Our Daily Homily Vol II

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Our Daily Homily

BY

F. B. MEYER, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"Peter: Fisherman, Disciple, Apostle."

ETC., ETC.

1 SAMUEL - JOB.

MARSHALL, MORGAN & SCOTT, LTD.,

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"WELL -- What are ages and the lapse of time

Match'd against truths, as lasting as sublime?

Can length of years on God Himself exact?

Or make that fiction, which was once a fact?

No -- marble and recording brass decay,

And, like the graver's memory, pass away;

The works of man inherit, as is just,

Their author's frailty, and return to dust;

But Truth divine for ever stands secure,

Its head is guarded as its base is sure;

Fix'd in the rolling flood of endless years,

The pillar of the eternal plan appears,

The raving storm and dashing wave defies,

Built by that Architect who built the skies."

COWPER.

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I have poured out my soul before the Lord. 1 Sam. i. 15.

HANNAH'S soul was fall of complaint and grief, which flowed over into

her face and made it sorrowful. But when she had poured out her soul

before the Lord, emptying out all its bitterness, the peace of God took

the place of her soul-anguish, she went her way, and did eat, and her

countenance was no more sad. What a glad exchange! How great the

contrast! How much the better for herself, and for her home!

Is your face darkened by the bitterness of your soul? Perhaps the enemy

has been vexing you sorely; or there is an unrealized hope, an

unfulfilled purpose. in your life; or, perchance, the Lord seems to

have forgotten you. Poor sufferer, there is nothing for it but to pour

out your soul before the Lord. Empty out its contents in confession and

prayer. God knows it all; yet tell Him, as if He knew nothing. "Ye

people, pour out your hearts before Him. God is a refuge for us." "In

everything, by prayer and supplication make your requests known unto

God."

As we pour out our bitterness, God pours in his peace. Weeping goes out

of one door whilst joy enters at another. We transmit the cup of tears

to the Man of Sorrows, and He hands it back to us filled with the

blessings of the new covenant. Some day you will come to the spot where

you wept and prayed, bringing your offering of praise and thanksgiving.

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His mother made him a little coat. 1 Sam. ii. 19.

WHAT happy work it was! Those nimble fingers flew along the seams,

because love inspired them. All her woman's art and wit were put into

the garment, her one idea and ambition being to make something which

should be not only useful, but becoming. Not mothers only, but fathers,

are always making little coats for their children, which they wear Iong

years after a material fabric would have become worn out. How many men

and women are wearing today the coats which their parents cut out and

made for them long years ago!

Habits are the vesture of the soul. The Apostle bade his converts put

off the old man, "which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts,"

and to put on the new man, "which after God is created in righteousness

and true holiness"; to put off anger, wrath, and malice, whilst they

put on mercy, humility, and meekness. What words could better establish

the fact that habits are (as the name indicates) the clothing of the

inner life! Where and how are habits formed? Not in the mid-passage of

life, but at its dawn; not in great crises, but in daily circumstances;

not in life's arena, but in the home, amid the surroundings of earliest

childhood. Oh that the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness may ever

be exhibited before those with whom we daily come in contact!

By their behaviour to each other and to their children; by the ordering

of the home-life; by their actions, more than by their words; by the

way in which they speak, and spend their leisure hours, and pray -- men

and women are making the little coats which, for better or worse, their

children wear ever after, and perhaps pass down to after generations.

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And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel,

Samuel! 1 Sam. iii. 10.

SEE the urgency of God! Four times He came, and stood, and called. Mark

how He stands at the door to knock. At first He was content to call the

lad once by name; but after three unsuccessful attempts to attract him

to Himself, He uttered the name twice, with strong urgency in the

appeal, Samuel! Samuel! This has been called God's double knock. There

are seven or eight of these double knocks in Scripture: Simon, Simon;

Saul, Saul; Abraham, Abraham.

How may we be sure of a Divine call?

We may know God's call when it grows in intensity. -- If an impression

comes into your soul, and you are not quite sure of its origin, pray

over it; above all, act on it so far as possible, follow in the

direction in which it leads --and as you lift up your soul before God,

it will wax or wane. If it wanes at all, abandon it. If it waxes follow

it, though all hell attempt to stay you.

We may test God's call by the assistance of godly friends. -- The aged

Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child, and gave him good

advice as to the manner in which he should respond to it. Our special

gifts and the drift of our circumstances will also assuredly concur in

one of God's calls.

We may test God's call by its effect on us. -- Does it lead to

self-denial? Does it induce us to leave the comfortable bed and step

into the cold? Does it drive us forth to minister to others? Does it

make us more unseIfish, loving, tender, modest, humble! Whatever is to

the humbling of our pride, and the glory of God, may be truly deemed

God's call. Be quick to respond, and fearlessly deliver the message the

Lord has given you.

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Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. 1 Sam. iv. 3.

ISRAEL had been defeated with great loss. Their only hope of being able

to hold their own against the Philistines and the people of the land

was in the protection and help vouchsafed to them by God. They knew

this, and thought that they would be secured, if only the Ark of the

covenant were on the field. They forgot that it was only the material

symbol of a spiritual relationship; that it was useless unless that

relationship was in living force; and that the bending forms of the

cherubim, emblematic of the Divine protection, would not avail if their

fellowship with the God of the cherubim had been ruptured by

backsliding.

There is a sense in which we are always sending for the Ark. The

reliance on outward rites, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, on

the part of those who are alienated from the life of God ; the

maintenance of the forms of prayer and Scripture-reading, which no

longer express the passionate love of the soul; the habit of

churchgoing, which so many practise, not because they love God, but

because they think that it will in some way secure his alliance in

life's battle -- all these are forms in which we still fetch the Ark of

the covenant, whilst our hearts are wrong with the God of the covenant.

It should never be forgotten that nothing can afford to us protection

and succour but vital union with Christ. We must hide in his secret

place if we would abide under his shadow. We must dwell in the most

holy place if we would be shadowed by the wings of the Shekinah. There

must be nothing between us and God, if we are to walk together, and

enjoy fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

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Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord.

1 Sam. v. 3.

THE idols of the heathen represent demons who are their accepted gods,

just as the Ark was the symbol of the presence of Jehovah. In the one

case there was a material representation of the demon; but in the case

of the Ark there was only a throne, the Mercy Seat; and no attempt was

made to represent the appearance of the God of Israel. When placed in

the Holy of Holies, the Shekinah shone between the cherubim; this alone

spoke of the Divine Spirit who filled the apparently vacant throne.

When the effigy of the fish-god was confronted by the Sacred Ark, it

was as though the demon spirit and the Divine Spirit had come into

contact, with the inevitable result that the inferiority of the one

ensured the crash of its effigy to the ground.

What a lesson this must have been to the Philistines -- similar to that

given Pharaoh in the plagues of Egypt, and with the same object of

leading them to see the superior greatness of Jehovah! How great the

encouragement to Israel -- to know that God could defend his

superiority! And how striking the prognostication for the future, when

all the Dagons of the world shall be broken before the symbol of Divine

power and love!

Bring the Ark of God into your life. Set it down in your heart, and

forthwith the Dagons which have held sway for so long will one after

another succumb. "The idols He will utterly abolish." Let Christ in --

that is the one need of the soul; and let Him take full possession of

you. Then He will do his own work. Darkness cannot abide light; nor the

defilement of the Augean stable the turning in of the water of the

river.

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And the kine went along the highway, lowing as they went. 1 Sam. vi.

12.

THAT two milch kine which had never borne the yoke should move quietly

along the high road, turning neither to the right nor to the left, and

lowing for the calves they had left behind, clearly indicated that they

were possessed and guided by some mysterious power, which we know to

have been God's. And if He were able thus to overpower the instincts of

their nature, and to compel them to do his will, may we not infer that

all circumstances, and all men, however unwittingly, and against their

natural instinct, are subserving the purposes of his will, and bearing

on the Ark? The fish yields the tribute money; the colt of the ass

waits where two ways meet to bear the Redeemer; the man with the

waterpot leads to the upper room; the Roman soldiers enable Paul to

fulfil the mission of his life, in preaching the Gospel without

hindrance in the very heart of Rome.

As we go forth into the world, let us believe that the movement of all

things is towards the accomplishment of God's purpose. Herein is a

fulfilment of the Psalmist's prediction about man, which can only be

perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the second Adam -- that all things

are under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the

field. Everything serves Christ, and those who serve Christ. In a true

sense all things are ours; they minister to us, even as Christ to God.

And against our natural inclinations let us always regard the claims of

God as paramount; and dare to go his way, though our heart pines for

those we leave behind. "He that loveth father or mother, son or

daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me."

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Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God. 1 Sam. vii 8.

SAMUEL was famous for his prayers. They are repeatedly referred to in

the brief record of his life. In the Psalms he is spoken of as the one

"who called upon God's name." Indeed, he fought and won Israel's

battles by his strong intercessions. Mary of Scots said that she

dreaded the prayers of John Knox more than the battalions of the King

of France. So his people were accustomed to think that if the prophet's

hands were held out in importunate prayer, their foes must be

restrained.

In the Life of Mr. Reginald Radcliffe, one who contributes a

reminiscence interjects a remark which deserves to be carefully

pondered: -- "The great secret of the blessing which came from God to

the awakening of whole districts, the quickening of Christians, and the

salvation of multitudes, was prayer, continued, fervent, believing,

expectant. There was never anything striking in the addresses; but

through communion with the living Christ, the word came forth with

living and life-giving power. Often would the forenoon be spent in

continuous prayer." This may well convict some of us of the cause of

our failure. We have expected the Lord to thunder and discomfort our

Philistines, and with a great deliverance ; but we have ceased to cry

unto the Lord.

Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, cease not to cry unto Him. If the

judge avenged the unfortunate widow, shall not God avenge his own

elect, who cry day and night? It is recorded of our Lord that He prayed

early and late, and all night. He prayed when He was about to be

transfigured; for his disciples; in the Garden of Gethsemane; and for

his murderers. How much more do we need to "pray without ceasing"!

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But the thing displeased Samuel.... And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. 1

Sam. viii. 6.

A LITTLE further down in the chapter we learn that Samuel rehearsed the

words of the people unto the Lord. His prayer, to a large extent, was a

rehearsal of all the strong and unkind things that the people had said

to him; and in this way he passed them off his mind, and found relief.

There is a suggestion of close communion with God in the expression,

"He rehearsed them in the ears of the

Lord." It had been the habit of his life to be on intimate terms with

his God.

Things do not always turn out as we had hoped, and we get displeased

for our own sakes and God's. We had planned in one direction, but

events have issued in another; and the results have threatened to

become disastrous. There is but one resource. If we allow vexations to

eat into our heart, they will corrode and injure it. We must rehearse

them to God -- spreading the letter before Him, as Hezekiah did; making

request like Paul; crying like Samuel.

Surely it is the mistake of our life, that we carry our burdens instead

of handing them over; that we worry instead of trusting; that we pray

so little. The grass grows thick on the pathway to our oratory; the

cobwebs hang across the doorway. The time we spend in prayer is perhaps

better spent than in any other way. It was whilst Samuel prayed thus,

that he saw the Divine programme for Israel:

"And he who at the sixth hour sought

The lone house-top to pray,

There gained a sight beyond his thought --

The dawn of Gentile day.

Then reckon not, when perils lour,

The time of prayer mis-spent;

Nor meanest chance, nor place, nor hour,

Without its heavenward bent."

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Behold, there is in this city a man of God. 1 Sam. ix. 6.

THERE is a street in London, near St. Paul's, which I never traverse

without very peculiar feelings. It is Godliman Street. Evidently the

name is a corruption of godly man. Did some saint of God once live

here, whose life was so holy as to give a sweet savour to the very

street in which he dwelt? Were the neighbours who knew him best, the

most sure of his godliness? Would that our piety might leave its mark

on our neighbourhoods, and the memory linger long after we have passed

away!

A generation or two ago in the Highlands, there were earnest and holy

men who were known by the significant title of the men. No great

religious gathering was deemed complete without them. Their prayers and

exhortations were accompanied by an especial unction.

In such manner Samuel's godliness was recognised far and wide. The

fragrance of his character could not be concealed. And this gave men

confidence in him. They said, "He is an honourable man; all that he

saith cometh surely to pass." How much credit redounds to godliness,

when it is combined with trustworthiness and high credit amongst our

fellows!

Let us seek to be God's men and women. Let us live not only soberly and

righteously, but godly, in this present world. Let us remember that God

hath set apart the godly for Himself. The godly are the godlike. They

become so by cultivating the fellowship and friendship of God. Their

faces become enlightened with his beauty; their words are weighty with

his truth. After being for a little in their company, you detect the

gravity, serenity, gentleness, beauty of holiness, which are the court

manners of heaven.

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Thou shalt do as occasion serve thee. 1 Sam. x. 7.

THIS is an example of how God demands of us the use of our sanctified

common-sense. Samuel sketches to Saul the course of events during the

next few days; showing how clearly our lives lie naked and open to the

eyes of God, and how easily He can reveal them when necessary. But

whilst the various incidents are told, the prophet does not feel it

incumbent to tell this goodly young man how he should behave in any

given instance. "When these signs are come upon thee, thou shalt do as

occasion serve thee."

We are reminded of a parallel in the life of Peter. The angel of God

unbarred the prison-doors, and led him forth, because nothing short of

Divine power would avail. He led the dazed Apostle through one street,

because he was too bewildered to realize what had happened. But, as

soon as the night-air had brought him to his senses, the angel left him

"to consider the meitter" -- to use his own judgment. The result of

which was, that he went to the house of Mary.

One of the divinest of our faculties is the judgment, before which the

reasons for and against a certain course of action must be adduced, but

with which the ultimate decision lies. It is a tendency with some to

depreciate the use of this wonderful power, by looking for signs and

visions to point their path. This is a profound mistake. God will give

these when there are complications in which the exercise of judgment

might be at fault; but not where it is sufficient. Where no sign is

given, carefully divest yourself of selfish considerations, weigh the

pros and cons, ask for guidance, dare to act; and having acted in

faith, never look back or doubt.

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Come let us go to Gilgal, and renew the Kingdom there . 1 Sam. xi. 14.

IT is good to have days and occasions for renewing the kingdom. Already

Saul had been anointed king. It was a recognised matter that he should

inaugurate the days of the kings, as distinguished from those of the

judges. But his great victory at Jabesh-Gilead seems to have wrought

the enthusiasm of the people to the highest pitch, and to have

presented a great opportunity for renewing the kingdom. They went to

Gilgal to do this, because there, on the first entrance into Canaan,

Israel had rolled away the reproach of uncircumcision, which symbolised

their lack of separation.

Jesus is our King. The Father hath anointed Him, and set Him on his

holy hill; and we have gladly assented to the appointment, and made Him

King. But sometimes our sense of loyalty and devotion wanes. Insensibly

we drift from our strenuous endeavour to act always as his devoted

subjects. Therefore we need, from time to time, to renew the kingdom,

and reverently make Him King before the Lord.

Go over the old solemn form of dedication; turn to the yellow leaves of

the diary; bring under his sceptre any new provinces of influence that

have been acquired; tell Him how glad and thankful you are to live only

for Him. Let this be done at Gilgal, the place of circumcision and

separation, with the Jordan of death flowing behind, and the Land of

Promise beckoning in front. There is a sense in which we can consecrate

ourselves only once; but we can renew our vows often.

"Blessings abound where'er He reigns;

The prisoner leaps to burst his chains;

The weary find eternal rest,

And all the sons of want are blest"

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The Lord will not forsake his people for his great Name's sake. 1 Sam.

xii. 22.

THE certainty of our salvation rests on the character of God. Moses,

years before, had pleaded that God could not afford to destroy or

forsake Israel, lest the Egyptians and others should have some ground

for saying that He was not able to carry out his purpose, or that He

was fickle and changeable. "What wilt Thou do for thy great Name?"

Samuel uses the same argument. We also may avail ourselves of it for

our great comfort.

God knew what we should be -- how weak and frail and changeful --

before He arrested us and brought us to Himself. Speaking after the

manner of men, we might say He counted the cost. He computed whether

his resources were sufficient to secure us from our foes, keep us from

falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with

exceeding joy. He foreknew how much forbearance, pity, consolation, and

tenderness, we should require. And yet it pleased Him to make us his

people. He cannot, therefore, now run back from his purpose; otherwise

it would seem that difficulties had arisen which either He had not

anticipated, or was not so well able to combat as He had thought. What

an absurd suggestion! In the former case there would be a slur on his

omniscience; on the other, upon his omnipotence.

"What if God should cast you into hell?" was asked of an old

Scotchwoman.

'Well," she answered, "If He do, all I can say is, He will lose mair

than I will."

The gracious promise given to Joshua may be appropriated by every

trembling saint of God: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." To

the poor and needy He says, "I the God of Israel will not forsake

them."

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I forced myself, therefore, and offered a burnt-offering. 1 Sam. xiii.

12.

THIS was wholly outside Saul's province. Samuel had engaged to arrive

within the seven days: they had nearly expired, and still there were no

signs of the prophet; and Saul, yielding to the promptings of his

impetuous nature, took the matter into his own hand, and rashly assumed

an office to which he had no right. He protested that he had been very

unwilling to add the function of priest to that of king. But this was

notoriously contrary to the truth. For some time he had chafed against

Samuel's prerogative, and now sought to supersede the Divine order.

It seemed but a small act, and, to superficial judgment, not enough to

warrant the loss of his kingdom; but it was symptomatic of a great

moral deficiency. He had not learned to obey the commandment of the

Lord: how could he rule? He could not control the hasty suggestions of

his own nature, in favour of the deliberate movement of the Divine

order: how could he be God's chosen agent? He acted on the showings of

expediency, rather than of faith: how could he be a man after God's own

heart? The restlessness and haste which characterize the present age

must not be allowed to affect our service for God; for thereby the

progress of the Gospel will be hindered rather than helped.

We must learn to wait for God. He may not come till the allotted time

has almost passed; but He will come. He waits for the exact moment in

which He can best succour you. Not till patience has been exercised,

but before it has given out. In the meanwhile, be sure that your safety

is secured; He will see to it that the Philistines shall not come down

to overwhelm you.

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His eyes were enlightened. 1 Sam. xiv. 27.

THE Philistines were in full flight. The Israelites followed hard at

their heels through the wood. It was there that the honey dropped in

rich abundance on the ground, and there Jonathan tasted a little,

dipping the end of his rod into it. It made all the difference to him,

warding off the excessive exhaustion which paralysed the rest of the

army.

The Word of God is sweeter than the honeycomb. -- Luscious to the

sanctified taste; enlightening to the dimming eyes; strength-giving to

the weary. It drops in abundance to the ground, as though inviting the

hand of the Christian warrior or wayfarer to take it freely. If there

is no taste for the written Word, it may be assumed that the living

Word has not been enthroned in the heart; for where He reigns supreme,

there is a longing for the food which alone can fit us for the

Christian life.

Where we cannot take much, let us take some. -- There was not time for

Jonathan to sit down and take his fill. He could only catch up some as

he hastily passed through the forest-glade; but that little made all

the difference to him. So, in the early morning, or at mid-day, if we

cannot fill our hearts with Scripture, we may catch up a morsel, which

will minister untold refreshment, and clear our spiritual vision.

We specially need to do this when flushed with success. -- Too often,

when we have had success in the battles of the Lord -- a good time in

preaching or teaching -- we are apt to congratulate ourselves, and

suppose that we can live on the emotions excited. But, probably, there

is no time when we need more absolutely to turn to the Word of God. In

victory, as in defeat, we must be fed and nourished.

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To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

1 Sam. xv. 22.

THIS is a great principle, which is repeatedly enforced throughout the

Bible. Men have always been apt to divorce religion and morality, and

to suppose that a certain tribute of sacrifice to God will be

sufficient compensation for notorious evil-doing. But in every age

God's servants have protested against the notion, and have insisted, as

Samuel did with Saul, that it were better to obey, although there

should be no spoil from which to select victims for sacrifice. This was

Christ's perpetual protest against the Pharisees.

Let the Ritualist beware. -- There is a grave fear lest extreme

attention to the outward rite may be accompanied by carelessness to the

inward temper. Where the outward observance is the expression of the

attitude of the soul, it is to be respected even by those of us who

feel that excessive symbolism is hostile to the devout life; but where

the rite takes the place of the soul's devotion, or condones a lax

morality, it cannot be too sternly deprecated. Though all the Levitical

rites should be observed without flaw, they could not compensate for

the persistent neglect of the least item of the decalogue. "God is a

Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in

truth."

Let us all beware. -- We are apt to make sacrifices of time and money

and energy for God, and to comfort ourselves with the reflection that

such as we are may be excused if in small lapses of temper, or

disposition, we come short of the Divine standard. No; it cannot pass

muster. One sin mastered, one temptation resisted, one duty performed,

is dearer to God than the most costly sacrifices that were ever piled

upon the altar.

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The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. 1 Sam.

xvi. 13.

WHAT may not a day bring forth! Here was a shepherd lad, summoned

hastily from his sheep, and anointed king. But an even greater blessing

came into his life that day, for he was mightily endued with the Holy

Spirit. Without doubt, during his early years the Spirit of God had

dwelt within him, moulding his character, inditing his songs; but,

henceforth, the Spirit was to abide on him, as a Divine unction.

Why should not this day witness a similar transformation for you; not

in the change of earthly position, but in your reception of the "power

from on high " through a renewed enduement? Why should not the Spirit

of the Lord come mightily upon you from this holy hour, even as your

eyes glance down this page? Though it is quite possible that you have

been empowered once, there is no finality in God's bestowals; the

apostles were filled and filled again (Acts ii. and iv.).

The age of Pentecost in which we live is distinctly one of Divine

anointing. It awaits all who will separate themselves to God, and

receive it for his glory. The characteristic preposition of this age is

on. If you have not received power, seek it; he that seeketh findeth;

nay, receive it -- to ask is to get. If the Master, though begotten of

the Holy Spirit, forebore to preach the Gospel, and bind up broken

hearts, till He had been anointed as the Christ by the Spirit, who

descended on Him at his baptism; how foolish it is for us, who were

born in sin, to attempt similar work, apart from similar enduement! The

promise to each child of God is: "Ye shall receive power after that the

Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts

i. 8).

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The armies of the living God. 1 Sam. xvii. 26, 36.

THIS made all the difference between David and the rest of the camp. To

Saul and his soldiers God was an absentee -- a name, but little else.

They believed that He had done great things for his people in the past,

and that at some future time, in the days of the Messiah, He might be

expected to do great things again; but no one thought of Him as

present. Keenly sensitive to the defiance of the Philistine, and

grieved by the apathy of his people, David, on the other hand, felt

that God was alive. He had lived alone with Him in the solitude of the

hills, till God had become one of -the greatest and most real facts of

his young existence; and as the lad went to and fro among the armed

warriors, he was sublimely conscious of the presence of the living God

amid the clang of the camp.

This is what we need. To live so much with God, that when we come

amongst men, whether in the bazaars of India or the market-place of an

English town, we may be more aware of his over-shadowing presence than

of the presence or absence of any one. Lo, God is here! This place is

hallowed ground! But none can realize this by the act of the will. We

can only find God everywhere when we carry Him everywhere. The miner

sees by the candle he carries on his forehead.

Each of us is opposed by difficulties, privations, and trials of

different sorts. But the one answer to them all is faith's vision of

the Living God. We can face the mightiest foe in his name. If our faith

can but make Him a passage, along which He shall come, there is no

Goliath He will not quell; no question He will not answer; no need He

will not meet

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David behaved himself wisely. 1 Sam. xviii. 5, 14, 15, 30.

THERE must be some strong reason for the four-fold repetition of this

phrase in so short a space. It is as though the Holy Ghost would lay

very distinct stress on the Divine prudence and circumspection, which

must characterise the man whose life is hid in God. Let us walk with

God, abiding in Him, subjecting our thoughts and plans to his,

communing about all things with Him, talking over our lives with Him,

before we go out to live them in the presence of our fellows. Then we

too shall have this gracious wisdom, which is more moral than

intellectual -- the product of the grace of God rather than of human

culture.

Our life shall commend itself to men (5). -- David's was good in the

sight of all the people, and more wonderful still, in the sight of

Saul's servants, who might have been jealous. A life lived in God

disarms jealousy and envy. He who, as a boy, did his Father's business

increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and men.

Our life shall rebuke and awe our foes (15). -- Saul stood in awe of

him. When traps and snares are laid for us we shall be enabled to

thread our way through them all, as Jesus did when they tried to

entangle Him in his talk. We shall have a wisdom which all our foes

together shall not be able to gainsay or resist.

Our name will be precious (30). -- People loved to dwell on the name of

David; it was much set by; they noticed and were impressed with the

beauty and nobility of his character. We must always view our lives,

amusements, and undertakings, in the light of the result which will

accrue to Him whose name it is our privilege to bear.

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And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan. 1 Sam. xix. 6.

IT was a noble act of Jonathan. He might have withdrawn from his

friendship with David when it threatened his relations with his father;

but, instead, be stopped into the breach, and pleaded for his friend,

endeavouring to eradicate the false ind ungenerous conceptions of which

Saul had become possessed. It is an example we do well to study and

copy. For his love's sake, as well as for his father's, he was

extremely eager to effect a reconciliation between him to whom he owed

allegiance of son and subject, and this fair shepherd-minstrel-warrior,

who had so recently cast a sunny gleam upon his life.

Men often misconceive of one another. Jealousy and envy distort

behaviour and actions which are in themselves as beautiful as possible.

Misrepresentation will blind us to the true excellences of one

another's characters. Wrong constructions are often put on the most

innocent incidents. We cannot help these things, they are part of the

sad heritage of the Fall; but we may often take up the cause of a

misunderstood man, and at the risk of losing our own reputation, and

diverting to ourselves some of the odium which attaches to him, we may

stand as his sponsors.

Even if we dislike another, as Saul did David, let us give scope to the

good Spirit to plead his cause at the bar of our hearts, as Jonathan

did for his friend. Let us consider all the kind and loving things that

may be said of him; let us put ourselves in his position; let us be

willing to believe and hope all things. Let us plead for others, since

this is a work in which Christ's followers most closely approximate to

Him who ever liveth to intercede.

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Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. 1 Sam. xx. 18.

JONATHAN and David had entered into a covenant,each loving the other as

his own soul. Anxious to shield his friend from the wrath of his

father, Jonathan discloses to David the plan by which he shall know how

matters fared in the royal palace. David's vacant seat suggests a

lesson for us.

There are a good many empty seats in our houses. Those that occupied

them can never do so again; they have gone never to return again, and

we miss them sorely.

Let us see to it that we do not leave our seats in the home circle

needlessly vacant. Let not the mother be away at the dance, or even at

the religious meeting, when she should be at home, joining in her

children's evening prayers. Let the father be very sure that God has

called him elsewhere, before he habitually vacates his place in the

evening family circle. Let each of us avoid giving needless pain to

those we love by leaving empty seats. But if God calls us away to his

service, then for those who miss us, another Form shall glide in, and

sit in the vacant chair; and they will become conscious that the Master

is filling the gap, and beguiling the weary moments.

Above all, let not your seat be empty in the house of God, at the

ordinary service, or at the Lord's Table. We are too prone to allow a

trifle to deter us from joining in the sacred feasts. At such times we

are missed, our empty seat witnesses against us; there is a lack in the

song and prayer, which cries out against us; there is a distinct loss

to the power of the service, which is in proportion to the number of

earnest souls present. Oh that there may be no empty seats at the

marriage supper, vacated through our unfaithfulness!

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There is none like that; give it me. 1 Sam. xxi. 9.

WHAT David said of the sword of Goliath we may say of Holy Scripture --

the sword of the Spirit -- "There is none like that."

There is no book like the Bible for those convinced of sin. -- The Word

of God assures the sinner of God's love in Christ, whilst it refuses to

condone a single sin, or excuse one shortcoming. The Bible is as stern

as conscience herself against sin, but as pitiful as the heart of God

to the sinner. It, moreover, discloses the method by which the just God

becomes the justifier of those who believe.

There is no book like the Bible for the sorrowful. -- It tells of the

Comforter; it reminds us that in all our sorrow God also is sad; it

points to the perfect plan according to which God is working out our

blessedness; it insists that all things are working together for good;

it opens the vision of the blessed future, where all the griefs and

tears of men shall be put away for ever.

There is no book like the Bible for the dying. -- "Read to me," said

Sir Walter Scott, on his dying bed, to his friend. "What shall l read?"

"There is only one book for a dying man," was the answer; "read to me

from the Bible." The Book which tells of the Lord, who died and rose

again; of the mansions which He has gone to prepare; of the reunion of

the saints; of the fountains of water of life -- is the only pillow on

which the dying head can rest softly.

In these days of debate and doubt there is no such evidence for the

Divine authority of the Bible as that which accrues from its perpetual

use, whether in our own life, or in the conviction of the ungodly.

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Till I know what God will do for me. 1 Sam. xxii. 3.

WE shall never get to the end of all that God will do for us, if only

we perfectly give ourselves up to Him. David had a very imperfect

vision of all that was in God's plan for him; he had an inkling, but

that was all. And we have still less. Yet let us recapitulate some of

the things which God will do for us.

He waits to give us the spirit of Sonship: so that we may ever be

conscious of his Fatherhood, and look up into his face in the garden of

Gethsemane, and on the Mount of Transfiguration alike, calling Him

Abba, Father.

He longs to lead us to full consecration; to lead us into such close

association with Jesus in his redeeming purpose, that we may become his

willing bond-servants, with no other purpose and aim in life than his

service and glory.

He desires to deliver us from all known sin: that we may be blameless

and harmless, his children without rebuke in this sinful world, who

walk before Him in holiness and righteousness all our days.

He wants to anoint us with the Holy Spirit: so that our ministry to men

may have more of the savour of Christ; may plough deeper furrows in

human hearts; may have more abiding results.

He desires us to come into partnership with his Son -- here in his

redemptive purpose, yonder in his throne. To this indeed He calls us.

Who can know all that God waits to do, not here only, but yonder, when

life has entered upon its eternal stage! "Now are we children of God;

and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2,

R.V.).

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He said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. 1 Sam. xxiii.

9.

DAVID was passing through one of the most awful experiences of his

life, when his men spoke of -stoning him instead of taking up his

cause. How many times in this chapter we are informed that David

inquired of the Lord! Some three or four times the appeal for direction

was renewed, as though he were fearful to stir one step by the light of

his own unaided wisdom. In that changeful life of his, it must have

been extremely difficult to set the Lord always before him, and await

Divine direction. Many a time his circumstances might seem to demand

immediate action rather than prayer; and the rude soldiery must have

insisted on their voice being heard rather than a priest's; but David

was not deterred by one or the other, and still held to his practice of

consulting the Urim and Thummim stone, set in the ephod; which was

probably a splendid diamond, flashing with God's distinct "Yes," or

growing cloudy and dark with his definite "No."

Let us inquire of the Lord. The answer will surely come, if we wait for

it. If we are not sure of it, let us still wait, for it will come --

not so early as to save us from using our faith, not so late as to

permit us to be overwhelmed. Direction will come in the growing

conviction of duty, in the drift of circumstances, in the advice of

friends, in the perceptions of a sanctified judgment. None that wait on

God can be ashamed. Whether our duty be to arise and pursue, to sit

still, or to escape -- "the meek He will guide in judgment; the meek He

will teach his way." He gives us a white stone in which a name is

written, which only they know who receive.

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And David's heart smote him. 1 Sam. xxiv. 5.

IT is well to have a tender conscience, and to obey its least

monitions, even when men and things militate against it. Here was an

opportunity for David and his band to end their wanderings and

hardships by one thrust of the spear; but though it was a very small

thing that he had done, David was struck with remorse for having taken

advantage of Saul's retirement in the precincts of the cave, where his

men and he were hiding, and cut off a piece of his robe.

It was a trifling matter, and yet it seemed dishonouring to God's

anointed king; and as such it hurt David to have done it. We sometimes

in conversation and criticism cut off a piece of a man's character, or

influence for good, or standing in the esteem of others. Ought not our

heart to smite us for such thoughtless conduct? Ought we not to make

confession or reparation?

Circumstances seemed to favour it. -- Of all the scores of caves in the

neighbourhood, the king had happened to choose the very one, in the

dark recesses of which David and his men were sheltering. What more

natural than to obtain some token to convince the king how absolutely

he had been in his young rival's power? But favouring circumstances do

not justify an act which is not perfectly healthy and right.

Opportunity does not make a wrong thing right.

His men unanimously approved the act, nay, they wanted him to go

further. Their standard was a very low one, not only in this case, but

in others. How wonderful that David kept such a high ideal amid such

comrades! We shall not be judged hereafter by the standard which

obtained among our comrades.

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This shall be no grief unto thee. 1 Sam. xxv. 31.

THERE was an inimitable blending of woman's wit with worldly prudence

in the words of the beautiful Abigail. Poor woman, she bad had a sorry

life of it, mated to such a man as Nabal was! An ill-assorted pair

certainly, though probably she had had no hand in bringing about the

alliance. Like so many Eastern women, she was the creature of another's

act and choice. But she succeeded in averting the blow which David was

hasting to inflict, by asserting her belief that the time was not far

distant when he would no longer be a fugitive from his foes, and by

suggesting that when that happy time came it would be a relief to feel

that he had not allowed himself to be carried to all lengths by his hot

passion.

It was very salutary advice. Let us always look at things from the

view-point of the future, when our passion shall have subsided, when

time shall have cooled us, and especially when we review the present

from the verge of the other world -- how then?

We can well afford to do this since God is with us, and our life is

bound up with Him in the bundle of life. Abigail reminded David that

God would do to

him all the good of which He had spoken, and would sling out his

enemies as from a sling. So God will do for us; not one good thing will

fail of all that He hath promised; no weapon that is formed against us

shall prosper. Within a little, Nabal was dead, and David's wrong

righted. So shall the evil that now molests us pass away. God will deal

with it. Let us leave it to Him: before Him mountains shall melt like

wax; and we shall have nothing to regret.

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Then said Saul, I have sinned. 1 Sam. xxvi. 21.

THE Apostle makes a great distinction, and rightly, between the sorrow

of the world and the sorrow of a godly repentance which needeth not to

be repented of. Certainly Saul's confession of sin belonged to the

former; whilst the cry of the latter comes out in Psalm li., extorted

from David by the crimes of after years.

The difference between the two may be briefly summarized in this, that

the one counts sin a folly and regrets its consequences; whilst the

other regards sin as a crime done against the most Holy God, and

regrets the pain given to Him. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,

and done this evil in thy sight."

Obviously Saul's confession was of the former description, "I have

played the fool." He recognised the unkingliness of his behaviour, and

the futility of his efforts against David. But he stayed there,

stopping short of a faithful recognition of his position in the sight

of God, as weighed in the balances of eternal justice.

Many a time in Scripture do we meet with this confession. The Prodigal,

Judas, Pharaoh, David, and Saul, uttered it; but in what differing

tones, and with what differing motives! We need to winnow our words

before God; not content with using the expressions of penitence, unless

we are very sure that they bear the mint-mark of heaven, and deserve

the master's Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be

comforted."

When sin is humbly confessed, the Saviour assures us: "Thy sins, which

are many, are forgiven thee, go in peace." "lf we confess our sins, He

is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness. "

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And David said, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. 1 Sam.

xxvii. 1.

WHAT a fit of despondency and unbelief was here! We can hardly believe

that this is he who in so many psalms had boasted of the shepherd care

of God, who had so often insisted on the safety of God's pavilion. It

was a fainting fit, brought on by the bad air he had breathed amid the

evil associations of Adullam's cave. Had not God promised to take care

of him? Was not his future already guaranteed by the promises that he

should succeed to the kingdom? But nothing availed to check his

precipitate flight into the land of the Philistines.

Bitterly he rued this mistake. The prevarication and deceit to which he

was driven; the anguish of having to march with Achish against his own

people; the sack and burning of Ziklag : these were the price he had to

pay for his mistrust. Unbelief always brings many other bitter sorrows

in its train, and leads the soul to cry,

"How long, Lord? Wilt Thou forget me for ever?

How long wilt Thou hide thy face from me?"

Let us beware of losing heart, as David did. Look not at Saul, but at

God, who is omnipotent; not at the winds and waves, but at Him who

walks across the water; not at what may come, but at that which is --

for the gIorious Lord is round about thee to deliver thee. He shall

deliver thy soul from death, thine eyes from tears, and thy feet from

falling. He that has helped will help. What He has done, He will do.

God always works from less to more, never from more to less. Dost thou

not hear -- hast thou not heard -- his voice saying, I will never leave

thee, nor forsake thee? What, then, can man do unto thee? Every weapon

used against thee shall go blunt on an invisible shield!

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Because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord, therefore . . . 1 Sam.

xxviii. 18.

THUS unforgiven sin comes back to a man. We cannot explain the

mysteries that lie around this incident; but it is clear that in that

supreme hour of Saul's fate, that early sin, which had never been

confessed and put away, came surging back on the mind and heart of the

terror-stricken monarch. "Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the

Lord, and didst not execute his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore

hath the Lord done this thing unto thee This day. Moreover the Lord

will deliver Israel also with thee into the hands of the Philistines"

(R.V.). But Saul did not realize that even then the gates of God's love

stood open to him, if only he would pass through them by humble

penitence and faith. If instead of applying to the witch, he had sought

God's mercy, light would have burst on his darkened path, and he had

never perished by his own hand on Mount Gilboa.

In strong contrast with this, let us put the assurance of the new

covenant: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." When God

forgives, He blots out from the book of his remembrance. The sin is

gone as a pebble in the ocean; as a cloud in the blue of a summer's

sky.

Saul's was a sin of omission. The question was not what evil he had

done, but the good be had failed to do. Let us remember that we need

pardon for the sad lapses and failures of our lives, equally as for the

positive transgressions. And if such things are not forgiven, they will

lie heavy on our consciences when the shadows of death begin to gather

around us. The New Testament especially judges those who knew and did

not do -- the slothful servant, the virgin without the oil, the priest

that passed by on the other side.

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What do these Hebrews here? 1 Sam. xxix. 3.

IT was a very natural remark. The Philistines were going into battle

with the Hebrew king and his troops, and it was very anomalous that a

strong body of Hebrews should be forming part of the Philistine array.

They had no business to be there. The annoyance of the chief captains

and lords that surrounded Achish was natural enough. For long,

probably, it had been smouldering; now it broke out into flame.

It is very terrible when the children of the world have a higher sense

of Christian propriety and fitness than Christians themselves, and say

to one another, "What do these Hebrews here?" The word "Hebrew" means

one that has passed over -- a separatist. The death of our Lord Jesus

was intended to make all his followers separatists. Through Him they

have passed from death unto life; they have been delivered out of the

power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

The appeal of his cross to us all is, "Come out from among them, and be

ye separate." Too often, however, that call is unheeded; and, for fear

of man, we mingle with the ranks of the enemies of our Lord.

If Christians attend the theatre; if Sunday-school teachers, elders or

deacons of a church, are found participating in the pleasures of the

ungodly; if the young Christian man is found loosely consorting with

the card-players of the smoking-room of an ocean steamer -- may not the

sneer go round, "What do these Hebrews here? " "What doest thou here,

Elijah! " is the remonstrance of God. "What do these Hebrews here? "

that of the world, which not unfrequently has a truer sense of

propriety than God's professing followers.

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David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. 1 Sam. xxx. 6.

HIS God! Doubtless the chronicler heard him say repeatedly, as he was

so fond of saying, "My God, my God. " "I will say unto God, my rock,

why hast Thou forsaken me?" Though he had seriously compromised God's

cause, by the failure of his faith, by consorting with Achish and the

Philistines, by a tortuous and treacherous policy, yet God was still

his God; and, in the supreme crisis which had overtaken him, he

naturally betook himself to the covert of those loving wings.

He encouraged himself. -- He would go back on promises of forgiveness

and succour, which had so often cheered him in similar straits. He

would recall his songs in former nights as black as this, and therefore

would have hope. He would remember that he had been brought through

worse trials; and surely He who had helped him against Goliath and Saul

would not fail him against the Amalekites. Besides, he had probably

left his dear ones in the protection of the encamping angel; and though

his faith might be tried, it could not be entirely disappointed. In

this way he encouraged himself. All around was tumult and fear; but in

God peace and rest brooded, as swans on a tranquil lake. His men might

speak of stoning him; his heart be greatly distressed for wives and

children; his life be in jeopardy: but God was a very present help,

"Why art thou cast down, and disquieted, my soul? Hope thou in God."

In similar circumstances, let us have resort to similar sources of

comfort; hide in God, and encourage ourselves in Him. It was in this

spirit that John Knox, when about to face death, said to his wife,

"Read to me where I first cast anchor."

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All the valiant men . . . 1 Sam. xxxi. 11, 12.

THIS was a noble and generous act. At the beginning of his reign, in

the early dawn of youthful promise and prowess, when he was the darling

of the nation, Saul had interposed to deliver their beleagured city.

And now, as the awful tidings of his defeat and suicide spread like

fire through the country, the men whom he had succoured remembered his

first kingly act, and showed their appreciation for his kindness by

doing a strong and chivalrous deed in rescuing his remains from

dishonour. They could not help him, but they could save his honour.

When David heard of this act, he sent messengers to the men of

Jabesh-Gilead, thanking them for their chivalrous devotion to the

memory of the fallen king, and promising to requite the kindness as one

done to the entire nation, and to himself

Are we careful enough of the honour and name of our dear Lord? He has

done for us spiritually all that Saul did for Jabesh-Gilead, and more.

He has delivered our soul from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet

from falling. Let us be swift to maintain the honour of his name among

those who are so apt at making it their scorn.

It was well that these men did not wait for others to act. Had they

done so, the body of Saul might have rotted piecemeal on the walls of

the temple at Bethshan. If they had left this act of reparation for

Abner, or Ish-bosheth, it would never have been done. There is no order

of precedence, when a wrong has to be righted, or a friend vindicated.

The man who is next must act. Let us strike into the fray, and count

that our opportunity is warrant enough. He who can, may.

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Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives. 2 Sam. i.

23.

IT was very lovely and pleasant of David to say so. He had no

hesitation, of course, in saying this of his beloved Jonathan, every

memory of whom was very pleasant, like a sweet strain of music, or the

scent of the spring breeze; but he might have been excused for omitting

Saul from the graceful and generous epithets he heaped on the kindred

soul of his friend. But death had obliterated the sad, dark memories of

recent days, and had transported the Psalmist across the dream of years

to Saul as he was when he was first introduced to him. All that could

be said in praise of the first Hebrew king was crowded into these

glowing lines -- the courage, martial prowess, swiftness to aid those

who required help, his pleasantness and courtesy in address.

This is the love of God, which He breathes into the hearts of his

children. They become perfect in love, as He is. "God commendeth his

love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for

us." It is God-like for his children to love their enemies, bless those

who curse them, and pray for all who despitefully use and persecute

them. Is such love ours? Do we forbear from thinking evil? Do we look

on the virtues more often than the failures of our friends? Do we cast

the mantle of forgiveness over the injuries done to us, and dwell

tenderly on the excellences of our foes? Such is the love which never

fails, but endures when faith has turned to fruition, and hope has

realized its dreams.

We need most of all a baptism of love. A piece of clay will become

fragrant if placed in contiguity to attar of roses. Let us lie where

John did, on the bosom of incarnate love, till we begin to love as he.

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The men of Judah came, and there they annoited David king. 2 Sam. ii.

4.

THUS was David anointed a second time. Hitherto he had been the leader

of a troop; now he became king of his own tribe: and his kingdom

clustered around the ancient city of Hebron.

Typically, we learn that our blessed Lord will be acknowledged King of

his own people, the Jews, before He is accepted by the world at large.

Now, his kingdom is in mystery -- it is in the Adullam stage. Men are

gathering to Him from all quarters; but as yet the world does not

recognise it in their political calculations. But ere long the Jews

will recognise Him as King, and then we may begin to expect his

enthronement over the populations of the globe. When they repent and

are converted, times of repenting will come to all the world.

Experimentally we are taught, that as each new department of our life

unfolds, we should give Christ a fresh coronation. The attitude which

we took up years ago, of complete consecration, must be applied

perpetually to each fresh development of experience. Each new step

should be characterised by a definite waiting on God, that there may be

a fresh enduement of power, a recharging of the spirit with his might.

Was He King in the cave, then be sure to acknowledge Him as such, now

that you are called from obscurity into the glare of noon. Whenever God

says, by the circumstances of your life, Go up; always kneel at the

feet of Jesus, saying, "Lord, in the very little I found my joy and

strength in serving Thee only; and now, amid the greater responsibility

and publicity of my life, I desire to be thy earnest, simple-minded,

whole-hearted follower."

Have you anointed Jesus as your King? Do not fail. Remember how near of

kin He is.

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David wared stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul wared weaker.

2 Sam. iii. 1.

THE war between the flesh and the Spirit is Iong, but the end is sure.

As the Baptist said of Jesus, so must the flesh say of the Spirit, He

must increase; I must decrease. Sometimes, in the long strain of the

war, our spirit dies down. Will the bugle never cease to ring out its

alarm? Will the assaults never come, to an end? When shall we be able

to lay aside sword and breastplate, and to enter the land of rest? Oh

to be able to say with the Apostle, "I have fought the good fight, I

have finished my course, I have kept the faith"!

Yet take heart. The assaults diminish in frequency and strength in

proportion as they are faithfully resisted. Each time you resist

successfully you will find it easier to resist. The strength of the

vanquished foe enters the vanquisher.

Moreover, ultimate victory is secured. " Whatsoever is born of God

overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the

world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that

believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? " (1 John v. 4, 5). It makes a

great difference to the soldier, when he belongs to an All-Victorious

Legion, and serves under a Captain that never lost a fight. And there

can be no doubt as to the issue in your heart or mine. "He must reign

till He has put all enemies under his feet."

At any moment we may look for the sudden collapse of a great portion of

the confederacy of evil, which has so long menaced us; as when Abner

suddenly came to Hebron to give in his adhesion to David. What a hugh

piece of cliff fell that day into the sea! Expect the sudden collapse

of evils which have long troubled you.

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As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity. 2

Sam. iv. 9.

IT was the mid-day of David's life, and, looking back, he saw how good

the Lord had been to him. Step by step God had brought him up out of a

horrible pit, and from the miry clay, setting him upon a rock, and

establishing his goings. What need was there, then, that men should

interfere to hasten the unfolding of the Divine purposes? It had been

his lifelong habit to wait. Whatever he needed he looked to God to

supply. Whatever difficulties blocked his path, he looked to God to

remove. Whatever men stood in his way, he looked to God to deal with

them. Twice in the wilderness he refused to take Saul's life. He had

executed the Amalekite because he claimed to have slain Saul on Gilboa.

And, in pursuance of the same policy, he could have no complicity in

the act of the murderers of Ishbosheth, even though they made his way

clear to the throne of Israel.

Let God redeem thee out of all thine adversities. Do not lose heart or

hope. Do not put forth thy hand to snatch at any position or

deliverance by an act which might afterwards cause thee shame or

sorrow. "Trust in the Lord, and do good. Roll thy way upon the Lord.

Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. Rest in the Lord, and

wait patiently for Him " (Psa. xxxvii. 3-7, R.V.). He who turns

glaciers to rivers that pass away, will remove all thy difficulties and

perplexities. He shall cause thee to inherit the land. He will promote

thee in due time, and give thee to see thy desire upon thine enemies.He

who redeemed thy soul by his most precious blood cannot fail thee,

however long He may tarry.Remember that He ever liveth, and loveth, and

reigneth

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And David took him more wives out of Jerusalem. 2 Sam. v. 13.

THIS is terribly disappointing! According to the ideas of the

surrounding nations, the greatness of a monarch was gauged by the

extent of his harem. But the law of Moses put severe restraint on the

multiplication of wives, "that his heart turn not away " (Deut. xvii.

17). It seems as though the soul of David sank into sensual indulgence

and luxuriance. It lost much of its early hardihood and strength in

consequence; and at this period of his life those seeds were sown,

which in after years brought forth such a plentiful and terrible

harvest of anguish, murder, and impurity, in his family.

Few of us realize how much our character owes to the stern discipline

to which God subjects us. The only way to keep us healthy and vigorous

is to send us many a nipping frost, many a keen northern blast. The

bleak hillside breeds stronger natures than the warm sheltered valley.

The difference between Anglo-Saxon and Negro is largely wrought by

temperature and soil. The campaign, with its strain on every power of

endurance, trains better soldiers than the barracks. As David was a

stronger, better man, when hunted like a coney in the rocks of Engedi,

so are we braced to a nobler life, when all things seem against us.

Few of us can be trusted with unbroken happiness. God is compelled to

withhold what the flesh craves. But where prosperity has shone on your

path, be very careful not to abuse it. Consider it as indicating God's

loving trust in you. He would rather convey his lesson in sunshine than

in storm. But walk carefully and humbly, looking to Him constantly for

daily grace, and never relaxing the girdle about the loin.

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They set the Ark of God upon a new cart. 2 Sam. vi. 3.

THIS was their mistake. The Divine directions were explicit that the

Ark of the living God must be carried on the shoulders of living men.

There would have been no stumbling of oxen, no swaying of the Ark to

falling, no need for Uzzah to reach out his hand, if only this simple

direction had been obeyed. This breaking forth of God was to recall men

to simple absolute obedience to the rules and regulations that had been

so explicitly laid down in the Levitical code. It could not fall into

disuse without grave loss to the entire people. Better that one life

should be sacrificed for disobedience than that the whole nation should

be impoverished for the relaxation of that ancient law.

We are fond of bringing new carts to God. At every birthday we build

the new cart of good resolution, and place thereon the Ark of God. We

will be different, and on our fresh endeavours the Lord of Hosts shall

ride; but we must drive, and if needs be, steady the Ark. Ah! it is not

long before the oxen stumble, and Uzzah who drives is smitten to the

dust of death.

God wants, not new carts, but the living shoulders of consecrated men.

We must live for Him, surrendering ourselves to his service; not

driving, but being driven; not conducting, but being impelled; not

imposing our thoughts on Him, but being willing to submit ourselves

absolutely to Him. There is no need to fear God, if only we will obey

Him, and in obedience discover the laws by which we may approach and

serve Him. Then the power which otherwise flames forth to destroy will

become the useful servant of our faith, and we shall be able to

undertake great things for God.

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Do as Thou hast said. 2 Sam. vii. 25.

THIS is the voice of a childlike faith.

Note what led to these words. -- Nathan had just unfolded to the king

all the purposes of God's heart towards him. That He would establish

his throne, deliver him from his enemies, and set up his dynasty to

succeed him -- this and much else. David's heart was full of joy and

gladness -- he knew that God would not run back from his word; but he

felt none the less the duty of claiming the fulfilments of these

guarantees. So it is with all the promises of God; though they are Yea

and Amen in Christ, it is requisite for us to put our hand on them;

plead them before God; and claim their fulfilment with appropriating

faith.

Notice the attitude in which David uttered these words. -- "He sat

before the Lord." Was not this the position of rest and trust? On

another occasion, he lay all night upon the earth (xii. 16), in an

agony of prayer, because not sure of God's purpose, and hoping to turn

God by the extremity of his anguish. But there is a marvellous

alteration in the tone of our prayer, so soon as we can base it on the

declared purposes of God. We enter into his rest; we put ourselves in

the current of his purposes; we sit before the Lord.

Mark the blessedness of communion with God. -- It is as a man talks

with his friend. We are not retired always to kneel when we pray, or to

con over a certain form of words; we can sit and talk with God,

catching up his words as they fall on our hearts, and reflecting them

back on Him in praise, and prayer, and happy converse. All true prayer

originates in the declarations of God's love, to each of which we

answer, Do as Thou hast said.

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The silver and gold he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued. 2

Sam. viii. 11.

DAVID might not build the temple, but he was bent on making provision

for it. Indeed, Solomon had never been able to do as he did, unless his

father had gathered these stores of gold and silver. Thus other men

labour, and we enter into their labours; but the accomplished building

is credited by God to each. He does not forget David when Solomon's

temple stands complete. The reward is proportioned to each man's

service, according to his share.

It is a glorious thing when we not only defeat our foes, but get spoils

out of their overthrow which we can use for the service of God and man.

It is as possible for us as for David. Out of our failures,

temptations, mistakes, let us get the power of helping and directing

others. In death Jesus won the keys of death and Hades, and the power

to become a merciful and faithful High Priest; and now He ever liveth

to make intercession for his people (Heb. vii. 25).

But the main lesson of this chapter is the foreshadowing of God's

purpose, that Gentiles should contribute to the building of his Temple.

What was literally true in the case of the temple of Solomon, is

spiritually true of the heavenly Temple, the Church. From every nation,

and kindred, people and tongue, souls are being gathered, who form a

spiritual house, a holy Temple in the Lord. The whole world is destined

to contribute to that structure, which is being prepared secretly and

mystically, but shall ere long be manifested in its full glory. It is

very interesting to get this suggestion from the chronicles of a nation

so exclusive and haughty as the Jews. "They shall come from the East

and West . . . . "

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Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. 2 Sam. ix. 7.

FOUR times in this chapter we are told of the lame man eating bread at

the royal table. But what are these facts recorded and repeated for,

save to accentuate the infinite blessings which come to us through the

Divine love!

Mephibosheth had done nothing to merit the royal favour. Not a word is

said of his being well-

favoured and attractive. So far from that, he was lame on both his

feet, and probably a sickly invalid. In his own judgment he was

worthless as a dead dog. His state was impoverished; no deed of prowess

could win David's notice; he was almost entirely at the mercy of his

servant, Ziba. In these respects there are many analogies to our own

condition in the sight of God. We are lame indeed; and, so far as we

are concerned, it is quite impossible that we should ever win the

Divine regard, or sit at his table among his sons.

But between David and Jonathan a covenant had been struck, which had

provided for the children of the ill-fated Jonathan (1 Sam. xx. 14-16).

It was because of this sacred obligation that Mephibosheth fared as he

did. Look away, child of God, to the covenant struck between God and

thy representative, the Son of his love. It is idle of thee to seek to

propitiate the Divine favour, or earn a seat at his table; but if thou

art willing to identify thyself with thy Lord, and to shelter thyself

in Him by the living union of faith; if thou canst base thy plea on the

Blood of the everlasting covenant -- then the provisions of that

covenant between Father and Son shall be extended to thee: and because

of God's love to Jesus thou shalt sit at the Divine table, and be

regarded as one of the heirs of the great King.

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The Lord do that which seemeth Him good. 2 Sam. x. 12.

ISRAEL was arrayed against overwhelming odds. To human sight it must

have appeared very improbable that Joab would be able to hold his own.

However, he made the best arrangements he could; exhorted his men to be

of good courage and do their utmost; and then piously left the issue to

the God of battles.

There are times in all lives when the case seems desperate. How can we

meet with ten thousand him who cometh against us with twenty thousand!

Heart and flesh fail. What resource is there, then save in the flight

of the lonely man to the only God? It is for God to act, since the help

of man is vain.

In your personal straits. -- When patience is exhausted; when the last

handful is taken from the barrel; when complicated trials meet and hem

you in; when the iron gate and the keepers before the door appear to

render escape impossible -- then look up, God is marching with

reinforcements to your aid.

In your work and war for God in the world. -- We too often act and

speak as if success were to be won by the forces that we may be able to

bring into the field, whereas God asks us for nothing more than

fidelity and the right disposition of such forces as we can command; He

will do all the rest.

In your outlook on the conflict between good and evil. -- It is quite

true that there appears to be an infinite disparity between the one and

the other. But there are other forces in the field than appear. There

is another host of which God Himself is captain. When the enemy comes

in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up the standard. "There

is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven to

thy help."

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David tarried still at Jerusalem. 2 Sam. xi. 1.

AH! fatal dalliance in the arms of sensual ease! It led to David's

undoing. It was the time of the year when kings generally went forth to

the fight; and in earlier days David would never have thought of

leaving to Joab or others the strain and stress of conflict when there

were hard knocks to give and take. Indeed, on more. than one occasion

his followers had remonstrated against his exposing the Light of Israel

to the risks of the battlefield. But now he sends Joab and his mighty

men to fight against Ammon, while he tarries securely at Jerusalem.In

this fatal lethargy he betrays the deterioration of his soul. Already

the walls were broken down, and entrance into the citadel was easy. We

are not surprised to learn that as he sauntered lazily on his palace

roof in the sultry afternoon he was swept away before the rush of

sudden passion, and took the poor man's ewe lamb to satisfy the

va-rant, hungry impulse which suddenly came to him.

Beware of hours of ease! Rest is necessary; times of recruiting and

renewal must come to us all; nature positively demands re-creation; but

there must be no neglect of known duty, no handing over to others of

what we might and could do ourselves, no tarrying behind the march of

the troops when we should go forth with them to the battle. Watch and

pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Be most on guard when not

actively engaged against the enemy. One unlocked gate may admit the foe

to the citadel of the life, and rob you of peace for all after-days.

The luxury of the plains of Capua was more fatal to the soldiers of

Hannibal than the passage of the Alps.

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And David went to Rabboh, and fought against it, and took it. 2 Sam.

xii. 29.

VICTORY might seem to have been for ever forfeited after so great a

fall. We could not have been surprised had we been told that from this

time onward the course of David's conquests had stayed. And yet this

thought would be a misconception of God's dealings with the penitent.

Where there is true contrition, confession, and faith, He not only

forgives, but restores; He not only restores to the enjoyment of his

favour, but reinstates in opportunities of usefulness. So Jesus not

only met the apostle who had denied Him, and put him back into the old

position of happy fellowship, but gave him a commission to feed his

sheep and lambs.

We have sometimes met backsliders who have doubted the possibility of

their forgiveness; or, if they have realized this, they have never

dared to hope that they could ever be what they had been. And so long

as faith refuses to believe in the perfect work of God's love, it must

inevitably take a back seat. Let us seek for such an entire faith in

God's forgiving and restoring love as to dare to believe that we are

put again into the old place, and allowed to anticipate the same

victories as aforetime. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and

just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9).

Directly David said, "I have sinned," in the dash of a moment Nathan

said, "The Lord hath put away thy sin"; and when Joab sent tidings that

Rabbah was about to fall, David was permitted the honour of its final

capture, though it had been associated so closely with Uriah's death.

Where sin abounds grace superabounds, and reigns through righteousness.

Dare to believe this.

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Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth. 2

Sam. xiii. 31.

THROUGHOUT the incidents of this chapter, the soul of David touched the

bottom of the sea of anguish and remorse. The circumstances narrated

were in themselves sad enough; but there was a more bitter element in

them for David, because he knew that they were the harvest of which his

own sin was the seed. Here began to be fulfilled the sentence of God

through Nathan, "The sword shall never depart from thine house."

He had broken up the peace of another's home, and peace had quitted his

home, never to return. He had defiled the purity of Uriah's wife, and

the purity of his own daughter had been trampled under foot. He had

smitten Uriah, and now Absalom had murdered Amnon. Through those awful

hours when the entire fate of the whole of his family seemed trembling

in the balance, he drank to the dregs the cup of bitterness. Oh, how

true are the apostle's words: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he

also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap

corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap

life everlasting."

Sin resembles the Australian weed, which when once it is sown in the

waters will spread with such rapidity as to spoil their beauty, and

choke their flow. We must distinguish between the penal and natural

results. The penal were borne by Christ for us all, and are remitted

for evermore; but the natural remain even to forgiven penitents, as

they did to David. Still, God's grace may transmute them into

blessings, and cause pearls to grow where before there had been gaping

wounds. Ask God to take in hand the natural consequences of your sins,

and make them means of grace and ennoblement.

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Yet doth He devise means that his banished be not expelled from Him. 2

Sam. xiv. 14.

THE means that David devised were really inadequate. He allowed his

heart to dictate to his royal sense of justice and rectitude, and

permitted Absalom to return to his country and home without one word of

confession, one symptom of penitence. The king was overmastered by the

father; and the result was disastrous. It shook the respect of his

people, undermined the foundations of just government, slackened the

bands of every family in the land, and confirmed Absalom in his wilful

and obstinate career. "What!" said he to himself, "does my father bid

me come back without conditions? Does he demand no confession or

reparation? Then he condones my sin."

Lot parents be warned. If your children disobey, and violate the rules

of your home, you have no right to treat them as you did before, until

they have owned their sin. You must insist on penitence, confession,

and reparation, though it take hours or days or even weeks of suffering

and pleading to bring it about.

Into what relief does David's mistake throw God's way of forgiveness

and salvation! Had he acted as David, and as so many wish us to

believe, He would have reinstated the human family in the Paradise of

his love without waiting for the work of the Mediator, or the

confession of the prodigal. By the arbitrary exercise of his sovereign

will He might have wiped out the record of our sins %without our

concurrence. But it would have been to the irreparable undoing of man.

Hence it behoved Christ to suffer, by his blood making an atonement for

our sins, and by his Spirit bringing us to penitence and confession.

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Here am I, let Him do to me as seemth good unto Him. 2 Sam. xv. 26.

THERE is the patience of hope. We love to gird ourselves in the

vehemence of our self-will, to go where we choose, to rule the lives of

others; but as the years pass and our pride is humbled, the sinews of

our strength slackened, and the radiance of early prospects overcast,

we are willing to hand ourselves over to our Father, saying, "Behold,

here am I; let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him."

It was thus that Isaac was passive in the hands of Abraham. It was thus

that Jesus spoke to his Father, "I come to do thy will, my God." It was

thus that the maiden who was blessed above women, answered the angel's

message. It was thus that Paul, when urged not to go up to Jerusalem,

avowed his willingness to live or die, as the Lord might choose.

God is ever working upon us through circumstances; and, as in the

present case, sometimes He overrules the plottings of wicked men to

fulfil his Divine purpose. His will is sometimes brought to us in a cup

which a Judas holds to our lips. How blessed to be able to say, as we

go forth to meet our Father's will, Behold, here am I! and to look

beyond the plottings and machinations of our enemies to One who loves

us infinitely. Whatever He permits must be good. Good, if driven as an

exile from our home; good, if exposed to the revilings of a Shimei;

good, if the heart breaks in bitter tears. All must be good which the

good Lord permits or appoints. Many were the afflictions of David, but

out of them all he was delivered. When he had learnt the lesson, the

rod was stayed. God did not take away his mercy from him. Thou too art

in his hands, and He will certainly bring thee again, and show thee the

city and his habitation.

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The king and all the people came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

2 Sam. xvi. 14.

A GREAT weariness falls often on our souls. We are wearied because of

the greatness of our way, and inclined to say there is no hope. Memory

tires us, perpetually casting up the record of past unfaithfulness and

transgression. The bitter way of the natural consequences of sin is

toilsome and difficult to the feet. We faint before the averted eve of

former friends and the pitiless criticism of foes. Longings for a

vanished past, for life and love, for purity and peace, grind heavily

in the soul. Our King has known something of human weariness, though

not from all the sources that cause it in his subjects.

But amid the presence of our weariness the voice of God may be heard

saying, "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and

this is the refreshing." There is rest for weary souls beneath the

shadow of the cross, in the sight of which the burden rolls away. There

is rest and refreshment as we sit in the banqueting house of Christ's

manifested and realized affection. There is refreshment as we eat of

his flesh and drink of his blood; as we yield our will to his; as we

sit with Him in heavenly places. We assuredly find Him to be "a hiding

place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water

in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa.

xxxii. 2).

There is no hill Difficulty without its arbour; no desert without its

oasis; no sultry heat without its shadow of a great rock; no weariness

without its pillow ; no intolerable sorrow without its solace; no

weariness without its refreshment; no failure of man without a very

present help in God.

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Arise, and pass quickly over the water. 2 Sam. xvii. 21.

THE water of Jordan may serve as an illustration for our position. Our

David has passed over the waters of death and in doing so has taken us

with Him. There is a sense in which in the morning light of Easter Day

all who believed passed over with Him, so that "by the morning light

there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan."

We all hold the doctrine of Substitution. Do we sufficiently realize

that of Identification? Not only did Jesus die for us, but we died with

and in Him. In Him, as the true Noah's Ark, the whole Church passed

over the Jordan of death from the old world to the new. There are some

who do not understand that in the purpose of God we are already

standing on resurrection ground. Across the water we can hear the

murmur of the world, and detect its corruption; but we are the

inheritors of the world in which there is no death nor corruption nor

the dominion of sin. When a man realizes this he no longer braces

himself up to meet death, because he knows that in the person of Christ

he has left it behind for ever.

What is true, however, in God's purpose should be the aim and goal of

our daily striving. To us there comes the unceasing call, "Arise, and

go over Jordan." There is always a thither and a hither side for every

experience and act. We may always do as the world does; this is to stay

on the death side. We may always do as Christ does; this is to pass

over to the risen and living side. Reckon that you have died, and

mortify the deeds of your body. "And if Christ be in you, the body is

dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. "

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Wherefore wilt thou run? . . . Come what may, said he, I will run. 2

Sam. xviii. 22, 23 (R.V.).

MOAB did not love David, as Ahimaaz did, and could not understand what

made the young man so eager to carry the tidings. Doubtless Ahimaaz and

Cushi entirely misinterpreted the heart of David, and thought that he

would be glad to hear that the rebellion was stamped out, and Absalom

was dead. And it was because of the pleasure which he thought to give

his king that the swift-footed son of Zadok pleaded for permission to

run. What though there would be no reward, or that it would fall to the

lot of Cushi, who had already started at Joab's command -- that

mattered not, the love of David constrained him.

How often that question of reward is thrown at the servants of God! It

is one of the favourite taunts of the world; as Satan said of Job, that

we do as we do because we are paid. "Doth Job serve God for nought?"

And nothing so startles men as disinterested service. They cannot

account for it; but it wins their respect. "Reward or no reward;

recompense or none; smiles or tears, come what may, let me run." That

is the spirit that becomes a Christian, and convinces the world. "The

love, of Christ constraineth us."

Ahimaaz outran Cushi. The one was a volunteer for love's dear sake; the

other, a bond-servant, doing as he was told. Love lent wings to his

feet, and speeding past his fellow bore him first into David's

presence. So God's will is done in heaven: "The cherubim ran and

returned like a flash of lighting." So God's will is done on earth:

"They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran

to bring his disciples word. And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All

hail!"

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The King is near of kin to us. 2 Sam. xix. 42.

THERE are two derivations for the word king: one from the word can --

the king is the man that can do things; the other from the word kin --

the king is closely related to us, of our kith and kin. In either case,

there is a beautiful meaning, as touching our Lord and Saviour. He is

King, because He has overcome our enemies, and can overcome. He is

King, because He has taken on Himself our flesh and blood, and has for

ever made us one with Himself. The King is our kinsman. Our kinsman is

King.

It is very comforting to know how really our Lord has identified

Himself with us. The Gospels are full of the wonderful story. His

kinship was manifested in --

His Prayers. -- He bade us speak to God as our Father; in that

marvellous possessive pronoun, not only Iinking us all to one another,

but including Himself in our petitions, save when we ask for

forgiveness.

His Infirmities. -- "We have not a high priest who cannot be touched

with the feeling of our infirmities." His hunger and thirst; his

weariness and exhaustion; his suffering unto death -- all accentuate

the closeness of the tie between us.

His Temptation. -- "In all points tempted like as we are, yet without

sin." The avenues through which the tempter could approach Him were

those by which He assails us also. No temptation took Him, but such as

is common to man. So to every lonely soldier of his He draws near,

saying, "Be of good cheer; I have passed through it all. I am your

brother in the fight; I feel for you with a quick sympathy; the glories

of my throne do not alter my true-hearted love."

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The men of Judah clave unto their King. 2 Sam. xx. 2.

WE are reminded of the exhortation of the good Barnabas, that with

purpose of heart the converts of Antioch should cleave unto the Lord.

This is the test of a true faith. We often come to the dividing of the

paths. We stand on the watershed of the hills: that way leads back to

Moab with its fascinations; this on to Canaan with its spiritual

attractions. Orpah and Ruth must choose. Each is equally profuse in

speeches and tears; but the ultimate test of love is whether they will

stay or go. Which will cleave to the widowed Naomi? She is the truest

lover; her fidelity will attest the fervour and strength of her

affection. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, and returned to her people

and her gods, while Ruth "clave unto her."

We must cleave to Jesus, in spite of the derision of the multitude. We

must be prepared to stand with Him when He stands alone, or goes forth

alone to die. We must be willing to stem the mighty tide of the world

which has left Him and pours past us. Though all forsake Him, yet we

must cleave.

We must cleave to Jesus, in spite of the rebellion of the flesh. Our

whole nature may sometimes rise in insurrection, demanding some

forbidden fruit. It is no child's play then for the lonely will to

stand by itself in unshaken fidelity and loyalty; but it must.

We must cleave to Jesus when He seems to rebuff us. Only those who can

stand so sharp an ordeal, are exposed to it. But sometimes we are

called to pass through it as Job, that angels may learn how Christ's

lovers cling to Him, not for his gifts, but for Himself.

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Because he slew the Gibeonites. 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

THE Gibeonites were under the protection of a special covenant, which

had been entered into between them and Joshua. That covenant was the

outcome of a ruse on their part. But since it had been most solemnly

made by the leaders of Israel, it held good. The fact of their deceit

and chicanery could not absolve Israel from the oath which had been

passed for their safety. For centuries the provisions of this covenant

had been observed, till Saul invaded them, and slew the Gibeonites.

This was a grievous sin, which, according to the religious light of the

time, seemed to demand blood; and David proposed to atone for blood by

blood. Nothing but blood could atone for sin so black and dark.

We are also protected by a covenant, into which the Father has entered

with the Son, not for our worthiness or merit, but only because He

would. The provisions of that covenant engage to take us to be his

people, to remember our sins no more, and to make the Divine law the

object of our love (Heb. viii.). And the argument is irresistible, that

if man is so mindful of a covenant as to feel that its infraction is a

sin which can only be expiated by blood-shedding, it is impossible to

suppose that God will ever run back from his.

my soul, thou mayest rest secure in this: here is an everlasting rock;

this foundation shall suffice thee for evermore. Thou art in the Son of

his love. Though thou art sinful and evil, yet thou art included in the

covenant which is more lasting than that of day and night. Jesus has

met its conditions on thy behalf, and has undertaken to secure thy

obedience and holiness.

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Thy gentleness hath made me great. 2 Sam. xxii. 36.

THE triumph of God's gentle goodness will be our song for ever. In

those far distant ages, when we look back on our earthly course, as a

grown man on his boyhood, and when the words of this Psalm shall

express our glad emotions, we shall recognise that the Hand which

brought us thither was as gentle as our mother's; and that the things

we craved, but faileth to receive, were withheld by his gentle

goodness. Our history tells what gentleness will do.

The Apostle besought the Corinthian converts by the gentleness of

Christ (2 Cor. x. 1). Though there were abuses amongst them that seemed

to call for stringent dealing, he felt that they could be best removed

by the gentle love which he had learned from the heart of Christ. The

wisdom which is from above is gentle as well as pure; and in dealing

with the sin that chokes our growth, it is probable that gentleness

will do more than severity. The gentleness of the nurse that cherishes

her children; of the lover to her whom he cherishes above himself; of

the infinite love which bears and endures to the uttermost -- is the

furnace before which the foul ingredients of our hearts are driven

never to return. We might brave the lion; we are vanquished by the

Lamb. We could withstand the scathing look of scorn; but when the

gentle Lord casts on us the look of ineffable tenderness, we go out to

weep bitterly.

That He has borne with us so lovingly; that He has filled our lives

with mercy even when compelled to correct; that He has never altered in

his tender behaviour towards us; that He has returned our rebuffs and

slights with meekness and forbearance; that He has never wearied of us

-- this is an everlasting tribute to the gentleness that makes great.

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As the light of the morning when the sun riseth, a morning without

clouds. 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

THE dealings of God with man are compared to morning light, and the

sprouting of tender grass in the sunshine that follows rain. The one

may refer to youth, and the other to age. In each there is sunlight: in

the one case it is before the clouds have gathered; in the other after

they have dispersed.

Clouds. -- There are many different sorts: the cirrus, like platines in

the sky; the cumulus, in heaps, like the summits of distant mountains;

the strata, or long bars; the nimbus, heavy with shower. There is a

counterpart for each in human life, without which we should miss much

of those experiences of light and shade that so frequently reveal the

nature of the light. We should not know God's comfort and very present

help, if it were not for the clouds which are born in the marsh-lands

of trouble. Who does not prefer the changeful beauty of an English

spring to the unclouded blue of Italian skies?

The Light of the Morning. -- The love of God steals over hearts as the

dawn. He is the Rock; but his advent breaks gently as light. So God's

love came to Lydia, whose heart opened as a flower its petals. This

makes it difficult for some of us to decide the moment of our

regeneration; only we know that, once darkness, we are now light in the

Lord.

Clear Shining after Rain. -- We all know something of cloud and rain.

If we did not, our lives would be arid as a desert. Rain is necessary

to fructify the seeds that lie buried in the soil but clear shining is

needed too. Times of joy are needed equally as those of sorrow. The

tender grass is the child of rain and sun. Hast thou had tears, thou

shalt have smiles! Hast thou had clouds and rain, thou shalt have clear

shining!

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Neither will I offer burnt offerings . . . of that which doth cost me

nothing. 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

GOD'S love to us cost Him something. He spared not his own Son, and

that Son spared not his blood. But how little our love to Him costs us!

Let us understand that where there is true, strong love to Jesus, it

will cost us something. Love is the costliest of all undertakings.

It will cost us Self-denial. Christ and self are perfectly

incompatible; to have the one we must be prepared to surrender the

other. The heart subtly schemes to hold both; but it does not deceive

Christ. He knows in a moment when we have preferred to spare ourselves

and to sacrifice Him, or to obey Him and sacrifice ourselves. We know

it also. At first we may find it an effort to count all things but loss

for Him; but as we go on doing it, and drink in the fresh air that

breathes about the mountains of self-denial -- above all, as we see the

smile of pleasure on his face -- our hearts leap with joy, and we love

to give Him everything, not thinking of the cost, any more than Mary

did when she broke the alabaster box of very precious ointment. After

all, it is but fitting that we offer our bodies "a living sacrifice,

holy, acceptable unto God."

It will cost us Companionships. Those who knew us will pass us with

averted faces. It will cost us hard-earned money; for we shall realize

that we have no property in anything that we possess. It will cost us

high repute amongst our fellows. But what shall we mind if we gain

Christ? You cannot give up for Him without regaining everything you

have renounced, but purified and transfigured. Did not the Lord say so?

And did He not add a hundredfold, with persecution. Let us heartily

respond, "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee!

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As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress. 1

Kings i. 29.

"IN my distress I called on the Lord, and cried to my God." Never let

there be distress without its cry. He will hear your voice out of his

temple, and your cry will come before Him even into his ears. He will

answer, and set you in a large place. There is even a gain to be won

from distress, because it brings out new phases of Christ's redemptive

help.

God redeemed David from the calumny of those who maligned him without

cause. In so many of his psalms he refers to the unjust and cruel

hatred which misrepresented him and his doings. But God, to whom he

committed his cause, vindicated him, so that his righteousness shone as

the light, and his judgment as the noonday. So He will do for you.

Those who now lay all manner of unkind charges to your door, will be

compelled to admit your innocence. Only leave your cause with God, and

be still.

God redeemed David from all the afflictions that shadowed his early

days: from his wanderings in the wilderness; from his hairbreadth

escapes in the eaves; from meeting his death on many a terrible

battlefield. We hardly realize, just now, how much we owe to the Angel

of God's redemption, who is ever beside us, environing us with careful

love, so that no evil may approach us, or snare take our feet. Our

pathway is thick with shares and dangers, as the pilgrims found it when

journeying through the valley of the shadow; but there is a way out,

and in the morning we shall marvel to see how we escaped.

God redeemed David's life from destruction. This was the greatest

miracle of all, when we consider the strong passions that slumbered

within him, breaking out whenever he broke loose from God's grace.

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That the Lord may continue his word. 1 Kings ii. 4.

HOW strongly David held to God's promise! It was deeply graven in his

soul. How could he forget the word which guaranteed the succession of

his race upon the throne of Israel! At the same time be distinctly

recognised that the fulfilment was conditional. There was an if in it.

It was only in so far as his children took heed to walk before God in

truth that God was bound to place them on the throne of Israel;

therefore he urged Solomon to keep the charge of the Lord, that the

Lord might continue his word. We also must obey the threefold condition

if we would enjoy a continuance of God's helpful care.

1. Be thou strong. -- The strength which is in Jesus Christ waits to

make us strong. In the Lion of the tribe of Judah there is the boldness

which will not swerve in the face of the foe. Timid women and little

children in the days of persecution have waxed valiant in the fight,

and have not flinched from death, because Jesus was beside them.

2. Keep the charge of the Lord thy God. -- He has committed to our care

many a sacred deposit, in return for our deposit with Him (2 Tim. i.

12, 14; R.V., marg.). They are his holy Gospel, the Rest Day, the

doctrines of the Evangelical Faith, and the Inspired Word. Let us watch

them until we see them weighed out in the temple as were the sacred

vessels which Ezra committed to the priests for transport across the

desert (Ezra viii. 33).

3. Keep his statutes and commandments. -- We must obey with reverent

care the one great law of love, which includes all the rest. Acting

thus, we shall put ourselves in the way of enjoying a continuance of

that favour which God has promised.

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I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked. 1 Kings iii. 13.

THE understanding heart was Solomon's supreme request, and it was given

him before the morning light had broken over Jerusalem. But God did

exceeding abundantly beyond what he asked or thought. Riches and

honour, victory and long life, were thrown in as part of the Divine

gift; as paper and string are given by the tradesmen with the goods we

purchase. It seems as though our Lord's words were anticipated, "Seek

first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things

shall be added unto you."

Put first things first. -- One of the most important lessons of life is

to discern the relative value of the

objects within our reach. The child will take the handful of glass

beads, and leave the heap of diamonds in the rough. It is the terrible

mistake of men that, perplexed by earth's cross-lights, they put evil

for good and good for evil; they make earth rather than heaven their

centre; time rather than eternity their measurement.

Seek God and all things in Him. -- Things without God cannot satisfy

the craving of the soul. To know God, and to be known by Him, is to

possess all things. All that is lovely, strong, or right, in any human

being was in the Creator before it entered the creature; having God,

you possess all things in Him.

Be more careful of what you are than what you have. -- A man's life

consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth; but in

his purity, truth, tenderness, and the properties of his soul. The

fruit of the Spirit must ever be manifest in the life of the believer

-- "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

meekness, temperance."

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Largeness of heart. 1 Kings iv. 29.

WE must all admit that our soul is too narrow. It holds too little,

knows too little, is deficient in willpower, and, above all, in

capacity of love; and when we are called to run in the way of God's

commandments, we break down in despair, and cry, "If I am to be a

runner, Thou must first enlarge my heart."

How little we know of the experience which Madame Guyon describes when

she says: "This vastness or enlargedness, which is not bounded by

anything, increases every day; so that my soul in partaking of the

qualities of her Spouse seems also to partake of his immensity."

"There is," remarks one of the old Puritans, "a straitness, slavery,

and narrowness, in all sin; sin crumples up our souls; which, if they

were freely spread abroad, would be as large and wide as the whole

universe. No man is truly free; but be that hath his will enlarged to

the extent of God's will, by loving whatsoever God loves, and nothing

else, he enjoys boundless liberty, and a boundless sweetness." God's

love embraces the universe. He "so loved the world that He gave his

only-begotten Son." We who have partaken of the Divine nature must also

love as He does.

Thomas a Kempis says, finally: "He who desires glory in things outside

of God, or to take pleasure in some private good, shall many ways be

encumbered and straitened; but if heavenly grace enter in, and true

charity, there will be no envy, neither narrowness of heart, neither

will self-love busy itself, for Divine charity overcometh all things,

and enlargeth all the powers of the soul." Give unto us, God, this

largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore I

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Now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side. 1 Kings v. 4.

GOD is the Rest-Giver, When He surrounds us on every side with his

protecting care, so that our life resembles one of the cities of the

Netherlands in the great war -- inaccessible to the foe because

surrounded by the waters of the sea, admitted through the sluice --

then neither adversary nor evil occurrent can break in, and we are kept

in perfect peace, our minds being stayed on God.

"Hidden in the hollow of his blessed hand,

Never foe can enter, never traitor stand.

Have you experienced the rest which comes by putting God round about

you, on every side -- like the light which burns brightly on a windy

night because surrounded by its four panes of clear glass! Ah! what a

contrast between the third and fourth verse: Wars on every side; Rest

on every side. And yet the two are compatible, because the wars expend

themselves on God, as the waves on the shingle; and there are far

reaches of rest within, like orchards and meadows and pasture-lands

beyond the reach of the devastating water.

Out of such rest should come the best work. We are not surprised to

find Solomon announcing his purpose to build a house unto the name of

the Lord. Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus, anointed Him. Out of

quiet hearts arise the greatest resolves; just as from the seclusion of

country hamlets have come the greatest warriors, statesmen, and

patriots. Men think, foolishly, that the active, ever-moving souls are

the strongest. It is not so, however. They expend themselves before the

day of trial comes. Give me those who have the power to restrain

themselves and wait; these are they that can act with the greatest

momentum in the hour of crisis.

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There was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard. 1 Kings

vi. 7.

IN absolute silence, like the growth of a palm in the desert, that

noble building arose in the symmetry of its fair proportions. But there

was plenty of quarrying and hammering and chiselling before the

materials were brought to the site.

The absolute silence with which the Temple rose is a meet emblem of the

progress of the Church, from its foundations laid in the Apostolate

towards the top stone, which before very long will be laid upon the

completed structure. Amid the rise and fall of dynasties and empires,

the Church is being built. Soul after soul, as so many added bricks, is

being quietly placed upon the walls. Some day the world will be amazed

when it sees the New Jerusalem descend out of heaven from God. The

mightiest works of God are the fruit of silence.

You and I are now in the quarry, hewn, chipped, chiselled: or we are in

the saw-pit, being sawn, planed, pierced by nails. Be of good cheer! It

will not be long, the preparatory work will be over, and we shall

become part of the eternal structure. Into heaven there can enter

neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron. The trial will have done

its work. Sorrow and crying will flee away. The apostle Paul, who knew

more than any man what trial and pain meant, could confidently declare:

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be

compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Then shall the

city of God shine forth in completed beauty, her walls Salvation and

her gates Praise; and the triumphant song of the redeemed shall ring

forth: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that

sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

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In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them. 1 Kings vii. 46.

THE Apostle tells us to obey from the heart that mould or form of

doctrine to which we were delivered (Rom. vi. 17). What a mould is to

the metal which is wrought into various forms of utensils, that the

form of sound doctrine is to believers who desire to resemble Christ.

When our hearts, melted in contrition and penitence, are poured into

the teaching of the Apostles, to ponder it in memory, and to carry it

out in life, they are, so to speak, cast into the pattern of Jesus

Christ, which they wear for evermore. Thus we are conformed to the

image of his Son.

We differ as widely as the vessels named here. Some are lavers, and

some bases; some shovels, and some basons. It matters little what shape

we bear; so long as we are cleansed and meet for the Master's use. Each

vessel in Solomon's temple filled its own niche. The machinery of the

whole would have been hindered if one had been missing. Be content with

the shape which the Great Designer hath intended for thee. Yield to it.

Dare to pour thyself into the dark passages of the mould. Do not ask

the intention of this or that. Obey from the heart, otherwise thou

mayest have to be broken up, and put back again into the furnace to go

through the process once more. This is the Plain of the Jordan for us,

the place of death; but soon we shall be remitted to the Palace and

Temple of God.

There is no clue to the understanding of the mysteries of our mortal

life, save the hypothesis, that we are being prepared for the position

which has been prepared for us in the eternal world. "And we know that

all things work together for good to them that love God."

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That he maintain the cause of his servant, as every day shall require.

1 Kings viii. 59 (R.V.).

THE marginal (R. V.) reading is, "The thing of a day in its day." What

rest would come into our lives, if we really believed that God

maintained the cause of his servants! Men hate you, and say unkind or

untrue things about you; on your part, though you are quite prepared to

admit that you have made mistakes, yet you know that you desire above

all things to act as God's servant should, that your motives are

sincere, and your hands clean -- be of good courage then: God will

maintain your cause, as every day may require.

Or, you are beset by strong competition; and, in order to hold your

own, you have been tempted to do what is not perfectly the best -- to

spice your teaching with a little heterodoxy, puff your wares with

misleading titles, to adulterate your goods. But there is no need to do

this; if only you are faithful to God, He will maintain your cause, as

every day may require.

Or, you are tempted almost beyond endurance, and think that you must

yield. The seductions are so insidious, the pitfalls so carefully

concealed, the charm of evil so subtle. But, if you will only look away

to God, you will find Him a very present help to maintain your cause.

Oh, trust Him; for none of them that do so can be desolate. Daily

strength for daily need; daily manna for daily hunger; daily

maintenance for daily temptation. These are assured.

As we stand on the hill-top in the morning and look across the valley

of the coming day, its scenes are too closely veiled in heavy-hanging

mists for us to specify all our requests. We can breathe the

comprehensive petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." And God

will suit his help to each requirement. As the moment arrives "the

thing" will be there.

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I have hallowed this house which thou hast built. 1 Kings ix. 3.

MAN builds; God hallows. This co-operation between man and God pervades

all life. Man performs the outward and mechanical; God the inward and

spiritual. Paul plants, Apollos waters; but God gives the increase. We

elaborate our sermons and addresses, building them up with careful,

eager thought; but God must work in and through them for his own glory

in the salvation and upbuilding of souls. We must be careful to do our

part with reverence and godly fear, remembering that God must work in

realms we cannot touch, and to issues we cannot reach, before our poor

exertions can avail.

May we not apply this especially to the education of a child's life?

Many who read these lines are engaged in building structures which will

outlive the Pyramids. The body is only the scaffolding, behind and

through which the building of the soul is being upreared. The materials

with which we build may be the gold, silver, and precious stones, of

our example, precept, careful watching, and discipline; but God must

come in to hallow. Our strenuous endeavour must be supplemented by the

incoming of the Holy Spirit.

God hallows by his indwelling. Holiness is the result of his putting

his Name into a place, a day, a human soul; for his Name is his nature,

Himself. Each day may be a building, reared between sunrise and sunset,

with our activities; but it were vain to hope to realize our ideal

unless the structure become a Temple filled with God. Build what you

will; but never be satisfied unless God sets his eyes and heart upon

your life, hallowing and sanctifying each day and act to Himself.

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Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee. 1 Kings x. 9.

THERE were two reasons why Solomon was on the throne. First, because of

God's love to him; secondly, because of God's love to Israel. May we

not address our Saviour with similar expressions of gladness as those

which the queen addressed to a less than He?

How well it is, now and again, to let ourselves go in exuberant

adoration! Prayer is good, but it may revolve too largely about our own

needs and desires: thanks are right, when we have received great

benefits at his hands; but praise is best, because the heart forgets

itself and earth and time, in enlarged conceptions of its adorable

Lover and Saviour.

We are reminded in this connection of a noble hymn by old John Ryland:

--

"Thou Son of God, and Son of Man,

Beloved, adored Emmanuel,

Who didst, before all time began,

in glory with thy Father dwell:

"We sing thy love, who didst in time,

For us, humanity assume,

To answer for the sinner's crime,

To suffer in the sinner's room.

"The ransomed Church thy glory sings,

The hosts of heaven thy will obey;

And, Lord of lords, and King of kings,

We celebrate thy blessed away."

We can never praise Him enough. Our furthest thoughts fall short of the

reality. His wisdom and prosperity exceed his fame. No question He

cannot answer; no desire He cannot gratify; no munificence He cannot

excel. Happy are they who stand continually before Him. Let us see that

this is our happy privilege; not content to pay Him a transient visit,

returning to our own land, but communing with Him always of that wh)ich

is in our heart.

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His wives turned away his heart. 1 Kings xi. 4.

EVERY man is vulnerable at one point of his character. Strong

everywhere else, and armour-plated, he is weak there; and our great

enemy knows just where to strike home. It would have been useless to

argue with Solomon for the claims of idols. He could at once, by his

wisdom, have annihilated all infidel arguments, and have established

the existence and unity of God. But, step by step, he was led by silken

cords, a captive, to the worship of other gods. It is a solemn warning;

and Nehemiah was perfectly justified when, in his contention with the

Jews who had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab, he said,

"Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by these things! Yet among many

nations there was no king like him who was beloved of his God. "

Let young people beware where they let their hearts go forth in love.

Whom we love we resemble; and in the marriage tie it is almost

inevitable that seductions to the lower will overcome the drawings to

the higher. When a Christian disobeys God's distinct command against

intermarriage with the ungodly, he begins to sink to the level of his

ungodly partner whom he had thought to raise to his own religious

standing.

Our associates determine the drift and current of our life. It is so

easy to launch upon the current that flows past our feet; it seems

impossible that the laughing, enticing water should ever carry us

against sharp, splintering rocks, or over breaking cataracts. When we

are compelled to associate with the ungodly, let us maintain a strict

self-watch, and pray that the breath of the heavenward gale may more

than counteract the tendency of the earthward current.

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The month which he had devised of his own heart. 1 Kings xii. 33.

JEROBOAM acted on expediency. It did seem reasonable to argue that the

constant going up to Jerusalem to worship might alienate the people

from his throne, and awaken a desire for the old national unity; and

without doubt a mere worldly wisdom extolled his setting-up of

idol-gods at Bethel and Dan; but his policy in this respect led to the

downfall of his kingdom. Had he trusted God's promise, made through the

prophet Ahijah, the Divine purpose would have ensured the continuance

of his rule; but the prompting of expediency resulted in ultimate

disaster (ch. xiv).

How prone we all are to devise out of our own hearts! We take counsel

with ourselves, and do what seems prudent and far-seeing, with the

inevitable result of being betrayed into courses of action that God

cannot approve, and of which we have reason to repent bitterly. It is

infinitely better to wait on God till He develop his plan, as He most

certainly will, when the predestined hour strikes. He who trusts in his

own heart, and takes his own way, is a fool. To run before God is to

sink knee-deep into the swamp. We must make all things after the

pattern shown us on the Mount, and take our time from God's almanack.

What a contrast to the course of Jeroboam was that of the Son of man!

He would do nothing of Himself. His eye was always on His Father's

dial-plate, and thus He knew when his time was not yet fulfilled. He

was always consulting the movement of his Father's will, and did only

those things which He saw his Father doing. Similarly make God's will

and way thy Pole-star. Oh to be able to say with our blessed Lord, "I

seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me "!

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Forasmuch as thou hast been disobedient, . . . but camest back. 1 Kings

xiii. 21, 22 (R.V.).

WE are inclined at first sight to pity this unknown prophet, and to

justify his return; but as we look closer into the story, we not only

discover the reason for the severe penalty that overtook him, but we

are warned lest we make a similar mistake. When we have received a

direct command fresh from the lips of Christ, we must act on it, and

not be turned aside by a different suggestion, made to us through the

lips of professing Christians. God does not vacillate or alter in the

thing which proceeds from his mouth. When we know we are in the line of

his purpose, we must not allow ourselves to be diverted by any appeal

or threat, from whomsoever it may emanate. Deal with God at first-hand.

The rule for determining the true worth of the advice which our friends

proffer us, is to ask, first, whether it conflicts with our own

deep-seated conviction of God's will; and, secondly, whether it tends

to the ease and satisfaction of the flesh, as the old prophet's

suggestion certainly did. Beware of any one who allures you with the

bread and water that are to break your fast. That bait is likely enough

to disturb the balance of your judgment. When a voice says spare

thyself, be on the alert; it savours the things that be of man, not of

those that be of God.

Learn to deal with God at first-hand. Do not run hither and thither to

human teachers, or to the Church. Be still before God, and what He says

in the depths of thy soul, do. His Holy Spirit shall guide you into all

truth; and when once his way has been revealed to thee, go straight on,

listening to no other voice, however much it professes Divine

inspiration.

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I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. 1 Kings xiv. 5.

HOW foolish! Jeroboam thought that the old prophet could penetrate the

vail that hid the future, but not the disguise in which his wife wished

to conceal herself. As we might have expected, the aged prophet's inner

sight read her heart. From God no secrets are hid. Immediately on his

accosting her by her name there came the dread announcement of

inevitable disaster.

We must not hesitate to unfold all the consequences of sin. As watchmen

on the walls, we are bound to tell men of the certain fearful looking

for of fiery indignation which shall devour the transgressors. None of

us should flinch from declaring the whole counsel of God. We should

specially insist on the guilt side of sin. Not only that it is a

misfortune, a mistake, an error, a disease, a tyranny; but a crime. The

sinner is a criminal, who has incurred the just wrath and anger of a

holy God: for which he must suffer a due recompense.

Oh for more tenderness that we may with tears warn men of their doom!

We are so self-possessed, so stolid ; we need to ask that our eyes,

like Jeremiah's, should be fountains of tears, that we might weep day

and night. If the tidings are heavy, let us first feel their pressure

on our own hearts; let us bend over the regions of despair and

darkness, and hear the bitter weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth,

and come back to warn our brethren, lest they also come to that place

of torment. Though it was with fear and much trembling that Paul

preached the Gospel, yet he did not shun to declare the whole counsel

of God. And while we go to men with the good tidings of salvation, we

must not withhold the heavy tidings from those who persist in unbelief

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Asa did . . . right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. 1

Kings xv. 11.

IT is a great thing to have such a testimony as this. We may do right

in our own eyes; yet the eye of the Lord may detect evil which neither

our associates nor we have seen. We may deceive ourselves, we may

deceive others; but we cannot deceive God. In the home or business, in

situation or factory, let us live as under the searching gaze of God.

Asa's life was one of religious activity: he destroyed the idols of his

father, and even deposed his queen-mother, "because she made an idol in

a grove." It needs Divine courage so to live for God that at home or

afield men shall take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.

This is what the world is languishing for -- reality, consistency under

all circumstances, and before all men.

There are, however, two clouds overhanging this otherwise bright life.

"The high places were not removed " (14). Though idols were destroyed,

the groves in which they were erected remained. They were no snare to

him; and he took care that during his life they should not ensnare

others; but after his death, in the reign of Jehoshaphat his son, "the

people offered and burnt incense" in them (xxii. 43). We must not only

cleanse our way before the Lord, but remove any evil thing which may

cause others to stumble.

The other cloud is indicated in 2 Chron. xvi. 12: "He was diseased in

his feet.. . . Yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the

physicians." Strange that in affliction he should not have turned to

the Great Physician. The enemy of souls is ever on the watch. Pray that

amid the pains of death you may not act unworthily.

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Ahab did more to provoke the Lord to anger than all the kings. 1 Kings

xvi. 33.

HIS sin was very aggravated, largely through the influence of Jezebel,

his young and beautiful wife, who introduced the abominations of

Phoenician idol-worship. This is why he is said to have exceeded his

predecessors in wickedness. They broke the second commandment, and

worshipped Jehovah under the form of a calf. Ahab and Jezebel broke the

first, and chose other gods -- Baal, the sun, and Ashtoreth, the moon.

The inveterate love for this idolatry was connected with licentious

rites with which these deities were served. What wonder that the land

became corrupt when the fountains of its religious life were polluted

at the source?

The connection between the indulgence of impurity and the declension of

the spiritual life, is very close. As the apostle Paul tells its in

Romans i., the men that refuse to retain God in their knowledge are

given up to the working of passion; and as they yield to passion they

lose the sweet, clear impression of the truth and nearness of the

Christ. The first, second, and third thing to be said to young people

on venturing out into the world, corrupt through many deceitful lusts,

is, Be pure. Wear the white flower of a blameless life. If you cannot

be faultless, be blameless. If you cannot realize all the good you

know, at least refrain from all the evil. Keep your robes unspotted

from the world. Then through purity of heart and obedience in life, you

shall see God. As the living Christ enters the heart, He will drive

before Him the brute forms of evil, overthrow the tables of the

money-changers, and will sit to teach of God. Give yourself

unreservedly into his keeping, that He may govern and control every

avenue of your life.

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I have commanded the ravens . . . a widow women . . . there. 1 Kings

xvii. 4, 9.

WE must be where God desires. -- Elijah spoke of himself as always

standing before the Lord God of Israel. He deemed himself as much a

courtier in the royal palace as Gabriel (Luke i. 19). And he could as

distinctly stand before God when hiding beside Cherith, or sheltering

in the widow's house at Zarephath, as when he stood erect on Carmel, or

listened to the voice of God at Horeb. Wherever you go, and whatever

ministry you are called to undertake, glory in this, that you never go

to any greater distance from God.

If we are where God wants us to be, He will see to the supply of our

need. It is as easy for Him to feed us by the ravens as by the widow

woman. As long as God says, Stay here, or there, be sure that He is

pledged to provide for you. Though you resemble a lonely sentinel in

some distant post of missionary service, God will see to you. The

ravens are not less amenable to his command than of old: and out of the

stores of widow women He is as able to supply your need as He did

Elijah's, at Zarephath.

How often God teaches best in seclusion and solitude! It is by the

murmuring brooks of nature that we have our deepest lessons. It is in

the homes of the poor that we are fitted for our greatest tasks. It is

beside couches where children suffer and die, that we receive those

preparations of the heart which avail us when the bugle note summons us

to some difficult post.

God leads through death to life. -- It was needful that the child

should die, that sin might be remembered and dealt with; but through

Death's portal the trio entered a richer, fuller life. Fear not that

gateway!

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So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of

Carmel. 1 Kings xviii. 42.

SUCH differences obtain still. The children of this world and the

children of light are manifest. What though the bodies of four hundred

and fifty prophets lay slain in the gorge of the Kishon; or that by one

great act Elijah had hewn down the upas tree, the deadly influence of

which had corrupted Palestine; or that the long-expected rain was in

the air -- yet Ahab must eat and drink. These are the things which the

children of the world seek after. Watch and pray, lest you enter into

this temptation. Let appetite be kept well in hand -- your servant, not

your master; and see to it that you are capable of such profound and

absorbing interest in the things of the Kingdom of God, as to count the

gratification of physical desire unworthy to be compared with the high

delights of service, prayer, and communion with the unseen.

Though he must have been exhausted with the excitements and efforts of

the day, Elijah must spend the evening hour with God. Though he knew

that the rain was near, he felt that his prayers were a needful

condition for its bestowment. Though any part of Carmel might have

become his oratory, he sought the lonely solitudes of the summit with

the outspread sea before him, that his soul might hold undisturbed

vigil, and that he might see over the wide expanse of the ocean the

first tokens of the coming answer. His attitude denoted his humility.

His repeated injunction to the lad, his perseverance. His success

approved his faith.

Stand, suppliant soul, on the highest point of expectant hope; see the

hurrying answer, which was being prepared from pools and lakes and

seas, long ere thy prayer began. "Before they call, I will answer."

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Behold, an angel touched him. 1 Kings xix. 5.

IN all probability the angels often touch us when danger is near,

threatening our health and life, or when foul fiends step up to us with

hideous temptation. They find us out, especially when, like Elijah, we

are alone and depressed; when nervous depression has crept about our

hearts; when we seem to have failed in the conflict against evil, and

long for death to end our long and weary strife. It was the lament of a

holy soul on the verge of eternity, that he had made so little of the

ministry of God's holy and tender angels.

It was very gracious for God to deal thus with his servant. We might

have expected rebuke or remonstrance, chiding or chastisement; but we

would hardly have expected such loving, gentle treatment as this. Is

this the man who defied Ahab and all his priests? He is as frail and

impotent as any! Nay, but God looked beneath the surface depression,

and detected the strong fountains of courage and devotion that lay

beneath, only capable of being called again into intense manifestation.

He knew his servant's frame, and recognised that he was dust. He knew

how to distinguish between the passing overstrain of the body and the

heroic temper of the spirit. So, he understands us in our fits of

depression and despair.

Whenever these angel-fingers touch you, whether directly or through the

medium of loving mortal hands, you will always find the cake and the

cruse of water. God never awakens to disappoint. It is an infinite

pleasure to Him to awaken his loved ones to good things, which they had

neither asked nor thought. Will not dying be something like this? The

angel of life will touch us, and we shall awake to see what love has

prepared.

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As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. 1 Kings xx. 40.

THIS was likely enough to happen on a battlefield. It would not be

possible to hold your prisoner, and to busy yourself about other things

at the same time. This man, in the prophet's parable, made a great

mistake to concern himself about a number of trifles, when so serious a

matter as his own life depended on giving all his attention to the

custodianship of the prisoner entrusted to his care. But is it not thus

that men miss the main end of life?

Busy here and there, and life is gone. -- Many spend their days in mere

trivialities. Like children they dig in the sand; like the butterfly,

they flit from flower to flower. A round of visits, a few novels, a

good many hours of light gaiety; vanity, fashion, and amusement --

these fill their hours, the days flash by, and life is gone. They have

nothing to show for it.

Busy here and there, and the chance of saving others is gone. -- Lives

touch lives, for the chief pur-pose that one should influence the

other. But too often we deal only with superficialities, busying

ourselves in the slightest interests, but not seeking the salvation of

those with whom we associate. The dance, the game, the business

relationship, monopolise our thought, and our friends are swept from us

in the eddying whirl of life's battle, and are gone.

Busy here and there, and the knowledge of God is gone. -- Remember how

the birds caught away the seed of the Kingdom; and be sure that, in the

same way, the cares and riches of this world, and the lusts of other

things may enter in, and destroy the impression made on the heart. The

ephemeral interests of life press hard on its real interests. Like

boys, we squander in trifling the hours given to prepare for an

examination on which all the future must turn.

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And Ahab said to Elijah, hast thou found me, O mine enemy? 1 Kings xxi.

20.

AHAB got his garden of herbs, but he had Elijah withal, who stood at

the gate like an incarnate conscience. Men may get the prize on which

they have set their heart; but if they have obtained it wrongfully, the

conscience of the wrong done will haunt them, and take away the

pleasure on which they counted, and ultimately bring them like a quarry

to the ground.

We turn our best friends into enemies, as Ahab did Elijah. The cloud

that lights Israel is darkness to Pharaoh; the angel that protects

Jerusalem, slays the host of Sennacherib; the gentle love which anoints

the Saviour, instigates in Judas a jealousy which ends in murder. The

God who shows Himself merciful to the merciful is froward to the

froward. The cause of the alteration is to be sought within ourselves.

The sun that melts wax hardens clay, but the difference is in the clay.

To the widow of Zarephath Elijah was an angel of light; whilst to Ahab

he was an enemy. The difference lay in their hearts; the one being holy

and loving, the other dark and turbid. What you are, determines whether

Elijah will be your friend or your enemy.

This word "sold thyself" is very awful. It underlies Goethe's tragedy

of Faust, in which the soul sells itself to the devil for so many years

of worldly pleasure. A few promises which are never kept; a mirage that

is dissipated in thin air when we approach it; a bribe of gold or

silver that burns the hands which receive it -- such are the price for

which men sell themselves. "They sell themselves for nought." Truly the

devil drives a hard bargain. When he gets the soul into his power, he

laughs at his former promises, and pays as wages, death.

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A certain man . . smote the king of Israel between the joints of the

harness. 1 Kings xxii. 34.

EVERY man we meet is clothed in armour; in other words, we all cover

ourselves with plates on which to receive the thrust of accusation and

reproach. "I only do as others." "I do not see any special harm in it."

"My father did it before me." "I cannot help it." Such are some of the

plates in the armour of the soul; and our work as Christian workers

becomes abortive in so many instances, because we are content to

belabour the plates, instead of striking home to the one place where

the armour joints are. Successful soul-winning depends on discovering

the vulnerable part of a man, and striking there. But all this demands

a very special discernment of spirits, and anointing of the Holy Ghost.

Only so can we detect where best to bring about conviction, and make

men know their need of the Gospel of God's grace. The great need of the

present day is a sharper and more searching analysis of sin. Men need

to be shown how they are violating the laws of God. They assent

generally to the Scriptural statements of what God requires, but fail

to realize how greatly they have come short. You are almost sure to

hit, if you begin to show the various ways in which respectably-living

people are coming under the Divine sentence.

But several conditions must be fulfilled. (1) Study well your own

heart. (2) Be a deep student of the biographies of Scripture; because

every type of human character is delineated in Holy Writ. (3) Open your

heart to the Holy Ghost, through whom alone you can discern spirits. He

is a discerner of the thoughts of the heart, and will teach you to cut

to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and

marrow.

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Thou man of God! 2 Kings i. 9, 11, 13.

OH that thou and I might so live before God and men, that they should

recognise us as men of God, as God's men! See how these ungodly

captains at once recognised this, in the case of Elijah. They fretted

and chafed against his holiness; but they were forced to admit it. They

tried to impose their orders, or those of their king; but they realized

that Elijah was the servant of Him whom they set at nought, so far as

their own lives were concerned.

If we are really men of God, we shall be the last to assume the title.

Notice that Elijah puts an if before the title with which he was

saluted: "If I be a man of God." Paul counted himself the least of all

saints.

We must be of God. -- All our goodness must originate in Him. We can no

more boast of goodness than a chamber can boast of the light which

irradiates each corner of its space. The faith that takes his grace, as

well as the grace it takes, is his. We are absolutely his debtors; and

happy are they who love to have it so, and lie always at the Beautiful

Gate of God's heart, expecting to receive alms at his hand.

We must be for God. -- This is the only cure for self-consciousness,

for that perpetual obtrusion of the self-life which is our bane and

curse. Ask that the Holy Spirit may fill you with so absorbing a

passion for the glory of Jesus, that there may be no room to think of

your own reputation or emolument.

We must be in God, and God in us. -- This is possible, when we love

perfectly. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Oh, sea of light, may we lie spread out in thy translucent waves, as

the sponges in southern sapphire seas, till every fibre of our being be

permeated and infilled!

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Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee. 2 Kings ii. 2, 4, 6.

THRICE Elijah spoke thus to his friend and disciple, to test him.

Perseverance, tenacity of purpose, a refusal to be content with

anything short of the best, are indispensable conditions for the

attainment of the highest possibilities of experience and service. And

perpetually in our life's discipline these words come back on us, Tarry

here! Not that God desires us to tarry, but because He desires each

onward step to be the choice and act of our own will.

Tarry here in Consecration. -- "You have given so much; is it not time

that you refrained from further sacrifices? Ungird your loins, sit down

and rest, forbear from this strenuous following after. Spare thyself;

this shall not come to thee."

Tarry here in the Life of Prayer. -- "It is waste time to spend so much

time at the footstool of God. You have done more than most, desist from

further intercession and supplication."

Tarry here in the attainment of the likeness of Christ. -- "It will

cost you so much, if all that is not Christ-like is to pass away from

your life."

Such voices are perpetually speaking to us all. And if we heed them, we

are at once shut out of that crossing the Jordan, that rapturous

intercourse with heaven, that reception of the double portion of the

Spirit, which await those who have successfully stood the test. The law

of the Christian life is always Advance; always leaving that which is

behind; always reckoning that you have not attained; always following

on to know the Lord, growing in grace and in the knowledge of the

blessed Saviour, and saying to the Spirit of God, as Elisha to Elijah,

I will not leave thee.

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Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall

be filled. 2 Kings iii. 17.

THIS is God's way of fulfilling the desire of them that fear Him. We

like to see the clouds blown forward through the sky, and hear the moan

of the rising wind; in other words, we like to see God's gifts on their

way, or to have the sensible emotion of receiving them. Sometimes we

have symptoms and signs that fill us with rapture; at other times,

these are lacking, and we surrender ourselves to despair. Yet when we

see neither wind nor rain, God may be most mightily at work.

It is so in Church work. -- How often we make our valleys full of

ditches! Our machinery is complicated and perfect; we have spared

neither pains nor care. Then we ardently desire the signs of a powerful

revival, and break our hearts if they are not apparent; while, all the

time, if we only knew it, the Divine blessing is welling up in the

ditches, doing more than would be the case if our highest wishes were

gratified.Here and there tears are failing silently, hearts are being

cleansed, lives are becoming yielded to God.

It is so in Christian experience. -- We expect to have our Pentecost as

the early Church received hers. We desire to see wind and rain, and to

know that God is baptizing us; but this is not granted. There is no

footfall of hurrying clouds, no coronet of flame, no gift of tongues.

But, deep down, the ditches are being filled up, yearnings are being

satisfied, the capacity for God within us is being met, though it grows

apace. God be praised that the success of his work is not gauged by

outward signs!

A well may be filled as completely by the percolation of water, a drop

at a time, as by turning a river into it.

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And the oil stayed. 2 Kings iv. 6.

WHAT a sorrowful confession! There was no reason why it should stay.

There was as much oil as ever, and the power which had made so much

could have gone on without limit or exhaustion. The only reason for the

ceasing of the oil was in the failure of the vessels. The widow and her

sons had secured only a limited number of vessels, and therefore there

was only a limited supply of the precious oil.

This is why so many of God's promises are unfulfilled in your

experience. -- In former days you kept claiming their fulfilment;

frequently you brought God's promises to Him and said, "Do as Thou hast

said." Vessel after vessel of need was brought empty and taken away

full. But of late years you have refrained, you have rested on your

oars, you have ceased to bring the vessels of your need. Hence the

dwindling supply.

This is why your life is not so productive of blessing as it might be.

-- You do not bring vessels enough. You think that God has wrought as

much through you as He can or will. You do not expect Him to fill the

latter years of your life as He did the former. You can trust Him for

two sermons a week, but not for five or six.

This is why the blessing of a revival stays in its course. -- As long

as the missioner remains with us, we call look for the continuance of

blessing. But after awhile we say, Let the services stop; they have run

their course, and fulfilled their end. And forthwith the blessing stops

in mid-flow. Let us go on pleading with the unsaved, and bringing the

empty vessels of our poor effort for God to fill them up to the full

measure of their capacity.

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Like unto the flesh of a little child. 2 Kings v. 14.

IS there any fabric woven on the loom of time to be compared in perfect

beauty to the flesh of a little child, on which, as yet, no scar or

blemish can be traced? So sweet, so pure, so clean. It was a wonderful

combination, that the strong muscles and make of the mighty man of war

should blend with the flesh of a child. But this may be ours also, if

we will let the hand of Jesus pass over our leprous-smitten souls. At

this moment, if you let Hin, He will touch you and say, "Be clean," and

immediately the leprosy will depart, and you will return to the days of

your youth -- not forgiven only, but cleansed; not pardoned only, but

clad in the beauty of the Lord your God, which He will put on you.

We do not count a little child to be free from the taint of sin. It is

conceived in sin, and inherits the evil tendencies of our fallen race.

Its innocence of evil is not holiness. Jesus gives us more than

innocence, He makes us pure and holy. But there are other childlike

qualities which our Saviour gives. The humility of a little child, who

is unconscious of itself, and who is not perpetually looking for

admiration. The unselfishness of a little child, who seeks its

companion to share its luxuries and games. The trust of a little child,

which so naturally clings to a strong and loving heart, willing to

follow anywhere, to believe in anything. The love of a little child,

who responds to every endearment with sunny laughter and soft caresses.

There is a great difference between childish and childlike. The former

is put away, as we grow up into Christ: the latter we grow into, as we

become more like our Lord. The oldest angels are the youngest: the

ripest saints are the most childlike.

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Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round

about Elisha. 2 Kings vi. 17.

SO it is with each of God's saints. We cannot see, because of the

imperfection of mortal vision, the harnessed squadrons of fire and

light; but the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear

Him, and delivereth them. If our eyes were opened, we should see the

angel-hosts as an encircling fence of fire; but whether we see them or

not, they are certainly there.

God is between us and temptation. -- However strong the foe, God is

stronger. However swift the descending blow, God is swifter to catch

and ward off. However weak we are, through long habits of yielding, God

is greater than our hearts, and can keep in perfect peace. "Trust ye in

the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages."

God is between us and the hate of man. -- Dare to believe that there is

an invisible wall of protection between you and all that men devise

against you. What though the heathen rage, and the people imagine a

vain thing! No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and

every tongue that shall rise in judgment shall be condemned.

God is between you and the deluge of care. -- What thousands are beset

with that dark spectre! They have no rest or peace either day or night,

saying, "Where will the next rent, the next meal, come from? " How

different the life of birds, and flowers, of children, of Jesus, and

all holy souls. Oh, rest in the Lord, and put Him between you and black

care.

God is between you and the pursuit of your past. -- He is your reward;

and as He intercepted the pursuit of Pharaoh, so He stands at Calvary

between your past and you. The assayer of retribution is arrested by

that Divine Victim -- what more can we ask!

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This day is a day of good tidings. 2 Kings vii. 9.

IT was indeed. The enemy that bad so long hemmed them in had dispersed,

leaving a great spoil behind. The famine which had driven the people to

awful straits was at an end, and there was now plenty of everything. It

was inhuman for these four lepers to be content with eating and

drinking, and sharing out the spoil, when hard by a city was in agony.

Common humanity bade them give information of what had happened.

Let us take care lest some mischief befall us, if we withhold the

blessed Gospel from a dying world. We know that Jesus has died and

risen again, and that his unsearchable riches wait for appropriation.

We have availed ourselves of the offer; but let us see to it that so

far as we can, we are making known that the wine and milk may be

obtained without money and without price.

Mischief always overtakes a selfish policy; whereas those who dare to

share with others what they have received, not only keep what they

have, but find the fragments enough for many days afterwards.

Let us tell men that the Saviour has overcome our foes, and has opened

the kingdom of heaven to all who believe. Let us speak from a full

heart of all that He has proved to be. Let us invite men to share with

us the grace which hath neither shore nor bound.

One ounce of testimony is worth a ton weight of argument, and

overpowers all objection. The Lord, on whom the king leaned, derided

the possibility of the prophet's prediction; and no doubt had plenty of

adherents. But the leper's report swept all his words to the winds.

They had known, tasted, and handled. Let us remember that we are called

to be witnesses of what God hath done for us.

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And the Man of God wept. 2 Kings viii. 11.

ELISHA foresaw all the evil that Hazael would inflict on Israel, and it

moved him to tears. Though he was a strong man, able to move kingdoms

by his message and prayer, yet he was of a tender and compassionate

disposition. This was he who one moment upbraided the king of Israel

for his crimes, and the next called for a minstrel to calm his

perturbed spirit with strains of music. The men that can move others

are themselves very susceptible and easily moved.

The nearer we live to God, the more we deserve to be known as men and

women of God, the more will our tears flow for the slain of the

daughters of our people. Consider the ravages that drink, and impurity,

and gambling, are making among our people; enumerate the homes that are

desolate, the young life that is wrecked as it is leaving the harbour,

the awful dishonour done to woman; and surely there must come times

when tears well up for very humanity's sake, to say nothing of the pity

which they acquire who look at things from God's standpoint.

Jesus beheld the city and wept over it. Give us this day, Son of Man,

thy compassion, thy love, thy tears, that we may speak of thy grace

graciously, of thy love tenderly, and even of thy judgments with

brimming, eyes.

"A broken heart, a fount of tears:

Ask, and it shall not be denied.'

Wouldst thou avert such issues; begin with the cradled babes of your

homes. Win them for God; teach them how to curb passion and subdue

themselves. Tenderness and wisdom may arrest the making of Ben-hadads.

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Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace? 2 Kings ix. 22.

WE all want peace. Of every telegraph messenger, as he puts the

buff-coloured envelope into our hands, we ask almost instinctively, Is

it peace? If there is a rumour of war, a depression in trade, a bad

harvest, a sudden calamity in our neighbourhood, we instantly consider

the effect it may have on the tranquillity and prosperity of our life.

By peace we too often mean the absence of the disagreeable, the

unbroken routine of outward prosperity, the serene passage of the

years: not always eager for anything deeper. And if other and

profounder questions intrude themselves, we instantly stifle or evade

them. Like Herod, we shut up the Baptist in the dungeon. Like the Roman

general, we make a desert and call it peace. Men will flee from a

Gospel ministry which pursues them into close quarters, and arouses

unwelcome questions that break the peace.

There cannot be true peace so long as we permit the infidelities and

charms of some Jezebel of the soul-life to attract and affect us.

Jezebel may stand for the painted world, with its wiles and snares, or

for the flesh, or for some unholy association of the past life, like

that which clung to Augustine. But there must be no quarter given to

the unhallowed rival of our Lord. Whatever its charms, it must be flung

out of the window before we can be at peace.

"Then, and not till then, we shall see Thee as Thou art;

Then, and not till then, in thy glory bear a part;

Then, and not till then, Thou wilt satisfy each heart."

If you are entirely surrendered to the Lord, "the peace of God, which

passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in

Christ Jesus."

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Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel . 2

Kings x. 31.

JEHU was the Cromwell of his time. He swept away the symbols of

idolatry with ruthless destruction. Nothing could withstand his

iconoclastic enthusiasm. But he failed to keep his own heart, and

therefore his dynasty lasted for but one generation. It is a deep

lesson for us all.

We may keep other people's vineyards, and neglect our own. We may give

good advice to our friends, but into the very faults against which we

warn them. We may pose as infallible guides, but fall into the

crevasses and precipices from which we had carefully warned our

companions. Jehu avenged the idolatries of Ahab, but he departed not

from Jeroboam's calves.

Before you rebuke another, be sure that you are free from the faults

that you detect in him. When you hear of the failings of some erring

brother, ask yourself whether you are perfectly free from them. And

never attempt to cast out the mote from your neighbour's eye till you

are sure that the beam has been taken from your own.

Take heed to your heart. Its complexion colours all the issues of life.

Do not be content to be strong against evil; be eagerly ambitious of

good. It is easier to be vehement against the abominations of others

than to judge and put away your own secret sins. But while we keep our

heart with all diligence, we cannot afford to be independent of the

keeping power of God. We must yield ourselves to Him, reserving

nothing. The King must have all. The light of his face must fill every

nook and corner of the soul. And every power that opposes itself to his

dominion, must be dragged beyond the barriers and ruthlessly slain.

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They made him king, and anointed him. 2 Kings xi. 12.

THIS dexterous overthrow of Athaliah by the bringing of the youthful

king, who had been hidden in the secret chambers of the Temple,

accommodates itself so obviously to a reference to the inner life, that

we must be pardoned for making it.

Is not the spiritual condition of too many children of God represented

by the condition of the Temple, during the early years of the life of

Joash? The king was within its precincts, the rightful heir of the

crown and defender of the worship of Jehovah: but, as a matter of fact,

the crown was on the head of the usurper Athaliah, who was exercising a

cruel and sanguinary tyranny. The king was limited to a chamber, and

the majority of the priests, with all the people, had not even heard of

his existence. So, unless we are reprobates, Jesus is within the

spirit, which has been regenerated by the Holy Ghost; but in too many

cases He is limited to a very small corner of our nature, and exercises

but a limited power over our life.

There needs to be an anointing, an enthroning, a determination that He

shall exercise his power over the entire Temple of our Being; the

spirit, which stands for the Holy of Holies; the soul, for the Holy

Place ; the body, for the outer court.

Holiness or Sanctification is Dot a quality or attribute which can be

attributed to us apart from the indwelling of the Holy One. If we would

be holy, we must be indwelt by Him who is holy. If we would have

holiness, we must be infilled by the Holy One. But there must be no

limiting of his power, no barrier to his control, no veiling or

curtaining of his light. The veil, if such there be, must be rent in

twain from the top to the bottom.

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The money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of

the Lord. 2 Kings xii. 4.

THE margin suggests that the thought of giving for God's house would

ascend in a man's heart, till it became the royal and predominant

thought, swaying the whole man to obedience. It is a beautiful

conception !

For the reconstruction of the Temple there were two classes of revenue:

the tribute money which each Israelite was bound to give, and the money

which a man might feel prompted to give. Surely the latter was the more

precious in the eye of God.

Does it ever come into your heart to bring some money into the house of

God? Perhaps the sug-gestion comes, but you put it away, and refuse to

consider it. The thought begins to ascend in your heart, but you thrust

it down and back, saying, Why should I part with what has cost me so

much to get! Beware of stifling these generous promptings. To yield to

them would bring untold blessing into heart and life. Besides, the

money is only yours as a stewardship; and the thought to give it to God

is only the Master's request for his own.

The great mistake with us all is, that we do not hold all our property

at God's disposal, seeking his directions for its administration; and

that we forget how freely we have received that we may resemble our

Father in heaven, and freely give. Too many, alas! are anxious to hoard

up and keep for themselves that which God has given them, instead of

counting themselves and all they have as purchased property, and using

all things as his representatives and trustees. Let us make a complete

surrender to our Lord, and from the heart sing,

"Take my silver and my gold,

Not a mite would I withhold.

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He smote thrice and stayed. 2 Kings xiii. 18.

A STRIKING spectacle. The dying prophet, with his thin hands on the

muscular hands of the young king, as he shoots his arrow through the

eastern window; the exhortation to smite the remaining arrows on the

ground; the bitter chiding that the king had struck thrice only,

instead of five or six times. What lessons are here! The Lord Jesus put

his hands upon ours. Here is the reverse to the incident referred to.

Ours are weak, his are strong; ours would miss the mark, his will

direct the arrows, if only we will allow Him, with unerring precision.

We shoot, but the Lord directs the arrow's flight to the heart of his

foes.

Our success is commensurate with our faith. If we strike but thrice, we

conquer but thrice. If we strike seven times, we attain a perfect

victory over the adversary. Is not this the cause of comparative

failure in Gospel effort? Souls are not saved because we do not expect

them to be saved. A few are saved, because we only believe for a few.

It is one of the most radical laws in the universe of God, and one

which our Lord repeatedly emphasized, that our faith determines the

less or more in our own growth, and in the victories we win for Christ.

Do not stay, soul-winner, but smite again and yet again in the secret

of thy chamber, that thou mayest smite Satan, and compel him to

acknowledge thy might.

Let us not stay, though the energy of earlier days may be ebbing fast.

The sanctified spirit waxes only stronger and more heroic, as Elisha's

and Paul's did, amid the decay of mortal power. The Lord will say to

us, as He did to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my

strength is made perfect in weakness."

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Every man shall be put to death for his own sin. 2 Kings xiv. 6.

SO ran the law of Moses. It forbade the imposition of punishment on the

relatives of the wrong-doer, but it had no mercy on him. "The soul that

sinneth, it shall die," was the succinct and conclusive verdict of the

older law, in this reflecting the spirit and letter of one yet older,

which ran, "The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

First, we were dead in our sins. -- Eph. ii. 5 puts this beyond all

doubt. In the sight of God, all who walk according to the course of

this world, and obey the prince that now worketh in the children of

this world, are dead in trespasses and sins. However much they may be

alive as to their souls, they are dead as to their spirits, entirely

destitute of the life of God.

Second, we have died for our sins. -- 2 Cor. v. 14, 15 (R.V.)

establishes this fact, and shows that in Jesus, we who believe in Him,

are reckoned to have died in Him when He bore our sins in his own body

on the tree. In God's estimate, his death is imputed to us; so that we

are reckoned as having satisfied, in Jesus, the demands of a broken

law. It has no more to ask.

Third, we must die to our sin.-- Rom. vi. 11. Reckon that you have

died, and whenever sin arises, to menace or allure you, point back to

the grave, and argue that since you died in Christ, you have passed

altogether beyond its jurisdiction, for you have yielded your members

as weapons of righteousness unto God. And having been crucified with

Christ, you now no longer live, but Christ liveth in you. Let it become

your daily habit to place the grave of Jesus between yourself and all

allurements of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

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The sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 2 Kings

xv. 9, 18, 24, 28.

THIS chapter anticipates the final overthrow of the kingdom of the

tribes. It describes the corruption and disorganization of the people

which made them the easy prey of Assyria. One puppet-king after another

was set upon the throne to fall after a brief space of rule, and four

times over it is said that they followed in the steps of Jeroboam, "who

made Israel to sin." The seed sown two hundred years before had at last

come to maturity, issuing in the ruin of the nation. 'What a comment on

the inspired words, "Sin, when it is finished, bridgeth forth death."

Twelve times in the story of the kingdom of Israel we are told that

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin. The institution of the

calves on his part seemed to be a piece of political wisdom, but it was

an infraction of the Divine law; and what is morally wrong can never be

politically right. The house cannot stand unless the foundation can

bear the test of the Divine plummet. The kingdom of Israel fell, to

prove to all after-time that the disregard of God's law is a foundation

of sand, which can never resist the test of time.

Why is Jeroboam so frequently called "the son of Nebat"? Why should the

father be for ever pilloried with the son, except that he was in some

way responsible for, and implicated in, his sins? There was a time when

perhaps Nebat might have restrained the growing boy, or led him to the

true worship of God; or perhaps his parental influence and example were

deadly in their effect. How important that parents should leave no

stone unturned to promote the godliness of their children, bringing

them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

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King Ahaz sent to Urijah the fashion of the alter and the pattern of

it. 2 Kings xvi. 10.

THE fashion of this world passeth away like a fleeting dream; or like

the panorama of clouds that constitutes a pavilion of the setting sun,

but which, whilst we gaze, tumbles into a mass of red ruin. And yet we

are always so prone to imitate King Ahaz, and visit Damascus with the

intention of procuring the latest design, and introducing it, even into

the service of the sanctuary.

Man naturally imitates. He must get the pattern of his work from above,

or beneath; from God or the devil: hence, the repeated injunction to us

all, to make all things after the pattern shown on the mount. lf we

would be rid of the influence of worldly fashion, we must conform

ourselves to the heavenly and divine. The pattern of the Body of Christ

-- of the position of each individual believer among its members, and

of the work which each should accomplish -- was fixed before the worlds

were made. The best cure for worldliness is not unworldliness, but

other-worldliness. The best way of resisting the trend of people around

us is to cultivate the speech, thought, and behaviour of that celestial

world to which we are bound by the most sacred ties, and whither we are

travelling at every heart-throb.

This introduction of the altar of a heathen shrine into the holy temple

of Jerusalem, reminds us of the many rites in modern religious

observances which have been borrowed from paganism, and warns us that

the Church has no right to go to the world for its methods and

principles. Let the world do as it may in its discussions about truth,

its efforts to attract attention, and its organizations; our course is

clear -- not to build altars after its fashion, nor model our life on

its maxims.

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These nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images. 2 Kings

xvii. 41.

IT was a curious mixture. These people had come from Babylon, Hamath,

and Sepharvaim, and were settled in the land from which Israel was

deported. In their desire to propitiate the God of the country, they

added his worship to that of their own gods (ver. 32), though they did

not really fear Him (ver. 34). There was an outward recognition of the

God of Israel, which was worse than useless. Are you sure this is not a

true description of your own position? You pay an outward deference to

God by attending his house, and acknowledging his day, whilst you are

really prostrating yourself before other shrines. The one originates in

a superstitious fear, a desire to stand well with your fellows; but it

is in the direction of the other that your heart really goes. You come

as his people come, sit as his people sit, kneel as his people kneel;

but your heart is far apart, and you only do as you do that you may

follow your own evil ways with less fear of discovery.

With all of us there is too much of this double worship; but let it be

clearly understood that it is only apparent, not real. No man ever

really serves two masters, or worships two gods. Whatever conflicts

with God in heart or life is our chosen god. Whatever appears to share

our heart with God really holds our heart. God will never be in

competition with another. He must either be all or none.

The soul that endeavours to divide its service between Jehovah on the

first day, and its graven images all the other days of the week, might

as well discontinue its religious observances, for they count for

nothing: except to blind it to its true condition.

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Now on whom dost thou trust? 2 Kings xviii. 20.

IT was no small thing for Hezekiah to rebel against the proud king of

Assyria. Hamath and Arpad, Samaria and Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivah,

reduced to heaps of stones, were sufficient proofs of the might of his

ruthless soldiers. How could Jerusalem hope to withstand? Rabshakeh

could not comprehend the secret source of Hezekiah's confidence. It was

of no use for him to turn to Egypt. Pharaoh was a bruised reed. And as

for Jehovah! Was there any likelihood that He could do for Israel more,

than the gods of the other nations had done for them? Not infrequently

does the puzzled world ask the Church, "In whom dost thou trust? "

Our life must to a large extent be a mystery, our peace pass

understanding, and our motives be hidden. The sources of our supply,

the ground of our confidence, the reasons for our actions, must evade

the most searching scrutiny of those who stand outside the charmed

circle of the face of God; as it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor

ear heard what God hath prepared."

We all ought to have the secrets which the world cannot penetrate.

Doubt your religion if it all lies on the surface, and if men are able

to calculate to a nicety the considerations by which you are actuated.

We must be prepared to be misunderstood and criticised, because our

behaviour is determined by facts which the princes of this world know

not. We do not look up to the hills, because we look beyond them to

God; we do not trust in silver or gold, or human resource, because God

is our confidence. We cannot but seem eccentric to this world, because

we have found another centre, and are concentric with the Eternal

Throne.

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And Hezekiah spread it before the Lord. 2 Kings xix. 14.

AMID the panic that reigned in Jerusalem, the king and the prophet

alone kept level heads, for they alone had quiet, trustful hearts. We

hardly realize the crisis unless we compare it with the march of

200,000 Kurds or Turkish soldiers upon some peaceful Armenian

community. Israel had no earthly allies. Her only reinforcements could

reach her from heaven, and it was the care of these two saintly men to

implicate their cause with that of the living God (ver. 4). This is the

faith that overcomes the world, which realizes that God lives here and

now in our home and life and circumstances. His cause is implicated in

our deliverance; his name will be disgraced if we are overwhelmed, and

honoured, if preserved. He is our Judge, Lawgiver, and King, and is

therefore bound by the most solemn obligations to save us, or his name

will be tarnished.

When therefore letters come to you, anonymous or otherwise, full of

bitter reproach; when unkind and malignant stories are set on foot with

respect to you; when all hope from man has perished, then take your

complaint -- the letter, the article, the speech, the rumour -- and lay

it before God. Let your requests be made known unto Him. Tell Him how

absolutely you trust. Then malice and fear will pass from your heart,

whilst peace and love will take their place: and presently there will

come a swift message of comfort, like that which Isaiah, the son of

Amoz, sent to Hezekiah, saying on the behalf of God, "That which thou

hast prayed to Me, I have heard."

God knew the contents of the missive before you did; but He likes to

read it again in the company of his child.

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Let the shadow return backward ten degrees. 2 Kings xx. 10.

IT is impossible for us to understand how this could be. The shadow of

the declining day waxes ever longer, and only a miracle could change

its appearance on the dial. It may suggest some significant thoughts

about shadows that may still go back.

The shadow of a wasted life. -- Of course, there is a sense in which

the wasted years will never come again; they have passed beyond recall.

But the shadow may go back on the dial of our life when we truly

repent, and turn again to God, for He hath promised: "I will never

leave thee, neither forsake thee." And "I will give back the years that

the canker worm and caterpillar have eaten."

The shadow of happier days. -- These seem to have gone. For long you

have noticed the growing twilight, and it has seemed impossible ever

again to have the lightsomeness and spring of one or two decades back.

But be of good cheer, for when a man comes into that fellowship with

God which sorrow and temptation teach, when with growing years he

attains added grace, we are told that he shall return to the days of

his youth.

The shadow of early affection. -- Have you lost loved ones, so that

your life is like a house the windows of which, one after another, have

become shuttered and dark? But love is not forfeited for ever. Those

who forsake all for Christ's sake shall get all back again in Him. His

love comprehends all human love. The relationships of his kingdom

surpass in tenderness and tenacity those of the warmest earthly ties.

Thy brother shall rise again, and thou shalt hear him call thy name,

and shalt sit with him in the Home of Life.

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And his mother's name was Hephzi-bah. 2 Kings xxi. 1.

HEPHZI-BAH means, "My delight is in her" (Isa. Ixii. 4). How strange,

supposing that her name was any indication of her character, that such

a woman should have borne such a son; for "Manasseh did wickedly above

all the Amorites did which were before him." A godly ancestry, however,

does not guarantee a holy seed. Hezekiahs and Hephzi-bahs may be the

parents of manassehs. That this may not be so: --

Let us guard against the inconsistencies of our private life. -- The

child of religious parents becomes habituated to their use of

expressions in public which betoken the highest degree of holiness, and

is therefore quicker to notice any inconsistency in temper or walk. Is

there not a subtle temptation also for those who work much for God in

public to feel that a certain laxity is permissible in the home? Will

not late after-meetings at night compensate for indolence in the

morning; and will not protracted services be the equivalent for private

prayer? May not irritability to servants or children be accounted for

by the overstrain of our great work? Hence, inconsistency and failure

to realize our lofty aims, which are quickly noticed, beget distaste

for our religion.

Let us guard against absorption in public religious duty to the neglect

of the home. -- Does it never happen that the children of religious

parents are put to bed by nurses who are heedless of their prayers,

because their mothers have undertaken a mission? Do not boys sometimes

grow up without the correcting influence of the father's character,

because he, good man, is so taken up with committees?

Let us guard against an austerity of manner, which prevents us being

the companions, play-fellows, and associates of our children.

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Thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace. 2 Kings xxii. 20.

AS a matter of fact, Josiah's death was not a peaceful one. He

persisted in going into conflict with Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt,

against the latter's earnest remonstrance (see 2 Chron. xxxv. 20-22);

and, in consequence of his hardihood, met his death. His servants

carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo (ch. xxiii. 30). Is there,

then, any real contradiction between the prophet's prediction and this

sad event?

Certainly not! The one tells us what God was prepared to do for his

servant; the other what he brought on himself by his own folly. There

are many instances of this change of purpose in the Word of God. One of

them is known as "his breach of promise," or "altering of purpose "

(Num. xiv. 34, marg.). He would have saved his people from the forty

years' wandering in the wilderness, but they made Him to serve with

their sins, and wearied Him with their iniquities. He would have

gathered Jerusalem as a hen gathers her brood, but she would not.

Let us beware lest, a promise being left us, we should seem to come

short of it; lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in

departing from the living God, and frustrating some blessed purpose of

his heart. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into

the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love

Him "; but we may limit the Holy One of Israel, and so restrain Him by

our unbelief as to stay the mighty works which are in his plan for us.

He may desire for us a prosperous life and a peaceful death; but we may

close our dying eyes amid disaster and defeat, because we wilfully

chose our own way.

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Like unto Josiah was there no king before him. 2 Kings xxiii. 25.

THIS chapter is a marvellous record of cleansing and purging. We are

led from one item to another of drastic reform. Nothing was spared that

savoured of idolatry. Priests and altars, buildings and groves, came

under the searching scrutiny of this true-hearted monarch; and, as the

result, it was possible to keep such a Passover as had not been

observed during the days of the judges or the kings (ver. 22).

How much our enjoyment of the solemn feast depends upon our previous

efforts to put away from our lives all that is inconsistent with the

law of God. We hardly realize how insidiously evils creep in. Before we

are aware, we have fallen beneath God's ideal, and adopted the customs

of our neighbours, or of those with whom we come into daily contact.

All such declension hinders our joy in keeping the Passover. It is

needful, therefore, that there should be times when we turn to God with

fresh devotion, and in the light of his holy truth pass the various

departments of our life under review, testing everything by the Book of

the Law. In Josiah's case, the sacred volume was recovered from long

neglect; in our case it needs to be re-read in the light of higher

resolves. This would be like a new discovery. Our ultimate rule must

always be the will of God, appreciated with growing clearness, and used

as a standard by which to judge the habits and tenets of our life. We

read the Bible for purposes of a truer knowledge of God and his ways,

and for spiritual quickening; but let us also use it more frequently as

the bath of the spirit. Let us bathe in it. Let us revel in it as the

grimy children of the slums in the laughing wavelets of river and sea.

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He carried out thence all the treasures of the House of the Lord. 2

Kings xxiv. 13.

AMONGST these deported treasures must have been much of the sacred

furniture of the Temple, and the holy vessels; because, in the days of

Belshazzar, find them brought out to grace the royal banquet.

BeIshazzar drank wine from them with his lords, wives, and concubines,

whilst they praised the gods of Babylon, who had given them victory

over their foes. Amongst the rest was the golden candlestick, whose

flame afterwards illuminated the inscription of doom, written by God's

hand upon the palace wall. By the command of Cyrus these precious

vessels were finally restored (Ezra v. 14), and carried back to

Jerusalem, by a faithful band of priests (viii. 33).

The whole story of the captivity is full of solemn lessons. -- The

Church of God must make her choice between one of two courses: either

she must keep from all entangling alliances, and from vieing for

temporal power; or she must face the liability of being brought under

the power with which she would fain assimilate. Israel wanted to be as

the other nations around her, imitating their organization, and allying

herself now with one, and then with another; in consequence she was

swept into captivity to the very nation whose fashions she most

affected (Isa. xxxviii.).

Have we never tasted the bitters of captivity? -- Borne away from our

happy early homes to live among strangers, set to repugnant tasks,

removed from all that made life worth living, we have known the exile's

lot. Alas! if it be so; yet, even in our captivity, where the Lord's

song is silenced, and our harps hang from the willows, if we repent,

and put away our sins, and turn again to the Lord, He will not only

have mercy, but abundantly pardon, and bring us again that we may be as

we were in times past.

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Every day a portion, all the days of his life 2 Kings xxv. 30 (R.V.).

IS it to be supposed that the king of Babylon took more care of

Jehoiachin than God will take of us? Jehoiachin had resisted his

suzerain, and cost him a great expenditure of men and treasure; but

nothing which had transpired in the past hindered this provision of a

daily supply. Will God do less for you, his child? Would it not come as

a relief if you were to be told that, from this moment till you die,

you could always have a sufficient provision of all the necessaries of

life? But if you are a child of God, that promise has already been

made! Do not be anxious. but believe that God's word is at least as

sure and as efficient as man's.

The allowance was continual. -- It did not begin with plenty, and

gradually dwindle to scraps. The supply was maintained year after year.

Will God drop off your supplies, think you, because He forgets, or

because his power is exhausted? You know that each supposition is alike

untenable. What He has done, He will do. The storehouses of nature open

to his key. His are the cattle on a thousand hills.

Every day a portion. -- Jehoiachin had not the provisions of a year or

a month put down at his door; but as each day broke he was sure of the

day's portion. It may be that God is dealing thus with you. Only manna

for the day: daily strength for daily need.

All the days of his life. -- Jesus is with us "all the days"; and He is

the Bread of God, in whom is every property necessary for life. All the

days are included in God's care for us, of birth and death, of sunshine

and shadow. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of

your life, and you shall dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.

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Adam, Sheth, Enosh. 1 Chron. i. 1.

THIS is an ancient graveyard. The names of past generations who were

born and died, who loved and suffered, who stormed and fought through

the world, are engraven on these solid slabs. But there is no

inscription to record their worth or demerit. Just names, and nothing

more.

How strange to think that if Christ tarry, our names will be treated

with the same apathy as these! So far as this world is concerned, we

and all our generation shall pass away. As the flowers of the field, so

we shall perish from the earth.

But each of these lives fulfilled a necessary part in the progress of

the race. Each was in turn father and son; each passed on the torch of

life; each contributed something to the fabric of humanity rising like

a coral island from unknown depths. The hill-tops would not be possible

but for their lower courses which touch the valleys. We could not have

the somebodies without an immense number of nobodies. The flowers of

the race were prepared for by the slow progress of the plant through

years of growth.

But each was the object of the love of God. Each was included in the

redemptive purpose of our Lord; each contributed some minute particle

to his nature; ach is living yet somewhere; each will have to stand

before the judgment-bar of God; each is predestined to live in the

unknown world that lies on the other side. It is a stupendous thought

to imagine the whole race, rooted in Adam, like one vast far-spreading

tree. Ah, reader, be sure that thou art taken out of the first Adam,

and grafted into the second -- the Lord Jesus; and abiding in him, see

'that thou bring forth much fruit to his glory.

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These are the sons of Israel. 1 Chron. ii. 1.

IT is noticeable how irrevocable the Divine sentence is on a human

life. Of Er, the grave, impartial voice of Scripture says, he was

"wicked in the sight of the Lord"; of Achan, he was the "troubler of

Israel, and committed a trespass in the devoted thing." These sentences

are recorded with such precision as to admit of no dispute, no appeal;

and they sum up the life.

But was there not much else in each of these men? Were there not tender

or chivalrous moments? Did they never shine for a moment in some

transfiguring ray? Was all their life dyed with these sad and sombre

hues? Ah, it may have been so -- still the one thing that the Scripture

tells of them is the sin in which all their life seemed to culminate

and express itself. With unerring accuracy God can distinguish the one

act or word by which the character is revealed. He may forgive it, but

He holds it up as the epitome or summary of what the life was.

Let us see how we live, walking before God with reverent fear, watching

and praying, because any moment may give birth to a word or act which

may characterise our life in all coming time. It must be remembered,

however, that all these things emanate from the heart. The heart is

deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; but the issues of

life proceed thence: it therefore must be watched with all diligence

and care. What a man thinks, that he is. The chance word or act is a

true indication of the inner life. Therefore it is preserved for all

after-time by the voice of God. See that your heart is perfect before

God. There is forgiveness; but then is also the unerring verdict.

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These were the sons of David. 1 Chron. iii. 1.

BUT how different they were to the Son of David! Contrast any one of

these with our blessed Lord, and what an infinite chasm lies between

them! Solomon was the most reputable of them, but a greater than

Solomon was born in Bethlehem, and cradled in a manger. Surely the

least earnest must be struck with the difference in these sons and that

Son. But in this difference, is there not the most conspicuous proof of

his miraculous conception? Even though the story of his wondrous birth

had never been preserved for us by the evangelists, we should have felt

convinced that something like it must have happened, in virtue of which

He should be the Man of men, the one absolutely flawless and perfect

flower on the stem of humanity. With new emphasis we read the familiar

words, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the

Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that Holy thing which shall be

born of thee shall be called the Son of GOD."

We, too, who have been born once, need to be born again. To be born of

a David does not ensure perfectness of heart and life. Though born of

parents, who were after God's own heart and are passed into the skies,

we need to be born again, or we may repeat the sins of an Ammon, an

Adonijah, an Absalom. It is a serious question to ask whether, like

David, we have called his greater Son our Lord. This is the true mark

of the new birth. Those who are born of the Holy Ghost call Jesus Lord,

and none other The recognition of the supreme lordship of Jesus is

imperative for the peace and right ordering of the heart and life, So

we pass to our true stature in Jesus.

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Because I bare him with sorrow. 1 Chron. iv. 9.

THE products of sorrow have been the rarest gifts to mankind. The

books, hymns, discoveries, deeds, to which men and women have been

urged by sorrow, or which have been born into the world amid

heart-rending soul-travail, are those which will never be allowed to

die, because perennial sources of inspiration and comfort. It was thus

with the child of whom we have this brief record. We might becomingly

weave the four petitions of the prayer of Jabez into the supplications

of each new morning hour.

To be blessed indeed. -- Not the lower springs only, but the upper ones

also; not life alone, but life more abundantly; not those blessings

only which pertain to the body or worldly circumstance, but those

spiritual ones of the heavenlies, that are the best donation man can

receive or God bestow.

A larger coast. -- There is a godly ambition which may be reverently

cherished for wider influence over men, not for its own sake, but for

the Master's. You may feel that you have fulfilled the measure of your

present possibilities, but have unexhausted powers and talents. Tell

God so, and ask for a wider extent of territory to bring under

cultivation for Him.

Thine hand with me. -- The father puts his hand on the boy's hand as he

draws back the bowstring, strengthening the thin arms of youth. So will

the mighty God of Jacob do for you.

Keep me from evil. -- You cannot keep your heart door shut when a

tumult of temptation or care assaults it from without; but God's peace

and grace, like angel sentries, can avail you. Though tempted, you may

be kept in the temptation and delivered from the evil. Thus your

spirit, and the Holy Spirit shall be ungrieved.

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They cried to God in the battle, and He was entreated of them. 1 Chron.

v. 20.

WHETHER they cried to God before they went into the battle we are not

told; but probably they did, because we read that the war was of God,

and it is hardly likely that they would have prayed to Him in the midst

of the fight, when the foemen's blows fell like hail on their armour,

if they had not prayed before they entered the bloody fray. Men often

excuse themselves for neglecting their morning devotions by saying that

they will surely look to God, as they may require his gracious help, in

the midst of the day's temptations and needs; but, as a matter of fact,

when once they are plunged into its war they forget to look up. You

must direct your prayer in the morning, and look up whilst the early

shadows lie long on the dewy grass, if you would keep looking off to

Jesus, amid the din of the fight.

It is very lovely to contract and preserve this habit of looking

upward, and crying to God in the battle. When our feet are slipping,

when the foe seems about to overmaster, when heart and flesh fail --

how refreshing and strengthening to fling one eager look or cry to

heaven, and say, "I am thine, save me." There can be no doubt as to the

issue. God is always intreated of those who put their trust in Him.

Sooner might a mother forget her sucking child than God be unmindful of

one sigh, or tear, or upward glancing look from his own. Oh, child of

God, put thou thy trust in God, and go through this tempestuous world

as one who is confident of a Divine Ally. At any moment He will ride on

the heavens to thy help. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne

of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of

need."

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Heman the singer. 1 Chron. vi. 33.

THIS is a very brief record to put on a man's grave, but a very

expressive one. To decipher that epitaph about Heman is to learn a good

deal about him. From this clue we might almost construct his entire

personality and character. And it would be well if it could be said of

us that we had ministered with song before the tabernacle of the Lord.

Would you be a singer -- not on Sundays only, but always; not with your

voice only, but in your heart; not only when the sunshine pours into

the open casement through the swaying boughs of honeysuckle, but when

the shutters tell of bereavement and removal -- then remember these

rules: -- (1st.) God must put the new song into your mouth; (2nd.) You

must be fully consecrated to Him; for the song of the Lord only begins

when the burnt-offering is complete. (3rd.) You must not go into a

strange land, for it is impossible to sing the Lord's song there.

Sing on, dear heart, sing on. There is nothing that scares off the

devil so quickly as a hymn. Luther said, "Let us sing a hymn, and spite

the devil." There is nothing that so well beguiles the pilgrim's step,

and quickens his pace, when the miles are growing long and weary. There

is nothing that brings so much of heaven into the heart. Singing makes

every movement rhythmic, every service praise, every act thanksgiving.

Sing when times are dark, you will make them bright; sing when the

house of life is lonely, it will become peopled with unseen choristers;

go down into the valley of shadow with a song, and you will find

yourself singing the new song of Moses and the Lamb when you awake on

the other side.

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It went evil with his house. 1 Chron. vii. 23.

IT is an old-world tale, and those tears have long since been wiped

away. What led to the death of so many of the stalwart sons of Ephraim

is not quite clear; but apparently they made a raid from the

hill-fastnesses on the men of Gath to lift their cattle, and were

repelled with great disaster. At any rate, they were slain by men of

Gath, that were born in the land. They were part of the early nations

of Canaan that should have been destroyed. This suggests a significant

train of thought. We must beware of the tendencies and impulses which

were born in us, which we have inherited.

They are strong in all of us. Parents transmit to an awful extent their

own passions. What a reason this is for carefully curbing them! I have

known the children of drunkards, grown to middle-life, who have

confessed that they have never spent a day without the conscious

craving for alcohol. These are the men of Gath, born in the land, who

will slay us unless we are on our guard.

There will be irremediable sorrow if we yield to them. Many days of

mourning will not avail to wipe out the sad and bitter memory of the

disaster, when once they have wreaked their wild will on us. If

permitted within, they will, like traitors, open the door to Satan

without.

But faith is the victory. He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of

God; he in whom Jesus lives by the Holy Spirit; he who knows the

Stronger than the strong man armed, shall be kept from falling, and

preserved unto God's heavenly kingdom. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye

shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against

the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."

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Esh-baal, . . . Merib-baal. 1 Chron. viii. 33, 34.

BAAL was the idol-god of Zidon and of many surrounding nations. This

idol, representing the sun in his productive force, was worshipped with

impure and scandalous rites. The introduction of this name into the

appellation of one of Saul's sons indicates the secret root of the

declension and consequent misfortunes of that ill-fated monarch. In the

earlier part of his reign he was perfect in his allegiance to Jehovah

-- Jonathan means "Gift of Jehovah " -- but as the years went on, he

became proud and seIfsufficient; he turned to Baal, the Spirit of the

Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit rushed in to take His place,

as wind rushes in to fill a vacuum.

The name which Jonathan gave his son had another significance.

Merib-baal is one who opposes Baal. It is as though he would indelibly

stamp upon his child an undying hatred and opposition to that idolatry

which was undoing his father's character and kingdom. In this choice of

his child's name we also gather the deep-seated piety and devotion of

that noble soul, whose heart was true to God amid the darkening shadows

of his father's reign. It was this that probably drew David and him so

closely in affinity.

How absolutely necessary it is for the peace of a household that there

should be a oneness of devotion to God! Where that is the first

consideration, there is peace and blessedness; and that it may be so,

it is of the greatest importance that the parents should be constant in

their godly allegiance. The ruin of Saul's home, family, and realm,

began in his personal disloyalty to God; and how far he influenced the

nation for evil it is difficult to estimate.

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Chosen to be porters . . appointed over the furniture; . . the singers.

1 Chron. ix. 22, 29, 31, 33.

WHAT a busy scene is suggested in these words! When the morning broke,

it called to duty first the porters who opened the House of God; and

then, after due ablution, each band of white-robed Levites been its

special service. There was no running to and fro in disorder, no

intrusion on one another's office, no clashing in duty, no jealousy of

each other's ministry. It was enough to know that each had been

appointed to his task, and was asked to be faithful to it. The right

ordering of the whole depended on the punctuality, fidelity, and

conscientiousness of each.

So it is in the Church of Christ, each is specially gifted for some

post to which he has been set apart. One to see to the gates, admitting

souls to the kingdom; one to the baking in pans, attending to the

feeding of the household of God; some are appointed to the furnishing

and maintaining of the House of Prayer; others to the psalmody, as the

hymn-writers of our praise and holy song. How beautiful it is when we

dwell together in this unity, not envying one another, nor interfering

in each other's ministry. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets;

and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the

perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the

edifying of the body of Christ." Whatever is successfully done by the

Church is accredited by Christ to each faithful servant, just as the

impression produced on the audience by an orchestra is the result of

each instrument, even to the piccolo, doing its part. Whatever is done

by the whole, is done by each part of the whole. Be content with the

position to which thy Master has assigned thee, and let thine eye be

single unto Him. So shall each have praise of God.

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So Saul died for his trespass. 1 Chron. x. 13 (R.V.).

IT is suggestive to ponder the threefold analysis of Saul's trespass as

given here. He kept not the word of the Lord -- this probably refers to

his failure to execute the sentence on Amalck; he asked counsel of one

that had a familiar spirit -- this errand had taken him to Endor on the

eve of the battle; he enquired not of the Lord -- this was

conspicuously the case in his persecution of David.

Do we sufficiently inquire of the Lord? We ask the advice of our

friends and religious teachers; we sometimes use doubtful methods of

ascertaining God's will, as allowing the Bible to drop open, or

interpreting some coincidence in the way we secretly desire to follow;

besides which there is an increasing tendency in society to use the

crystal, to consult spiritualistic mediums, to employ palmistry. These

latter, course, repeat the sin of Saul, in going to Endor; and the

resort to them on the part of children of this world shows that the

heart of man must have something exterior to itself for worship and

trust; if it has Forsaken God, it will deal with the devil rather than

drift on alone. But let us all cultivate more carefully the blessed

habit of waiting on God. If we ask Him for guidance, He will be sure to

impart it; only we must put aside all selfish and personal ends,

desiring to know his will, with a single purpose, and an unalloyed

determination to follow it at any cost.

Christ has told us that willingness to do his will is the sure organ of

spiritual knowledge. "He that wills to do his will, shall know." Be of

good career, beloved: God hath chosen thee that thou shouldst know his

will, and see that Just One, and shouIdst hear the voice of his mouth.

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Oh that one would give me drink of the water at the well of Bethlehem!

1 Chron. xi. 17.

DAVID had often drunk of this well. As a boy he had gone with his

mother to draw its clear, cold water. It was, therefore, associated

with the happy days of childhood and youth that lay behind the haze of

the years. In the sultry afternoon, as, from the cave in which be was

hiding, he looked across the valley where his ancestress Ruth had

gleaned in the fields of Boaz, to the long straggling town of his

birth, it seemed as though nothing could stay his passionate longing

for a draught of the water of the well of Bethlehem that was at the

gate.

Sometimes longings like his take possession of us. We desire to drink

again the waters of comparative innocence, of child-like trust and joy;

to drink again of the fountains of human love; to have the bright,

fresh rapture in God, and nature, and home. But it is a mistake to look

back. Here and now, within us, Jesus is waiting to open the well of

living water which springs up to eternal life, of which if we drink we

never thirst.

Purity is better than innocence; the blessedness which comes through

suffering is richer than the gladsomeness of childhood; the peace of

the heart is more than peace of circumstances. We have solace in Jesus,

which even the dear love of home could not equal; and before us lies

the reunion with the blessed dead. How shall we thank Him who, at the

cost of his own blood, broke through the hosts of our foes, and won for

us the river of life; and who for evermore will lead us to the

fountains, where life rises fresh from the heart of God! Listen to his

voice as He bids us drink abundantly: "Let him that is athirst come;

and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

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All these men of war, that could keep rank, came to make David king. 1

Chron. xii. 38.

THE crowning of David secured the unity of Israel. Because all these

men of war converged on the chosen king, they met each other, and

became one great nation. The enthroning of David was the uniting of the

kingdom. Herein is the secret of the unity of the Church. We shall

never secure it by endeavouring to bring about an unity in thought, or

act, or organization. It is as each individual heart enthrones the

Saviour that each will become one with all kindred souls in the

everlasting kingdom.

Is your heart perfect to make Christ king? We read in verse 33 of

Zebulon, whose warriors were not of a double heart; the margin says

they were "without a heart and a heart." The double-minded man is

unstable in all his ways; he is not to be relied upon in his loyalty or

service to his king. The only blessed life is that of the man whose eye

is single. It is only such an one that receives anything from the Lord.

Let us ask that the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed by the

inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, that our hearts may be perfect

towards Him, and so perfect to all who hold Jesus as King and Head,

though they differ from us in minor points. Different regiments, but

one army, one movement, one king.

Let us learn to keep rank, shoulder to shoulder, and in step, with our

brethren. Too many like to break the ranks, and do God's work

independently. Fifty men who act together will do greater execution

than five hundred acting apart. There is too much of this guerilla

fighting. Unity is strength; and in their efforts to overthrow the

kingdom of Satan it is most essential that the soldiers of Christ move

in rank and keep step.

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And David was afraid of God that day. 1 Chron. xiii. 12.

THERE was no reason for David to be afraid of God, if he conformed to

the rules laid down in Leviticus. There it was expressly ordained that

the Ark should be carried on the shoulders of the priests, because the

cause of God must proceed through the world by the means of consecrated

men, rather than by mechanical instrumentality. David ignored this

provision when he placed the Ark on the new cart. He disobeyed the

distinct law of the Divine procedure. What wonder that Uzza was struck

dead! Fire will burn if you persist in violating its law. Obed-edom, on

the other hand, studiously obeyed, so far as he knew them, the Divine

regulations, and to him the Ark was a source of blessing; just as fire

will toil for us in our furnaces and grates, and be the greatest

possible benediction to human Iife, if only we carefully conform to its

ascertained and immutable law.

God is to us what we are to Him. To Pharaoh, blackness and darkness; to

Israel, light and help. To the froward, He is froward; to the merciful

man, merciful.To one of the thieves, the cross of Christ was the savour

of death unto death, because his heart was impenitent; to the other,

the savour of life unto life, because his heart was soft and believing

You need not fear God so long as you walk in his ways and do his will.

He is to be feared only by those who violate his law. God is a

consuming fire. He will make a breach on those who disobey Him. He will

consume the evil of our inner life. But let Him be welcomed into your

life and home; let the Ark, which is the symbol of his presence, dwell

within; bring up your children to minister unto Him; and you will be

blessed, with all that you have.

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Then thou shalt go out to battle; for God is gone forth before thee. 1

Chron. xiv. 15.

WHAT was this "going"? It was not merely a fitful breeze stealing

through the leaves; it was not the going of the wind; but of angel

squadrons who were proceeding against the enemies of Israel. This

thought often occurs in Scripture -- as when Jacob met God's host; and

the warrior-Saviour told Joshua that He was captain of a host whom God

had commissioned to take Jericho; so also the horses and chariots of

fire surrounded Elisha. Hearken to the measured footfall of God's host,

beneath which the mulberry trees sway, though no wind stirs the sultry

air.

God's hosts go forth against his foes and ours. Perhaps we should feel

less oppressed with the burden of the fight if we realized this. The

battle is not ours, but God's. He will deliver the Philistines to us so

that we shall have to do little else than fight and spoil. Oh, believe

in the co-operation of the Holy Spirit. Lonely missionary in some

distant station of the foreign field, listen for the moving in the tops

of the mulberry trees! God is stirring for thy succour. Thou art a

co-worker with Him in making known his salvation; and He will prosper

thee.

Let us wait for our instructions. David inquired of the Lord; let us

not anticipate Him. It is useless to go up until He has gone out before

us. We may as well save ourselves from disappointment by quietly

waiting for the salvation of our God. But oh, be sure that those who

wait for God shall not be long before the God for whom they wait shall

go forth before them to smite the host, whether it be the hosts of

temptation that oppress the inner life, or the hosts of spiritual foes

that oppose the progress of God's work.

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And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song. 1 Chron. xv. 22.

THE carrying of the Ark to its right place was associated with every

expression of gladness on the part of king and people; but there were

some who were specially set apart as the exponents of the general joy.

In the old time such were David, Heman, Asaph, Chenaniah; in our time,

Watts and Doddridge, Wesley and Toplady, Keble, Havergal, and Bonar.

It is good to be for song. Many a heart that cannot rank as a musician

or poet, may yet be susceptible to the joy of the Lord, which is ever

passing through creation, catching it up so as to express it. As the

Ark of the Lord comes to its place within you, sing.

Song is harmony with the life of God. The will of God sometimes enters

life as a sigh, as David's first attempt to move the Ark; but

afterwards it becomes a song, as in the second attempt. Enshrine the

Ark of God with its tables of stone, its mercy-seat of fellowship, its

worshipping Cherubim in the Holy of Holies within; and you will find

sighs turned to songs, tears to thanks, mourning to the garment of

praise.

Worship the will of God. Conform your life with it. Draw on the ground

a circle to represent God's will, and step into it, resolving never to

step out of its blessed precincts again. Dare to believe and confess

that Paradise lies within, though it may be veiled to sight and sense.

According to your faith it shall be unto you. If you believe that

heaven is there, you will find heaven. The Ark of God is ever a

provocative of song. His statutes seem awful in the distance; but so

soon as we begin to practise them, they turn to songs

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Talk ye of all His wondrous works. 1 Chron. xvi. 9.

WE do not talk sufficiently about God. Why it is so may not be easy to

explain; but there seems a too great reticence among Christian people

about the best things. In the days of Malachi, "they that feared the

Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." We

talk about sermons, details of worship and church organization, or the

latest phase of Scripture criticism; we discuss men, methods, and

churches; but our talk in the home, and in the gatherings of Christians

for social purposes, is too seldom about the wonderful works of God.

Better to speak less, and to talk more of Him.

But probably the real cause of our avoidance of this best of topics, is

that our hearts are filled with so much which is not of God, and they

speak out of their abundance. You may judge the contents of a shop by

what is put in the windows; and you may judge of the inner life of too

many Christians by the subjects which are most familiar to their lips.

The heart does not seek for God and his strength, nor his face

continually; and therefore we find it hard to talk of all his wondrous

works.

But go back in thought to the day of Pentecost. One of the first signs

of the descent of the blessed Spirit was that the crowd heard every man

speaking in his own tongue the wonderful works of God. What God has

done in the past, as recorded on the page of Scripture; what He is

doing day by day in the world around, and in our hearts; what He has

promised to do on the horizon where heaven and earth shall blend in the

Second Advent -- yield fit themes on which his children may beamingly

talk to each other, till He goes beside and talks with them till their

hearts burn.

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Do as Thou hast said, that thy name may be magnified for ever. 1 Chron.

xvii. 23, 24.

THIS is a most blessed phase of true prayer. Many a time we ask for

things which are not absolutely promised. We are not sure therefore

until we have persevered for some time whether our petitions are in the

line of God's purpose or no. There are other occasions, and in the life

of David this was one, when we are fully persuaded that what we ask is

according to God's will. We feel led to take up slid plead some promise

from the page of Scripture, under the special impression that it

contains a message for us.

At such times, in confident faith, we say, "Do as Thou hast said."

There is hardly any position more utterly beautiful, strong, or safe,

than to put the finger upon some promise of the Divine Word, and claim

it. There need be no anguish, or struggle, or wrestling; we simply

present the cheque and ask for cash, produce the promise, and claim its

fulfilment; nor can there be any doubt as to the issue. It would give

much interest to prayer, if we were more definite. It is far better to

claim a few things specifically than a score vaguely.

David's argument was not simply that his house might be established,

but that God's name might be magnified for ever. It is good when we can

lose sight of our personal interests in our keen desire for his glory;

when we are so delivered from egotism, that Christ is all and in all.

Let the attitude of your soul be more towards the glory of God; and as

you quote promise after promise for the enthroning of Christ, the

saving of men, and the sanctification of your soul, dare in humble

faith to say, Do as Thou hast said, that thy Name may be magnified for

ever.

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He put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became servants to

David. 1 Chron. xviii. 73.

EDOM and Israel were closely related, but there was constant rivalry

and war between the two peoples. Sometimes Israel held the upper-hand

for a little; but Edom soon broke loose again, and resumed the old

independence, with the border forays (2 Chron. xxi. 10; xxv. 11-14;

Psa. cxxxvii. 7). Now, as Edom stands for the flesh, which hungers for

the savoury dish, and is willing to give even its birthright of

spiritual power to secure it -- this long feud is full of interest to

us. It reminds us of the strife of Rom. vii., between the will of the

renewed man and the law of the members, ever striving for mastery.

We turn on the pages of our Bibles to Isa. Ixiii., where a mighty

Conqueror is seen coming towards the southern frontier of Palestine,

with his back on Bozrah and Edom. His garments are dyed with the blood

of Israel's foes; and behind Him cities are desolate and depopulated,

territories are laid waste without inhabitant, and Edom's hostility is

for ever quenched in blood. What a portraiture is here of Jesus,

"mighty to save," who in his cross triumphed over principalities and

powers, and made a show of them openly. He has overcome the world, the

flesh, and the prince of the power of darkness; and stands for evermore

between us and our former oppressors.

Let us resign the conflict wholly to Him. We have sought in vain for

victory by resolutions and endeavours ; by close attention to religious

duties; by occupying our mind with various interests, so that we had no

leisure to be tempted; by diet and exercise. Now, hand the conflict

absolutely over to Jesus: do not even try to help Him: just let Him do

all: be quite still, and when temptation comes, let Him meet it.

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Let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of

our God. 1 Chron. xix. 13.

THOSE were days in which rough soldiers, like Joab, did not hesitate to

speak freely of God to their companions in arms. It is a sorry thing

that it is considered a breach of etiquette to mention God's name in

polite society. "It is not good form! "

We are reminded in these words of Joab of Cromwell's memorable advice

to trust in God and keep the powder dry. David's General felt that the

ultimate issue of the battle must be left to God; but that nothing

could absolve him and his soldier from doing their best. They, at

least, must make careful dispositions for the fight, and show

themselves valiant.

This balance of statement and thought between God's work and ours is an

evidence of fine Christian sanity. We must believe that God is the

ultimate arbiter, but we must ever speak and act as though the

responsibility were entirely on ourselves. To believe that God will do

all, and therefore to do nothing, is as bad as to believe that God

leaves us to our unaided endeavours. We believe in the strength and

sufficiency of God's purpose; but we know that there is link in the

chain of causation which we must supply.

The servant of God who counts most absolutely on the communion and

co-operation of the Divine Spirit will be most careful in making all

needful dispositions for the fight. He will leave no stone unturned to

secure the victory, though he knows that the ultimate decision rests

with God. The conquests of the cross recorded in the Acts of the

Apostles were the result of the united action of the Holy Spirit and

the men who were sent forth with the message of the gospel "We are

labourers together with God."

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The time when Kings go out to battle. . . . . But David tarried at

Jerusalem. 1 Chron. xx. 1.

THERE are times and tides in the affairs of men. Favourable moments for

doing and daring, for attempting and achieving. Hours when the ship

must be launched, or it will have to wait for another spring tide. Days

when the seed must be sown, or it will have to tarry till another

autumn. Royal natures show their quality by taking advantage of times

like these, when God and circumstances favour a great attempt.

Alas, if long-continued prosperity has robbed the kingly soul of its

desire or power to use its sacred opportunity! Once missed, it may

never recur; and the soul that has missed it condemns itself, and loses

heart, and surrenders itself to lower and ever lower depths of

temptation.

Beware of moments and hours of ease. It is in these that we most easily

fall into the power of Satan. The sultriest summer days are most laden

with blight. There is no such guard against temptation -- next to the

keeping power of Jesus, which is all-sufficient -- as occupation to the

full measure of time and capacity. If we cannot fill our days with our

own matters, there is always plenty to be done for others. You think

that no one has hired you, but it is not so; the Master has sent you

into his vineyard. If you cannot do one thing, you can another. There

is the ministry of intercession for those who are in the field. There

is the exercise of worship, in which you take your place amongst the

priests. There is the ministry of comfort to some of the sad hearts

within your own circle. Redeem the time, because the days are evil.

Watch and pray in days of vacation and ease, even more than at other

times.

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And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly in that I have done this

thing. 1 Chron. xxi. 8 (R.V.).

HIS sin lay in the spirit of pride and display. He vaunted in the

growing numbers of Israel, and credited them to himself, as the result

of his own prowess and prudence. All such boasting is very abhorrent to

the all-holy God, who will not give his glory to another. It was the

sin of Nebuchadnezzar, when he said, "Is not this great Babylon which I

have built?" It was the sin of Herod Agrippa when the people shouted,

saying, "The voice of a god, and not of a man"; and immediately the

angel of the Lord smote him, "because he gave not God the glory."

We are all tempted to it when we count up the number of our adherents

and converts; when we unroll our securities and vouchers; when we count

up our assets; when we display our jewels. All these are gifts

entrusted to our care by our Father and Saviour, to be held in trust as

a matter for gratitude rather than for pride.

How greatly David had fallen from the level of his own sweet sonnet! --

"Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty." Oh, let us ask our

Master Christ to teach us how to be meek and lowly in heart, that we

may find rest unto our souls; let us endeavour to be as little

children, devoid of self. consciousness; and let us be careful, as we

survey the growing treasures and power of our lives, to remember the

Apostle's words: "Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that

thou didst not receive? But if thou didst receive it, why dost thou

glory, as if thou hadst not received it? "

How well John the Baptist parried the temptation to jealousy, when he

said, "A man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven."

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A man of rest . . . he shall build. 1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10.

THE men of rest are the builders of the most lasting structures.

Solomon builds the Temple, not David. Mary's deed of anointing, learnt

in much sitting at the Lord's feet, fills the world with its aroma.

What is needed to make us men and women of rest?

First, a profound conviction that God is working. -- Never despair of

the world, said the late Mrs. Beecher Stowe, when you remember what God

did with slavery: the best possible must happen. This serene faith,

that all things are working out for the best -- the best to God, the

best to man -- and that God is at the heart of all, will calm and still

us in the most feverish days. There is a strong and an experienced Hand

on the helm.

Next, an entire surrender to his will. -- God's will is certain to mean

the destruction of the flesh, in whatever form He finds it; but it is

our part to yield to Him; to will his will even to the cross; to follow

our leader Christ in this, that He yielded Himself without reserve to

execute his Father's purpose.

Thirdly, a certain knowledge that He is working within to will and do

of his good pIeasure. -- what a blessed peace possesses us when once we

realize that we are not called on to originate or initiate, nor to make

great far-reaching plans and try to execute them; but just to believe

that God is prepared to work through our hands, speak by our life,

dwell in our bodies, and fulfil in us the good purposes of his will. Be

full of God's rest. Let there be no hurry, precipitation, or fret;

yield to God's hands, that He may mould thee: hush thy quickly

throbbing pulse! So shalt thou build to good and lasting purpose.

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Aaron was separated, he and his sons for ever, to minister unto Him. 1

Chron. xxiii. 13.

THE threefold office of Aaron suggests our own. When we are prepared to

follow Jesus, through the rent vail of his flesh, living a truly

separated life, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh

and spirit, we also, as chosen priests, may exercise these functions of

intercession, ministry, and blessing.

Intercession. -- The fragrant incense stealing heavenward is a

beautiful emblem of intercessory prayer. Let us pray more, not for

ourselves so much as for others. This is the sign of growth in grace,

when our prayers are fragrant with the names of friend and foe, and

mingled with the coals of the golden altar. This is one of the best

gifts; oh to exercise it more persistently!

Ministry. -- We have many things to engage our attention, but they

maybe unified and elevated by the one threading purpose of doing all

for the King. Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever else we do, we may

do all to his glory. Go up and down in the Temple, priests; engage in

song, or sacrifice, or whatever ministry you will: but be sure that all

is of Him, and through Him, and to Him for ever.

Blessing. -- As Aaron came forth from the most Holy Place to bless the

congregation that waited for him, so we should bless that little

portion of the world in which our lot is cast. It is not enough to

Iinger in soft prayer within the vail, we must come forth to bless

mankind. He who is nearest God is closest man. Let our smile, our

touch, our words, our life, be the greatest blessing possible to those

who know us best.

Blessed Spirit, realize through each of us this threefoId ideal, and

separate us from sin and the world, that we may be prepared for it.

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Princes of the Sanctuary. 1 Chron. xxiv. 5 (R.V.).

IT is not enough for us to be in the sanctuary, we must be princes

there. There must be the regal mien, which is a meek humility; the real

largesse, which is peace and blessing; and the regal might, which is

self-restraint and self-control. None can be princes of the sanctuary

without two things: they must be priests, come of the priestly line;

and kings, royal not because of deeds of war, but because they are

related to the King Himself, and are regal in their holy and blameless

character.

There is only one power that can make us princes of the sanctuary --

the hand of the exalted Lamb, who is Himself a Priest-King, after the

order of Melchizedek. He it is who makes us kings and priests unto God

his Father.

He makes us priests. -- This is your position, not now to offer

propitiatory sacrifices, but to present yourselves a living sacrifice;

to have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the

way; to swing the censer of prayer between the living and the dead, so

that plagues may be stayed; and to plead for the dark sad world, with

its load of wretchedness, need, and sin. See that your garments are

ever white and stainless.

He makes us kings. -- We reign with Him. Sin and Satan, the world and

the flesh, are beneath our feet. Ours the life of overcoming power, of

unbroken victory, of identification with Jesus in the glory that the

Father has given Him. They that receive the abundance of his grace

reign. It is there for us all, but many do not know, or knowing do not

appreciate. It is on our reception by faith of God's abundant grace,

that we reign in this life, and the next.

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All these were under the hands of their father for song. 1 Chron. xxv.

5, 6.

WHAT a glorious family was here! The household was a band of

choristers! From morning till night their home must have been full of

holy song and psalm, or talk about the order of the Temple service, in

which they were all so deepIy interested. Surely no jarring note, no

unholy discord, would live in such an atmosphere! The common occupation

and worship must have welded the brothers and sisters into to the

tenderest union.

How one would like to have seen Heman coming into the Temple with his

children! It was largely owing to him arid their mother that they were

what they were. We shall read the Psalms ascribed to him with more

interest, now we know of the holy family life out of which they

emanated. What interest there would be when the father had produced a

new psalm, to know what music would suit it best!

Parents! Be sure that you look on your children, as these Hebrews did

on theirs, as the gifts of God; and remember that if He gives you many

months to feed, He will send the wherewithal to feed them. Be careful

also that your own hearts and lives are full of praise and prayer; what

you are, the children will become. Would that mothers especially

realized how they transmit their characters. But remember that you must

be obeyed in the home. Heman's children were "under the hands of their

father." Young people must not get the upper hand.

But if you would rule well, you must obey. Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun,

were under the king (6, R.V.). The man who is himself under authority,

can say, Go, come, do this or that, with the calm assurance of being

obeyed.

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For the courses of the doorkeepers. 1 Chron. xxvi. 1 (R.V.).

MIGHTY men of valour were needed for this, just as sweet singers were

for the service of song. Entrance to the House of God was restricted to

a privileged few. Gentiles were excluded from certain courts, and women

from another. It was incumbent also to look out for those who, like the

publican in the Lord's parable, might shrink from intruding, and

encourage them to enter. Doorkeepers had to combine many qualities,

which would be of the greatest service if they could be repeated in

each church and chapel of our great cities, for welcoming old and

young.

But chiefly we are concerned with the temple of the heart. We surely

need the doorkeeper there, for in the history of the inner life there

is so much going and coming; such troops of thoughts pour into the

shrine of the soul, and pour out. And often, in the crowd, disloyal and

evil thoughts intrude, which, before we know it, introduce a sense of

distance and alienation from God, as though a cloud had veiled the

shining of the Shekinah. Whenever the sky is overcast within, we should

question whether some traitor, some excommunicate, has entered. Our

native wit is not quick enough to detect, and our strength not mighty

enough to withstand, the entrance of all these evil things. Hence the

necessity not only to live in the Spirit, but to walk in the Spirit, i.

e., to submit everything to the Spirit's scrutiny.

It is necessary also that strict supervision strong be exercised over

those who unite with the visible Church, lest her holiness become

diluted, and her fences broken down. Nothing is more important than the

function of doorkeeping for the Church's purity.

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All these were the rulers of the substance which was King David's. 1

Chron. xxvii. 31.

THERE was great variety in office and gift. He who cared for the work

of the field could not have known how to care for the flocks. The

overseer of olive-yard and vineyard would have been a poor hand with

the camels and asses. One sort of talent was needed for the herds, and

another for the wine cellars; and yet there was unity in the common

service of the king. We are reminded of the words of the Apostle,

describing the variety in unity which must obtain in every healthy

church: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;

diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord; diversities of

operations, but the same God."

Each of these different men had his distinct sphere for which he was

doubtless specially qualified; and it was his duty -- not to be jealous

of others, nor eager to imitate them, but -- to be faithful in his own

province. How much happier we should all be if we recognised our

specific work in God's house, and kept to it, being content to serve

the King as He has seen fit to determine, rendering Him the produce in

due season.

How great an error it would have been had any of these begun to account

the produce of cattle or ground as his own! He had nothing that he had

not received, and whatever he controlled had been entrusted to his care

for the emolument and of his sovereign. Yet, how few of us that we are

put in business with God's capital, for God's use. We take all and give

Him a percentage, instead of using all for Him and keeping a percentage

for ourselves. In this we rob God, and greatly err. We must acknowledge

that both we and all we possess belong to Him.

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The Lord God, even my God, . . will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 1

Chron. xxviii. 20.

IT is very comforting to take these words to our hearts; especially

when we connect them with the foregoing ones about the pattern, and

apply the whole passage to the temple-building of our own lives. For

each of us, too, there is a pattern, an ideal, a design, based on the

possibilities which God sees to be within our reach; for each, too,

there is abundance of stored provision; but we are not always strong to

do. In Jesus there is the complete ideal of human life; of the Child at

Nazareth; of the Servant in the workshop; of the Lover in his affection

for his church; of the Friend, the Sufferer, the Patriot, the Saviour.

Go forth and imitate Him!

Sometimes our heart and flesh fail us in the mid-passage of life. Once

the energy and vigour of youth promised to sustain and carry us to the

end of life, without fear or failure; but these die down, and we wonder

how the remainder of the life-plan can be fulfilled. And the one

sufficient answer is -- God. He who helped our fathers to the very end

will help us; He who did not fail or forsake them, will never leave nor

forsake us, until all the work of life which He has planned, is

finished.

It is probable that you will do better and more enduring work

henceforth than you have ever done in the heyday and plenitude of

youthful power, if you let God work all through you to his own glory.

You have no need for despondency, God is sufficient. Oh to write this

down on the tablets of the heart -- God is; God is here ; God is

all-sufficient; God has begun and will finish! God has promised that he

will never leave nor forsake us; therefore we may boldly say, "God is

my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

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Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding. 1

Chron. xxix. 15. (R.V.).

ALL life has been compared to the shadow of a smoke-wreath; a gesture

in the invisible air; a hier-oglyph traced for an instant on the sand,

and effaced a moment after by a breath of wind; an air-bubble vanishing

on the river. Pilgrims and sojourners, as were all our fathers -- such

is the universal confession. But even such may do a work that will last

for ages. David and the men of his time, though transitory their stay

on our planet, left behind them a standing evidence that they had been

here.

Our life is nothing, but it may be divine: our days are as a breath,

but they may affect unborn generations: the tent of the body is laid

aside, but the soul, which had dwelt in it, is immortal in its touch:

it leaves traces of its own immortality behind in its works, and it

lives in them. In one sense, the answer to the ancient prayer is

certain: "Establish Thou the works of our hands upon us." But we may

well ask, that they may be such that we shall have no need to be

ashamed of.

But, for this, God must live mightily within us. Abide in Me, said our

Lord. . . . I have appointed you that ye may bring forth fruit, and

that your fruit may abide. It is impossible to be in true union with

Christ without feeling the pulse of his glorious life; and where it

enters like a tidal river, it can have but one result -- it must

manifest itself in fruit. It is only in proportion as our works are

done in God, and God permeates our works, that they become sources of

enduring blessing to coming time. Pilgrims though we be, yet, if our

lives are spent before Him, we may build temples which will outlast the

wreck of matter.

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I will give thee riches. 2 Chron. i. 11, 12.

SOLOMON had chosen wisdom and knowledge that he might honour God in the

sight of his people. And in return God honoured him, and supplemented

his choice with abundant wealth.

This reminds one of the constant teaching of Jesus. He who seeks his

life loses it; but to lose it is to save it in the best and deepest

sense. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all

these things shall be added.

The conception of life given in the Bible differs by a whole heaven

from the maxims and practices of some good and earnest people. Their

notion is that they must work for their living, "keep the wolf from the

door," educate their children for successfully meeting the demands of

life. These objects are legitimate; but they were never meant by God to

be the supreme aim of his servants.

His object in our creation, redemption, and regeneration, was that we

might serve his redemptive purposes in the world, manifest his

character, do his will, win souls for his kingdom, administer the gifts

with which He had entrusted us. He asks us to rise to this high

calling, and give our whole life to its realization. He will be

responsible for all else. It is surely his will that we should give

ourselves to useful trades, and fill our days with honest toil; but the

main purpose should ever be his glory, and the exemplification in word

and act of his holy character. It we ask for wisdom to do this well, we

shall get all eIse into the bargain. God is a being of perfect honour

and integrity. And if we dare to make his service the main end of life,

we shall find that no good thing will fail. He paves the streets of

heaven with gold, and will not withhold it from his children, if they

really need.

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Because the Lord loveth His people, He hath made thee King over them. 2

Chron. ii. 11(R.V.).

HOW truly might these words be addressed to our blessed Lord! Because

God loved the world, He gave his only-begotten Son, his well-beloved,

to be both Prince and Saviour. And it is in knowing, loving, and

serving Him that we can realize our supreme blessedness.

God's loving appointment in making Jesus King will be apparent when we

remember how beautiful He is in his personal character; how closely He

is identified with our nature; the might of his arm with which He

shields, the patience wherewith He bears, the redemption which He has

wrought out and brought in for all who believe. What could God's love

have done better to approve itself?

Is He your King? Never till He is so, will you know the fulness of

God's love. Those who question or refuse his authority are always in

doubt about the love of God to themselves and to the world. Those, on

the other hand, who acknowledge his claims, and crown Him as King,

suddenly find themselves admitted to a standpoint of vision in which

doubts and disputations vanish, and the secret love of God is unfolded.

Then they experience the wise and gentle tendance of the Divine love in

its most entrancing characteristics. All is love where Jesus reigns.

Nothing is more indicative of God's benevolence than his incessant

appeal to men to make Jesus King. The demand may sometimes involve

severe agony and suffering for those who have acknowledged other lords

too long; but God persists in his demand, because only in serving Jesus

can the human heart be truly blessed.

"Go, spread your trophies at his feet,

And crown Him Lord of all!"

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He set up the pillars before the Temple, . . . Jachin and Boaz. 2

Chron. iii. 17.

THE meaning of these names is significant -- He shall establish, and In

it is strength. Each speaks of Him of whom the whole temple was a type.

The Lord Jesus has established the work of redemption so that it shall

never be removed; has established the covenant, ordered in all things

and sure; has established his Church, so that the gates of Hades shall

not prevail against it; has established us before the face of his

Father for evermore.

There is much in the New Testament about the established life. It is

the desire of Peter that the scattered saints should be perfected,

established, and strengthened. Paul desires to see the Roman

Christians, that he may impart some spiritual gift so that they may be

established: he desires that the Colossians may be built up in Christ,

and established in the faith. The Epistle to the Hebrews says that it

is good for the heart to be established with grace. Let us ask that

Jesus should establish us in the Divine life, rooting and grounding us

in love and faith, so that we may not be moved away from the Gospel,

but abound therein with thanksgiving.

It is only as we abide in Jesus, that we shall become steadfast,

unmovable, and always abounding.

But Christ is also our strong Helper. We have no strength of our own;

but He is strong; and in Him we have righteousness and strength. Let

its make our refuge in Him, as the conies, who are a feeble folk, do in

the rock. They who abide in Jesus derive from Him fresh supplies of

strength for each moment's need. They hear Him saying, "Fear not, I

will strengthen, yea, I will help thee"; and they learn to say with

Paul: "I can do all things in Christ that strengtheneth me."

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The Weight could not be found out. 2 Chron. iv. 18.

THIS was as it should be. There was no attempt to keep an accurate

account of what was given to the service of God. Even Solomon's left

hand did not know what his right hand did. There is a tendency in all

of us to keep a strict account of what we give to God. We note it down

in our ledgers; we rigorously observe the compact into which we have

entered with Him; but the loftiest form of devotion overleaps such

calculation.

This liberality of the people reminds us of Mary's. She never thought

of the great cost of the precious spikenard which she broke over the

Master's person. It was her joy to give her all; and it was only when

Judas came on the scene, that we learn how many hundred pence it was

worth. Thus the churches of Macedonia abounded from their deep poverty

unto the riches of their liberality, so that, beyond their power, they

gave to the cause of God.

This lavish generosity is the reflection of God's. There is no measure

in his bounty. It is heaped up, pressed down, and running over. He

never says, I will give up to a certain amount, and hold my hand; but

He continues to give like the overflowings of the river of Egypt, or

the abundance of the spring flowers, which cover the earth as with a

carpet. Ah, what a God is ours, who loves with a love that passeth

knowledge; and when He gives, exceeds abundance, however much we may

have asked or thought. How truly may we say with the psalmist, "Many,

Lord my God, are the wonderful works that Thou hast done, and thy

thoughts which are to us-ward. They cannot be reckoned up in order unto

Thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be

numbered."

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Then the house was filled with a Cloud. 2 Chron. v. 13.

THIS was the bright Shekinah cloud, the symbol of the Divine Presence,

which had shone for Moses in the bush, and led the march through the

desert. It was as though God had found a rest. And as it settled upon

the Most Holy Place, it was as though God said, This is my rest for

ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it.

The Most Holy Place is the symbol of our spirit, meant to be the

abiding-place and home of God; and shall we not invite the blessed

Shekinah cloud to enter thither, addressing it in the words of the

Psalm, "Arise, Lord, into thy resting-place, Thou and the ark of thy

strength." Because where He comes to abide He abundantly blesses the

provision, and satisfies the poor with bread; He clothes his priests

with salvation, and makes his saints shout aloud for joy; He erects the

horn of strength and prepares the lamp of light. What were the

conditions of this incoming? --

First, UNITY.- "The trumpeters and singers were as one." We must put

away strife, divisions, variance, and evil-speaking. Our heart and life

must be full of love. When the disciples were with one accord,. in one

place, the Spirit descended.

Second, HEARTINESS. -- "They lifted up their voice." There was every

symptom of sincerity and fervour.

Third, THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE. -- "They praised the Lord, saying, He

is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." No refrain occurs oftener in

the Bible than this. It is an exquisite expression of the heart's joy

and rest in God. Let us sing it in our darkest, as well as gladdest

hours, full of trust, thanksgiving, and praise.

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When Thou teachest them the good way wherein they should walk. 2 Chron.

vi. 27 (R.V.).

THIS sentence is exactly parallel with the previous one, When Thou dost

afflict them. The obvious meaning then is, that God sometimes taught

Israel the good way wherein they should walk, by afflicting them and

shutting up the heaven so that there was no rain. This was notably the

case in the day.s of Elijah. Possibly, these words were in his heart,

when be prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not for

the space of three years and six months. Perhaps the prophet felt that

in no other away could the people be brought back to their senses, and

reconciled to God, except by learning the futility of idol-worship. So

he asked God to teach them the good way, by shutting up the bad one.

What a lesson for ourselves: God often teaches us by bitter

disappointment and pain. Our familiar paths are barricaded by thorns,

our familiar hidingplaces are blocked up, our fountains are poisoned,

and all our pleasant things are laid waste. We sometimes suppose that

this is in wrath; may it not rather be in love? God is reaching us the

good by us the evil; is urging us to tread in the pleasant ways of

wisdom, by allowing us to prove the sharp flints and thorns of

transgression. Then Ephraim bemoans himself thus: Thou hast chastised

me, and I was chastised, as a calf unaccustomed to the yoke: turn Thou

me, and I shall be turned. Then the soul cries, I will go and return to

my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.

Sit in God's school, and learn from his Word and Spirit, that He may

not be compelled to have recourse to such severe measures as these. Why

shouldst thou be afflicted, when He is willing to instruct and teach

thee in the way that thou shouldst go!

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The fire came down from Heaven, and consumed the Burnt-Offering. 2

Chron. vii. 1.

IT was a very gracious and immediate response to the prayer of King and

people. If we make room for God, He always comes and fills. If we seek

Him, He is instantly with us. Directly the soul confesses, it is

forgiven; or consecrates itself, it is accepted; or claims deliverance

from the power of sin, it is cleansed. Do you really want the Lord to

come to you? His glory has even now begun to shine in on you, to grow

and enlighten you for evermore.

The fire stands for the Divine Presence. Oh to have always a

consciousness of it! Nothing would so soon arrest and destroy the

impurity and evil within; as sunshine does fungus-growth. We are told

that the fire was to be kept burning on the altar: it was never to go

out. Thus, we should always perpetuate and practise the presence of

God, feeding the fire with the fuel of prayer and meditation.

Fire also stands for the Divine Purity. As the Plague of London was

stamped out by the Great Fire which destroyed the nests where it had

bred: and as the furnace rids the ore of dross -- so the Holy Spirit in

thy heart and mine is a guarantee of holiness and righteousness all our

days.

Fire also stands for Divine Fellowship. It consumed that part of the

offering which was placed on the altar; and it seemed as if the Divine

nature was therefore feeding upon the sacrifice, whilst the remainder

of it was consumed by the offerer. Thus, also, we have communion with

Cod, as we eat the bread and drink the wine in the Lord's Supper. We

feed on Christ in adoration, faith, and identification. God feeds on

the completeness of Christ's obedience, ar.the glory of his character.

Thus we have fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the Holy Ghost.

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The places are holy, whereunto the Ark of God hath come. 2 Chron. viii.

11.

ON this account Solomon said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of

David, king of Israel. What a fatal admission! She was the daughter of

Pharaoh, and therefore it was no doubt considered a splendid match for

the young king; and yet she could not dwell within the precincts of the

old city of David, hallowed by the presence of the Ark. "He brought her

out of the city of David, into the house that he had built for her." So

from the very outset there was division of interests, making way no

doubt for much of the waywardness of Solomon's character in after life,

so that we are told "his wives turned away his heart."

One of the first questions that youth and maiden should put in

considering the question of marriage is, whether there can be perfect

sympathy in the best and deepest things; for how can two walk together

except they be agreed?

The blessedness of the marriage tie depends on whether the twain are

one in spirit, in a common love for Christ, and endeavour for his

glory. Nothing is more terrible than when either admits in the secresy

of the heart, concerning the other, My husband or my wife cannot

accompany me into the holy places where I was reared, and in which my

best life finds its home.

All friendship should follow the same law. We must abide together in

the secret place of the Most High, if our friends and we are to be

friends indeed. All places may be made holy where the Ark of God's

covenant comes. Where it goes, love may safely follow; but woe to the

love that cannot! Its inability proves its lack of elements of

permanence and perfect satisfaction.

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She came to prove Solomon with hard questions. 2 Chron. ix. 1.

SHE came to the right place, for Solomon passed all the kings of the

earth in wisdom; and all the kings of the earth sought his presence, to

hear the wisdom that God had put into his heart. Bring your hard

questions to Christ; He is greater than Solomon. To Him is given riches

and wisdom, and He is made unto us wisdom. Before the touch of his

light the darkest perplexities must resolve themselves. Though He speak

no audible word, the hardest questions are answered to the eyes and

ears

of such as wait before Him.

She came in the right spirit, bringing him gold and spices and precious

stones. Those who would get from Christ must be willing to give to Him.

There must be a reciprocity; and if we hope to receive from Him from

those infinite stores of which He has the key, we must count all things

but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and must be

prepared to count them as refuse if only we may win Him.

She came to a right conclusion. He answered all her questions, and she

returned congratulating his servants and blessing God. To each of us

life is full of perplexities, to which we can find no solution, however

much we strain our eyes and weary our minds. But away there in the

light Christ stands, with the perfect plan of every maze in his

possession, with a key for every riddle, and solution for every enigma.

Wait patiently. Each tough knot will be untied; and there will come

into our hearts a radiancy, a bounding joy like that with which the

Queen of Sheba turned to go to her own home. The half of the greatness

of thy wisdom, Word of God can never be told!

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For it was brought about of God. 2 Chron. x. 15 (R.V.).

THIS revolt must have seemed to be the result of an unfortunate mistake

on the part of the ill-advised young king. He and the young men that

gathered around him thought that the best way of ruling people was by

showing a strong hand, and adopting a policy of noncompliance with

their very natural requests. But as the result, the Ten Tribes, never

very closely bound to David's line, sprang away from it, leaving, as

Ahijah had foretold, only two out of the twelve pieces of the rent

garment. Here, however, a deeper explanation is given: "It was brought

about of God." It seemed to be altogether a piece of human folly and

passion; but now we are suddenly brought into the presence of God, and

told that beneath the plottings and plannings of man He was carrying

out his eternal purpose.

To detect this Divine purpose lying beneath the cross-currents of human

affairs is the prerogative of the saints. In a recent book, the Duke of

Argyll has argued from the purpose-iveness of nature. With as much

certainty we may apply that word to history, politics, the course of

current events. All is under law. God doeth according to his will among

the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. "And we know

that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them

who are the called according to his purpose." Without contravening the

action of man's free choice He carries out his great designs and works

his sovereign will. Lot us trust in this Almighty Providence, which

underlies all events and catastrophes, and pursues its beneficent

objects undeterred by our sins. He makes the wrath of man to praise

Him, and weaves the malignant work of Satan into his plans.

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Such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came to

Jerusalem. 2 Chron. xi. 16.

ALL the tribes were represented in those great convocations around the

Temple and Ark of God. The territory of the northern tribes was now

under Jeroboam; the gulf between the two kingdoms was marked and

distinct. Everything was done by the son of Nebat to make it difficult

for his people to cross the frontier; but their spiritual affinities

prevailed. They were stronger than the antipathy which Rehoboam's

haughty behaviour had excited; stronger than the fear of incurring

odium with their own king; stronger than the inconvenience of the long

journey. In spite of everything, those whose hearts were set on seeking

the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God

of their fathers.

Does not this foreshadow the unity of the Church of Christ? Territorial

distinctions, the risk of incur-ring disfavour, the necessity of making

a sacrifice -- these things are as nothing compared with the attraction

of our common Lord. Amid wide disunion and disparity of every kind,

there is one mighty bond which draws believers of every nation,

kindred, tribe, and people together. Each morning we all ascend the

steps of the same temple of prayer; each evening we join in one great

hymn of praise; at each Lord's Supper we sit at the same table. Eating

of one Bread, we know that we are one Loaf; drinking of one Cup, we

profess our indebtedness to the same precious Blood for our hope and

ground of acceptance (1 Cor. x. 17, R.V., marg.).

We must set our hearts, if we desire to execute any great purpose in

our life: otherwise we shall be daunted and checkmated by the strong

opposition of men and things.

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He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord. 2

Chron. xii. 14.

IN the margin of the A.V. for prepared the alternative rendering fixed

is suggested. The R.V. gives set, "he set not his heart to seek the

Lord." This is very true of all of us. Before temptation comes we

almost always have a warning of some kind. The barometer falls; the sea

birds come in to the shore; the leaves of the trees are bent back. The

Spirit of God contrives to give the soul some signal that at any moment

it may expect an assault. The question always is at such a time, Is the

heart set on seeking and doing the will of God? If it be, if without

reserve the whole nature is determined to do God's will at any cost,

there is no fear of the enemy effecting an entrance. All day the

thunder of its artillery may boom around, but from every side the foe

will be repelled, until presently the storm will roll far down the

wind.

If, on the other hand, there is any vacillation; if, whilst ostensibly

avowing our determination to do the right thing, we secretly whisper in

our deepest consciousness that we intend to go as far as we can in

self-indulgence, and would be almost thankful if circumstances

compelled us to yield -- we are almost certain to fall. The will must

be whole in its resolves; the heart must be consecrated in its most

secret determinations; no traitor may be harboured, who may open the

postern gate. Oh to say with David, "My heart is fixed, God, my heart

is fixed"! But this steadfastness is one of those preparations of the

heart which can only be obtained through the gracious indwelling of the

Holy Spirit. Hence we pray with David, "Renew a steadfast spirit within

me." And while we pray, we must never forget our Lord's command to

watch also.

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Behold, the battle was before and behind. 2 Chron. xiii. 14.

ABIJAH'S address is full of true and noble utterances, especially when

he describes God as being the Captain of the Host; and this spirit soon

permeated his people, so that when the battle was sorest, and they were

hemmed in by their foes, it was natural for them to turn to the Lord,

and for the priests to give a blast on the trumpets, like that with

which the new moon and the solemn feasts were inaugurated.

The point for us to remember is that our enemies may shut us in on all

sides, preventing reinforce-

ments from north, south, east, and west; but no earthly power can ever

shut off God from above us. The way upwards is always kept clear; the

ladder which links the beleaguered soul with God and heaven can never

be blocked, except by transgression and sin.

The Priest is always with thee, child of God. His help is always at

hand. Neither death, nor life, nor height, nor depth, nor

principalities, nor powers, can ever separate thee from the down-coming

of God's love.

The battle is often before and behind. From behind come memories of

past failure, the consequences of mistakes, the misunderstandings which

have alienated us from others, and made it difficult for us to live as

we would; on the other hand perplexities and anxieties seem to bar our

future path. But when the battle is before and behind, remember that

God besets his people behind and before, and covers them with his hand.

The invisible film of his protection makes the soul invulnerable. The

life that is hid with Christ in God is beyond the reach of harm.

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Lord, there is none beside Thee to help. 2 Chron. xiv. 11 (R.V.)

REMIND God of his entire responsibility. -- "There is none beside thee

to help." The odds against Asa were enormous. There were a million of

men in arms against him, beside three hundred chariots. It seemed

impossible to hold his own against that vast multitude. There were no

allies who would come to his help: his only hope therefore was in God.

There was none beside to help. It may be that your difficulties have

been allowed to come to so alarming a pitch that you may be compelled

to renounce all creature aid, to which in lesser trials you have had

recourse, and cast yourself back on your Almighty Friend.

Put God between yourself and the foe. -- To Asa's faith, Jehovah seemed

to stand between the might of Zerah and himself, as one who had no

strength. Nor was he mistaken. We are told that the Ethiopians were

destroyed before the Lord and before his host, as though celestial

combatants flung themselves against the foe in Israel's behalf, and put

the large host to rout, so that Israel had only to follow up and gather

the spoil. Our God is Jehovah of Hosts, who can summon unexpected

reinforcements at any moment to the aid of his people. Believe that He

is there between you and your difficulty, and what baffles you will

flee before Him, as clouds before the gale.

Identify your cause with his. -- "In thy name are we come. . . . . Let

not man prevail against Thee." It is a great matter when a small State

is so identified with a strong European power, as that an insult to one

of its officials is deemed a casus belli by the more powerful

Government; and whenever we are so delivered from selfish aims, as to

be able to show that our cause and God's are one, we are invincible.

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They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers. 2

Chron. xv. 12.

WE hear but little talk in the present day of the covenant, the mention

of which was dear to God's people of olden time. There is this

difference between it and the covenants which we make with God. That is

permanent, these evanescent. That is founded upon the oath and promise

of God; these on the resolutions and endeavours of man. That is full of

promises of what God will be and do; these recount what we are prepared

to sacrifice and suffer. And though we sign them with blood drawn from

our veins, they will disappoint and fail.

Do not think too much of entering into and keeping a covenant with God;

but remember that the Lord Jesus, on our behalf, has entered into

covenant relation with the Father, and the Father with us in Him. This

is the new covenant. It is drawn out at length in Hebrews viii. Very

little is said about our side, but it is full to overflowing of God's.

Nothing is said of our fidelity to our obligations, because man has

been too often weighed in the balances and found wanting; and because

the Lord Jesus Christ, as our representative, has already fulfilled all

the conditions of obedience and devotion on which its provisions

depend. He has also graciously undertaken to realize those conditions

by the Holy Spirit in us.

Every time we put to our lips the cup of the new covenant, we humbly

remind God of all He has promised, and ask Him to do as He has said. At

the same time we may confidently ask the great Surety of the covenant

to accomplish in us such a mind as may love and keep our Father's law.

And what He did for our fathers, who were naturally just such as we

are, He will certainly do for us.

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To show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect

toward him. 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

THE emphasis is clearly on the word perfect. That was the point between

Hanani the seer and Asa the king. Asa's mistake and sin lay in his

resorting to Benhadad, king of Syria, as an ally against Baasha.

Evidently he did not perfectly trust the delivering power of God; and

in this failure of his faith, he forfeited the all-sufficient help

which would have more than availed. As the seer said very truly, simple

trust in God had brought deliverance from the Ethiopians and Lubim,

though they were a much huger host than Baasha's; and the same attitude

in respect of Baasha would have secured a like result. God was only

awaiting the appeal of Asa's faith, to show Himself strong. What a

mistake to send to Syria!

Now, dear reader, this is very pertinent for your life and mine. We

often complain that we are bereft of help, and send off for Benhadad.

And all the while the eyes of the Lord are looking pitifully and

longingly at us. Nothing would give Him greater pleasure than to show

Himself strong on our behalf. This, however, He cannot do until

renouncing all other confidants and helpers, our heart is perfect in

the simplicity and frankness of its faith. What an exquisite thought is

suggested by the allusion to the eyes of the Lord running to and fro

throughout the whole earth! At a glance He takes in our position; not a

sorrow, trial, or temptation visits us without exciting his notice and

loving sympathy. In all the whole wide earth there is not one spot so

lonely, one heart so darkened, as to escape those eyes. Oh for the

perfect confidence which will allow Him to act! It is for lack of this

that we remain unhelped, and spend our days in the midst of wars and

tumults.

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His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. 2 Chron. xvii. 6.

SURSUM corda! Lift up your hearts! How beautiful is this ejaculation in

the Communion Service of the Church of England, and the response, "We

lift them up unto the Lord." I never hear it without the thrill of a

holy impulse passing through me. It is possible, and it is meet and

right, to lift up our hearts from the sordid cares and pressing

responsibilities of daily life, into the calm, serene presence of God

our Father.

Lift up your heart to God, as a child its face to be kissed. Lift it up

free from mistrust and sinful stain, and unkind feeling towards any.

Lift it up in holy joy and inspiration. Lift it up as a censer filled

with the hot coals, from which sweet fragrance exhales. And God will

bend down to lift it higher, and fill it with his peace and joy and

purity.

In hours of depression look up, be lifted. Sursum corda! When the foe

is pressing you most severely, look up, your redemption draweth nigh.

When the river has to be crossed, when the last farewell must be said,

when the flesh fails, let your mind and heart thither ascend, and there

continually dwell where Jesus has entered as your Forerunner.

If you would lift up your heart, you must be in the ways of the Lord,

as the good Jehoshaphat. You must seek the Lord God, and walk in his

commandments. You must take away the high places and groves of idolatry

and impurity. Beware of the world's birdlime! Shake yourself from the

bands and bonds that would detain you. Oh, heart of mine, why is thy

flight so low? Lift thyself up and sit down with Christ in the heavenly

places! "Unto Thee, Lord, do I lift up my soul. Let not mine enemies

triumph over me!"

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I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil. 2

Chron. xviii. 7.

THIS was a very naive confession. Of course, Micaiah could not speak

good of Ahab, whose life was diametrically opposed to all that was

God-like and holy. Micaiah had no animosity towards the king of lsrael;

it was not a personal matter with him. He simply read from the page of

the future as God opened it to his eyes, and in which the out-working

of the king's evil life was disclosed in gloomy characters. It was as

absurd to hate him because he read such dark lessons from the

inevitable future, as for a householder to shoot his dog, that bays all

night, to warn his master against the burglar engaged in rifling his

home.

The Bible, the pastor, the whole Church of God, are hated by worldlings

for the same reason, because they cannot speak hopefully of their

future. It is as though a card-playing crew were to hate the watchman

who told them that the course of their vessel was straight for the surf

and rocks of the shore. If men will persist in violating God's law, in

breaking through the hedge of thorns, and in pursuing their own wild

ways, they cannot possibly expect the blessedness of the Beatitudes.

However, their hatred against those who warn them is really directed

towards God. They are indignant that they cannot have their way; their

proud spirit would like to overturn the very order of the universe

rather than that it should be thwarted. They cannot endure the contrast

between God's children and themselves. Do not be surprised if the world

hate you. It shows that you are no more of the world than your Master

was. Jesus said: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute

you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

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Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? 2

Chron. xix. 2.

THIS looks back to xviii. 1, where we learn that Jehoshaphat, though he

had riches and honour in abundance, joined affinity with Ahab. Riches

and abundance are dangerous things. They usually weaken our character,

and incline us to worldly alliances; and it was to their subtle and

pernicious influences that Jehoshaphat fell a victim. Ah! what a fall

it was to hear him saying, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy

people." Well might Jehu take up the role which his father had filled

before Asa, and protest. But let us seriously question whether, though

there are good things found in us, we may not be falling into the same

mistake, and sin. Are there not ways in which we say to men of the

world, with whom we mix, "I am as thou art "?

There is a great tendency in the present day to boast in the closeness

with which we can approach the world without injury. We join in the

social life, read the same books, go to the same amusements, talk of

the same themes; and it is almost impossible in a drawing-room to tell

the difference between the Jehoshaphats and the Ahabs. So also, in our

methods of doing good. The real difficulty lies away back in our want

of engagedness with Christ. It is of little use to find fault with the

outward, as long as the heart is wayward. Love to the Lord Jesus is our

only safeguard. The love of Christ must constrain us. Personal

attachment to Christ will wean us away from this close identification

with the world. But if we persist in identifying ourselves with the

world, which God has doomed, we must not be surprised to find that

wrath is on us from the Lord: and He will chasten us for love's sake.

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He appointed singers unto the Lord, that should praise the beauty of

holiness. 2 Chron. xx. 21.

DOST thou praise the beauty of holiness? Is holiness beautiful to thee?

Art thou in love with it as it is presented in the glorious Lord? Canst

thou turn from the noise and anxiety of life's battle to dwell on the

loveliness of God and of the devout life, and to praise Him whose mercy

endureth for ever? It is a rare accomplishment, acquired only through

the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. In each of us there should be the

priest-side of character as well as the warrior: the love for what is

beautiful in holiness as well as for the strong and active in service.

But the special characteristic of this battle was that the good king

put the singers in the forefront of the army, and praised for a victory

which was only assured to him by faith. Yet so sure was he of it, that

he could praise before he entered into the battle.

There is much to help us here in our daily combat for God and truth.

Let us fill the morning hour with holy song, in the heart, if not with

the voice; let a psalm or hymn be part of the daily reading; let there

be the confidence that God is going to bless, which cannot restrain its

jubilant expression. So in all prayer, wait on God till you feel that

you can praise Him for what you have asked Him to bestow.

When they began to praise, the Lord did all the rest. Before the onset

of his Divine reinforcements the enemy fled. His people had but to

gather spoil, and then the praise which had anticipated the battle was

consummated as they returned, in the valley of blessing.

'There's a song in the valley of blessing so sweet,

And angels would fain join the strain,

As with rapturous praises we bow at his feet,

Crying. 'Worthy the Lamb that was slain!'

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The same time also did Libnah rebuild from under his hand. 2 Chron.

xxi. 10.

AS long as the kings of Judah remained true to their allegiance to God

they were able to keep in subjection the surrounding nations; but just

so soon as they revolted from God these peoples revolted from them. It

was as though power descended into them from the source of all power;

and when the link between themselves and God was broken, that between

them and their subordinates was broken also.

This applies very widely: To our passions. -- If they master you,

rebelling against and revolting from your hand, it is because there is

some flaw in your consecration, and you have forsaken to some extent

the Lord God.

To our families. -- When the heads of a home are in perfect unity with

each other and God, they may generally expect that their children will

grow up submissive and obedient. Their authority will be recognised and

honoured. Revolt in the home indicates very often some lapse in

obedience and loyalty to God.

To our influence over men. -- When the soul is in blessed fellowship

with God, power flows into it from Him, before which strongholds are

overthrown. "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord," said the

prophet. "I am a man under authority, and have soldiers under me," said

the centurion.

Give yourself entirely to Jesus. Obey Him absolutely; receive by faith

from Him living power and grace; be a channel through which He may pour

Himself; and you will find that men and things will fall into line at

your bidding, and you shall receive power. Our Libnahs will not revolt

unless we forsake the Lord God of our fathers.

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Hid in the House of God. 2 Chron. xxii. 12.

SAFE from Athaliah, who would have ruthlessly destroyed him if she had

had an inkling of his existence, the Young Joash was reared beneath the

care of Jehoiada and his wife within the precincts of the house of God.

He was hidden in the secret place of the Most High, and abode under the

shadow of the Almighty. There let us also live. Let us know what it is

to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, and all

this day. Let us cultivate the life which is hid with Christ in God.

It is well often to remind ourselves that we are in God, and that the

film of his environing presence is about us like a wall of thick-ribbed

steel. We are in Him as the jewel in the casket; as the chick under the

feathers of the hen; as the child in the warm embrace of its mother.

And so long as we stay there we are invulnerable. Therefore our great

enemy is continually endeavouring to allure us into the open; he knows

he can do as he likes with us, if only he can induce us to venture

beyond our hiding-place. Therefore, beware of any temptation to worry,

to amass this world's goods, or to seek the indulgence of appetite; it

is by such lures and baits that Satan seduces unwary souls from their

safe hiding.

If a day in God's courts is better than a thousand, what must it be to

dwell in the house of the Lord all one's days, to behold his beauty,

and enquire in his temple. The rarest visions, the fairest fellowship,

the most entrancing joys, the most confident outlook on life, and the

hereafter, are the accompaniments of such a residence. The altar of

incense, the laver of dairy cleansing, the light of the Shekinah, the

holy psalm and song, the great altar of sacrifice, are familiar objects

to the hidden soul.

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And the city was quiet after they had slain Athaliah with the sword. 2

Chron. xxiii. 21.

THIS was a great revolution, admirably planned and carried into effect.

It was intolerable that such a woman as Athaliah should desecrate the

throne and temple. Jehoiada, by his prudence and courage, deserved well

of the entire nation in ridding the world of her presence. No half

measures would have availed to meet the case.

There are times in every life when strong and strenuous action is

inevitable if the cause of God is to be promoted and saved. In many of

us there is a willingness to tolerate evil, rather than arouse

ourselves to grasp it with a firm hand, and, if needs be, drag it up by

its roots. Be strong, yea, be strong, is an injunction that has to be

emphasized even to men who are greatly beloved. The easiest thing for

Jehoiada would have been to shut himself up in the temple, and leave

things to take their course. The noblest thing was to come forth, and

boldly confront the rampant evil of his time. So God's call rings out

for helpers in the great fight against sin. Its notes penetrate into

the retirement of Christian homes, to noble women and devoted men,

demanding that they should come forth to resist impurity, the love of

strong drink, the strong tendency towards extravagance, luxury, and

waste. The world is full of Athaliahs, and it is not befitting that the

Jehoiadas should remain at their holy rites and services if there is a

paramount need for action in the world's battlefield, in the strife

against wrong.

The children of God are citizens of the New Jerusalem, but they are

also certainly citizens here; and they must not stand aside from great

public issues, allowing them to be decided by ungodly and wicked men.

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The Spirit of God clothed itself with Zechariah the son of Jehoiada. 2

Chron. xxiv. 20 (R. V., marg.).

AS we put on a cloak or dress, so does the Spirit of God, as it were,

hide Himself in those who surrender themselves to Him, so that it is

not they who speak and act, but He within them. Have you at any time

been conscious of having become the clothing of the Holy Spirit?

Remember that cloth or leather must yield itself easily to the

movements of its wearer, and not less pliable and supple must we be to

the Spirit of God.

When the Spirit of God is thus within us, and speaks or acts for us, we

may expect, as Zechariah found it, to come into collision with the

entire drift and current of society around us, and to incur odium and

hatred. Men do not like to be told that they cannot prosper because

they have forsaken God; but we have no alternative than to witness

against their sins. Does the Spirit clothe Himself with you my friend,

as you anticipate the work of to-day? Are you using Him, or is He to

use you? Are you seeking to clothe yourself with his power for some

personal ambition, or are you desirous that He should array Himself in

you, so that the glory may evidently be his? In the agony of battle,

when great deeds are to be done, no one stops to think of the uniform

of the soldier, but only of the might beneath it.

But for this you must be prepared to pay the cost, and be willing to

cross the cherished purposes of men, as the Spirit of God by your voice

or deed witnesses against them. They stoned Zechariah at the command of

the king; but years after the Lord Jesus referred to it, for no

faithful martyr seals his witness with his blood without some quick

glance of recognition from the Master, and some record on the

imperishable tablets of his heart.

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The Lord ia able to give thee much more than this. 2 Chron. xxv. 9.

AMAZIAH had many good qualities, but he did not clearly see how

impossible it was for Israel to be allied with Judah without

invalidating the special Divine protection and care on which Judah had

been taught to rely. We must understand that God cannot be in

fellowship with us if we tolerate fellowship with the ungodly. We must

choose between the two. If we can renounce all creature aid, and trust

simply in the eternal God, there is no limit to the victories He will

secure; but if, turning from Him, we hold out our hand toward the

world, we forfeit his aid. child of God, let not the army of Israel go

with thee! Do not adopt worldly policy, methods, or partnership.

However strong you make yourself for the battle in alliance with these,

you will fail. Indeed, God Himself will make you fall before the enemy,

that you may be driven back to Himself.

But you say that you have already entered into so close an alliance

that you cannot draw back. You have invested your capital, you have

gone to great expenditures Yet it will be better to forfeit these than

Him. Without these aids, and with only God beside you, you will be able

to rout Edom, and smite ten thousand men. Would that men knew the

absolute deliverance which God will effect for those whose hearts are

perfect towards Him!

The soldiers of Israel committed depredations on their way back. This

was the result of the folly and sin of Amaziah's proposal. We may be

forgiven, and delivered, and yet there will be afterconsequences which

will follow us from some ill-considered act. Sin may be forgiven, but

its secondary results are sometimes very bitter. We must expect to reap

as we sow.

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He was marvellously helped, till he was strong. 2 Chron. xxvi. 15, 16.

GREAT and marvellous are thy works, God; that our soul knoweth quite

well. Thou hast showed marvellous loving-kindness. We must sing to

Thee; for Thou hast done marvellous things. lt is marvelous that Thou

shouldst have set thy love upon us; that Thou shouldst have watched

over our interests with unwearied care; that our sins, or unbelief, or

declensions, have never diverted thy love from us. "Marvellous " is the

only word we can use, as we think of the condescension of the

well-beloved Son to the manger-bed; of the agony and bloody-sweat; of

the cross and passion -- and all for us who were his enemies. But it is

most marvellous of all that Thou least made us children, heirs, arid

joint-heirs with Christ. To think that we shall shine as the sun in thy

kingdom, that we are to sit upon his throne, and be included in that

circle of love and life of which the throne of God and the Lamb is the

centre! Surely the marvels of thy grace will only seem the greater when

eternity with its boundless ages gives us time to explore them.

The danger, however, is that we should become strong in our own

conceit, and credit ourselves with the position which is due to the

grace of God alone. Oh for the truly humble spirit of the little child,

that we may never vaunt ourselves! The laden ship sinks in the water;

the fruit-burdened bough stoops to the ground; the truest scientist is

the humblest disciple. Oh to be submerged and abashed for the

marvellous help of God!

God cannot trust some of us with prosperity and success, because our

nature could not stand them. We must tug at the oar, instead of

spreading the sail, because we have not enough ballast.

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Jotham became mighty, because he ordered his ways. 2 Chron. xxvii. 6

(R.V.).

THERE is a lower sense in which this holds good in daily and business

life. You can hardly imagine a really successful man being untidy and

disorderly. Method is the law of success; and a truly holy soul is sure

to be orderly. I do not remember ever meeting one who really walked

with God who did not make orderliness one of the first principles of

life.

The Lord Jesus would have the men sit down in rows before He broke the

bread; and He wrapt together his grave-clothes before He left the

sepulchre. It was, therefore, in keeping with the whole tenor of his

example when the apostle prescribed that all things should be done

decently and in order.

Clear handwriting, especially the direction of an envelope, to give the

postman as little trouble as possible; the careful folding of our

cast-off garments, to save the maids needless work; the leaving our

room that we have been occupying as little disturbed in its

arrangements as may be; the gathering up of luncheon fragments from the

green banks, where we have sat to view the entrancing prospect; the

arrangement of papers, and accounts, and magazines, so that we can

readily lay our hand upon whatever is required; the adopting of mental

order in prayer and conversation, and in the thinking out of plans and

purposes; neatness in dress -- these are all part of the right ordering

of life which makes for its success and comfort, and greatly for peace

in the home. They are the habits of the soul that walks before God, and

which is accustomed to think of Him as seeing in secret, and as

considering all our ways. In this way we may become mighty, and by

being faithful in that which is least come to great charges.

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They clothed all that were naked, and gave them to eat and drink. 2

Chron. xxviii. 15.

A GREAT burst of generosity was here, for Israel had every reason to be

incensed against Judah for the raid made on their territory. But,

instead of pushing their advantage to the uttermost, they returned good

for evil, and anticipated the words of the apostle, "If thine enemy

hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou

shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

Have you in your life people who have done you injury, and against whom

you entertain hard thoughts? You do not injure them in return, but you

cannot pray for them. So far as you can, you avoid them; you make no

attempt to overcome the evil that is in them. But to act thus is to

come short of Christ's standard. It is your duty, not merely to keep at

a distance and give a wide berth, but by love to destroy the evil, to

transform the enemy into a friend, and to create love and friendship

where hostility and alienation had reigned. It is God's way, and in

this we are bidden to be perfect, as our Heavenly Father is perfect.

Will you try it? Will you begin by doing kind acts to those who have

harmed you? Not because as yet you feel as you would, but because it is

right. Then as you dig the trench in right doing, look up to God, and

He will pour into your heart the warm gush of affection. If you

sincerely will his will in this matter, and act as the Good Samaritan

did to the Jew, and exercise faith, God will came to your aid whilst

you clothe others and minister to them, you will find their hard heart

melted, and yourselves clothed with the beautiful garments of

salvation, and of a meek and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is of

great price.

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When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also. 2

Chron. xxix. 27.

THIS chapter contains a parable of the cleansing of the heart, meant to

be a temple for God; but the doors of prayer are unopened, the lamps of

testimony unlit, the burnt-offerings of self-sacrifice neglected ; and,

as the result, grass grows thick in courts which should have been

trodden by the feet of Levite minstrels engaged in holy song. If ever

that song is to break out again, it can only be after a thorough

cleansing and renovation of the inner shrine. You tell me that you

cannot sing the Lord's song; then I know you have gone into the strange

land of backsliding. You acknowledge that for some time now you have

taken no delight in God or his service; then I am sure that the temple

is badly in need of renovation.

Cleanse the house of the Lord. Bring out all the uncleanness. By

self-examination, confession, and repudiation, be clean of all the

filth which has accumulated through months and years of neglect. Resume

the position of entire devotion, as a prepared and sanctified soul.

Offer the sin-offering for the past, and prepare the burnt-offering of

entire consecration for the future. And when that is offered, when you

determine to be wholly God's, lay yourself, with all the interests of

your life, at the feet of Jesus, for his disposal; then the song of the

Lord will begin again.

The music of your life is still, because you are out of accord with the

will of God; but when by surrender and consecration there is unison,

your heart will be filled with songs without words, and love like an

ocean in the fulness of her strength. When tie rich, selfish bachelor

suddenly finds himself compelled to care for his dead brother's little

children, he is startled to find that a new song has begun in his life.

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The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God. 2

Chron. xxx. 18, 19.

A VERY touching prayer, that opens up deep thoughts as to the progress

of the true knowledge of God in Israel, and of the comparative value of

heart preparation and ceremonial cleansing. Here were crowds of

well-meaning people who had come from all parts of the land in answer

to Hezekiah's invitation. Unaccustomed to temple usage, strangers to

the temple rites, they had participated in the festivities of this

great Passover without submitting first to the necessary ablutions.

Their heart was prepared to seek God, they were proud of the great

past, they desired to stand right with the Lord God of their fathers;

but they were sadly ignorant and careless. The only thing to be done

was to pray that their ignorances and negligences might be forgiven.

It is thus that Jesus pleads in heaven; and there are many that obtain

mercy on the ground of his merit, because when they sin they do so

ignorantly, and from want of knowledge rather than from want of heart.

The devout ritualist who lays an excessive stress on outward forms; the

man who has sensuous and distorted views of Christ, but sincerely

desires to be accepted through Him; the soul that touches the hem of

the garment as though the healing power were independent of the

will-power of the Redeemer; the dying malefactor, who, in his last

hours, catches at some distorted representation of Christ which is

filtered through to him from the chance word of an uninstructed

preacher -- these are included in the fruitful pleading of the Great

High Priest, who has compassion on the ignorant and on those who are

out of the way. You may not understand doctrine, creed, or rite;but be

sure to seek God. No splendid ceremonial nor rigorous etiquette can

intercept the seeking soul.

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He did it with all his heart and prospered. 2 Chron. xxxi. 21.

THE man who does his business with all his heart, is sure to prosper.

To put your heart into your work is like genius manipulating common

materials, till their worth becomes priceless, just because of what has

been put into it.

The heart stands for the emotions and affections. What the furnace is

to the factory or steamship, that the heart is in the economy of our

nature. It is a great thing to love our life-work, to have an aim that

kindles us whenever we think of it. Those who are so happily

circumstanced, cannot be sufficiently thankful. But what of those who

are bound to a work which they did not choose and do not like, who find

their daily toil irksome and distasteful -- is there any help for them?

Can they possibly learn to do such work from their hearts? Certainly:

because of Him who set it, and for whom it may be done.

Love performs the most onerous duties with all its heart, if they

conduce to the comfort and help of those whom it loves more than

itself. Does not a mother or wife perform tasks from which the hireling

would shrink? She does them with all her heart, not considering for a

moment the loathesomeness and hardness of the demand. So if we look at

our life-work as God-appointed; if we realize that He has fixed it for

us, who determined the orbits of the stars; if we can hear the voice of

Jesus saying, "Do this for Me " -- there is no further thought of

hardship or distaste. Remember to do all your life-work for Jesus; do

all in his name and for his glory; ask Him to fill your heart with

submissive, loyal obedience, and you will find that when you introduce

the personal element of Christ-service into the meanest acts, they will

glisten like a piece of gold-tapestry.

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Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah, prayed and cryed to heaven.

2 Chron. xxxii. 20.

IT was the indignity done to Jehovah that stirred these two holy men to

the heart. Not that their lives, and the lives of their people, and the

beautiful holy city, were in danger; but that Sennacherib spake against

the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth,

which were the work of the hands of man. Oh that we were possessed with

a similar zeal for God, so that we might look at sin as it affects Him,

and lament over the awful wrongs which are continually being

perpetrated against his holy, loving nature! What an argument this

would give us in prayer!

This constitutes a special reason why we should plead for a revival of

religion throughout our land. Men speak and act so shamelessly, as

though God had abdicated his throne, and was hardly to be taken account

of. They sin against Him with so high a hand, and treat his laws with

so much contumely. Are there no Hezekiahs and Isaiahs who will pray and

cry to the God of our fathers to do again the great works He did in

their days, and in the old time before?

Then the Lord would save us, and guide us on every side (22). There

never was a more conspicuous and glorious deliverance than when the

angel of God wrought for Israel against Assyria. The Lord became a

place of broad rivers and streams across which the enemy could not

pass. As the mother bird settling down on her nest, He covered the city

with his outspread wings. And the rich spoils of the foe were left for

the beleagured garrison. Pray on, beloved; the Lord is our Judge, the

Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King ; He will save us.

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When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God. 2 Chron.

xxxiii. 12.

SO long as this story stands on the page of revelation, no sinner need

despair of mercy. There was hardly a sin possible to man that Manasseh

did not commit. "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord,

like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out

before the children of Israel." And he made his people do worse than

the heathen.

Then came awful sorrow. Bound in fetters, exposed to consummate cruelty

and disgrace, he was carried to Babylon, and thrust into the dungeons,

where other captive princes were immured, with little chance of

liberation or permission to revisit his native land. But there the

Spirit of God did his work. He humbled himself greatly, and prayed.

What tears, and cries, and bursts of heart-broken penitence, were his!

How those walls were saturated with the breath of confession, and those

stone floors indented by his kneeling at perpetual prayer! And God came

near to his low dungeon, and graciously heard his supplication, and

brought him back again.

Yes, and He will do as much for you. The blood of jesus Christ his Son

cleanseth from all sin; the grace of God is exceedingly abundant with

faith and love; all sins and blasphemies may be forgiven to the sons of

men. Turn to Him with brokenness of soul, and He will not only forgive,

but bring you again; and give you, as He did Manasseh, an opportunity

of undoing some of those evil things which have marred your past. For

the rest, it is good not to wait for affliction to stir us up to seek

God, but to abide in Him for love's dear bake.

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I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. 2 Chron.

xxxiv. 15, 18.

IT is supposed that this was the Book of Deuteronomy; though we have no

sympathy whatever with a modern notion with respect to its discovery.

In our judgment that book is rightly ascribed to Moses. Apparently,

however, it had long been missing, and the young king was filled with

horror when he heard the list of evils that were associated with

apostasy. "He rent his clothes."

We should read the Bible with a particular application to the days in

which we live. It is well enough to accept its statements as being

generally true and credible; but it is better to realize their

pertinence to ourselves and our circumstances. The book of the law had

been sadly neglected in the years preceding Josiah's accession; and

through the neglect of God's Word the people had become indifferent to

his commands, and deaf to the appeals of his prophets. Josiah turned

the lantern on the evils of his time, and saw how God was feeling with

respect to them.

The Bible is a book for all time. What it said, it says. What it was,

it is. You tell me it was written so many centuries ago; but I reply

the ink is still wet on its immortal pages. They have been read and

pondered by generations; but the light of its eye is not dim, nor its

natural force abated. Sin is the same, man the same, God the same, in

all ages. And the Bible's claim to be God's Word is substantiated by

the fact that it is possessed of living power, and of the same

perennial freshness as the sun, or the spring, or the ocean, or the

faces of the little children. Would that we might daily read it as we

read the newspaper, damp from the press, realizing that it is our

Father's great message for the life of every day!

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Prepare. 2 Chron. xxxv. 4, 6, 10, 14, 15, 16.

NO great court function can be carried through successfully, without

careful preparation. And Josiah's passover was so vast and rare a

success because of the large amount of previous preparation, as is

described in this chapter. The priests and Levites were prepared by

careful washings and ceremonial rites. The course of the sacrifices was

ordered according to the law of Moses. The routine of sacred song and

praise was also provided for. Nothing was left to haphazard or chance.

We are taught to rely on the promptings and inspirations of the Holy

Spirit; and it is certain that He would use us more on special errands,

if we were to trust and obey Him better. But these extraordinary

ministries should not lead us to a life of haphazard. We should prepare

ourselves for service so far as we may, laying our plans, anticipating

the calls and exigencies of coming days, and preparing for the demand

which almost certainly will be made on us. We may have to give our

special words and addresses and arrangements to the winds; but we shall

always need that preparedness of heart which is necessary for those who

are to be used of God.

Remember what is said of the vessels that were purged from uncleanness,

sanctified, meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good

work. Be always in your own place, clean so far as you can be, filled

with the Holy Ghost, with the handle of your life turned towards the

Master's hand, that at any moment He may take hold of you, and use you

for his holy service. By the diligent study of his Word, as well as by

earnest prayer and waiting upon God, on will be prepared to do his

will.

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Rising up betimes. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15.

WHAT a touching and graphic phrase! How did God yearn over that sinful

and rebellious city! Sending his messengers, "rising up betimes, and

sending " -- like a man who has had a sleepless night of anxiety for

his friend or child, and rises with the dawn to send a servant on a

mission of inquiry, or a message of love. How eager God is for men's

salvation!

From God's eagerness, may we not learn a lesson of anxiety for the

souls of men? We do not long after them enough, or rise betimes to urge

them to repent. Did we realize what heaven is, or hell, what men are

missing or incurring, what our duty is, as saved ourselves, we should

rise up betimes to seek their eternal interests.

But if God rises betimes to seek men, should they not do the same to

seek Him? Think you not, that when Adam heard the voice of the Lord God

walking in the garden at morning prime, he would be up and away to meet

Him on the upland lawns of Paradise? Can we wonder that our Master

would rise up a great while before day, to meet his Father on some

unfrequented height? Let us not cling to beds of sloth when God is

awaiting us; let us heed his loving remonstrances, that we may be saved

in the overthrow of the world; and let us, like Lot, pass on the word

to others enwrapt in fatal slumber around us, bidding them to escape to

the mountains, before the sun rise on the earth, lest they be consumed.

It was the practice of Sir Henry Havelock, during his campaigns in

India, always to have two hours for prayer and Bible study before the

march. If the camp was struck at 6.0 a.m., he would rise at 4. O.

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The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. Ezra i. 1.

THERE were many rays focussed on this spot. In the first place, it bad

been definitely foretold by Jeremiah that the captivity would only last

for seventy years. In the next place, Daniel, having learned from

comparison of dates that the allotted time had nearly expired, had set

himself to pray. Also, if Josephus be credited, the aged prophet had

shown the young king the predictions of Isaiah in which his own name

was clearly mentioned: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,

whose right hand I have holden: . . . he shall build my city, and he

shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of

hosts" (Isa. xlv. 1, 13).

God is the fountainhead and source of all spiritual blessing, and of

all those great movements for the uplifting and enlightenment of

mankind which have swept from time to time over the world. Go to Him

when you want to reach the heart of kings, prophets, and people. Oh for

the faith of Samuel, Elijah, Daniel, and other stalwart men of God,

that through Him we may stir up the spirits of those who will not

listen to our appeals! For the fervent prayer of a righteous man still

availeth much. In prayer you can touch the spring of all the stirrings

that the world needs.

But it is not enough for God to stir men, they must obey. It appears

that only a comparatively small number of captive Jews obeyed the

Divine stirring and came out of Babylon with the chief of the fathers.

The call resounds for volunteers, but only a few respond; the

inspiration breathes over us, but only some are susceptible to it. God

works to will and to do, but only certain of the children of men work

out what He works in. Whenever there is a Divine stirring abroad, let

us rise up and go.

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Till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummin. Ezra ii. 63.

IT must have been a great disappointment to these people who found

themselves excluded from sharing as priests. Their names were not on

the register, and so they had to wait until a properly-qualified

authority could adjudicate their case. The mere inference of reason was

not enough; they needed the direct corroboration of the anointed priest

with Urim and with Thummim.

So in our life it is not enough to rely on the inference of reason, or

to allow our Christian standing to be determined by the evidence of a

document. We must seek the direct witness and testimony of the Holy

Spirit. How many Christians there are who have no experimental

knowledge of what the Apostle meant when he said that the Spirit

witnesseth with our spirit that we are born again. They are always

referring to inference, and the testimony of others; and therefore

their consciousness varies, and they cannot eat of the holy bread of

God. But when the Spirit of God speaks through the Urim and Thummim,

and certifies that we are the children of God, giving us the white

stone with its new name, and revealing Christ as dwelling within us, we

have, immediately, boldness to enter into the holiest of all, and eat

of the holy things.

Assurance is needful before we dare to appropriate the things which are

freely given to us of God. Who of us is not able to verify this from

his personal experience? We could not enjoy the Father's table, so long

as there was a doubt about our sonship. But the assurance of faith may

be ours as we wait in the presence of our great High Priest, speaking

to us by the Holy Spirit, who witnesses with our spirits that we are

the children of God.

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And they set the alter upon its bases. Ezra iii. 3.

THIS is the first thing that must be done before our temple-building or

other undertakings can be crowned with success. It was well that the

returned remnant made this their care; it augured well for their

future. The new start that God Himself was giving would have been

invalidated without that altar, which meant forgiveness for the past,

and renewed consecration for the future.

Where is the altar in your life? Where the burnt sacrifice which

betokens entire surrender of consecration? It cannot be too often

insisted on, that since Christ died for all, all died in Him. We were

not only saved by his death, we were included in it, but we must

appropriate and identify ourselves with it. We must look up to God and

say, "I desire that this death should be mine, to the world, to sin, to

the flesh; make it so by the power of the Holy Ghost, that in Jesus I

may be truly dead unto sin, but alive unto Thee."

Perhaps that last clause will help some souls most. Do not perpetually

dwell on the dying side, but think much of the living side. Yield

yourselves to receive God's life, which is the life of the Son of God

in the surrendered nature. Be very sensitive, and "quick of scent," to

every movement and prompting of the Holy Spirit. Seek the things which

are above, where Christ, your life, is seated. So you will find your

energy drained away from self to Christ. Because He lives you will live

also. A maple tree planted on a barren soil sent out one of its

rootlets to a richer patch not far away, and ulti mately all its

roothold was there, till finally it was bodily moved and transferred

from its first position to this more salubrious one.

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Let us build with you. Ezra iv. 2.

AT first the world does its best to intimidate the Church; then it asks

to be permitted to join with it. A most subtle temptation this. The

child of God is greatly inclined to yield; the proposal seems so

harmless, and so likely to be a means of blessing to the poor, hungry,

weary world. But there is only one condition on which the world may be

admitted; it must yield a true and humble submission to the cross, and

be willing to give up all for Jesus -- conditions which the world will

not consider for a moment; and so its heart is filled with bitterness

and gall, and it sets itself to hinder where it had professed

willingness to help.

There are five things of which we are expressly bidden to beware --

they are five phases of an unequal yoke: fellowship with

unrighteousness; communion with darkness; concord with Belial; part

with an unbeliever; agreement with idols. Let us beware of these

things, and cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and

spirit. There may seem to be great loss and needless sacrifice in

dispensing with the help of Rehum and Shimshai; but if once we accepted

their help, we should discover to our cost that they were adversaries

still, and that their only desire was to retard our efforts.

We sometimes shrink from some great undertaking for God, and are

inclined to accept the proffered aid of wealthy but ungodly men. But

their help may be purchased by the cost of all that makes our work

worth doing. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for

what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?"

"Yea, with one mouth, world, though thou deniest

Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."

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The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews. Ezra v. 5.

IT was a delightful thought amid obloquy and opposition, like that

which the Jews were at this moment encountering, to know that God was

watching them with jealous care. We are reminded of the words of the

Psalmist, quoted and authenticated by the Apostle Peter, "The eyes of

the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry;

but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." And he goes on

to argue, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that

which is good?" The Jews certainly found it so; for the efforts of

their enemies to induce them to desist from their work of

temple-building were rendered nugatory and ineffectual by the special

care exercised over them by their Almighty Friend.

It may be that you will have to encounter hatred and opposition in

doing God's work; but be sure not to look at these things, but

steadfastly to Jesus. Must you not watch the foe? No; you could not

make a greater mistake. You must look away to the face of Jesus, and

you will find that He, like a good shepherd, is looking carefully and

lovingly down on you, and watching the stealthy movements of your foe.

Even when we are not directly conscious of that watchful eye, it still

follows us. He knoweth the way that you take; and He is acquainted with

the varied circumstances of your life. He has pledged Himself to be

with you for ever; as Wordsworth once said of his beloved daughter Dora

: --

"Dear child, fair child, that walkest with me here,

Though thou appear untouched by solemn thought,

Thy nature is not therefore less divine;

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year,

Thou worshippest at the temple's inner shrine,

God being with thee when thou knowest not."

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The Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the King unto

them. Ezra vi. 22.

YES, the hearts of men are in the hands of God, and He can turn them

whither He will. There are many instances of this in Scripture. God

gave Joseph favour with Pharaoh; Moses with the Princess; and Daniel

with the King of Babylon. If certain matters can only be settled by

reference to great men, kings or men of affairs, make the application;

and then betake yourself to prayer, believing that as He inclined the

heart of Darius, in the instance before us, so He can do as He will

among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of earth.

That unkind overseer, that vexatious member of your home-circle, that

great man whose help you so greatly need -- these are accessible to

God's Spirit, if only you are intent on seeking his glory, and doing

his will. But you must be able to show, as these Jews could, that your

cause is identical with the cause of God, before you can claim, with

unwavering faith, his interference on your behalf.

Then when the answer comes, let us thank Him, separating ourselves

still further from the filthiness around us, so as to keep the feast

with joy. Do not be afraid of joy; when God makes you joyful, do not

think it necessary to restrain your songs or smiles, for fear that an

equivalent of sorrow will presently be meted out as a make-weight. Our

blessed Lord was desirous that his joy might be in his Disciples; it

was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the cross,

despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of

God; it is with exceeding joy that He will present us faultless before

the presence of his glory. "Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing

which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

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I was strengthened, as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me. Ezra

vii. 28.

IT was no small work that the good Ezra had undertaken. To lead a great

expedition across the inhospitable desert; to convoy the sacred vessels

and a large treasure of gold and silver; to set magistrates and judges

over all that great district beyond the river -- this was no slight

task, and he needed strength. But in the simple language of his heart

the good hand of his God was upon him, and that was sufficient to nerve

and strengthen him.

It is wonderful what resistless might comes to the soul, when it

realizes that it is treading the path and working out the career

determined for it from all eternity by the Almighty. The thought

imparts the same kind of impulse to the soul, as the touch of love or

authority on the arm. We are reminded of the veteran, who, when charged

by the Duke of Wellington to take a difficult position, turned to him

and said, "I will go, sir; but first give me a grip of your conquering

hand."

Think, soul, of what that hand is which holds the waters in its hollow,

and spreads the curtains of the sky, and was nailed to the cross; that

brought blessing with its touch to so many weary sufferers, and now

holds the mysterious book, sealed with seven seals; that caught Peter,

and lay lightly on the heads of the little babes. That hand is

strengthening thee for a work for which by nature thou art unequal, but

to which thou hast been evidently called. Go forward: it holds, guides,

empowers thee. It can lead thee before kings, princes, and nobles, so

that thou shalt not fear; it can preserve thee from dangers

innumerable; it can shield thee from the fire of the enemy; and none,

man or devil, can pluck you out of the Father's hand.

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Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them at Jerusalem. Ezra viii.

29.

THEY were protected by God, whose presence with them across the wild

desert made it needless to ask for an escort of soldiers; but they had

to take care of the precious vessels of his house. It was a reciprocal

trust. So it must be with us, as we are taught in 2 Tim. i. 12, 14.

There are two deposits, as the margin shows. We deposit ourselves, and

all we are and have, with God; whilst He deposits with us his sacred

Gospel, the vessels of which we must "guard through the Holy Ghost

which dwelleth in us," and be prepared to defend with our blood.

Our deposit with God. -- How safe are they who commit their all to God!

Faraday was asked, when dying, on what supposition he depended as he

contemplated the other world; and he replied, "I am relying on no

supposition, but on a certainty; I know in whom I have believed, and am

persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him."

God's deposit with us. -- But let us be true to our trust. The Holy

Bible, the Doctrines of the Christian Church, the Day of Rest, the

House of God, the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Christian

Bap-tism -- these are some of the vessels which have been passed down

to us, and we must hand on intact. Be ye clean that carry them! Oh,

what joy it will be when we reach our destination, and can resign our

trust, and weigh out the deposit, and hear the Master's "Well done!"

But, in the meanwhile, whilst marching across the yellow sands, where

wild dangers lie in wait, let us not seek the escort of creature or

worldly might; but boast of the Hand of our God, which is for good upon

all them that seek Him.

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The people have not separated themselves. Ezra ix. 1.

THIS was only too true! There had been, on the part of princes and

rulers, gross intermarriage with the people of surrounding lands. The

holy seed had become mixed and diluted. And it was the more sad that

this should have taken place, when it was to cleanse his people from

such alliances, and the evils to which they inevitably led, that God

had passed them through the purging fires of the seventy years'

captivity. It afflicted the good Ezra sorely. With every sign of

Oriental grief he poured out his soul before God. And this is the

lesson we should carry with us. It has been truly said that communion

with the Lord dries many tears, but it starts many more. We no longer

sorrow with the sorrow of the world; but we become burdened with some

of the griefs that still rend the heart of the Lord in the glory.

This fellowship between the Lord's people and the world is becoming

increasingly close as we near the end of the age. In the appointments

of our homes, our amusements, books, and practices, there is very

little to choose between the one and the other. If there is any

distinction, it lies in a certain sadness with which Christians take

their pIeasures, as though remembering a something better. But the rest

of us do not grieve over it; we do not rend our clothes: we do not take

these things to heart, as though they specially concerned us.

Let us at least separate ourselves after the manner of Christ, who

frequented the temple, acknowledged the State, accepted invitations to

great houses; but his heart and speech always revolved about his

Father. What if it led to our being cast out without the camp!

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We also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it. Ezra x. 4.

THIS narrative reminds us of the story of Achan, who took of the

accursed thing, and kindled the anger of the Lord against the children

of Israel. There must be confession and the putting away of evil ere

communion with God can be re-established.

It is not given to every one to be an Ezra. There are abuses to deal

with, and wrongs to right, on every side; but they require to be dealt

with by those who are specially adapted or qualified for the work. Be

always ready to do such work, if there should be no one else. It was

the life motto of a great man always to act as though there were no one

else who would. Still, Nehemiahs and Ezras are not given very largely

to the Church or the world; and, for the most part, we must be content

to be of those who say, "Be of good courage, and do it; we also will be

with thee." But though this seems but a little thing, it may lead to

great results. Many a man has been urged to a noble deed by the

encouragement he received at a critical hour from some unknown and

obscure disciple.

If you cannot do a great thing, identify yourself with one who can.

Stand by him, identify yourself with him in public or private, by

sympathy and prayer. Though the strongholds of evil are great and high,

they may be swept away before an avalanche of snowflakes, any one of

which would melt in the warm hand of a child.

Oh for more of that magnanimity, which is quick to recognise the

matters that belong to certain elect souls -- not envying, nor

disparaging, but frankly confessing their eminent qualifications, and

falling in to further and accelerate their success, which will be the

gain of all!

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I was the king's cupbearer . Neh. i. 11.

THE post was an important one. It gave its occupant the opportunity of

coming into close contact with the king; it implied a character of

unusual trustworthiness, since Oriental despots were very afraid of

poison. But no one expected a royal cupbearer to do anything very

heroic. He lived in the inner part of the palace, and was necessarily

excluded from the great deeds of the stirring outward world. Nehemiah

also was evidently a humble and retiring man. His response to the story

of the ruined condition of Jerusalem was just a flood of tears and

prayer to the God of heaven. And had you seen those tears and heard

that prayer, you might have thought that just another flower was

drooping, another seed falling into the ground to die.

But this was not all. These prayers and tears were supplemented by an

earnest purpose, which was maturing with every hour. He gave himself to

God to be used, if God would have it so, as an instrument in the

execution of his recorded purpose. He was a man of faith. It mattered

little enough that he was only a cupbearer, for that was no barrier to

God; indeed, God might work more efficiently through a frail, weak man,

than through the prince, the soldier, or the orator, since He cannot

give his glory to another. What a glorious faith was his, which dared

to believe that through his yielded life God could pour his mighty

rivers! Why do we not yield ourselves in our helplessness to God, and

ask Him to work through us, to fulfil his mighty purposes?

"We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!

Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,

Or others -- that we are not always strong!"

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So I prayed to the God of Heaven. Neh. ii. 4.

ALL around the apartment in which this interview took place were

effigies of idol gods: perhaps incense was burning before a shrine, and

filling the air with its aroma. But Nehemiah, though standing amid

these heathen emblems, and in the presence of the gre atest king on

earth, thought little of either one or the other, and prostrated

himself in spirit before the throne of heaven. Remember that thou hast

within thee a shrine, a temple into which at any moment, even amid the

excitement of an earthly court, thou mayest retire and ask direction of

thy King and Friend.

He had been sorely startled by the king's question; he did not know

that his face had betrayed him. He had, doubtless, intended to seek an

interview with the king, and formally state the whole case (see i. 11).

But to be taken thus at unawares, to have to state his case on the spur

of the moment, appeared to take him at a great disadvantage; and he

instinctively turned to prayer.

How little the king knew what was transpiring, or what had happened

between his question and the reply which was given, apparently, without

the loss of a moment. But how beautiful is the example for ourselves!

You cannot acquire this habit of ejaculatory prayer unless you spend

prolonged periods in holy fellowship. But when you are much with God in

private, you will not find it diffecult at any moment to step aside to

ask Him a question.The busy mart or the crowded street may at any time

become the place of prayer.

"A touch divine

And the sealed eyeball owns the mystic rod;

Visibly through His garden walketh God."

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Every one over against his house. Neh. iii. 28.

THIS is the way to deal with the evil of this world. We are all fonder

of starting schemes, forming committees, and discussing methods of

work, than in setting definitely to work for ourselves. There is a lack

of definiteness, and we hardly know where to begin. But this verse

suggests that every one should begin over against his own house. Try

and make your own neighbourhood a little more like what God would have

it. It may be that you have gone too far afield in search of work; you

are applying to the Foreign Missionary Society, or are waiting for a

sphere of service; yet, all the time, there is that wretched

neighbourhood, like a piece of ruined wall before you. Arise and repair

it!

Meshullam repaired over against his chamber (ver. 30). Perhaps he was

not rich enough to have a whole house; he lived in a single room, but

he discovered that there was a little bit of the wall just opposite his

window, which would not be built unless he set to it. Is not that a

hint for college students, and for those who live in flats, or

industrial dwellings?

The best way is not immediately to begin giving tracts, good though

that is in its place. Ask God to give you an opportunity of showing

kindness to your neighbours, so that they get to understand and trust

you; and wait upon God until the answer comes -- until He shall show

you what step He would have you take next. This is the foundation of

your bit of wall. Then plod on step by step, tier by tier. God will

show you how. You may be unpractised in wall-building; but He is the

Architect and Builder, and you are but a bricklayer's labourer at the

best. Do as He tells you.

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Remember the Lord. Neh. iv. 14.

IT was uncommonly good advice. Amid all the wise precautions taken by

this man of sanctified common-sense, he kept bringing the people back

to God. God was amongst them. God would fight for them. God was going

to bring the counsel of their enemies to nought.

This would make a good motto for daily living. If in all circumstances

we would remember the Lord, the way would be brightened; the burdens

would faII; our spirits would never droop; and songs of joy would take

the place of sadness. Whenever enemies assail and difficulties gather

like storm-clouds, look away from them and remember the Lord. When

hemmed in on every side, be sure that He can help you from his holy

heaven; remember the Lord. When heart and flesh fail, and you do not

know what to do for the best, be sure to remember the Lord, and act as

in his most holy presence. What a comfort and strength it is to see a

friend, when standing amid a crowd of adversaries intent on your

destruction, and to know that he will act and speak for you! But

remember that Jesus is always like that.

You say that you forget so soon; that you would remember, though at the

critical moment you are betrayed into forgetfulness. But you must

recall His precious promise, that the Holy Spirit will bring all to

remembrance. If only you will trust the difficulty into his hands, you

will find that He will gladly undertake it; and as long as you leave it

with Him, you will hear his voice rising in your heart, and saying,

"Remember the Lord."

"Watch with me, Jesus, in my loneliness,

Though others say me Nay, yet say Thou, Yea;

Though others pass me by, stop Thou to bless.

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So did not I, because of the fear of God. Neh. v. 15.

THESE were great words. Nehemiah had a perfect right to take this

money. Not a word could be said even by his critics, if he did. He was

doing a priceless work, and might justly claim his maintenance. On the

other hand, the people were very poor, and he would have a larger

influence over them if he were prepared to stand on their level, and to

share with them. It was just so that the Apostle argued in 1 Cor. ix.

And from both we learn that often we must forego our evident rights and

liberties in order to influence others for Christ. Do not always stand

on your rights; but live for others, making any sacrifice in order to

save some -- even as Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us.

If Nehemiah did so much for the holy fear of God, what ought not we to

do for love? Love is more inexorable than law. Its exactions are more

stringent and searching. Are we doing as much for Iove of Jesus as

generations before did simply on the score of duty? It is much to be

questioned if Jesus does not get less, of outward service at least, out

of his followers, than Mehomet or Buddha does. But what He does get is

infinitely sweet to Him, in so far as love prompts it.

All around you people are doing things that they say are perfectly

legitimate; they call you narrow and bigoted because you do not join

with them; they are always arguing with you to prove you are wrong. But

your supreme law is your attitude to your Master. "I cannot do

otherwise for the love of Jesus."

"Not I, because of the fear of God."

"Not I, but the grace of God that was with me."

"Not I, but Christ liveth in me."

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I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Neh. vi. 3.

IT was a sublime answer. Below was the Plain of Ono, where Nehemiah's

foes awaited him. Let him once descend into it and he would become

their easy prey; but he withstood their four-fold solicitation by

considering the greatness of the work he was doing and the responsible

position he was called to fill. Other-worldliness is the best cure for

worldliness. Those whose affections are set on things above, will have

no difficulty in refusing the appeals of sense. Get your heart and

hands deeply engaged in the great work of building God's Temple, and

you will be proof to the most flattering proposals ever made by Madam

Bubble.

Oh, children of the Great King, let us pray that we may know the

grandeur of our position before Him; the high calling with which we

have been called; the vast responsibilities with which we are

entrusted; the great work of co-operating with God in erecting the city

of God. Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ! Called to sit with

Christ in the Heavenlies! Risen, ascended, crowned in Him! Sitting with

Christ, far above all principality and power! How can we go down --

down to the world that rejected Him; down to the level of the first

Adam, from which, at so great cost, we have been raised; down to the

quarry from which we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were

digged! No, it cannot be; and as we make our choice, let us look to the

living and ascended Christ to make it good. Put your will on his side,

and expect that the energy of the power that raised Him from the dead

will raise and maintain you in union with Him. For "your life is hid

with Christ in God."

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It was not found. Neh. vii. 64.

CERTAIN claimed the maintenance of the priests, and were challenged to

show their name in the register of the priestly line. In all likelihood

they were descended from the sons of Aaron, but through marriage

outside the priestly clan, and through the fact also of the name of the

mother's father being adopted, their names were not reckoned in the

priestly genealogy; consequently, their claim for priestly maintenance

and service could not be established.

Is there not something like this still? Men, who were called to be

God's priests, drop out of the register of those who serve before Him.

It may be they are not sure of their genealogy, and have lost the

assurance of sonship; their spirit is no longer filled with the blessed

co-witness of the Holy Ghost. God is afar from them; and, being out of

harmony with Him, they are out of sympathy with their fellows. They

are, therefore, rightly put out of the priesthood.

Now trace this matter back to its beginning. As likely as not you will

find it originated in some worldly alliance. He that will be a friend

of the world is necessarily an enemy with God. For a mess of pottage

Esau loses his birthright.

But all this can be put right. There has arisen a Priest, who holds the

Urim and Thummim in his hand: God's own Priest after the order of

Melchizedek. "Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like

unto his brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest

in things pertaining to God." He waits to reinstate the erring soul,

restore it to the priestly office, and give it priestly food and

maintenance.

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The joy of the Lord is your strength. Neh. viii. 10.

"THE sad heart tires in a mile," is a frequent proverb. What a

difference there is between the energy of the healthy, joyous heart and

the forced activity of the morbid and depressed one! The one leaps to

its task, the other creeps to it. The one discovers its meat and drink

in self-sacrifice, the other limps, and stoops, and crawls. If you want

to be strong for life's work, be sure to keep a glad heart. But, be

equally sure to be glad with the joy of Lord. There is a counterfeit of

it in the world, of which we must beware -- an outward merry-making,

jesting, and mad laughter, which hides an aching and miserable heart.

Solomon compares the joy of the world to the crackling of thorns under

a pot, which flare up with great speed, but burn out before the water

in the pot is warm.

Ours must be the joy of the Lord. It begins with the assurance of

forgiveness and acceptance in the Beloved. It is nourished in trial and

tribulation, which veil outward sources of consolation, and lead us to

rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus. It is independent of

circumstances, so that its possessors can sing in the stocks. It lives

not in the gifts of God, but in God Himself. It is the fruit of the

Spirit, who begets in us love, joy, peace, long-suffering. Get the Lord

Himself to fill your soul, and joy will be as natural as the murmur of

a brook to its flow.

And such joy will always reveal itself to others. You will desire to

send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. Your joy will be

contagious; it will shed its kindly light on sad and weary hearts. As

Rutherford said, we have a new heaven in the heaven of every soul we

bring there.

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The seed of Israel separated themselves. Neh. ix. 2.

THIS is the beginning of the true life. Turn to the story of creation,

and you learn, first, that God divided the light from the darkness;

next, the waters of the clouds from those on the earth; and next, the

seas from the land. It was only thus that He could effect his purpose

of substituting kosmos for chaos. So, in the development of the inner

life, there must be separation and judgment; the discrimination of the

false from the true, the evil from the good." Separate Me . . . for the

work whereunto I have called them."

When God put his hand to man's highest culture, He separated Shem from

his brethren; Terah's house from other kindred clans; and Abraham from

his people. What weight this gave to those solemn words, "I am the Lord

your God, which have separated you from other people. And ye shall be

holy unto Me; for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other

people that ye should be mine" (Lev. xx. 24, 26). It was not that God

had no care for the great world; but that He desired to concentrate his

attention on a few, that when they had fully caught his thought they

might pass it on to mankind.

This accounts for the cry of the Holy Ghost through the Apostle,

"Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not

the unclean thing." We must be separate in our practices, cleansing

ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; in our pursuits,

going with Christ without the camp; in our pleasures; and in our

alliances. "Follow the Christ -- the King! Live pure! Speak true! Right

wrong! Follow the King! Else, wherefore born! "

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The children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the

offering. Neh. x. 39.

IT was about this time that Malachi wrote the memorable words, "Bring

ye all the tithes into my storehouse, that there may be meat in my

house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not pour

you out a blessing." When a people has separated itself to God, there

will be no lack in its house, no failure in its supplies, no lack for

its ministers. So with the individual. All they that had separated

themselves entered into an oath to charge themselves yearly for the

service of the house of God. Separation is the negative side of

consecration.

How does this touch you, my friend? What proportion of your income are

you setting apart for the service of God? The amount that a man gives

in proportion to his income is a sure gauge of the genuineness and

depth of his religious life. The Jew gave about a third of his yearly

income to God; do we come up to this standard? Yet we speak of the Jews

with contempt, as hard-fisted and miserly. These old Jews might set an

example to us newer Christians. How often we reverse our position from

God's ideal! He puts us over his estate that we should send Him all the

produce, after deducting what is necessary for our maintenance, and

that of our families. But we engross the entire proceeds for ourselves,

sending Him an odd guinea, or half-crown, when we can easily spare it.

Let us see that we give at least a fixed proportion of our income, and

as much more as we can. Do not forsake the House of your God; so shall

the heavens be opened in blessing. "There is that giveth and yet

increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it sendeth

to poverty."

A certain portion should be for the singers. Neh. xi. 23.

IT was the king's command, and it was very right and sensible, because

they enlivened and quickened the life of the entire community. A mere

utilitarian spirit might have refused to maintain them, because they

did not contribute to the handicrafts of the community. They only sang

the praises of God; but they fulfilled a very important part in the

life of the city, and they deserved the portion which was regularly

contributed to them.

You sometimes feel your life to be comparatively useless. You can only

say a kind word to those who are doing the main business of the world.

When the brothers had wrought all day at the clearing for the farm,

their sister Hope sang through the evening hours to cheer them and

drive away their sense of fatigue. That was all she could do; but was

she not deserving of maintenance? You can only sing your song of hope,

and keep the heart of the toilers sweet and fresh. You can only get

inspiration from God's heart and pass it on. You can do little but

learn to detect, and translate into music that men love, the deep

undertones of God's creation. But it is well. You are needed in God's

world.

There are invalids, who lie on their back through weary months and

years, that are the inspiration of their homes, and to their side the

elders and the children come for counsel and comfort. Sing on, ye sweet

choristers, that alleviate our depressions and start our hearts to high

endeavour! Ye that by night, in sleepless hours, stand in the house of

the Lord, praise ye the Lord when all the busy life of men is hushed!

The King will see to it that ye do not miss your maintenance, your

portion day by day.

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David, the man of God. Neh. xii. 24, 36, 37, 45, 46.

HOW long the influence of David has lingered over the world, like the

afterglow of a sunset! Mark the characteristic in him which laid the

foundation of his supremacy over the hearts of his countrymen. He was

pre-eminently "a man of God." Notwithstanding his terrible fall, his

people recognised that his salient characteristic was Godward. Would

you be one of God's men?

(1) Give all to God. -- Too many live lives of piecemeal consecration,

giving a bit here and a bit there, but never all. David surrendered

himself to do God's will utterly, and in all, and so became a man after

God's own heart. With what joy God's voice seems to quiver, as He says,

"I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, who

shall fulfil all my will" (Acts xiii. 22). Without reserve, holding

nothing back, yield yourself to God, to be, and do, and suffer his

will, whatever it may be.

(2) Take all from God. -- "It is not what we give to Jesus, but what we

take from Him, that makes us strong, helpful, and victorious day by

day." Accept this as a fact, that in Jesus God has made all his fulness

dwell. There is nothing we require, for life or godliness, that is not

stored in Him; but the terrible loss of our lives is that we take so

little. We have ourselves to blame if we are poor, and miserable, and

blind, and naked.

(3) Use all for God. -- It sometimes appears as though Christian people

were urged to yield themselves to God, only that their lives might be

more comfortable. But the supreme and final end in all surrender must

be that his will be done, his glory promoted, and Himself magnified

whether in life or death.

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Remember me, O my God! Neh. xiii. 14, 22, 31.

THRICE in this chapter this humble man asks to be remembered. We cannot

think that he expected to purchase God's favour because of his

sacrifices and endeavours. Of this he was already assured. But being a

redeemed soul, he desired that his works might come up in remembrance

before God, and secure a reward. There is no harm in keeping the eye

fixed on the reward for faithful toil in the Lord's service. It was a

constant incentive in the life, of the great Apostle that he might so

run as to obtain; so finish his work that he might win the crown.

Note the three departments of service mentioned in this chapter, in

connection with which Nehemiah breathed this petition. He had turned

all Tobia's household stuff out of the temple, so that the whole

structure should be given up to the service of God. He had secured the

Sabbath from desecration, so that its holy rest and calm were preserved

intact. And he insisted on the purity of the holy seed being untainted

by foreign alliances. Consecration to God, the Rest of Faith in the

inner life, and the separation of God's children from the world, are

the counterparts of these in our own time.

Shall we not humbly set ourselves to seek them for the professing

Church? Nehemiah was an ungifted, simple-hearted man, but he was able

to secure them as the instrument and channel of God's purposes. Why

should not God work through us for the same ends. But, first, let us

see to it that each of these particulars is being realized in our own

personal character and life. Let every room of the heart be for God;

let no voice break the inner peace. Then what God has done for us, we

may confidently plead as within his scheme for others.

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That every man should bear rule in his own house. Esther i. 22.

ONE of the pre-requisites in choosing a presiding officer in the early

Church was that he should rule well his own house; "for if a man know

not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of

God?" (1 Tim. iii. 4, 5).

When a man bears rule as husband and father in the love of God, there

is no issue of commands which conflict with primary obligations; rather

than that, his authority represents the Divine authority. As Christ

received his authority from the Father, so does a man derive and

receive his from Christ; and in the recognition of his delegated right

and ability to lead, the entire household becomes well ordered. The

relaxation of the bonds of authority and government in our homes is one

of the saddest symptoms of national decay, as it is among the predicted

signs of the end (2 Tim. iii. 2, 3).

But, on the other hand, you must show yourself worthy to lead and rule

your home. Your character must be such as to command respect. Those

whom God has put into your charge require that you do not us your

authority for selfish or capricious ends. Above all, love is the source

of the truest authority. We count nothing hard or irksome that we do

for those we love. Show love, and you will win love; and on love will

be built respect, reverence, and obedience.

One of the most eloquent of modern Italians has said truly: "You can

only obtain the exercise of your rights by deserving them, through your

own activity, and your own spirit of love and sacrifice!" Christ's

golden rule holds good in every phase of life -- "In all things,

whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

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Hadassah, that is, Esther. Esther ii. 7.

THROUGH this one girl-life God was about to save his people, though He

was all the while hidden from view. The peculiarity of this book is

that there is no mention of the name of God; but there is no book in

the Bible more full of the presence and working of God for his own. His

name is clearly in the watermark of the paper, if it do not appear in

the print.

We know that the meshes of evil plotting were laid for the hurt of

Israel long before the fatal decree was made for the destruction of the

entire nation; but here we find that God has begun his preparations for

deliverance long before. In the beauty of Esther, in the position her

uncle held at court, in the favour she won with the king, in the

discovery through Mordecai of the plot against the king's life, there

are the materials of a great and Divine deliverance. God was clearly

beforehand to the devil. The angels of light were on the ground before

those of darkness were marshalled.

It is a sweet thought to carry with us always: God prepares of his

goodness for the poor. He prepares the good work in which we are to

walk, and the deliverances by which He will succour us in the hour of

need. Do not dread the foe, be not fearful nor dismayed, as he draws

his net around thee; God has prepared a way of escape, so that thou

shalt be able to bear it. In the meanwhile, rest in the Lord, and wait

patiently for Him; trust in the Lord; wait for the Lord; be silent to

the Lord. He is more farseeing, his plans more far-reaching, his help

more certain, than all the stratagems of evil. God laughs at them. Into

the pit they have dug, thine enemies shall fall.

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But Mordecai bowed not. Esther iii. 2.

THERE was stern stuff in this old Jew. He was not going to prostrate

himself before one so haughty and so depraved as Haman, albeit that he

was the king's favourite. To be the only one in a city office that does

not laugh at the questionable story; to stand alone on shipboard

against the gambling mania; to refuse to countenance cleverness which

is divorced from cleanness, and genius which is apart from goodness --

this is to do as Mordecai did in the gate of the king's palace.

Only God can give this power, since of ourselves we are as reeds shaken

by the wind. Sooner might a single ear of wheat resist the breeze that

bends all its companions in the same direction, than we stand alone,

whilst all our associates bow, unless God Himself enable as. But God is

prepared to enable us. Listen: "I will strengthen thee; yea, I will

help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my

righteousness." But the mistake we are so apt to make is to brace

ourselves up by resolution and firm determination, in anticipation of

some impending struggle. To do this is to fail. Live in Christ, look up

into his face, derive from Him strength for the moment and at the

moment; and often wrap about thee that exceeding great and precious

promise, "I will make him to become a pillar in the temple of my God;

and he shall go no more out; and I will write on him the name of my

God." Oh to stand pillar-like amid men, bearing up the temple arch of

truth, and inscribed with God's name, whilst the crowds go and come on

the pavement beneath!

"Greatly begin! though thou have time

But for a line, be that sublime --

Not Failure, but low aim, is Crime!"

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Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as

this? Esther iv. 14.

WHAT grand faith was here! Mordecai was in God's secrets, and was

assured that deliverance and enlargement would come to his people from

some quarter -- if not from Esther, then from some other; but he was

extremely anxious that she should not miss the honour of being her

people's emancipator. Therefore he suggested that she had come to her

high position for this very purpose.

We none of us know, at the first, God's reasons for bringing us into

positions of honour and trust. Why is that young girl suddenly made

mistress over that household? Why is that youth taken from the ranks of

the working-people, and placed over that great City church? Why is that

man put forward in his business, so that he is the head of the firm in

which he served as an office-boy? All these are parts of the Divine

plan. God has brought them to the Kingdom that He may work out through

them some great purpose of salvation. They have the option, however, to

serve it or not. They may use their position for themselves, for their

own emolument and enjoyment, that they may surround themselves with

strong fortifications against misfortune; but in that case they court

destruction. Their position and wealth may vanish as suddenly as it

came; or ill-health and disaster may incapacitate them.

If, on the other hand, all is used for God, though at the risk of

perishing -- for it seemed to Esther as though the action to which

Mordecai urged her meant that -- the issue is blessed. Those that love

their lives lose them; those that are prepared to forfeit them keep

them. The wheat grain which is buried in the soil bears much fruit.

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The king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand.

Esther v. 2.

WHAT a beautiful type this is for each of us in our approaches to God!

For the repentant sinner. -- You may have said with Esther, "I will go

into the king's presence, and if I perish, I perish." But it is

impossible for you to perish. None ever perished at the footstool of

mercy. God is faithful to his promises, and just to his Son; and He can

do no other -- He wants to do no other -- than forgive. As you stand

amid the throng that surrounds his throne, He will espy you, and accept

you graciously, because of the God-Man who sits at his right hand, and

ever lives to intercede. In his name you may come boldly and obtain

mercy.

For the suppliant. -- You have a great boon to ask for yourself, or

another. The King's court stands open; enter and lodge your petition.

He will be very gracious at the voice of your cry: the golden sceptre

extended, his word passed, that He will answer with the whole resources

of his kingdom. The answer may not come at once, or in the way you

expected; but no true suppliant was ever turned away without his

complaint or cause being graciously considered, and in the best way met

and adjusted.

For the Christian worker. -- Surely Esther represents a Paul prepared

to be himself accursed, a Luther, a Brainerd. It is a lovely sight when

the child of God is so oppressed with the burden of other souls as to

sacrifice all else in order to plead their cause. Surely such find

favour with God; they are kindred spirits with his own, and He bids

them share his throne. God will do anything for those who are consumed

by his own redemptive purpose.

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As thou hast said, do even so to Mordecai the Jew. Esther vi. 10.

HERE indeed was a turning of the tables! Haman doing honour to the

humble Jew, who refused to do honour to himself. Surely that day the

old refrain must have rung through Mordecai's heart: -- "He raiseth up

the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghilI,

to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of

glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's." And there was an

anticipation of yet other words: -- "For thou hast a little strength,

and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name: behold, I will make

them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved

thee."

How evidently God was working for his child. The gallows, indeed, was

being prepared, but it would be used for Haman; whilst the triumph that

Haman thought to be preparing for himself was to be used for Mordecai.

This is not an isolated case. Any one who has lived a few years in the

world and has observed the ways of God could duplicate it with

instances that have come under his own notice. Dr. Gordon told us once

of a church in Boston that would not admit coloured people; and after a

few years it broke up, and the edifice is now occupied by a flourishing

coloured church.

Trust on, beloved friend, amid scorn, hate, and threatening death. So

long as thy cause is God's, it must prevail. He will vindicate thee.

Them that honour Him He will honour; whilst those that despise Him

shall be lightly esteemed.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,

Yet they grind exceeding small;

Though with patience He stands waiting,

With exactness grinds He all."

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What is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy

request? Esther vii. 2.

AMID the sensual conceptions of marriage that obtained in this heathen

empire there was doubtless a consciousness in the king's breast of the

essential unity between himself and his beautiful queen. She was his

better self, and in her pleading he heard the voice of his own higher

nature. To nothing less than this could he have made so far-reaching a

promise. It was not so much Ahasuerus pledging himself to Esther, as

Ahasuerus, the king, awakening to the appeal of a nobler Ahasuerus, for

the most part buried. Such is the power of a pure and noble character

awakening a nobler life. Will you try by your unselfishness and purity

to awaken those around you to see and follow an ideal, which shall

presently assume the form of the living Christ?

In these words of the king we are reminded that God is willing to do

beyond what we ask or think. Not to the half of his kingdom, but to the

whole extent of it, has God pledged Himself, "according to the power

that worketh in us." But our prayer must be in the name, or nature, of

Christ; that is, the nature of Christ must pray in us, and God must

recognise Himself come back through the circle of our intercession to

Himself. The Spirit must make intercession in us, according to the will

of God. When the unselfish, lovely, and holy nature of Jesus pleads in

us by the Holy Ghost, there is nothing that God will not do for us,

even to the whole of his kingdom.

"If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye

will, and it shall be done unto you."

"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name He will give it you."

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Sealed with the king's ring. Esther viii. 8.

IN chap. iii. 10 the king took the ring from his hand, and gave it to

Haman. It is evident that he had resumed it from his chief officer's

finger before sending him to execution. It was now entrusted to

Mordecai, because it gave validity to the documents that proclaimed

liberty to the Jews. Notice those words: "The writing which is written

in the king's name, and sealed with the kings seal, no man may

reverse," and apply them to that sealing with the Holy Ghost, of which

we read so often in the New Testament.

On the molten wax the ring, with its royal device, or perhaps the

cutting of the royal profile, was pressed, giving sanction, validity,

and irreversibleness; so on the tender heart of the believer in Christ,

the Holy Spirit impresses the likeness of Jesus. The seal does not

leave an impression of itself, but of the sovereign; and the Holy

Spirit reveals not Himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and aims only to

leave the mark and superscription of Christ on the character. The word

character is used in Hebrews i. 3 (see Greek). How wonderful, that as

the image or character of the Father was impressed on Christ, so the

Saviour's image and character are impressed on us! "Him hath God the

Father sealed," says the evangelist. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of

God, by whom ye were sealed," says the Apostle.

This sealing us with the likeness of Jesus is God's attestation. It is

his witness that we are born from above, and are become his sons and

daughters. It is God's sign manual of his intention and decree that we

should inherit an irreversible portion; and when God has once passed

and sealed it, neither man nor devil can reverse it.

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The Jews had rule over them that hated them . Esther ix. 1.

YES, my reader, a similar reversal awaits us in the near future! Now,

the god of this world and his followers bear rule over us, and work

their way with the servants of God. They butcher them like sheep, and

scatter the ashes of their homes to the winds; and sometimes it seems

as though God had forgotten to avenge the cause of his saints. But the

hour is coming when the Almighty will arise on our behalf; and to him

who has patiently kept his works unto the end, He will give authority

over the nations. Listen to these great words: "Behold, I give of the

synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews, and they are not,

but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy

feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Words more applicable to the

case of the Jews in the days of Mordecai, and to the history of the

Church, it would be impossible to find.

But mark a notable distinction. In the case of the enemies of the

Jewish people, there was no quarter. Destruction and death were meted

to those who had breathed out persecution and slaughter. But in the

case of Christ and his Church, power is viewed only as an opportunity

of securing salvation and life. The Saviour said, after his

resurrection, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth; go

ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them

into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and

lo, I am with you alway." And the Church says, as through suffering she

passes to the right hand of power, "Lay not this sin to their charge;

but out of our persecutors raise apostles to carry the Gospel to the

confines of the earth."

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Seeking the good of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

Esther x. 3 (R.V.).

THIS epitaph on the life of a simple-minded, truehearted man, might be

yours also. Why should you not from this moment adopt these, twin

characteristics? Go about the world seeking the good of people. It does

not always mean that you should give them a tract, or a little book. It

is much easier to do this than to sacrifice your own good in order to

seek theirs. You may be quite sure that some little act of

self-sacrifice or thoughtfulness for a weary mother, or crying child,

for a sick friend, or for some person who is always maligning and

injuring you, would do a great deal in the way of preparing an entrance

for the Gospel message. It is thus that the genial spring loosens the

earth and prepares the way for the germination of multitudinous life.

Count the day lost in which you have not sought to promote the good of

some one. Adopt as your own the pious Quaker's motto, "Do all the good

you can, to all the people you can, in all the ways you can."

Speak peace to people. -- Soothe agitated and irritated souls. Throw

oil on troubled waters. There are worried and anxious hearts all around

us; a word of sympathy and earnest prayer with them will often remove

the heavy load, and smooth out the wrinkles of care. Let the law of

kindness be on your lip. Do not say sharp or unkind things of the

absent, or allow your lips to utter words that will lead to bitterness

or wrath. Seek peace and pursue it. And in order to this, let the peace

of God that passeth all understanding keep your mind and heart.

"Come, my beloved! We will haste and go

To those pale faces of our fellow-men!

Our loving hearts, burning with summer-fire,

Shall cast a glow upon their pallidness."

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Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and renounced God in their

hearts. Job i. 5 (R.V.).

TIMES of festivity are always full of temptation. The loins are

relaxed, the girdle of the soul is loosed. Amid the general hilarity

and the passing of the merry joke, words are said and thoughts

permitted which are not always consistent with the character of God and

his glorious kingdom and service. Job was not wrong, therefore, in

supposing that his children might have contracted some defiling stain.

It necessary for some of us to move in society, and to attend festive

gatherings. As the Lord went to the wedding feast, and accepted Simon's

invitation, so must we. The sphere of our life lies necessarily in the

world. But when we are entering scenes of recreation and pleasure we

should be more than ever careful to put on our armour, and by previous

meditation and prayer prepare ourselves for the inevitable temptation;

and when it is all over, and the lights are down, we should quietly

review our behaviour under the light that streams from the Word of God.

If we then are made aware of frivolous or uncharitable words, of

jealousy because others have outshone us, or of pride at the splendour

of our dress and the brilliance of our talk, we must confess it, and

obtain forgiveness and restoration.

What a beautiful example is furnished by Job to Christian parents! When

your girls are going among strangers, and your boys into the great ways

of the world, and you are unable to impose your will upon them, as in

the days of childhood, you can yet pray for them, casting over them the

shield of intercession, with strong cryings and tears. They are beyond

your reach; but by faith you can move the arm of God on their behalf.

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A perfect and an upright man. Job ii. 3.

EVEN God spoke of Job as perfect. Not that he was absolutely so, as

judged by the perfect standard of eternity, but as judged by the

standard of his own light and knowledge. He was living up to all the

requirements of God and man, so far as he understood them. His whole

being was open and obedient to the Divine impulses. So far as he knew

there was no cause of controversy in heart or life. Probably he could

have adopted the words of the Apostle, "I know nothing against myself."

He exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward

God and man.

Satan suggested that his goodness was pure selfishness; that it paid

him well to be as he was, because God had hedged him around and blessed

his substance. This malignant suggestion was at once dealt with by the

Almighty Vindicator of the saints. It was as if God said, "I give thee

permission to deprive him of all those favouring conditions, for the

sake of which thou sayest he is bribed to goodness; and it shall be

seen that his integrity is rooted deep down in the work of my grace

upon his heart."

But the book goes on to show that God desired to teach Job that there

were flaws and blemishes in his character which could only be seen by

comparing it with the more perfect glory of his own Divine nature. His

friends sought to prove him faulty, and failed; God revealed himself,

and he cried, "Behold, I am vile, and abhor myself, and repent in dust

and ashes."

How often God takes away our consolations, that we may only love Him

for Himself; and reveals our sinfulness, that we may better appreciate

the completeness of his salvation!

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Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day. Job iii. 1.

THAT is, the day of his birth. Probably there have been hours in the

majority of lives in which men have wished that they had never been

born. When they have stood beside the wreck of all earthly hope, or

entered the garden of the grave they have cried, "Why died I not from

the birth!" The reason for this is, that the heart has been so occupied

with the transient and earthly, that it has lost sight of the unseen

and eternal; and in finding itself deprived of the former, it has

thought that there was nothing left to live for.

One of the greatest tests of true religion is in bearing suffering. At

such a time we are apt, if we are professing Christians, to exert a

certain constraint over ourselves, and bear ourselves heroically. We

have read of people in like circumstances who have not shed a tear or

uttered a complaining word; and we have braced ourselves to a Christian

stoicism. "I am sure you cannot find fault with my behaviour," said one

such to me. And yet beneath the correct exterior there may be the pride

and haughtiness of an altogether unsubdued self.

There is a more excellent way: to humble oneself under the mighty hand

of God; to search the heart for any dross that needs to be burnt out;

to resign oneself to the will of the Father; to endeavour to learn the

lesson in the black-lettered book; to seek to manifest the specific

grace for which the trial calls; to be very tender and thoughtful for

others; to live deeper down.

"Nearer, my God to Thee! -- Nearer to Thee!

E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,

Still all my song shall be -- Nearer, my God, to Thee!

Nearer to Thee!"

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But now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest. Job iv. 5 (R.V.).

IT is much easier to counsel others in their trouble than to bear it

ourselves. Full often the soul, which has poured floods of consolation

on others, feels sadly in need of a touch, a voice, a sympathising

companion, as the chill waters begin to rise towards the knees, and the

shadow of the great eclipse falls around. The fact of our having

consoled so many others seems at such a moment to leave us the more

solitary and lonesome. People have been so wont to be helped by as that

they hardly dare approach us; besides, they suppose that all the fund

of comfort from which we have succoured others must be now available

for us. What can they say that we have not said a hundred times? and if

we have said it, of course we must know all about it; but they do not

know how wistful the heart is to hear it said to us with the accent of

a sympathetic voice and the touch of a ministering hand.

Ah, it will come unto thee at last. The pain and sorrow of life will

find thee out. The arrow will at last fix itself quivering in thy

heart. How wilt thou do then? Thou wilt faint unless thy words have

sprung from a living experience of the love and presence of Jesus. Thou

must have a better hope than "the integrity of thy ways," as suggested

by Eliphaz. But there awaits thee the personal fellowship of Jesus, a

brother born for the hour of trial. He is the never-failing Friend, who

sticketh closer than a brother. Put Him and his will and his choice

between thee and thy sorrow, whatever it may be. Hide thee in his

secret place, and under the shadow of his wings thou shalt enjoy sweet

peace.

"Only heaven Is better than a walk

With Christ at midnight over moonlit seas."

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He maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth and his hands make whole.

Job v. 18.

HAS this been your experience lately? Have you been made sore by the

heavy scourge of pain, and wounded by the nails of the cross? Do not

look at second causes. Men may have been the instruments, but God is

the Agent. The cup has been presented by a Judas, but the Father

permitted it; and it is therefore the cup that the Father hath given

you to drink. Shall you not drink it? How much He must love you, to

dare to inflict this awful discipline, which makes your love and trust,

that He values so infinitely, tremble in the scale! "Despise not thou

the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for

whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He

receiveth."

But do not look back on what you have suffered; look on and up! As

surely as He has made sore, He will bind up; as soon as He has wounded,

his hands will begin to make whole. Consider the reparative processes

of nature. So soon as the unsightly ruin or chasm yawns, nature begins

to weave her rich festoons, to cover it with moss and lichen; let the

flesh be punctured or lacerated, the blood begins to poor out the

protoplastic matter to be woven into a new fabric. So when the heart

seems bleeding its life away, God is at work binding up and healing.

Think of those dear and tender hands, that fashioned the heavens, and

touched the eyeballs of the blind, as laid upon you to make you whole.

Trust Him; He loves infinitely, and will suffer none that trust in Him

to be desolate.

We must be careful, however, that nothing on our part shall hinder the

life of the Son of God from flowing through us, as the sap of the vine

through every branch.

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As a brook, as the channel of brooks that pass away. Job vi. 15 (R.V.).

JOB complains of his three friends. He was glad when they first came to

his side, as likely to yield him comfort in his sore distress. Instead

of this, however, they began probing his heart and searching his life,

to find the secret sin on account of which his heavy troubles had

befallen him. Their philosophy was at fault.They held that special

misfortune is always the result of special sin; and since there was

nothing in Job's outward conduct to account for his awful sufferings,

they felt that he was hiding some secret defection, which they urged

him to confess. Job felt that in all this they cruelly misunderstood

him, and compares them in these words to one of the desert streams that

are choked with ice and snow in the time of the winter rains, but

dwindle and dry up on the first approach of summer. And when the weary

caravans come to their banks, lo, their bed is a mere heap of stones.

"They come thither and are confounded."

Is it not so with human friendships? We hoped that they would quench

the raging thirst of our souls; this hope increases when they draw nigh

us in days of sorrow; but how often they fail us -- stones for bread,

scorpions for fish, and scorching pebbles instead of water-brooks. How

great a contrast to the love and friendship of Jesus! Not like a brook

that dries in the time of drought, but like a well of water springing

up within the heart for ever. He does not merely give consolation and

sympathy, but He is what He gives. He imparts Himself. His promise

chases away our fears as his Spirit reminds us of the words, "I will

never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Nothing gives Him greater joy than

to be the perfect circle of which earth's friendships are broken arcs.

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What is man . . . that thou shouldest visit him every morning? Job vii.

17, 18.

GOD visits us with mercy every morning. Before we are awake He is at

work in the world, baptizing it with dew, feeding the birds and wild

things, taking pleasure in the jasmine and heliotrope, the honeysuckle,

and the rose; and with all his care for his world, He does not forget

man, whom He has placed there to be its tenant. There is no life so

mean and abject, so suffering and wretched, that He does not visit in

order to comfort and relieve it. No heart so forlorn that He does not

knock at the door: no window so selfishly curtained and shuttered, at

which He does not tap. "Open to Me!" the heavenly visitor entreats, "my

love, my dove, my spouse!" Alas for us! that we keep the doors and

windows closed to Him -- as the poor widow to a beneficent friend, who

called to relieve her, but she mistook him for the rent-collector.

But probably Job meant that God visits us in discipline, training,

education. He is the watcher of men; not to detect their failures, but

to discover opportunities of leading them on to richer, fuller

experiences of his grace and life. Surely, as we consider all the time

and pains which God has expended on us, we too may cry, with the

patriarch, "What is man?" Man is more than we guess, else God would

never take such time and pains with him. When a lapidary spends years

over a single diamond, the most careless observer begins to appraise

properly its intrinsic value.

Every morning God visits thee, with holy thoughts and warnings, with

miracles and parables, with anticipations and forecasts -- oh, realize

how much thou art to Him: give Him love for love, thanks and loving

recognition, a child's welcome and trust.

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If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee. Job

viii. 6.

SO Bildad spoke, suggesting that Job was not pure and upright, since

God did not appear to deliver him. The premises from which he argued

were that God always delivers and prospers pure and upright men, and

that therefore, if a man were not delivered and prospered, he was

proved to be neither pure nor upright. The fallacy lay in the premiss.

It is not universally true that God delivers his saints from adverse

circumstances, or prospers them with outward good. There have been in

all ages thousands of devoted servants of God who have been destitute,

afflicted, and tormented; and there are thousands of such to-day in

prisons, in hospital wards, in every condition of privation and trial;

but in none of these cases can there be the least imputation on the

love and righteousness of God, nor necessarily on their fidelity and

goodness.

God's arrangements for us are not governed by the superficial

philosophy which would make material prosperity a sign of his favour,

and adversity of his displeasure. There are many considerations beside.

Our privations in the outward strengthen and ripen the inward. As the

outward man decays, the inward is renewed day by day. We have to learn

and manifest those passive virtues which can only mature in silence and

sorrow. We must be taught to be largely independent of circumstances,

and to find in God Himself the springs of unfailing supply. We must

learn to carry the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may not

trust in ourselves, but in the living God. We have to stiffer with and

for others. All these things worketh God with us to make us partakers

of his holiness. But amid all our sorrows, He is always awake for us.

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Yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor

me. Job ix. 31.

WE shall never got beyond the need of using daily the Lord's prayer. He

has bound by the conjunction and the prayer for forgiveness with that

for daily bread, as though to teach us that we shall need the one as

Iong as we need the other. At the end of the best day that we ever

spent, when we are not aware of having consciously sinned in act, or

speech, or thought, we shall still have need of the precious blood. We

may know nothing against ourselves, yet we shall not be thereby

justified; because He that judgeth us is our holy Lord, and the

standard by which we are judged is his own perfect character. A piece

of cambric looks extremely fine to the eye, but how coarse to the

microscope! Sheep look white against the dark ground of the early

spring; but how dark if there should be a fall of snow! Our characters

seem stainless, only because we compare ourselves with ourselves, or

with others.

But, when our eyes are opened to see God, to behold the whiteness of

the great white throne, and we stand in the searching light of heaven,

we are as those who have just emerged from a ditch. I heard the other

day of a woman being proud of having lived without sin for ten years!

So we deceive ourselves. No, at the best we are sinful men and women,

needing constant cleansing; even though we may be kept from known sin

by the grace of Christ. It was at an advanced period in the life of the

great Apostle, and when he lived nearest God, that he realized himself

to be the chief of sinners.

"I know not what I am, but only know

I have had glimpses tongue may never speak:

No more I balance human joy and woe,

But think of my transgressions, and am meek."

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The land of darkness and the shadow of death. Job x. 21.

THIS represented the highest thinking of that age about the future.

There were gleams now and again of something more; but they were fitful

and uncertain, soon overtaken by dark and sad forebodings. How

different to our happy condition, for whom death is abolished, whilst

life and immortality have been brought to light! The patriarch called

the present life Day, and the future Night. We know that in comparison

the present is Night, and the future Day. "The night is far spent, the

day is at hand; let us put on the armour of light."

For us, too, there is something better. We wait for his Son from

heaven; we look for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our

great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. "As the waters of the sea are held

between two mighty gravitations, the moon now drawing them towards

itself, and the earth drawing them back again, thus giving the ebbing

and flowing tide, by which our earth is kept clean and healthful, so

must the tides of the soul's affection move perpetually between the

cross of Christ and the coming of Christ, influenced now by the power

of memory and now by the power of hope." It is said of the late Dr.

Gordon: "Hardly a sermon was preached without allusion to the glorious

appearing. Never a day passed in which he did not prepare himself for

it, in which its hastening was not sought for with prayer." "Yet a

little while [Greek, how little! how little!] and He that shall come

will come." The attitude of every believer should be that of waiting:

with loins girt and lamp burning, let us be ready to meet our Lord.

"The Best is yet to be,

The Last for which the First was made."

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Canst thou by searching find out God? Job xi. 7.

THERE is but one answer to that question. No one can. The very angels

veil their faces before the insufferable glory of his face.

"The firstborn sons of light

Desire in vain his depths to see;

They cannot reach the mystery,

The length, and breadth, and height.

Do not be surprised, then, if there should be matters in the Bible, in

your own life, and in the Providential government of the world, which

baffle your thought. Remember you are only a little child in an infant

class, and it is not likely that you can comprehend the whole system of

your instructor. God would cease to be God to us, if we by searching

could find Him out.

But though we cannot find out God by the searching of the intellect, we

may know Him by love. "He that loveth, knoweth God; for God is Love."

There is a way of knowing God, which is hidden from the wise and

prudent, and revealed to babes. Seek to be strengthened with might by

his Spirit in the inner man. Let Christ dwell deep in your heart by

faith. Take care to obey all his commandments, and then the Holy God

will come into you, and abide. He will give you Himself, and you will

know Him as a little child knows its parent, whom it cannot grasp with

its mind, but loves and trusts and knows with its heart. We cannot find

out God by searching, but we can by loving.

We can also find Him in the character and life of Jesus. He that hath

seen Him hath seen the Father; why then ask to be shown the Father?

"What is Thy name, mystery of strength and beauty?" "Shiloh,

Rest-Giver," is the deep response.

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Doth not the ear try words? and the palate tasteth its meat. Job xii.

11 (R.V.).

THERE is no appeal from the verdict of our palate.We know in a moment

whether a substance is sweet or bitter, palatable or disagreeable. Now,

what the taste is to articles of diet, that the ear is to words,

whether of God or man. More especially we can tell in a moment whether

the fire of inspiration is burning in them. This is the test which Job

proposed to apply to the words of his friends; and it would be well for

all of us to apply the same test to Holy Scripture.

The humble student of the Word of God is sometimes much perplexed and

cast down by the assaults which are made on it by scholars and

teachers, who do not scruple to question the authorship and authority

of large tracts of Scripture. We cannot vie with these in scholarship,

but the humblest may apply the test of the purged ear; and it will

detect a certain quality in the Bible which is absent everywhere

beside. There is a tone in the voice of Scripture, which the child of

God must recognise. This is the interesting characteristic in the

quotations made in the New Testament from the Old. All the writers in

the later Revelation detect the voice of God in the Old; to them, it is

the Divine utterance through holy lips. Hearken, they cry, "the holy

Ghost saith." God is speaking in the prophets, as He spake in his Son.

It is one of the characteristics of Christ's sheep that they know his

voice, and follow Him, whilst they flee from the voice of strangers.

Ask that the Lord may touch your ears, that they may discern by a swift

intuition the voice of the Good Shepherd from that of strangers; and

for grace to follow immediately He calls you.

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Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Job xiii. 15.

THIS was a noble expression, which has been appropriated by thousands

in every subsequent age. In every friendship there is a probation,

during which we narrowly watch the actions of another, as indicating

the nature of his soul; but after awhile we get to such intimate

knowledge and confidence, that we read and know his inner secret. We

have passed from the outer court into the Holy Place of fellowship. We

seem familiar with every nook and cranny of our friend's nature. And

then it is comparatively unimportant how he appears to act; we know

him.

So it is in respect of God. At first we know Him through the testimony

of others, and on the evidence of Scripture; but as time passes, with

its everdeepening experiences of what God is, with those opportunities

of converse that arise during years of prayer and communion, we get to

know Him as He is and to trust Him implicitly. And when that point has

been reached and passed, nothing afterwards can greatly move us.

Instead of looking at God from the standpoint of his acts, we look at

his dealings with us and all men from the standpoint of his heart.

Though He put us on the altar, as Abraham did Isaac, and take the knife

to slay us, we trust Him. If we die, it is to pass into a richer life.

If He seem to forget and forsake us, it is only in appearance. His

heart is yearning over us more than ever. God cannot do a thing which

is not perfectly loving and wise and good. Oh to know Him thus!

" Leaving the final issue In His hands

Whose goodness knows no change, whose love is sure,

Who sees, foresees, who cannot judge amiss."

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All the days of my warfare would I wait, till my release should come.

Job xiv. 14 (R.V.).

THE Lord Jesus has chosen us to be his soldiers. We are in the midst of

a great campaign: let us endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus

Christ, and strive above all things to please Him (2 Tim. ii. 4).

Amongst other things, let us be sure not to entangle ourselves in the

affairs of this life. What purpose could a soldier serve who insisted

on taking all his household goods with him on the march!

There is no pause in the warfare. We can never, like Gideon's soldiers,

throw ourselves on the bank and quaff the water at our leisure. Every

bush may hide a sharp-shooter; every brake an ambuscade. It becomes us

to watch and pray; to keep on our harness of armour; to be on the alert

for our Captain's voice. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but

against the hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenly places; we need to

be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and to take unto

ourselves the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in

the evil day, and having done all to stand.

But the release will come at last. When the soldier has fought the good

fight, the time of his departure will come, and he will go in to

receive the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give in

that day. "Come," said the dying Havelock to his son, "and see how a

Christian can die." Sometimes it demands more of a soldier's courage to

wait than to charge. Remember that long waiting on the field at

Waterloo, when the day passed from morning to evening. If you can do

nothing else, wait. Be steadfast, immovable: lying still to suffer, to

bear, to endure. This is fighting of the noblest sort.

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Thou restrainest prayer before God. Job xv. 4.

JOB'S friends were bent on discovering the cause of his sufferings in

some secret failure and declension. This is why Eliphaz accused him so

groundlessly. They did not know of those secret habits of intercession

described in the first chapter. But this charge is eminently true of

some professing Christians.

They restrain private prayer. -- The closet door is too seldom shut

behind them, or it is kept shut for to brief a period. They do not give

themselves time to get into the mid-current of intercession and be

borne forward by it whither it will. The voice of the Holy Spirit is

barely able to assert itself amid the hubbub of voices within. They are

so taken up with speaking of the Lord, or working for Him, that they

slur over private audiences with Himself.

They restrain social prayer. -- Their minister never them in the

gatherings for intercession on behalf of the work of the Church and the

salvation of the lost. They forsake the assembling of themselves with

the saints. Like Thomas, they are absent from the gathering in the

upper room, and miss the smile of the Lord.

They restrain family prayer. -- Surely we ought to gather at least once

a day around the family altar. Where Abraham pitched his tent he

erected the altar. A prayerless home is apt to become a worldly and

unhappy one. There is no such keystone to the arch of home-life and

home-love, as the habit of family worship.

How foolish, how short-sighted, how sinful, it is to restrain prayer!

What wonder that your soul is famished when you fail to feed it, or

impoverished when you neglect intercourse with heaven!

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I was at ease, and He brake me asunder. Job xvi. 12 (R.V.).

THE other day, it was the Lord's Day morning, two sparrows fell from

the leads of my church into the vestry, which has a lofty glass

skylight. As soon as they had recovered from their astonishment at

finding themselves prisoners, they flew up against this skylight as

though to break through it to the open heaven, and then round and round

the room. They were desperately afraid of myself and the verger, whom I

had called, not realizing that we were as anxious as they to get them

out again into the air. The only thing we could do to help them was to

keep them from alighting to rest; so with long brooms and soft missiles

we constantly drove them from every cornice and picture-frame on which

they alighted, till they fell exhausted, and with panting breasts, to

the ground. Then we captured them and set them free. They might have

said many a time, in the course of that encounter, "We were at case,

and they brake us asunder; they also set us up for their mark." But if

they could review that episode now, they would doubtless see that it

was love which forbade them to rest anywhere in the vestry, because it

desired to give them their fullest liberty.

So with Job. God would not allow him to rest in anything short of the

best, and therefore He broke up his nest. Is not this the key to his

dealings with you? Oh, believe that behind the perpetual change and

displacement of your life God is leading you into the glorious liberty

of his children!

"Therefore to whom turn I but Thee, the ineffable Name?

Builder and Maker Thou of houses not made with hands!

What? have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?

Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?

There shall never be one lost good."

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Yet shall the righteous hold on his way. Job xvii. 9 (R.V.).

WHEN the real life of God enters the soul, it persists there. Genuine

religion is shown by its power of persistence. Anything short of a

Godgiven faith will sooner or later fail. It may run well for a time,

but its pace will inevitably slacken till it comes to a stand. The

youths faint and are weary, and the young men utterly fall. The seed

sown on the rock springs up quickly, and as quickly dies down and

perishes. But where there is the rooting and grounding in God, there is

a perpetuity and persistence which outlives all storms and survives all

resistance.

You shall hold on your way because Jesus holds you in his strong hand.

He is your Shepherd; He has vanquished all your foes, and you shall

never perish.

You shall hold on your way because the Father has designed through you

to glorify his Son; and there must be no gaps in his crown where jewels

ought to be.

You shall hold on your way because the Holy Spirit has deigned to make

you his residence and home; and He is within you the perennial spring

of a holy life.

It is said that there was once a debate in heaven, as to which kind of

life needed most of God's grace. That of a man who after a lifetime of

gross sins was converted at the eleventh hour, or of a man that for his

whole career had been kept from destruction. And finally the latter was

agreed to be the most conspicuous miracle. And there is no doubt that

this is so. Yet for this also shall God's grace avail: and He shall

enable thee to hold on thy way till heaven open to thee.

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The king of terrors. Job xviii. 14.

S0 the ancients spoke of death. They were constantly pursued by the

dread of the unknown. Every unpeopled or distant spot was the haunt and

dwellingplace of evil and dreadful objects. But the grave, and the

world beyond, were above all terrible, and death the King of Terrors.

It is difficult for us, who inherit centuries of Christian teaching, to

realize how dark and fearsome was all the realm that lay under the

dominion of death and the grave. What a shiver in those words, King of

Terrors!

But for us how vast the contrast! Jesus has abolished death, and

brought life and immortality to light. He has gone through the grave,

and come again to assure us that it is the back door into our Father's

house, with its many mansions. At his girdle hang the keys of death and

Hades; none can shut the door when He opens it, and none open when He

keeps it shut. He was Himself dead; but He lives for evermore, and

comes to the side of each dying saint to escort him through the valley

to his own bright abode.

There is something better. In the case of immense numbers, who shall be

alive and remain when He comes again, death will be entirely evaded.

"He that liveth and believeth in Him shall never die." They shall be

caught away to meet the Lord in the air. Suddenly, in the twinkling of

an eye, this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible

incorruption. At his coming the grave shall be despoiled of its

treasures, and death shall miss its expected prey.

"0 death, where is thy sting! grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to

God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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I know that my Redeemer liveth. Job xix. 25.

THOSE words express the deepest and most radiant conviction of

believing hearts. "He lives, the great Redeemer lives!" Man did his

worst; the nail, the cross, the spear, were bitter; but He liveth!

Death stood over Him as a vanquished foe; but He liveth! Captain

Sepulchre and his henchman Corruption held earnest colloquy together

about the best method of detaining Him; but He liveth! He ever liveth:

and because He continueth ever, He hath an unchangeable priesthood.

But it is not probable that his words meant all this to Job. The word

translated "Redeemer " is Goel -- the nearest kinsman, sworn to avenge

the wrongs of blood relations. This conception of the kinsman avenger

has been always in vogue in the East, where the populations are

scattered and migratory, and our system of law impossible. Beyond the

heavens Job thought there lived a Kinsman, who saw all his sufferings,

and pitied, and would one day appear on earth to vindicate his

innocence and avenge his wrongs. He was content to leave the case with

Him, sure that He would not fail, as his friends had done.

Beyond the sorrows and anguish of time he should yet see God; and he

longed to see Him, that he might learn the secret purpose, which

explained the sorrow of his lot. He had no dread of that momentous

event, since his Goel would be there to stand beside him.

"Sudden the Worst turns the Best to the brave,

The black minute's at end!--

And the Elements' rage, the fiend voices that rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend,

Shall change, shall become, -- first a Peace out of Pain,

Then a Light, then thy breast."

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This is the portion of a wicked man from God. Job xx. 29.

REPEATEDLY in reading this book we are reminded of the strong

convictions entertained by thoughtful men among these Eastern peoples,

of the sure connection between wrong-doing and its bitter penalty. The

friends of the sufferer express their opinions in cold-blooded and

unfeeling words; but we can detect their intense convictions beneath

all -- that special suffering indicates the presence of special sin,

and that all wickedness is sooner or later brought to light and

punished.

We are less able to follow the track of God's providences in these

crowded, hurrying days; but there can be little doubt of the connection

between wrong-doing and punishment. The law is immutable. As a man

soweth, so shall be also reap. The triumphing of the wicked is short,

and the joy of the godless but for a moment. He shall disgorge his

wealth; he shall suck the poison of asps in the remorse and bitterness

of his soul; the heavens shall reveal his iniquity; and his descendants

shall seek favour of the poor. These things are still to be seen among

us, in the rise and fall of proud men and their families.

Let us go into the sanctuary of God, and consider their latter end; and

as we contrast it with that of the poorest of his children, we shall

find no reason to envy them. Even though no human tribunal sentence

them, they carry the harpoon in their heart, and sooner or later it

will bring them to a certain and awful doom. It cannot be otherwise

whilst God is God. The psalmist said:

"I have seen the wicked in great power,

And spreading himself like a green bay tree;

Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not."

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Shall any teach God knowledge? Job xxi. 22.

WE cannot tell God anything He does not know already. The most fervent

and full of our prayers simply unfold in word all that has been patent

to his loving, pitying eye. This does not make prayer needless; on the

contrary, it incites to prayer, since it is pleasant to talk with one

who knows the whole case perfectly; and it is a relief to feel that

God's answers depend -- not on the information we bring Him, or even on

the specific requests we make, but -- on his infinite and perfect

acquaintance with circumstances and conditions of which we are

altogether ignorant.

"Your Father knoweth." Quicker than lightning is his notice of every

transition in your inner life -- of your downsittings and your

uprisings; of every thought in your heart; every word on your tongue;

of the fretting of that inward cross; of the anguish of that stake in

your flesh; of the enemy that, like a sword in your bones, reproaches

you with the derisive challenge. "Thou compassest my path and my lying

down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in

my tongue, but, lo, Lord, thou knowest it altogether." Yes, He knows it

all, and loves you better than you know.

Do not presume to dictate to Him; do not dare to say that some other

way would be better, some other lot more likely to develop your best

self. He knows every track by which to bring sons to glory; and that He

has chosen this one is a positive proof that it is the best, the one

most adapted to your idiosyncrasies and needs. His ways are, higher

than your ways, and his thoughts than your thoughts. You could not

teach Him knowledge, or increase his love -- then trust both.

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If thou return to the Almighty. Job xxii. 23.

THESE words introduce a most exquisite picture of the blessings

consequent on return to God. They do not fit the case of Job, to whom

they were addressed, because he had not left God; and they sound

strange as coming from the mouth of Eliphaz. Still they are full of

sublime truth.

There are three conditions. -- We must retrace the steps of our

backsliding and wandering lives. We must put away unrighteousness from

our home-life and business engagements, so that the tent may be free

from idols. We must be content to lay our most treasured possessions in

the dust at God's feet for Him to deal with as He pleases.

There are four consequences. -- Whatever we give up for God, we shall

find again in Him; He shall become our treasure. Prayer shall have new

zest, new success; be full of delight; become the interchange of

face-to-face fellowship. There shall be more certainty and permanence

in our decisions and achievements. Our decrees shall stand, our work

shall last, our path shall be illumined with light. Trouble and trial

shall depress us for only a brief space, like the passing of an

Atlantic breaker over a lighthouse rock, whilst a glad relief shall

always follow close on disaster.

Let us ask for all this in our daily prayer. God, be my precious

silver; give me delight in Thee; hear my prayers; may I decree what

Thou canst establish; let Thy light shine on my ways; lift me up above

all my depressions and fears -- that I may stretch out a strong hand to

those who are in trouble.

"Oh, strengthen me, that while I stand

Firm on the Rock, and strong In Thee,

I may stretch out a loving hand

To wrestlers with the troubled sea."

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O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to his

seat! Job xxiii. 3.

POOR tempest-driven man, he knew not that God was intimately near,

nearer than breathing. There was no need for him to go forward and

backward, on the right hand or the left. The Lord his God was nigh him,

even in his heart; for his throne was pitched there on the sands of the

desert, between Job and his pitiless accusers.

Thou needest not speak like this. Thou knowest where to find Him; thou

canst find the way to his seat. He is to be found in Jesus, seated on

the mercy-seat; in that room where thou sittest reading these words; in

that railway train or store. No need to ascend into heaven, or descend

into the abyss. Thou couldst not be nearer God, if thou wert in heaven.

True, the obscuring vail shall be then removed.

"And without a screen,

At one burst shall be seen,

The Presence in which we have ever been";

but the dropping- of the scales from our eyes will not make us nearer

God than we are at this moment.

Now go to his seat, just in front of thee. Order thy cause before Him,

and argue it. Wait to know the words with which He shall answer thee,

and understand his reply. Only be sure that He will not contend against

thee with his great power. Sometimes we are so bewildered and perplexed

that we lose the realizing sense of God's presence; but there is no

real difference. God is not really farther away; and nothing glorifies

and pleases Him more than for us to go on speaking with Him as though

we could see his face, and realize his embrace. Be still for a moment,

and say, reverently and believingly: Lo, God is in this place.

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Yet a little while, and they are gone. Job xxiv. 24 (R.V.).

JOB here describes the insecurity of the wicked. He may have raged

against the poor and innocent; but in a moment he comes down to Sheol,

is hurried to stand before his Maker to receive his sentence. As he had

treated the poor, so he is treated. As he had devoured the houses of

the innocent, so he is devoured. "How are they become a desolation in a

moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one

awaketh; so, Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image."

For those who fear God there is a greatly contrasted lot. They receive

a kingdom that cannot be moved. Zion may be a desolation, and Jerusalem

a wilderness; the holy and beautiful institutions in which their early

religious impressions were made may crumble; but they are come to the

heavenly Jerusalem. The removing of those things that are capable of

being shaken only makes more apparent those which cannot be shaken.

Where do you build your nest? In the trees of this world, that sway in

the tempest, or may be hewn down by the woodman's axe; or have you

learnt to build in the clefts of the Rock of Ages? Is your treasure in

human friendships, which may change or be cut in twain by the sharp

shears of death; or is it in the love of God, the unchangeable and

everlasting Lover of souls? Let us look off from ourselves; from that

diseased introspection that so confuses and dims our life; from the old

fears that made us tremble and the old matters of which we must speak

no more. And let us look upward and forward to that near future, which

is so much larger and better than the past has been, and where we shall

attain more than the heights of our dreams.

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How then can man be just with God? Job xxv. 4 (R.V.).

THIS is the question of the ages. Man knows that he is as a worm, and

worse. For no animal, however humble, has consciously and determinedly

broken the law of God, and defiled its nature.

Our first effort is to go about to establish a righteousness of our

own. Repeated failure only aggravates our misery and chagrin, till we

fall helpless at the foot of Sinai. Our vows are broken, the law of God

lies shivered around us, the thunders and lightnings make us afraid.

Then God in the Person of Jesus comes to our help. First, He meets and

satisfies the demands of the broken law, so that it can ask no more.

With his own hands He works out, and brings in, everlasting

righteousness. And finally, He produces in us that faith by which his

finished work is applied to our conscience and heart.

By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for

by the law is the knowledge of sin. But we are justified freely by his

grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set

forth to be a propitiation. God is Himself the Justifier of the

ungodly. "Whom He called, them He also justified." He takes off the

filthy garments, and clothes us in change of raiment.

But the condition is faith. We must believe in Him who justifieth the

ungodly. They who believe are justified from all things. Being

justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus

Christ. We are not saved by believing about his work, but in Himself.

The Greek of John iii. 16 might be rendered, Whosoever even believeth

into Him. The motion of faith is ever towards the heart of Him who

died, and rose, and lives. Then through our faith the Spirit produces a

holy character.

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How small a whisper do we hear of Him! Job xxvi. 14 (R.V.).

JOB in thought passes through the universe. Sheol stands for the grave

and the unseen world; Abaddon, for Satan, or for the great reservoirs

in which the destructive agencies of creation have their home. With a

marvellous anticipation of the conclusions of modern science, he speaks

of the world as pendant in space. He passes to the confines of light

and darkness, rides on the wings of the wind, discourses of the clouds,

skims the mighty surface of the sea. All this, however, he deems as the

outskirts of God's ways. It is but a whisper compared to the mighty

thunder of his glory and power. If this is a whisper, what must the

thunder be! If this universe is but a flower on the meadows of God's

life, what must not God Himself be!

Perhaps we know something more of the thunder of his power than Job

could, because we have stood beneath Calvary and seen Jesus die, and He

is the wisdom and power of God; yea, we have witnessed the exceeding

greatness of his power, according to the working of the strength of his

might, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.

Who of us can fathom or understand the power of God? But what a comfort

to know that it is an attribute of his heart. God is not power, but He

is love, and his love throbs through and commands his power. Be

reverent when you kneel before the great and mighty God; but believe

that all his power is engaged on the side of his weakest, needist

child. And more: cease not to wait upon God until He endue you with his

mighty power, for service and for daily living. A Nasmyth hammer can

break a nutshell without crushing or touching the kernel.

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My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let go. Job xxvii. 6.

JOB had an ideal and clung to it. Have you such? A vision of what you

may be, and, by the grace of God, will aim at being. Bishop Westcott

says: -- "The vision of the ideal guards monotony of work from becoming

monotony of life." Bitter indeed is life for those who have not seen

the heavenly vision, or heard the calling upward of the voice that

says, Come up hither. Any life looks more interesting and attractive

when the light of our ideal falls on it, and we realize that every yard

leads somewhere, and every step is one nearer the goal. So some one has

suggested that "If we cannot realize our ideal, we may at least

idealize our real."

But there are many hindrances, many adverse influences to combat, many

suggestions that we should let go our ideal. We have so often failed,

slipped where we thought we should stand, limped where we thought to

overcome by wrestling. The crags are so steep, the encouragement we

receive from fellow-climbers so scant, the dissuasions and

misconstructions -- like those Job had from his friends -- so many. But

Jesus who inspired the ideal waits to realize it, if only you will open

your heart and let Him enter. Do you hunger and thirst? then He will

satisfy. He does not tantalize and disappoint the seeking soul.

"Have we not all, amid life's petty strife,

Some pure ideal of a noble life

That once seemed possible? It was. And yet

We lost it in this daily jar and fret,

And now live idle in a vague regret.

but still our place is kept, and it will wait.

Ready for us to fill it, soon or late:

No star is ever lost we once have seen --

We always may be what we might have been.

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The deep saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me.

Job xxviii. 14 (R.V.).

In this sublime chapter the holy soul goes in quest of wisdom, which is

the perfect balance of the moral and intellectual attributes of the

soul; that knowledge of God, and life, and truth, which is only

possible when the eyes of the heart have been enlightened to know; that

radiancy of spirit which is enlightened and illuminated with God who is

HimseIf the Light.

In a marvellous description of mining operations, which would arrest

any company of miners in the world, if read from the Revised Version,

Job declares it is not to be found in the deep. From one quarter of the

universe after another, he receives the intelligence that it is not

there. God alone has the secret; He only can communicate it, or give

the disposition to appreciate and receive.

We must deal with God. Looking away from every other source of

illumination and satisfaction, we must have close and searching

fellowship with Him. Dr. Gordon was wont to say that evangelical faith

consists not in a glance alone, but in a gaze. "We live in a very busy,

perspiring time, when a thousand clamant calls assail us on every side;

but we must have more time for visions if we would be well equipped for

our tasks." Let us then turn from the quarters where we have been

accustomed to draw our supplies -- broken cisterns, with uncertain and

brackish water -- and let us come to God, the eternal source of life

and peace. Love and rest we want, Thy love and rest, oh, give us! From

men and things; from the mine, the deep, and the sea; from the murmur

of human voices, and the crosslights of human interests, we come back

to Thee, our Home.

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Oh that I were as in the months of old! Job xxix. 2 (R.V.).

WE are irresistibly reminded of Cowper's sad complaint: --

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!

How sweet their memory still;

But they have left an aching void

The world can never fill."

We are all prone to think that the earliest days were the best; and it

is quite possible they were. But we must carefully distinguish between

the exchange of the freshness and novelty of our first love for a

deepening and maturing love, and the loss of love. The streamlet may

not babble so cheerily, but there may be more water in the river. We

lose the green Spring, but is it not better to have the intense light

of Autumn in which the fruits ripen? There may not be so much ecstasy,

but there may be stronger, deeper experience. We should not reckon our

position in God's sight by our raptures, and count ourselves

retrograding because they have gone; there is something better than

rapture: the peace of a settled understanding and unvarying faith.

Still, if it be really so, that you have left the old place on the

bosom or at the feet of Christ, that your love is cooling and your

spirituality waning, I beseech thee, get back! Remember whence thou art

fallen, and repent, and do the first works. Jesus yearns to reinstate

thee, and has permitted this restless longing for the past to come,

that it may be with thee as in the months of old. Again his lamp shall

shine above thy head, and the secret of the Lord shall be upon thy

tent; thy steps shall be washed with butter, and the rock pour out

rivers of oil; thy roots shall spread to the waters, and the dew shall

lie all night upon thy branch.

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I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not answer me. Job xxx. 20 (R.V.).

IT may have seemed so to the sufferer; but there is not a cry that goes

from the anguished soul which does not ring a bell in the very heart of

God, where the Man of Sorrows waits, touched with the feeling of our

infirmities.

I have sometimes gone to a telephone office, and have rung the bell,

asking to be put in connection with my friend, but it has seemed

impossible to get at him; either he has been engaged or absent, and one

has found oneself speaking to a stranger, and the voice which replied

has been unfamiliar. Thoroughly disappointed, one turns away. But this

is never the case with God. And the comfort is, that He is most quick

to succour those whose cry is lowest. As a mother goes about her work,

she is less sensitive to the trains that thunder past, and the heavy

drays, and the laughter of boisterous health, than to the stifled cry

of her little invalid; and if there could be one thing more sure than

another of awakening God's immediate response, it would be such broken

cries as pain elicited from Job.

But the answer will come -- nay, it is on its way, timed to arrive in

the fourth watch of the night. Perhaps the delay is the answer, because

the heart needs to be prepared to receive the great gift when it comes.

Perhaps, like the Syrophenician woman, you have to give Christ his

right place as Lord, and take yours amongst the dogs. Perhaps the

answer is coming all the time by one door, whilst you are looking for

it through another; but you cannot and must not say that God is not

answering. All the time you are crying, the answer is to your hand,

awaiting your appropriation. Go to the post-office for the letter:

hasten to the landing-stage for the ship -- it is in.

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Mine integrity. Job xxxi. 6.

INTEGRITY is from the Latin word integrita, wholeness. It means

whole-heartedness. It is interesting in this chapter to see what, in

Job's estimation, it involved.

v.1. Purity in the look.

v.7. Cleanliness of the hands.

v.13. Thoughtfulness for domestic servants and underlings.

v.16. Justice to the poor and the widow.

v.17. Willingness to share morsels, and to be a father to the

fatherless.

v.19, 20. Clothing for the naked.

v.21. The refusal to depute to others help which one might render.

v.24.. The heart weaned from the love of gold.

v.26. Refusal to turn aside to idols.

v.29. Inability to rejoice at the destruction of those who had derided

and hated.

v. 33. The frank confession of wrong-doing.

It becomes us prayerfully to go over these items, and use them as the

catechism of our soul; for if this was the standard of character for

one who lived so many centuries before the full revelation of Christ,

what should not our standard be! How impossible, however, it is to live

like this from without! We must enshrine within us the blessed Spirit

of God, who alone originates and maintains that perfect love to God and

man which compared to Job's maxims is as the heart to the body. Law is

given as the expression of God's will for the regulation of life: but

it is impossible to keep the law till we have the love; and it is

impossible to have the love until we have the Lord Jesus Christ,

through the Holy Ghost.

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There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth

understanding. Job xxxii. 8 (R.V.).

ELIHU had waited whilst the three elder men said all that was in their

hearts. He now excuses his youth and demands audience, because so

conscious that the breath of inspiration had entered his soul. Wisdom

is not with age; but wherever the heart is freely open to God, He will

make it wise. We have received not the spirit which is of the world,

but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know.

George Fox tells us that though he read the Scriptures which spoke of

Christ and of God, yet he knew Him not till He who had the key did

open. "Then the Lord gently led me along and let me see his love which

was endless and eternal, surpassing all the knowledge that men have in

the natural state, or can get by history or books. I had not fellowship

with any people, priests or professors, but with Christ, who hath the

key, and opened the door of life and light unto me. His one message was

the necessity of the Inner Light, the inward witness of the Spirit, his

secret revelations of truth to the soul. "

This distinction needs to be deeply pondered. We have been trying to

know God by the intellect, by reading the Bible intellectually, by

endeavouring to apprehend human systems. There is, however, a deeper

and truer method. "There is a spirit in man!" Open your spirit to the

Divine Spirit as you open a window to the sunny air. Instantly God

enters and fills. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit. The inbreathed

life of God gives us light. We know by intuition, by fellowship with

God, by direct vision, what the wise of this world could never

discover.

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If there be with him a messenger, an interpreter. Job xxxiii. 23.

GOD is greater than man, and by his love seeks to hold man back from

his purpose. Sometimes He comes in the visions of the night; sometimes

in pain and sickness. But we are too dull to understand the inner

reason of God's endeavours to deliver us from the brink of destruction;

and therefore we need an interpreter, one among a thousand, to explain

the meaning of his dealings, and to show us the way in which we should

amend our ways. How often has the sick visitor, the minister, the

friend, interpreted God's purpose, enabling us to see light in his

light. There are few higher offices in this world than to act in this

way between God and our fellows.

To perform this function, however, we need to understand two languages;

the one of the throne, obtained from deep and intimate converse with

our Father, while the other is man's native language of pain and

sorrow. Each must be spoken perfectly before we can interpret: --

"And to the height of this great argument

Assert eternal Providence,

And justify the ways of God to man."

But, as Bunyan truly says, the best Interpreter is the Holy Spirit. As

soon as the Pilgrim has passed the Wicket-gate, he is conducted through

the Interpreter's house by the Interpreter Himself. Are you perplexed

as to the meaning of God's Word, the dealings of God's providence, the

mystery of God's moral government? Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you

through chamber after chamber, unfolding to you the mysteries of the

kingdom of heaven. They are for babes -- for the childlike and pure in

heart. He will show you wondrous things out of his law.

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He giveth quietness. Job xxxiv. 29.

QUIETNESS amid the accusations of Satan. -- The great accuser points to

the stains of our past lives, by which we have defiled our robes and

those of others; he says that we shall fall again and again; he imputes

evil motives to our holiest actions, and detects flaws in our most

sacred services; he raises so great a hubbub that we can hardly hear

another voice within our souls. Then the great Intercessor arises and

saith, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan; the Lord that hath chosen

Jerusalem rebuke thee: I have loved with an everlasting love, I have

paid the ransom. So "He giveth quietness."

Quietness amid the dash of the storm. -- We sail the lake with Him

still, and as we reach its middle waters, far from land, under midnight

skies, suddenly a great storm sweeps down. Earth and hell seem arrayed

against us, and each billow threatens to overwhelm. Then He arises from

his sleep, and rebukes the winds and the waves; his hand waves

benediction and repose over the rage of the tempestuous elements. His

voice is heard above the scream of the wind in the cordage and the

conflict of the billows. Peace, be still! Can you not hear it? And

there is instantly a great calm. "He giveth quietness."

Quietness amid the loss of inward consolations. -- He sometimes

withdraws these, because we make to much of them. We are tempted to

look at our joy, our ecstasies, our transports, or our visions, with

too great complacency. Then love, for love's sake, withdraws them. But,

by his grace, He leads us to distinguish between them and Himself. He

draws nigh, and whispers the assurance of his presence. Thus an

infinite calm comes to keep our heart and mind. "He giveth quietness."

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None saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night? Job

xxxv. 10.

DO you have sleepless nights, tossing on the hot pillow, and watching

for the first glint of dawn? Ask the Divine Spirit to enable you to fix

your thoughts on God, your Maker, and believe that He can fill those

lonely, dreary hours with song.

Is yours the night of doubt? -- A holy man tells us that once as he was

sitting by the fire, a great cloud came over him, and a temptation

beset him to think that all things came by nature; and as he sat still

under it, and let it alone, a living hope arose in him, and a true

voice said, "There is a living God who made all things." And

immediately the cloud and temptation vanished away, and life rose over

it all. His heart was glad, and he praised the living God. Was not this

a song in the night?

Is yours the night of bereavement? -- Is it not often to such God draws

near, and assures the mourner that the Lord had need of its beloved,

and called "the eager, earnest spirit to stand in the bright throng of

the invisible, liberated, radiant, active, intent on some high

mission"; and as the thought enters, is there not the beginning of a

song?

Is yours the night of discouragement and fancied or actual failure? --

No one understands you, your friends reproach; but your Maker draws

nigh, and gives you a song -- the song of hope, the song which is

harmonious with the strong, deep music of his providence. Be ready to

sing the songs that your Maker gives.

"What then? Shall we sit idly down and say

'The night hath come; it is no longer day'?

. . . . . . . . .

Yet as the evening twilight fades away,

The sky is filled with stars, invisible to day."

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Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any. Job xxxvi. 5.

WHAT entrancing assurances are contained in this and the preceding

sentence! To think that in all our wayfarings through this world One

that is perfect in knowledge is always with us, and One that is mighty

is pledged to bring us through! Nothing could be desired beside. This

makes prayer new. It is a child's confidential whisper to the One who

is attent to the lowest murmur, who cannot forget, who will not

relinquish a purpose which He has formed though years pass, and who is

able to do exceeding abundantly.

It is because God is so great that He despises none. If He were less

than infinite, He might overlook. The boundlessness of his being has no

ebb, fails of no soul He has made, and is as much at any one point as

if He had no care or thought beside. In fact, those that man despises

stand the best chance with God. Just because no one else cares for

them, he must; just because no one else will help them, He will. This

is necessary to his nature.

When a philanthropist adopts a certain lapsed section of the community,

he does so because no one else will. It becomes a matter of honour with

him that none of these, outcast by all else, should miss his help. And

God has constituted Himself Champion, Guardian, and Saviour, of all who

have no help from their fellows. Friendless, forlorn, helpless,

despised, He recognises and meets the claim of their urgent necessity.

Bruised reeds, bits of smoking tow, half-consumed fire-brands, lost

sheep, prodigal sons, waifs and strays, homeless, destitute, neglected

-- these have a first claim on the Almightiness of the living God.

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Men see not the bright light which is in the clouds. Job xxxvii. 21.

THE world owes much of its beauty to cloudland. The unchanging blue of

the Italian sky hardly compensates for the changefulness and glory of

the clouds. Clouds also are the cisterns of the rain. Earth would

become a wilderness apart from their ministry. There are clouds in

human life, shadowing, refreshing, and sometimes draping it in

blackness of night; but there is never a cloud without its bright

light. "I do set my bow in the cloud! "

If only we could see the clouds from the other side where they lie in

billowy glory, bathed in the light they intercept, like heaped ranges

of Alps, we should be amazed at their splendid magnificence. We look at

their under side; but who shall describe the bright light that bathes

their summits, and searches their valleys, and is reflected from every

pinnacle of their expanse? Is not every drop drinking in health-giving

qualities, which it will carry to the earth?

child of God! If you could see your sorrows and troubles from the other

side; if instead of looking up at them from earth, you would look down

on them from the heavenly places where you sit with Christ; if you knew

how they are reflecting in prismatic beauty before the gaze of heaven,

the bright light of Christ's face -- you would be content that they

should cast their deep shadows over the mountain slopes of existence.

Only remember that clouds are always moving, and passing before God's

cleansing wind.

"Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen;

Bright skies will soon be o'er me, where the dark clouds have been:

My hope I cannot measure, my path of life is free;

My Saviour hath my treasure, and He will walk with me."

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Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades? Job xxxviii. 31 (R.V.).

THE seven stars of the Pleiades always stand for the sweet influences

of spring; Orion for the storm and tempest. In this sublime catechism,

Jehovah asks Job if he has any control over the One or the other. As it

is with the year, so with our life.

There are times when the PLEIADEs are in the ascendant. The winter is

over and gone, the time of the singing of birds is come. Doves coo

their love notes in the trees, and the flowers gem the soil. Days of

hope, of radiant light, of ecstatic joy! Days in which God seems to be

making a new heaven and a new earth within us! Days when our Beloved

shows Himself through the lattice-work, and says, "Come, my beloved!"

Oh, tender influences of the Pleiades, we would that ye might ever

stay, filling us with immortal youth! When God bids them shine, no one

can bind them. When He gives joy, none can give sorrow. No mortal man

can restrain the outburst of Nature's spring. You might as well stay

the resurrection of the Son of God and his saints!

But ORION has his work as well. Storms come; the drenching rain veils

the landscape; the mighty billows are lashed to fury. But all works for

good. The blast in the forest snaps off dead wood. The rain fills up

the wells. Frost pulverises the earth. When God binds Orion, man cannot

unloose him; "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." But

when the Almighty unlooses Orion, like another Samson, he does his work

of devastation, before which we must find refuge in the cleft of the

Rock.

"God sendeth sun,

He sendeth shower,

Alike they're needful for the flower."

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Knowest thou? Job xxxix. 1.

THE catechism of this chapter is designed to convince man of his

ignorance. How little he knows of nature! Even though centuries of

investigation and research have passed, there are still many questions

which baffle us. And if we know so little of tile Creator's handiwork,

how much less do we know of Himself, or the principles on which He

acts!

The knowledge of God is not intellectual, but moral and spiritual.

Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, are made known to Love and

Obedience. Let the Love of God be shed through the heart, and the will

of God be the ruling principle of life, and there will be given a

knowledge of God which the research of the investigator could never

gain. "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit

which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us

of God . . . they are spiritually discerned." Knowest thou?

Dost thou know the exceeding greatness of his power, which He wrought

in the Resurrection of thy Lord -- that it is all around thee waiting

to do as much for thee also; lifting thee, dead weight as thou art, to

sit in the heavenlies?

Dost thou know the hope of his calling to a life within the vail, with

the vail behind thee, and the light of the Shekinah ever on thy face?

Dost thou know the riches of his glorious indwelling, that He is

prepared so to infill thee, that thou shalt partake of the very life

wherewith He liveth and reigneth evermore?

Dost thou know the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of the

love that passeth knowledge; and Christ Jesus the Lord?

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I am of small account; what shall I answer Thee? I lay mine hand upon

my mouth. Job xl. 4.

WHAT a different tone is here! This is be who so vehemently protested

his innocence, and defended himself against the attacks of his

accusers. The Master is come, and the servant who had contended with

his fellows takes a lowly place of humility and silence.

The first step in the noblest life, possible to any of us, is to learn

and say that we are of small account. We may learn it by successive and

perpetual failures which abash and confound us. It is better to learn

it by seeing the light of God rise in majesty above the loftiest of

earth's mountains. "When I was young," said Gounod to a friend, "I used

to talk of 'I and Mozart.' Later I said, 'Mozart and I.' But now I only

say 'Mozart."' Substitute God, and you have the true story of many a

soul.

The next step is to choke back words, and lay the hand on the mouth.

Silence and meditation! Not arguing or contending! Not complaining or

murmuring! Not cavilling or criticising! But just being still -- still,

that you may feel God near; still, that you may hear Him speak. "Take

heed of many words," said George Fox; "keep down, keep low, that

nothing may reign in you but life itself."

The greatest saints avoided, when they could, the society of men, and

did rather choose to live to God, in secret. A certain one said, "As

oft as I have been among men I returned home less a man than I was

before. Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto Jesus, thy Beloved. Stay

with Him in thy closet, for thou shalt not find elsewhere so great

peace." How good it would be to lay our hands on our mouths rather

oftener, whether in silence with our fellows, or in the hour of secret

prayer!

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Who then is he that can stand before Me? Job xii. 10 (R.V.).

THE first catechism had been on Job's knowledge; now it turns on his

power. The pivot of the one was, Knowest thou? of the other, Canst

thou? If a man cannot stand before one of God's creatures, how much

less before the Creator! If we dread the wrath of the enraged

crocodile, what should not be our dread before the wrath of the

Eternal? Canst thou stand before Him? Canst thou strive against Him,

with any hope of success? Canst thou force thyself, unbidden and unfit,

into the presence of the Most Holy? Thou couldst not intrude on an

earthly sovereign; how much less on Him, in whose sight the heavens are

not clean?

"Eternal light! eternal light!

how pure the soul must be,

When placed within thy searching light,

It shrinks not, but with calm delight

Can live, and look on Thee!"

But Jesus can make it possible. Through Him we draw nigh to God. We

have boldness to enter into the Holiest of All by his Blood. We may,

through Him, be able to say, with Elijah, "Thus saith Jehovah, before

whom I stand." Jesus is the minister of the heavenly sanctuary, and in

virtue of his office He is able to bring us into, and maintain us

within, the Most Holy Place. He comes out to take its by the hand; and

then, having fulfilled in us the good pleasure of his will, He brings

us in and places us before the face of God for ever. Like Solomon's

servants, we evermore stand before the king, see his face, and hear his

words.

"The sons of ignorance and night

May dwell in the Eternal Light,

Through the Eternal Love."

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Now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust

and ashes. Job xiii. 5, 6.

THIS is the clue to the entire book. Here is a man, who was universally

known as perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil;

who abounded in beneficent and loving ministries to all who were in

need; to whom respect and love flowed in a full tide. He was not

conscious of any failure in perfect obedience, or of secret sin;

indeed, when his friends endeavoured to account for his unparalleled

calamities by suggesting that there was some discrepancy between his

outward reputation and inward consistency, he indignantly repelled the

charge, and repudiated the impeachment.

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Indexes

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Index of Scripture References

Leviticus

[1]20:24 [2]20:26

Numbers

[3]14:34

Deuteronomy

[4]17:17

1 Samuel

[5]1:15 [6]2:19 [7]3:10 [8]4:3 [9]5:3 [10]6:12 [11]7:8

[12]8:6 [13]9:6 [14]10:7 [15]11:14 [16]12:22 [17]13:12

[18]14:27 [19]15:22 [20]16:13 [21]17:26 [22]17:36 [23]18:5

[24]18:14 [25]18:15 [26]18:30 [27]19:6 [28]20:14-16

[29]20:18 [30]21:9 [31]22:3 [32]23:9 [33]24:5 [34]25:31

[35]26:21 [36]27:1 [37]28:18 [38]29:3 [39]30:6 [40]31:11

[41]31:12

2 Samuel

[42]1:23 [43]2:4 [44]3:1 [45]4:9 [46]5:13 [47]6:3

[48]7:25 [49]8:11 [50]9:7 [51]10:12 [52]11:1 [53]12:29

[54]13:31 [55]14:14 [56]15:26 [57]16:14 [58]17:21 [59]18:22

[60]18:23 [61]19:42 [62]20:2 [63]21:1 [64]22:36 [65]23:4

[66]24:24

1 Kings

[67]1:29 [68]2:4 [69]3:13 [70]4:29 [71]5:4 [72]6:7

[73]7:46 [74]8:59 [75]9:3 [76]10:9 [77]11:4 [78]12:33

[79]13:21 [80]13:22 [81]14:5 [82]15:11 [83]16:33 [84]17:4

[85]17:9 [86]18:42 [87]19:5 [88]20:40 [89]21:20 [90]22:34

2 Kings

[91]1:9 [92]1:11 [93]1:13 [94]2:2 [95]2:4 [96]2:6

[97]3:17 [98]4:6 [99]5:14 [100]6:17 [101]7:9 [102]8:11

[103]9:22 [104]10:31 [105]11:12 [106]12:4 [107]13:18

[108]14:6 [109]15:9 [110]15:18 [111]15:24 [112]15:28

[113]16:10 [114]17:41 [115]18:20 [116]19:14 [117]20:10

[118]21:1 [119]22:20 [120]23:25 [121]24:13 [122]25:30

1 Chronicles

[123]1:1 [124]2:1 [125]3:1 [126]4:9 [127]5:20 [128]6:33

[129]7:23 [130]8:33 [131]8:34 [132]9:22 [133]9:29 [134]9:31

[135]9:33 [136]10:13 [137]11:17 [138]12:38 [139]13:12

[140]14:15 [141]15:22 [142]16:9 [143]17:23 [144]17:24

[145]18:73 [146]19:13 [147]20:1 [148]21:8 [149]22:9

[150]22:10 [151]23:13 [152]24:5 [153]25:5 [154]25:6

[155]26:1 [156]27:31 [157]28:20 [158]29:15

2 Chronicles

[159]1:11 [160]1:12 [161]2:11 [162]3:17 [163]4:18 [164]5:13

[165]6:27 [166]7:1 [167]8:11 [168]9:1 [169]10:15 [170]11:16

[171]12:14 [172]13:14 [173]14:11 [174]15:12 [175]16:9

[176]16:12 [177]17:6 [178]18:7 [179]19:2 [180]20:21

[181]21:10 [182]21:10 [183]22:12 [184]23:21 [185]24:20

[186]25:9 [187]25:11-14 [188]26:15 [189]26:16 [190]27:6

[191]28:15 [192]29:27 [193]30:18 [194]30:19 [195]31:21

[196]32:20 [197]33:12 [198]34:15 [199]34:18 [200]35:4

[201]35:6 [202]35:10 [203]35:14 [204]35:15 [205]35:16

[206]35:20-22 [207]36:15

Ezra

[208]1:1 [209]2:63 [210]3:3 [211]4:2 [212]5:5 [213]5:14

[214]6:22 [215]7:28 [216]8:29 [217]8:33 [218]9:1 [219]10:4

Nehemiah

[220]1:11 [221]2:4 [222]3:28 [223]4:14 [224]5:15 [225]6:3

[226]7:64 [227]8:10 [228]9:2 [229]10:39 [230]11:23

[231]12:24 [232]12:36 [233]12:37 [234]12:45 [235]12:46

[236]13:14 [237]13:22 [238]13:31

Esther

[239]1:22 [240]2:7 [241]3:2 [242]4:14 [243]5:2 [244]6:10

[245]7:2 [246]8:8 [247]9:1 [248]10:3

Job

[249]1:5 [250]2:3 [251]3:1 [252]4:5 [253]5:18 [254]6:15

[255]7:17 [256]7:18 [257]8:6 [258]9:31 [259]10:21 [260]11:7

[261]12:10 [262]12:11 [263]13:5 [264]13:6 [265]13:15

[266]14:14 [267]15:4 [268]16:12 [269]17:9 [270]18:14

[271]19:25 [272]20:29 [273]21:22 [274]22:23 [275]23:3

[276]24:24 [277]25:4 [278]26:14 [279]27:6 [280]28:14

[281]29:2 [282]30:20 [283]31:6 [284]32:8 [285]33:23

[286]34:29 [287]35:10 [288]36:5 [289]37:21 [290]38:31

[291]39:1 [292]40:4

Psalms

[293]37:3-7 [294]37:7 [295]51

Isaiah

[296]32:2 [297]38 [298]45:1 [299]45:13

Luke

[300]1:19

John

[301]3:16

Acts

[302]1:8 [303]2 [304]13:22

Romans

[305]1 [306]6:11 [307]6:17 [308]7

1 Corinthians

[309]9 [310]10:17

2 Corinthians

[311]5:14 [312]5:15 [313]10:1

Ephesians

[314]2:5

1 Timothy

[315]3:4 [316]3:5

2 Timothy

[317]1:12 [318]1:12 [319]1:14 [320]1:14 [321]2:4 [322]3:2

[323]3:3

Hebrews

[324]1:3 [325]7:25 [326]8 [327]8

1 John

[328]1:9 [329]3:2 [330]5:4

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Index of Scripture Commentary

1 Samuel

[331]1:15 [332]2:19 [333]3:10 [334]4:3 [335]5:3 [336]6:12

[337]7:8 [338]8:6 [339]9:6 [340]10:7 [341]11:14 [342]12:22

[343]13:12 [344]14:27 [345]15:22 [346]16:13 [347]17:26

[348]17:36 [349]18:5 [350]18:14 [351]18:15 [352]18:30

[353]19:6 [354]20:18 [355]21:9 [356]22 [357]23:9 [358]24:5

[359]25:31 [360]26:21 [361]27:1 [362]28:18 [363]29:3

[364]30:6 [365]31:11 [366]31:12

2 Samuel

[367]1:23 [368]2:4 [369]3:1 [370]4:9 [371]5:13 [372]6:3

[373]7:25 [374]8:11 [375]9:7 [376]10:12 [377]11:1

[378]12:29 [379]13:31 [380]14:14 [381]15:26 [382]16:14

[383]17:21 [384]18:22 [385]18:23 [386]19:42 [387]20:2

[388]21:1 [389]22:36 [390]23:4 [391]24:24

1 Kings

[392]1:29 [393]2:4 [394]3:13 [395]4:29 [396]5:4 [397]6:7

[398]7:46 [399]8:59 [400]9:3 [401]10:9 [402]11:4 [403]12:33

[404]13:21 [405]13:22 [406]14:5 [407]15:11 [408]16:33

[409]17:4 [410]17:9 [411]18:42 [412]19:5 [413]20:40

[414]21:20 [415]22:34

2 Kings

[416]1:9 [417]1:11 [418]1:13 [419]2:2 [420]2:4 [421]2:6

[422]3:17 [423]4:6 [424]5:14 [425]6:17 [426]7:9 [427]8:11

[428]9:22 [429]10:31 [430]11:12 [431]12:4 [432]13:18

[433]14:6 [434]15:9 [435]15:18 [436]15:24 [437]15:28

[438]16:10 [439]17:41 [440]18:20 [441]19:14 [442]20:10

[443]21:1 [444]22:20 [445]23:25 [446]24:13 [447]25:30

1 Chronicles

[448]1:1 [449]2:1 [450]3:1 [451]4:9 [452]5:20 [453]6:33

[454]7:23 [455]8:33 [456]8:34 [457]9:22 [458]9:29 [459]9:31

[460]9:33 [461]10:13 [462]11:17 [463]12:38 [464]13:12

[465]14:15 [466]15:22 [467]16:9 [468]17:23 [469]17:24

[470]18:73 [471]19:13 [472]20:1 [473]21:8 [474]22:9

[475]22:10 [476]23:13 [477]24:5 [478]25:5 [479]25:6

[480]26:1 [481]27:31 [482]28:20 [483]29:15

2 Chronicles

[484]1:11 [485]1:12 [486]2:11 [487]3:17 [488]4:18 [489]5:13

[490]6:27 [491]7:1 [492]8:11 [493]9:1 [494]10:15 [495]11:16

[496]12:14 [497]13:14 [498]14:11 [499]15:12 [500]16:9

[501]17:6 [502]18:7 [503]19:2 [504]20:21 [505]21:10

[506]22:12 [507]23:21 [508]24:20 [509]25:9 [510]26:15

[511]26:16 [512]27:6 [513]28:15 [514]29:27 [515]30:18

[516]30:19 [517]31:21 [518]32:20 [519]33:12 [520]34:15

[521]34:18 [522]35:4 [523]35:6 [524]35:10 [525]35:14

[526]35:15 [527]35:16 [528]36:15

Ezra

[529]1:1 [530]2:63 [531]3:3 [532]4:2 [533]5:5 [534]6:22

[535]7:28 [536]8:29 [537]9:1 [538]10:4

Nehemiah

[539]1:11 [540]2:4 [541]3:28 [542]4:14 [543]5:15 [544]6:3

[545]7:64 [546]8:10 [547]9:2 [548]10:39 [549]12:24

[550]12:36 [551]12:37 [552]12:45 [553]12:46 [554]13:14

[555]13:22 [556]13:31

Esther

[557]1:22 [558]2:7 [559]3:2 [560]4:14 [561]5:2 [562]6:10

[563]7:2 [564]8:8 [565]9:1 [566]10:3

Job

[567]1:5 [568]2:3 [569]3:1 [570]4:5 [571]5:18 [572]6:15

[573]7:17 [574]7:18 [575]8:6 [576]9:31 [577]10:21 [578]11:7

[579]12:10 [580]12:11 [581]13:5 [582]13:6 [583]13:15

[584]14:14 [585]15:4 [586]16:12 [587]17:9 [588]18:14

[589]19:25 [590]20:29 [591]21:22 [592]22:23 [593]23:3

[594]24:24 [595]25:4 [596]26:14 [597]27:6 [598]28:14

[599]29:2 [600]30:20 [601]31:6 [602]32:8 [603]33:23

[604]34:29 [605]35:10 [606]36:5 [607]37:21 [608]38:31

[609]39:1 [610]40:4

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225. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxiv-p1.1

226. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxv-p1.1

227. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxvi-p1.1

228. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxvii-p1.1

229. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxviii-p1.1

230. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxviii-p7.1

231. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxix-p1.1

232. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxix-p1.1

233. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxix-p1.1

234. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxix-p1.1

235. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxix-p1.1

236. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxc-p1.1

237. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxc-p1.1

238. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxc-p1.1

239. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxci-p1.1

240. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxcii-p1.1

241. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxciii-p1.1

242. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxciv-p1.1

243. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxcv-p1.1

244. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxcvi-p1.1

245. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxcvii-p1.1

246. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxcviii-p1.1

247. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxcix-p1.1

248. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cc-p1.1

249. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cci-p1.1

250. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccii-p1.1

251. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cciii-p1.1

252. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cciv-p1.1

253. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccv-p1.1

254. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccvi-p1.1

255. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccvii-p1.1

256. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccvii-p1.1

257. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccviii-p1.1

258. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccix-p1.1

259. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccx-p1.1

260. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxi-p1.1

261. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxli-p1.1

262. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxii-p1.1

263. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxlii-p1.1

264. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxlii-p1.1

265. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxiii-p1.1

266. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxiv-p1.1

267. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxv-p1.1

268. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxvi-p1.1

269. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxvii-p1.1

270. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxviii-p1.1

271. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxix-p1.1

272. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxx-p1.1

273. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxi-p1.1

274. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxii-p1.1

275. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxiii-p1.1

276. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxiv-p1.1

277. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxv-p1.1

278. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxvi-p1.1

279. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxvii-p1.1

280. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxviii-p1.1

281. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxix-p1.1

282. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxx-p1.1

283. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxxi-p1.1

284. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxxii-p1.1

285. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxxiii-p1.1

286. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxxiv-p1.1

287. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxxv-p1.1

288. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxxvi-p1.1

289. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxxvii-p1.1

290. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxxviii-p1.1

291. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxxix-p1.1

292. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxl-p1.1

293. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxvi-p4.1

294. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxxi-p3.2

295. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxvii-p3.1

296. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xlviii-p4.1

297. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cii-p4.1

298. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxix-p3.1

299. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxix-p3.1

300. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxiii-p3.1

301. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxxv-p6.1

302. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xvii-p5.1

303. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xvii-p4.1

304. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxix-p4.1

305. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxii-p4.1

306. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcii-p6.1

307. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxiii-p3.1

308. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxxi-p3.3

309. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxxiii-p3.1

310. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxliii-p4.1

311. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcii-p5.1

312. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcii-p5.1

313. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#liv-p4.1

314. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcii-p4.1

315. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxci-p3.1

316. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxci-p3.1

317. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lviii-p5.1

318. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxvi-p3.1

319. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lviii-p5.1

320. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#clxxvi-p3.1

321. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ccxiv-p3.1

322. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxci-p4.1

323. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxci-p4.1

324. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxcviii-p4.1

325. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xl-p4.1

326. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#liii-p4.1

327. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxlvii-p4.1

328. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xliv-p4.1

329. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxiii-p9.1

330. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxv-p5.1

331. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ii-p0.1

332. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#iii-p0.1

333. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#iv-p0.1

334. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#v-p0.1

335. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#vi-p0.1

336. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#vii-p0.1

337. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#viii-p0.1

338. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ix-p0.1

339. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#x-p0.1

340. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xi-p0.1

341. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xii-p0.1

342. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xiii-p0.1

343. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xiv-p0.1

344. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xv-p0.1

345. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xvi-p0.1

346. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xvii-p0.1

347. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xviii-p0.1

348. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xviii-p0.1

349. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xix-p0.1

350. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xix-p0.1

351. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xix-p0.1

352. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xix-p0.1

353. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xx-p0.1

354. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxi-p0.1

355. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxii-p0.1

356. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxiii-p0.1

357. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxiv-p0.1

358. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxv-p0.1

359. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxvi-p0.1

360. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxvii-p0.1

361. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxviii-p0.1

362. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxix-p0.1

363. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxx-p0.1

364. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxi-p0.1

365. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxii-p0.1

366. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxii-p0.1

367. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxiii-p0.1

368. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxiv-p0.1

369. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxv-p0.1

370. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxvi-p0.1

371. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxvii-p0.1

372. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxviii-p0.1

373. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xxxix-p0.1

374. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xl-p0.1

375. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xli-p0.1

376. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xlii-p0.1

377. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xliii-p0.1

378. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xliv-p0.1

379. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xlv-p0.1

380. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xlvi-p0.1

381. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xlvii-p0.1

382. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xlviii-p0.1

383. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xlix-p0.1

384. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#l-p0.1

385. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#l-p0.1

386. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#li-p0.1

387. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lii-p0.1

388. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#liii-p0.1

389. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#liv-p0.1

390. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lv-p0.1

391. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lvi-p0.1

392. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lvii-p0.1

393. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lviii-p0.1

394. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lix-p0.1

395. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lx-p0.1

396. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxi-p0.1

397. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxii-p0.1

398. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxiii-p0.1

399. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxiv-p0.1

400. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxv-p0.1

401. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxvi-p0.1

402. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxvii-p0.1

403. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxviii-p0.1

404. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxix-p0.1

405. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxix-p0.1

406. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxx-p0.1

407. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxi-p0.1

408. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxii-p0.1

409. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxiii-p0.1

410. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxiii-p0.1

411. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxiv-p0.1

412. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxv-p0.1

413. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxvi-p0.1

414. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxvii-p0.1

415. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxviii-p0.1

416. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxix-p0.1

417. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxix-p0.1

418. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxix-p0.1

419. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxx-p0.1

420. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxx-p0.1

421. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxx-p0.1

422. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxxi-p0.1

423. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxxii-p0.1

424. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxxiii-p0.1

425. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxxiv-p0.1

426. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxxv-p0.1

427. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxxvi-p0.1

428. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxxvii-p0.1

429. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxxviii-p0.1

430. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#lxxxix-p0.1

431. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xc-p0.1

432. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xci-p0.1

433. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcii-p0.1

434. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xciii-p0.1

435. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xciii-p0.1

436. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xciii-p0.1

437. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xciii-p0.1

438. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xciv-p0.1

439. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcv-p0.1

440. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcvi-p0.1

441. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcvii-p0.1

442. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcviii-p0.1

443. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#xcix-p0.1

444. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#c-p0.1

445. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ci-p0.1

446. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cii-p0.1

447. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#ciii-p0.1

448. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#civ-p0.1

449. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cv-p0.1

450. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cvi-p0.1

451. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cvii-p0.1

452. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cviii-p0.1

453. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cix-p0.1

454. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cx-p0.1

455. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxi-p0.1

456. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxi-p0.1

457. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxii-p0.1

458. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxii-p0.1

459. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxii-p0.1

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461. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxiii-p0.1

462. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxiv-p0.1

463. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxv-p0.1

464. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxvi-p0.1

465. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxvii-p0.1

466. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxviii-p0.1

467. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxix-p0.1

468. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxx-p0.1

469. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxx-p0.1

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471. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxxii-p0.1

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557. file://localhost/ccel/m/meyer/homily2/cache/homily2.html3#cxci-p0.1

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