represents God in a more gracious light than when he is spoken of as stooping from his throne, and coming down from heaven to attend to the wants and to behold the woes of mankind. We love him, who, when Sodom and Gomorrah were full of iniquity, would not destroy those cities until he had made a personal visitation of them. We cannot help pouring out our heart in affection for our Lord who inclines his ear from the highest glory, and puts it to the lip of the dying sinner, whose failing heart longs after reconciliation. How can we but love him when we know that he numbers the very hairs of our heads, marks our path, and orders our ways? Specially is this great truth brought near to our heart, when we recollect how attentive he is, not merely to the temporal interests of his creatures, but to their spiritual concerns. Though leagues of distance lie between the finite creature and the infinite Creator, yet there are links uniting both. When a tear is wept by thee, think not that God doth not behold; for, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” Thy sigh is able to move the heart of Jehovah; thy whisper can incline his ear unto thee; thy prayer can stay his hand; thy faith can move his arm. Think not that God sits on high taking no account of thee. Remember that however poor and needy thou art, yet the Lord thinketh upon thee. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.

Oh! then repeat the truth that never tires;
No God is like the God my soul desires;
He at whose voice heaven trembles, even he,
Great as he is, knows how to stoop to me.

Morning, July 2

“Our heart shall rejoice in Him.” — Psalm 33:21

Blessed is the fact that Christians can rejoice even in the deepest distress; although trouble may surround them, they still sing; and, like many birds, they sing best in their cages. The waves may roll over them, but their souls soon rise to the surface and see the light of God's countenance; they have a buoyancy about them which keeps their head always above the water, and helps them to sing amid the tempest, “God is with me still.” To whom shall the glory be given? Oh! to Jesus—it is all by Jesus. Trouble does not necessarily bring consolation with it to the believer, but the presence of the Son of God in the fiery furnace with him fills his heart with joy. He is sick and suffering, but Jesus visits him and makes his bed for him. He is dying, and the cold chilly waters of Jordan are gathering about him up to the neck, but Jesus puts His arms around him, and cries, “Fear not, beloved; to die is to be blessed; the waters of death have their fountain-head in heaven; they are not bitter, they are sweet as nectar, for they flow from the throne of God.” As the departing saint wades through the stream, and the billows gather around him, and heart and flesh fail him, the same voice sounds in his ears, “Fear not; I am with thee; be not dismayed; I am thy God.” As he nears the borders of the infinite unknown, and is almost affrighted to enter the realm of shades, Jesus says, “Fear not, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Thus strengthened and consoled, the believer is not afraid to die; nay, he is even willing to depart, for since he has seen Jesus as the morning star, he longs to gaze upon Him as the sun in his strength. Truly, the presence of Jesus is all the heaven we desire. He is at once

“The glory of our brightest days;
The comfort of our nights.”

Evening, March 5

“Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” — Psalm 35:3

What does this sweet prayer teach me? It shall be my evening’s petition; but first let it yield me an instructive meditation. The text informs me first of all that David had his doubts; for why should he pray, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation,” if he were not sometimes exercised with doubts and fears? Let me, then, be of good cheer, for I am not the only saint who has to complain of weakness of faith. If David doubted, I need not conclude that I am no Christian because I have doubts. The text reminds me that David was not content while he had doubts and fears, but he repaired at once to the mercy-seat to pray for assurance; for he valued it as much fine gold. I too must labour after an abiding sense of my acceptance in the Beloved, and must have no joy when his love is not shed abroad in my soul. When my Bridegroom is gone from me, my soul must and will fast. I learn also that David knew where to obtain full assurance. He went to his God in prayer, crying, “Say unto my soul I am thy salvation.” I must be much alone with God if I would have a clear sense of Jesus’ love. Let my prayers cease, and my eye of faith will grow dim. Much in prayer, much in heaven; slow in prayer, slow in progress. I notice that David would not be satisfied unless his assurance had a divine source. “Say unto my soul.” Lord, do thou say it! Nothing short of a divine testimony in the soul will ever content the true Christian. Moreover, David could not rest unless his assurance had a vivid personality about it. “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” Lord, if thou shouldst say this to all the saints, it were nothing, unless thou shouldst say it to me. Lord, I have sinned; I deserve not thy smile; I scarcely dare to ask it; but oh! say to my soul, even to my soul, “I am thy salvation.” Let me have a present, personal, infallible, indisputable sense that I am thine, and that thou art mine.

Evening, March 4

“They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.” — Psalm 36:8

Sheba’s queen was amazed at the sumptuousness of Solomon’s table. She lost all heart when she saw the provision of a single day; and she marvelled equally at the company of servants who were feasted at the royal board. But what is this to the hospitalities of the God of grace? Ten thousand thousand of his people are daily fed; hungry and thirsty, they bring large appetites with them to the banquet, but not one of them returns unsatisfied; there is enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore. Though the host that feed at Jehovah’s table is countless as the stars of heaven, yet each one has his portion of meat. Think how much grace one saint requires, so much that nothing but the Infinite could supply him for one day; and yet the Lord spreads his table, not for one, but many saints, not for one day, but for many years; not for many years only, but for generation after generation. Observe the full feasting spoken of in the text, the guests at mercy’s banquet are satisfied, nay, more “abundantly satisfied;” and that not with ordinary fare, but with fatness, the peculiar fatness of God’s own house; and such feasting is guaranteed by a faithful promise to all those children of men who put their trust under the shadow of Jehovah’s wings. I once thought if I might but get the broken meat at God’s back door of grace I should be satisfied; like the woman who said, “The dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master’s table;” but no child of God is ever served with scraps and leavings; like Mephibosheth, they all eat from the king’s own table. In matters of grace, we all have Benjamin’s mess—we all have ten times more than we could have expected, and though our necessities are great, yet are we often amazed at the marvellous plenty of grace which God gives us experimentally to enjoy.

Evening, October 16

“With thee is the fountain of life.” — Psalm 36:9

There are times in our spiritual experience when human counsel or sympathy, or religious ordinances, fail to comfort or help us. Why does our gracious God permit this? Perhaps it is because we have been living too much without him, and he therefore takes away everything upon which we have been in the habit of depending, that he may drive us to himself. It is a blessed thing to live at the fountain head. While our skin-bottles are full, we are content, like Hagar and Ishmael, to go into the wilderness; but when those are dry, nothing will serve us but “Thou God seest me.” We are like the prodigal, we love the swine-troughs and forget our Father’s house. Remember, we can make swine-troughs and husks even out of the forms of religion; they are blessed things, but we may put them in God’s place, and then they are of no value. Anything becomes an idol when it keeps us away from God: even the brazen serpent is to be despised as “Nehushtan,” if we worship it instead of God. The prodigal was never safer than when he was driven to his father’s bosom, because he could find sustenance nowhere else. Our Lord favours us with a famine in the land that it may make us seek after himself the more. The best position for a Christian is living wholly and directly on God’s grace—still abiding where he stood at first—“Having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” Let us never for a moment think that our standing is in our sanctification, our mortification, our graces, or our feelings, but know that because Christ offered a full atonement, therefore we are saved; for we are complete in him. Having nothing of our own to trust to, but resting upon the merits of Jesus—his passion and holy life furnish us with the only sure ground of confidence. Beloved, when we are brought to a thirsting condition, we are sure to turn to the fountain of life with eagerness.

Evening, November 4

“In thy light shall we see light.” — Psalm 36:9

No lips can tell the love of Christ to the heart till Jesus himself shall speak within. Descriptions all fall flat and tame unless the Holy Ghost fills them with life and power; till our Immanuel reveals himself within, the soul sees him not. If you would see the sun, would you gather together the common means of illumination, and seek in that way to behold the orb of day? No, the wise man knoweth that the sun must reveal itself, and only by its own blaze can that mighty lamp be seen. It is so with Christ. “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:” said he to Peter, “for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee.” Purify flesh and blood by any educational process you may select, elevate mental faculties to the highest degree of intellectual power, yet none of these can reveal Christ. The Spirit of God must come with power, and overshadow the man with his wings, and then in that mystic holy of holies the Lord Jesus must display himself to the sanctified eye, as he doth not unto the purblind sons of men. Christ must be his own mirror. The great mass of this blear-eyed world can see nothing of the ineffable glories of Immanuel. He stands before them without form or comeliness, a root out of a dry ground, rejected by the vain and despised by the proud. Only where the Spirit has touched the eye with eye-salve, quickened the heart with divine life, and educated the soul to a heavenly taste, only there is he understood. “To you that believe he is precious”; to you he is the chief corner-stone, the Rock of your salvation, your all in all; but to others he is “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.” Happy are those to whom our Lord manifests himself, for his promise to such is that he will make his abode with them. O Jesus, our Lord, our heart is open, come in, and go out no more for ever. Show thyself to us now! Favour us with a glimpse of thine all-conquering charms.

Morning, June 14

“Delight thyself also in the Lord.” — Psalm 37:4

The teaching of these words must seem very surprising to those who are strangers to vital godliness, but to the sincere believer it is only the inculcation of a recognized truth. The life of the believer is here described as a delight in God, and we are thus certified of the great fact that true religion overflows with happiness and joy. Ungodly persons and mere professors never look upon religion as a joyful thing; to them it is service, duty, or necessity, but never pleasure or delight. If they attend to religion at all, it is either that they may gain thereby, or else because they dare not do otherwise. The thought of delight in religion is so strange to most men, that no two words in their language stand further apart than “holiness” and “delight.” But believers who know Christ, understand that delight and faith are so blessedly united, that the gates of hell cannot prevail to separate them. They who love God with all their hearts, find that his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. Such joys, such brimful delights, such overflowing blessednesses, do the saints discover in their Lord, that so far from serving him from custom, they would follow him though all the world cast out his name as evil. We fear not God because of any compulsion; our faith is no fetter, our profession is no bondage, we are not dragged to holiness, nor driven to duty. No, our piety is our pleasure, our hope is our happiness, our duty is our delight.

Delight and true religion are as allied as root and flower; as indivisible as truth and certainty; they are, in fact, two precious jewels glittering side by side in a setting of gold.

“Tis when we taste thy love,
Our joys divinely grow,
Unspeakable like those above,
And heaven begins below.”

Morning, May 25

“Forsake me not, O Lord.” — Psalm 38:21

Frequently we pray that God would not forsake us in the hour of trial and temptation, but we too much forget that we have need to use this prayer at all times. There is no moment of our life, however holy, in which we can do without his constant upholding. Whether in light or in darkness, in communion or in temptation, we alike need the prayer, “Forsake me not, O Lord.” “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” A little child, while learning to walk, always needs the nurse’s aid. The ship left by the pilot drifts at once from her course. We cannot do without continued aid from above; let it then be your prayer to-day, “Forsake me not. Father, forsake not thy child, lest he fall by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, forsake not thy lamb, lest he wander from the safety of the fold. Great Husbandman, forsake not thy plant, lest it wither and die. ‘Forsake me not, O Lord,’ now; and forsake me not at any moment of my life. Forsake me not in my joys, lest they absorb my heart. Forsake me not in my sorrows, lest I murmur against thee. Forsake me not in the day of my repentance, lest I lose the hope of pardon, and fall into despair; and forsake me not in the day of my strongest faith, lest faith degenerate into presumption. Forsake me not, for without thee I am weak, but with thee I am strong. Forsake me not, for my path is dangerous, and full of snares, and I cannot do without thy guidance. The hen forsakes not her brood, do thou then evermore cover me with thy feathers, and permit me under thy wings to find my refuge. ‘Be not far from me, O Lord, for trouble is near, for there is none to help.’ ‘Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation!’”

“O ever in our cleansed breast,
Bid thine Eternal Spirit rest;
And make our secret soul to be
A temple pure and worthy thee.”

Evening, June 13

“Remove far from me vanity and lies.” — Proverbs 30:8

“O my God, be not far from me.” — Psalm 38:21

Here we have two great lessons—what to deprecate and what to supplicate. The happiest state of a Christian is the holiest state. As there is the most heat nearest to the sun, so there is the most happiness nearest to Christ. No Christian enjoys comfort when his eyes are fixed on vanity—he finds no satisfaction unless his soul is quickened in the ways of God. The world may win happiness elsewhere, but he cannot. I do not blame ungodly men for rushing to their pleasures. Why should I? Let them have their fill. That is all they have to enjoy. A converted wife who despaired of her husband was always very kind to him, for she said, “I fear that this is the only world in which he will be happy, and therefore I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can in it.” Christians must seek their delights in a higher sphere than the insipid frivolities or sinful enjoyments of the world. Vain pursuits are dangerous to renewed souls. We have heard of a philosopher who, while he looked up to the stars, fell into a pit; but how deeply do they fall who look down. Their fall is fatal. No Christian is safe when his soul is slothful, and his God is far from him. Every Christian is always safe as to the great matter of his standing in Christ, but he is not safe as regards his experience in holiness, and communion with Jesus in this life. Satan does not often attack a Christian who is living near to God. It is when the Christian departs from his God, becomes spiritually starved, and endeavours to feed on vanities, that the devil discovers his vantage hour. He may sometimes stand foot to foot with the child of God who is active in his Master’s service, but the battle is generally short: he who slips as he goes down into the Valley of Humiliation, every time he takes a false step invites Apollyon to assail him. O for grace to walk humbly with our God!

Evening, March 14

"I will take heed to my ways." — Psalm 39:1

Fellow-pilgrim, say not in your heart, "I will go hither and thither, and I shall not sin;" for you are never so out of danger of sinning as to boast of security. The road is very miry, it will be hard to pick your path so as not to soil your garments. This is a world of pitch; you will need to watch often, if in handling it you are to keep your hands clean. There is a robber at every turn of the road to rob you of your jewels; there is a temptation in every mercy; there is a snare in every joy; and if you ever reach heaven, it will be a miracle of divine grace to be ascribed entirely to your Father's power. Be on your guard. When a man carries a bomb-shell in his hand, he should mind that he does not go near a candle; and you too must take care that you enter not into temptation. Even your common actions are edged tools; you must mind how you handle them. There is nothing in this world to foster a Christian's piety, but everything to destroy it. How anxious should you be to look up to God, that he may keep you! Your prayer should be, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Having prayed, you must also watch; guarding every thought, word, and action, with holy jealousy. Do not expose yourselves unnecessarily; but if called to exposure, if you are bidden to go where the darts are flying, never venture forth without your shield; for if once the devil finds you without your buckler, he will rejoice that his hour of triumph is come, and will soon make you fall down wounded by his arrows. Though slain you cannot be; wounded you may be. "Be sober; be vigilant, danger may be in an hour when all seemeth securest to thee." Therefore, take heed to thy ways, and watch unto prayer. No man ever fell into error through being too watchful. May the Holy Spirit guide us in all our ways, so shall they always please the Lord.

Morning, March 16

"I am a stranger with thee." — Psalm 39:12

Yes, O Lord, with thee, but not to thee. All my natural alienation from thee, thy grace has effectually removed; and now, in fellowship with thyself, I walk through this sinful world as a pilgrim in a foreign country. Thou art a stranger in thine own world. Man forgets thee, dishonours thee, sets up new laws and alien customs, and knows thee not. When thy dear Son came unto his own, his own received him not. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. Never was foreigner so speckled a bird among the denizens of any land as thy beloved Son among his mother's brethren. It is no marvel, then, if I who live the life of Jesus, should be unknown and a stranger here below. Lord, I would not be a citizen where Jesus was an alien. His pierced hand has loosened the cords which once bound my soul to earth, and now I find myself a stranger in the land. My speech seems to these Babylonians among whom I dwell an outlandish tongue, my manners are singular, and my actions are strange. A Tartar would be more at home in Cheapside than I could ever be in the haunts of sinners. But here is the sweetness of my lot: I am a stranger with thee. Thou art my fellow-sufferer, my fellow-pilgrim. Oh, what joy to wander in such blessed society! My heart burns within me by the way when thou dost speak to me, and though I be a sojourner, I am far more blest than those who sit on thrones, and far more at home than those who dwell in their ceiled houses.

"To me remains nor place, nor time:
My country is in every clime;
I can be calm and free from care
On any shore, since God is there.

While place we seek, or place we shun,
The soul finds happiness in none:
But with a God to guide our way,
'Tis equal joy to go or stay."

Evening, July 21

“Why go I mourning?” — Psalm 42:9

Canst thou answer this, believer? Canst thou find any reason why thou art so often mourning instead of rejoicing? Why yield to gloomy anticipations? Who told thee that the night would never end in day? Who told thee that the sea of circumstances would ebb out till there should be nothing left but long leagues of the mud of horrible poverty? Who told thee that the winter of thy discontent would proceed from frost to frost, from snow, and ice, and hail, to deeper snow, and yet more heavy tempest of despair? Knowest thou not that day follows night, that flood comes after ebb, that spring and summer succeed winter? Hope thou then! Hope thou ever! For God fails thee not. Dost thou not know that thy God loves thee in the midst of all this? Mountains, when in darkness hidden, are as real as in day, and God's love is as true to thee now as it was in thy brightest moments. No father chastens always: thy Lord hates the rod as much as thou dost; he only cares to use it for that reason which should make thee willing to receive it, namely, that it works thy lasting good. Thou shalt yet climb Jacob's ladder with the angels, and behold him who sits at the top of it —thy covenant God. Thou shalt yet, amidst the splendours of eternity, forget the trials of time, or only remember them to bless the God who led thee through them, and wrought thy lasting good by them. Come, sing in the midst of tribulation. Rejoice even while passing through the furnace. Make the wilderness to blossom like the rose! Cause the desert to ring with thine exulting joys, for these light afflictions will soon be over, and then “for ever with the Lord,” thy bliss shall never wane.

“Faint not nor fear, his arms are near,
He changeth not, and thou art dear;
Only believe and thou shalt see,
That Christ is all in all to thee.”

Morning, June 21

“Thou art fairer than the children of men.” — Psalm 45:2

The entire person of Jesus is but as one gem, and his life is all along but one impression of the seal. He is altogether complete; not only in his several parts, but as a gracious all-glorious whole. His character is not a mass of fair colours mixed confusedly, nor a heap of precious stones laid carelessly one upon another; he is a picture of beauty and a breastplate of glory. In him, all the “things of good repute” are in their proper places, and assist in adorning each other. Not one feature in his glorious person attracts attention at the expense of others; but he is perfectly and altogether lovely.

Oh, Jesus! thy power, thy grace, thy justice, thy tenderness, thy truth, thy majesty, and thine immutability make up such a man, or rather such a God-man, as neither heaven nor earth hath seen elsewhere. Thy infancy, thy eternity, thy sufferings, thy triumphs, thy death, and thine immortality, are all woven in one gorgeous tapestry, without seam or rent. Thou art music without discord; thou art many, and yet not divided; thou art all things, and yet not diverse. As all the colours blend into one resplendent rainbow, so all the glories of heaven and earth meet in thee, and unite so wondrously, that there is none like thee in all things; nay, if all the virtues of the most excellent were bound in one bundle, they could not rival thee, thou mirror of all perfection. Thou hast been anointed with the holy oil of myrrh and cassia, which thy God hath reserved for thee alone; and as for thy fragrance, it is as the holy perfume, the like of which none other can ever mingle, even with the art of the apothecary; each spice is fragrant, but the compound is divine.

“Oh, sacred symmetry! oh, rare connection
Of many perfects, to make one perfection!
Oh, heavenly music, where all parts do meet
In one sweet strain, to make one perfect sweet!”

Morning, May 29

“Thou hatest wickedness.” — Psalm 45:7

“Be ye angry, and sin not.” There can hardly be goodness in a man if he be not angry at sin; he who loves truth must hate every false way. How our Lord Jesus hated it when the temptation came! Thrice it assailed him in different forms, but ever he met it with, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” He hated it in others; none the less fervently because he showed his hate oftener in tears of pity than in words of rebuke; yet what language could be more stern, more Elijah-like, than the words, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer.” He hated wickedness, so much that he bled to wound it to the heart; he died that it might die; he was buried that he might bury it in his tomb; and he rose that he might for ever trample it beneath his feet. Christ is in the Gospel, and that Gospel is opposed to wickedness in every shape. Wickedness arrays itself in fair garments, and imitates the language of holiness; but the precepts of Jesus, like his famous scourge of small cords, chase it out of the temple, and will not tolerate it in the Church. So, too, in the heart where Jesus reigns, what war there is between Christ and Belial! And when our Redeemer shall come to be our Judge, those thundering words, “Depart, ye cursed” which are, indeed, but a prolongation of his life-teaching concerning sin, shall manifest his abhorrence of iniquity. As warm as is his love to sinners, so hot is his hatred of sin; as perfect as is his righteousness, so complete shall be the destruction of every form of wickedness. O thou glorious champion of right, and destroyer of wrong, for this cause hath God, even thy God, anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Evening, February 15

“Whereby they have made thee glad.” — Psalm 45:8

And who are thus privileged to make the Saviour glad? His church—his people. But is it possible? He makes us glad, but how can we make him glad? By our love. Ah! we think it so cold, so faint; and so, indeed, we must sorrowfully confess it to be, but it is very sweet to Christ. Hear his own eulogy of that love in the golden Canticle: “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine!” See, loving heart, how he delights in you. When you lean your head on his bosom, you not only receive, but you give him joy; when you gaze with love upon his all-glorious face, you not only obtain comfort, but impart delight. Our praise, too, gives him joy—not the song of the lips alone, but the melody of the heart’s deep gratitude. Our gifts, too, are very pleasant to him; he loves to see us lay our time, our talents, our substance upon the altar, not for the value of what we give, but for the sake of the motive from which the gift springs. To him the lowly offerings of his saints are more acceptable than the thousands of gold and silver. Holiness is like frankincense and myrrh to him. Forgive your enemy, and you make Christ glad; distribute of your substance to the poor, and he rejoices; be the means of saving souls, and you give him to see of the travail of his soul; proclaim his gospel, and you are a sweet savour unto him; go among the ignorant and lift up the cross, and you have given him honour. It is in your power even now to break the alabaster box, and pour the precious oil of joy upon his head, as did the woman of old, whose memorial is to this day set forth wherever the gospel is preached. Will you be backward then? Will you not perfume your beloved Lord with the myrrh and aloes, and cassia, of your heart’s praise? Yes, ye ivory palaces, ye shall hear the songs of the saints!

Evening, May 3

“A very present help.” — Psalm 46:1

Covenant blessings are not meant to be looked at only, but to be appropriated. Even our Lord Jesus is given to us for our present use. Believer, thou dost not make use of Christ as thou oughtest to do. When thou art in trouble, why dost thou not tell him all thy grief? Has he not a sympathizing heart, and can he not comfort and relieve thee? No, thou art going about to all thy friends, save thy best Friend, and telling thy tale everywhere except into the bosom of thy Lord. Art thou burdened with this day's sins? Here is a fountain filled with blood: use it, saint, use it. Has a sense of guilt returned upon thee? The pardoning grace of Jesus may be proved again and again. Come to him at once for cleansing. Dost thou deplore thy weakness? He is thy strength: why not lean upon him? Dost thou feel naked? Come hither, soul; put on the robe of Jesus' righteousness. Stand not looking at it, but wear it. Strip off thine own righteousness, and thine own fears too: put on the fair white linen, for it was meant to wear. Dost thou feel thyself sick? Pull the night-bell of prayer, and call up the Beloved Physician! He will give the cordial that will revive thee. Thou art poor, but then thou hast “a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth.” What! wilt thou not go to him, and ask him to give thee of his abundance, when he has given thee this promise, that thou shalt be joint heir with him, and has made over all that he is and all that he has to be thine? There is nothing Christ dislikes more than for his people to make a show-thing of him, and not to use him. He loves to be employed by us. The more burdens we put on his shoulders, the more precious will he be to us.

“Let us be simple with him, then,
Not backward, stiff, or cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old.”

Evening, November 11

“He shall choose our inheritance for us.” — Psalm 47:4

Believer, if your inheritance be a lowly one you should be satisfied with your earthly portion; for you may rest assured that it is the fittest for you. Unerring wisdom ordained your lot, and selected for you the safest and best condition. A ship of large tonnage is to be brought up the river; now, in one part of the stream there is a sandbank; should some one ask, “Why does the captain steer through the deep part of the channel and deviate so much from a straight line?” His answer would be, “Because I should not get my vessel into harbour at all if I did not keep to the deep channel.” So, it may be, you would run aground and suffer shipwreck, if your divine Captain did not steer you into the depths of affliction where waves of trouble follow each other in quick succession. Some plants die if they have too much sunshine. It may be that you are planted where you get but little, you are put there by the loving Husbandman, because only in that situation will you bring forth fruit unto perfection. Remember this, had any other condition been better for you than the one in which you are, divine love would have put you there. You are placed by God in the most suitable circumstances, and if you had the choosing of your lot, you would soon cry, “Lord, choose my inheritance for me, for by my self-will I am pierced through with many sorrows.” Be content with such things as you have, since the Lord has ordered all things for your good. Take up your own daily cross; it is the burden best suited for your shoulder, and will prove most effective to make you perfect in every good word and work to the glory of God. Down busy self, and proud impatience, it is not for you to choose, but for the Lord of Love!

“Trials must and will befall—
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all;
This is happiness to me.”

Morning, August 29

"Have mercy upon me, O God." — Psalm 51:1

When Dr. Carey was suffering from a dangerous illness, the enquiry was made, "If this sickness should prove fatal, what passage would you select as the text for your funeral sermon?" He replied, "Oh, I feel that such a poor sinful creature is unworthy to have anything said about him; but if a funeral sermon must be preached, let it be from the words, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.'" In the same spirit of humility he directed in his will that the following inscription and nothing more should be cut on his gravestone:—

William Carey, Born August 17th, 1761: Died - -

"A wretched, poor, and helpless worm
On thy kind arms I fall."

Only on the footing of free grace can the most experienced and most honoured of the saints approach their God. The best of men are conscious above all others that they are men at the best. Empty boats float high, but heavily laden vessels are low in the water; mere professors can boast, but true children of God cry for mercy upon their unprofitableness. We have need that the Lord should have mercy upon our good works, our prayers, our preachings, our alms-givings, and our holiest things. The blood was not only sprinkled upon the doorposts of Israel's dwelling houses, but upon the sanctuary, the mercy-seat, and the altar, because as sin intrudes into our holiest things, the blood of Jesus is needed to purify them from defilement. If mercy be needed to be exercised towards our duties, what shall be said of our sins? How sweet the remembrance that inexhaustible mercy is waiting to be gracious to us, to restore our backslidings, and make our broken bones rejoice!

Morning, October 31

"Renew a right spirit within me." — Psalm 51:10

A backslider, if there be a spark of life left in him will groan after restoration. In this renewal the same exercise of grace is required as at our conversion. We needed repentance then; we certainly need it now. We wanted faith that we might come to Christ at first; only the like grace can bring us to Jesus now. We wanted a word from the Most High, a word from the lip of the loving One, to end our fears then; we shall soon discover, when under a sense of present sin, that we need it now. No man can be renewed without as real and true a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's energy as he felt at first, because the work is as great, and flesh and blood are as much in the way now as ever they were. Let thy personal weakness, O Christian, be an argument to make thee pray earnestly to thy God for help. Remember, David when he felt himself to be powerless, did not fold his arms or close his lips, but he hastened to the mercy-seat with "renew a right spirit within me." Let not the doctrine that you, unaided, can do nothing, make you sleep; but let it be a goad in your side to drive you with an awful earnestness to Israel's strong Helper. O that you may have grace to plead with God, as though you pleaded for your very life—"Lord, renew a right spirit within me." He who sincerely prays to God to do this, will prove his honesty by using the means through which God works. Be much in prayer; live much upon the Word of God; kill the lusts which have driven your Lord from you; be careful to watch over the future uprisings of sin. The Lord has his own appointed ways; sit by the wayside and you will be ready when he passes by. Continue in all those blessed ordinances which will foster and nourish your dying graces; and, knowing that all the power must proceed from him, cease not to cry, "Renew a right spirit within me."

Evening, April 7

“Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.” — Psalm 51:14

In this solemn confession, it is pleasing to observe that David plainly names his sin. He does not call it manslaughter, nor speak of it as an imprudence by which an unfortunate accident occurred to a worthy man, but he calls it by its true name, bloodguiltiness. He did not actually kill the husband of Bathsheba; but still it was planned in David's heart that Uriah should be slain, and he was before the Lord his murderer. Learn in confession to be honest with God. Do not give fair names to foul sins; call them what you will, they will smell no sweeter. What God sees them to be, that do you labour to feel them to be; and with all openness of heart acknowledge their real character. Observe, that David was evidently oppressed with the heinousness of his sin. It is easy to use words, but it is difficult to feel their meaning. The fifty-first Psalm is the photograph of a contrite spirit. Let us seek after the like brokenness of heart; for however excellent our words may be, if our heart is not conscious of the hell-deservingness of sin, we cannot expect to find forgiveness.

Our text has in it an earnest prayer—it is addressed to the God of salvation. It is his prerogative to forgive; it is his very name and office to save those who seek his face. Better still, the text calls him the God of my salvation. Yes, blessed be his name, while I am yet going to him through Jesus' blood, I can rejoice in the God of my salvation.

The psalmist ends with a commendable vow: if God will deliver him he will sing—nay, more, he will “sing aloud.” Who can sing in any other style of such a mercy as this! But note the subject of the song—“Thy righteousness.” We must sing of the finished work of a precious Saviour; and he who knows most of forgiving love will sing the loudest.

Morning, May 26

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.” — Psalm 55:22

Care, even though exercised upon legitimate objects, if carried to excess, has in it the nature of sin. The precept to avoid anxious care is earnestly inculcated by our Saviour, again and again; it is reiterated by the apostles; and it is one which cannot be neglected without involving transgression: for the very essence of anxious care is the imagining that we are wiser than God, and the thrusting ourselves into his place to do for him that which he has undertaken to do for us. We attempt to think of that which we fancy he will forget; we labour to take upon ourselves our weary burden, as if he were unable or unwilling to take it for us. Now this disobedience to his plain precept, this unbelief in his Word, this presumption in intruding upon his province, is all sinful. Yet more than this, anxious care often leads to acts of sin. He who cannot calmly leave his affairs in God's hand, but will carry his own burden, is very likely to be tempted to use wrong means to help himself. This sin leads to a forsaking of God as our counsellor, and resorting instead to human wisdom. This is going to the “broken cistern” instead of to the “fountain;” a sin which was laid against Israel of old. Anxiety makes us doubt God's lovingkindness, and thus our love to him grows cold; we feel mistrust, and thus grieve the Spirit of God, so that our prayers become hindered, our consistent example marred, and our life one of self-seeking. Thus want of confidence in God leads us to wander far from him; but if through simple faith in his promise, we cast each burden as it comes upon him, and are “careful for nothing” because he undertakes to care for us, it will keep us close to him, and strengthen us against much temptation. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”

Evening, July 13

“When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.” — Psalm 56:9

It is impossible for any human speech to express the full meaning of this delightful phrase, “God is for me.” He was “for us” before the worlds were made; he was “for us,” or he would not have given his well-beloved son; he was “for us” when he smote the Only-begotten, and laid the full weight of his wrath upon him—he was “for us,” though he was against him; he was “for us,” when we were ruined in the fall—he loved us notwithstanding all; he was “for us,” when we were rebels against him, and with a high hand were bidding him defiance; he was “for us,” or he would not have brought us humbly to seek his face. He has been “for us” in many struggles; we have been summoned to encounter hosts of dangers; we have been assailed by temptations from without and within—how could we have remained unharmed to this hour if he had not been “for us”? He is “for us,” with all the infinity of his being; with all the omnipotence of his love; with all the infallibility of his wisdom; arrayed in all his divine attributes, he is “for us;”—eternally and immutably “for us”; “for us” when yon blue skies shall be rolled up like a worn out vesture; “for us” throughout eternity. And because he is “for us,” the voice of prayer will always ensure his help. “When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies be turned back.” This is no uncertain hope, but a well grounded assurance—“this I know.” I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up for the answer, assured that it will come, and that mine enemies shall be defeated, “for God is for me.” O believer, how happy art thou with the King of kings on thy side! How safe with such a Protector! How sure thy cause pleaded by such an Advocate! If God be for thee, who can be against thee?

Evening, September 22

“When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.” — Psalm 61:2

Most of us know what it is to be overwhelmed in heart; emptied as when a man wipeth a dish and turneth it upside down; submerged and thrown on our beam ends like a vessel mastered by the storm. Discoveries of inward corruption will do this, if the Lord permits the great deep of our depravity to become troubled and cast up mire and dirt. Disappointments and heart-breaks will do this when billow after billow rolls over us, and we are like a broken shell hurled to and fro by the surf. Blessed be God, at such seasons we are not without an all-sufficient solace, our God is the harbour of weather-beaten sails, the hospice of forlorn pilgrims. Higher than we are is he, his mercy higher than our sins, his love higher than our thoughts. It is pitiful to see men putting their trust in something lower than themselves; but our confidence is fixed upon an exceeding high and glorious Lord. A Rock he is since he changes not, and a high Rock, because the tempests which overwhelm us roll far beneath at his feet; he is not disturbed by them, but rules them at his will. If we get under the shelter of this lofty Rock we may defy the hurricane; all is calm under the lee of that towering cliff. Alas! such is the confusion in which the troubled mind is often cast, that we need piloting to this divine shelter. Hence the prayer of the text. O Lord, our God, by thy Holy Spirit, teach us the way of faith, lead us into thy rest. The wind blows us out to sea, the helm answers not to our puny hand; thou, thou alone canst steer us over the bar between yon sunken rocks, safe into the fair haven. How dependent we are upon thee—we need thee to bring us to thee. To be wisely directed and steered into safety and peace is thy gift, and thine alone. This night be pleased to deal well with thy servants.

Morning, February 28

“My expectation is from him.” — Psalm 62:5

It is the believer’s privilege to use this language. If he is looking for aught from the world, it is a poor “expectation” indeed. But if he looks to God for the supply of his wants, whether in temporal or spiritual blessings, his “expectation” will not be a vain one. Constantly he may draw from the bank of faith, and get his need supplied out of the riches of God’s lovingkindness. This I know, I had rather have God for my banker than all the Rothschilds. My Lord never fails to honour his promises; and when we bring them to his throne, he never sends them back unanswered. Therefore I will wait only at his door, for he ever opens it with the hand of munificent grace. At this hour I will try him anew. But we have “expectations” beyond this life. We shall die soon; and then our “expectation is from him.” Do we not expect that when we lie upon the bed of sickness he will send angels to carry us to his bosom? We believe that when the pulse is faint, and the heart heaves heavily, some angelic messenger shall stand and look with loving eyes upon us, and whisper, “Sister spirit, come away!” As we approach the heavenly gate, we expect to hear the welcome invitation, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” We are expecting harps of gold and crowns of glory; we are hoping soon to be amongst the multitude of shining ones before the throne; we are looking forward and longing for the time when we shall be like our glorious Lord—for “We shall see him as he is.” Then if these be thine “expectations,” O my soul, live for God; live with the desire and resolve to glorify him from whom cometh all thy supplies, and of whose grace in thy election, redemption, and calling, it is that thou hast any “expectation” of coming glory.

Evening, September 1

"Trust in him at all times." — Psalm 62:8

Faith is as much the rule of temporal as of spiritual life; we ought to have faith in God for our earthly affairs as well as for our heavenly business. It is only as we learn to trust in God for the supply of all our daily need that we shall live above the world. We are not to be idle, that would show we did not trust in God, who worketh hitherto, but in the devil, who is the father of idleness. We are not to be imprudent or rash; that were to trust chance, and not the living God, who is a God of economy and order. Acting in all prudence and uprightness, we are to rely simply and entirely upon the Lord at all times.

Let me commend to you a life of trust in God in temporal things. Trusting in God, you will not be compelled to mourn because you have used sinful means to grow rich. Serve God with integrity, and if you achieve no success, at least no sin will lie upon your conscience. Trusting God, you will not be guilty of self-contradiction. He who trusts in craft, sails this way to-day, and that way the next, like a vessel tossed about by the fickle wind; but he that trusteth in the Lord is like a vessel propelled by steam, she cuts through the waves, defies the wind, and makes one bright silvery straightforward track to her destined haven. Be you a man with living principles within; never bow to the varying customs of worldly wisdom. Walk in your path of integrity with steadfast steps, and show that you are invincibly strong in the strength which confidence in God alone can confer. Thus you will be delivered from anxious care, you will not be troubled with evil tidings, your heart will be fixed, trusting in the Lord. How pleasant to float along the stream of providence! There is no more blessed way of living than a life of dependence upon a covenant-keeping God. We have no care, for he careth for us; we have no troubles, because we cast our burdens upon the Lord

DEVOTIONALS ON PSALMS

by C H Spurgeon

"Morning and Evening"

Part 2