The God of All Comfort

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**The God of All Comfort**

**Hannah Whitall Smith**

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**Chapter 1**

**Why This Book Has Been Written**

**"My heart is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things which I have**

**made touching the king."**

**I was once talking on the subject of religion with an intelligent**

**agnostic, whom I very much wished to influence, and after listening to**

**me politely for a little while, he said, "Well, madam, all I have to**

**say is this. If you Christians want to make us agnostics inclined to**

**look into your religion, you must try to be more comfortable in the**

**possession of it yourselves. The Christians I meet seem to me to be the**

**very most uncomfortable people anywhere around. They seem to carry**

**their religion as a man carries a headache. He does not want to get rid**

**of his head, but at the same time it is very uncomfortable to have it.**

**And I for one do not care to have that sort of religion."**

**This was a lesson I have never forgotten, and it is the primary cause**

**of my writing this book.**

**I was very young in the Christian life at the time of this**

**conversation, and was still in the first joy of my entrance into it, so**

**I could not believe that any of God's children could be as**

**uncomfortable in their religious lives as my agnostic friend had**

**asserted. But when the early glow of my conversion had passed, and I**

**had come down to the dullness of everyday duties and responsibilities,**

**I soon found from my own experience, and also from the similar**

**experiences of most of the Christians around me, that there was far too**

**much truth in his assertion, and that the religious life of most of us**

**was full of discomfort and unrest. In fact, it seemed, as one of my**

**Christian friends said to me one day when we were comparing our**

**experiences, "as if we had just enough religion to make us miserable."**

**I confess that this was very disappointing, for I had expected**

**something altogether different. It seemed to me exceedingly incongruous**

**that a religion, whose fruits were declared in the Bible to be love,**

**and joy, and peace should so often work out practically in an exactly**

**opposite direction, and should develop the fruits of doubt, and fear,**

**and unrest, and conflict, and discomforts of every kind; and I resolved**

**if possible to find out what was the matter. Why, I asked myself,**

**should the children of God lead such utterly uncomfortable religious**

**lives when He has led us to believe that His yoke would be easy and His**

**burden light? Why are we tormented with so many spiritual doubts, and**

**such heavy spiritual anxieties? Why do we find it so hard to be sure**

**that God really loves us, and why is it that we never seem able to**

**believe long at a time in His kindness and His care? How is it that we**

**can let ourselves suspect Him of forgetting us and forsaking us in**

**times of need? We can trust our earthly friends, and can be comfortable**

**in their companionship, and why is it then that we cannot trust our**

**heavenly Friend, and that we seem unable to be comfortable in His**

**service?**

**I believe I have found the answer to these questions, and I should like**

**to state frankly that my object in writing this book is to try to bring**

**into some troubled Christian lives around me a little real and genuine**

**comfort. My own idea of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is that**

**it was meant to be full of comfort. I feel sure any unprejudiced reader**

**of the New Testament would say the same; and I believe that every newly**

**converted soul, in the first joy of its conversion, fully expects it.**

**And yet, as I have said, it seems as if, with a large proportion of**

**Christians, their religious lives are the most uncomfortable part of**

**their existence. Does the fault of this state of things lie with the**

**Lord? Has He promised more than He is able to supply?**

**A writer has said, "We know what overadvertisement is. It is a**

**twentieth-century disease from which we all suffer. There are posters**

**on every billboard, exaggerations on every blank wall, representations**

**and misrepresentations without number. What visions we have seen of**

**impossible fruits and flowers grown from Mr. So-and-So's seeds.**

**Everything is overadvertised. Is it the same with the kingdom of God?**

**Do the fruits which we raise from the good seed of the kingdom verify**

**the description given by Him from whom we obtained that good seed? Has**

**He played us false? There is a feeling abroad that Christ has offered**

**in His Gospel more than He has to give. People think that they have not**

**exactly realized what was predicted as the portion of the children of**

**God. But why is this so? Has the kingdom of God been overadvertised, or**

**is it only that it has been underbelieved; has the Lord Jesus Christ**

**been overestimated, or has He only been undertrusted?"**

**What I want to do in this book is to show, in my small measure, what I**

**firmly believe, that the kingdom of God could not possibly be**

**overadvertised, nor the Lord Jesus Christ overestimated, for 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; and that all**

**the difficulty arises from the fact that we have underbelieved and**

**undertrusted.**

**I want, therefore, to show as best I can the grounds there are in the**

**religion of the Lord Jesus Christ for that deep and lasting peace and**

**comfort of soul, which nothing earthly can disturb, and which is**

**declared to be the portion of those who embrace it. And I want further**

**to tell, if this is indeed our rightful portion, how we are to avail**

**ourselves of it, and what are the things that hinder. There is God's**

**part in the matter, and there is man's part, and we must look carefully**

**at both.**

**A wild young fellow, who was brought to the Lord at a mission meeting,**

**and who became a rejoicing Christian and lived an exemplary life**

**afterward, was asked by someone what he did to get converted. "Oh," he**

**said, "I did my part, and the Lord did His."**

**"But what was your part," asked the inquirer, "and what was the Lord's**

**part?"**

**"My part," was the prompt reply, "was to run away, and the Lord's part**

**was to run after me until He caught me." A most significant answer; but**

**how few can understand it!**

**God's part is always to run after us. Christ came to seek and to save**

**that which is lost. "What man of you," He says, "having a hundred**

**sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in**

**the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? And**

**when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." This**

**is always the divine part; but in our foolishness we do not understand**

**it, but think that the Lord is the one who is lost, and that our part**

**is to seek and find Him. The very expressions we use show this. We urge**

**sinners to "seek the Lord," and we talk about having "found" Him. "Have**

**you found the Saviour?" asked a too zealous mission worker of a happy,**

**trusting little girl.**

**With a look of amazement, she replied in a tone of wonder, "Why, I did**

**not know the Saviour was lost!"**

**It is our ignorance of God that does it all. Because we do not know**

**Him, we naturally get all sorts of wrong ideas about Him. We think He**

**is an angry Judge who is on the watch for our slightest faults, or a**

**harsh Taskmaster determined to exact from us the uttermost service, or**

**a self-absorbed Deity demanding His full measure of honor and glory, or**

**a far-off Sovereign concerned only with His own affairs and indifferent**

**to our welfare. Who can wonder that such a God can neither be loved nor**

**trusted? And who could expect Christians, with such ideas concerning**

**Him, to be anything but full of discomfort and misery?**

**But I can assert boldly, and without fear of contradiction, that it is**

**impossible for anyone who really knows God to have such uncomfortable**

**thoughts about Him. Plenty of outward discomforts there may be, and**

**many earthly sorrows and trials, but through them all the soul that**

**knows God cannot but dwell inwardly in a fortress of perfect peace.**

**"Who so hearkeneth unto me," He says, "shall dwell safely; and shall be**

**quiet from fear of evil." And this is a statement that no one dare**

**question. If we would really hearken unto God, which means not only**

**hearing Him, but believing what we hear, we could not fail to know**

**that, just because He is God, He cannot do other than care for us as He**

**cares for the apple of His eye; and that all that tender love and**

**divine wisdom can do for our welfare, must be and will be unfailingly**

**done. Not a single loophole for worry or fear is left to the soul that**

**knows God.**

**"Ah, yes," you say, "but how am I to get to know Him. Other people seem**

**to have some kind of inward revelation that makes them know Him, but I**

**never do; and no matter how much I pray, everything seems dark to me. I**

**want to know God, but I do not see how to manage it."**

**Your trouble is that you have got a wrong idea of what knowing God is,**

**or at least the kind of knowing I mean. For I do not mean any mystical**

**interior revelations of any kind. Such revelations are delightful when**

**you can have them, but they are not always at your command, and they**

**are often variable and uncertain. The kind of knowing I mean is just**

**the plain matter-of-fact knowledge of God's nature and character that**

**comes to us by believing what is revealed to us in the Bible concerning**

**Him. The apostle John at the close of his Gospel says, regarding the**

**things he had been recording: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in**

**the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book: but**

**these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the**

**Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name."**

**It is believing the thing that is written, not the thing that is**

**inwardly revealed, that is to give life; and the kind of knowing I mean**

**is the knowing that comes from believing the things that are written.**

**I mean, to be practical, that when I read in the Bible that God is**

**love, I am to believe it, just because "it is written," and not because**

**I have had any inward revelation that is true; and when the Bible says**

**that He cares for us as He cares for the lilies of the field and the**

**birds of the air, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered,**

**I am to believe it, just because it is written, no matter whether I**

**have any inward revelation of it or not.**

**It is of vital importance for us to understand that the Bible is a**

**statement, not of theories, but of actual facts; and that things are**

**not true because they are in the Bible, but they are only in the Bible**

**because they are true. A little boy, who had been studying at school**

**about the discovery of America, said to his father one day, "Father, if**

**I had been Columbus I would not have taken all that trouble to discover**

**America."**

**"Why, what would you have done?" asked the father.**

**"Oh," replied the little boy, "I would have just gone to the map and**

**found it." This little boy did not understand that maps are only**

**pictures of already known places, and that America did not exist**

**because it was on the map, but it could not be on the map until it was**

**already known to exist. And similarly with the Bible. It is, like the**

**map, a simple statement of facts; so that when it tells us that God**

**loves us, it is only telling us something that is a fact, and that**

**would not be in the Bible if it had not been already known to be a**

**fact.**

**It was a great discovery to me when I grasped this idea. It seemed to**

**take all uncertainty and all speculation out of the revelation given us**

**in the Bible of the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make all**

**that is written concerning Him to be simply a statement of**

**incontrovertible facts. And facts we can believe, and what is more, we**

**do believe them as soon as we see that they are facts. Inward**

**revelations we cannot manage, but anyone in his senses can believe the**

**thing that is written. And although this may seem very dry and bare to**

**start with, it will, if steadfastly persevered in, result in very**

**blessed inward revelations, and will sooner or later lead us out into**

**such a knowledge of God as will transform our lives. This kind of**

**knowing brings us convictions; and to my mind convictions are far**

**superior to any inward revelations, delightful as these last are. An**

**inward revelation may be upset by the state of one's health, or by many**

**other upsetting things, but a conviction is permanent. Once convince a**

**man that two and two make four, and no amount of dyspepsia, or liver**

**complaint, or east winds, or anything else, but actual lunacy, can**

**upset his conviction. He knows it just as well when he has an attack of**

**dyspepsia as he does when his digestion is in good working order.**

**Convictions come from knowledge, and no amount of good feelings or bad**

**feelings, of good health or ill health, can alter knowledge.**

**It is to try to help my readers to come to a knowledge of God in the**

**plain matter-of-fact sort of way of which I have spoken, and to the**

**convictions which result from this knowledge, that this book is**

**written. I shall first try to show what God is, not theologically, nor**

**doctrinally, but simply what He is in actual, practical reality, as the**

**God and Father of each one of us. And I shall also point out some of**

**the things that seem to me the principal hindrances to becoming really**

**acquainted with Him.**

**I am so absolutely certain that coming to know Him as He really is will**

**bring unfailing comfort and peace to every troubled heart that I long**

**unspeakably to help everyone within my reach to this knowledge. One of**

**Job's friends said, in his arguments against Job's bitter complaints,**

**"Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace"; and our Lord in His**

**last recorded prayer said: "This is life eternal, that they might know**

**thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." It is**

**not a question of acquaintance with ourselves, or of knowing what we**

**are, or what we do, or what we feel; it is simply and only a question**

**of becoming acquainted with God, and getting to know what He is, and**

**what He does, and what He feels. Comfort and peace never come from**

**anything we know about ourselves, but only and always from what we know**

**about Him.**

**We may spend our days in what we call our religious duties, and we may**

**fill our devotions with fervor, and still may be miserable. Nothing can**

**set our hearts at rest but a real acquaintance with God; for, after**

**all, everything in our salvation must depend upon Him in the last**

**instance; and, according as He is worthy or not of our confidence, so**

**must necessarily be our comfort. If we were planning to take a**

**dangerous voyage, our first question would be as to the sort of captain**

**we were to have. Our common sense would tell us that if the captain**

**were untrustworthy, no amount of trustworthiness on our part would make**

**the voyage safe; and it would be his character and not our own that**

**would be the thing of paramount importance to us.**

**If I can only say this often enough and in enough different ways to**

**bring conviction to some troubled hearts, and lift them out of their**

**sad and uncomfortable religious lives into the kingdom of love, and**

**joy, and peace, which is their undisputed inheritance, I shall feel**

**that my object in writing this book has been accomplished. And I shall**

**be able to say, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for**

**mine eyes have seen Thy salvation; and my pen has tried to tell it.**

**It must, however, be clearly understood that my book does not propose**

**to touch on the critical or the theological aspects of our religion. It**

**does not undertake to deal with any questions concerning the**

**authenticity of the Bible. Other and far abler minds can deal with**

**these matters. My book is written for people, who, like myself, profess**

**to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who accept the Bible simply as**

**the revelation of Him.**

**Putting aside all critical questions, therefore, I seek only to tell**

**such believers of what seems to me the necessary result of their**

**belief, and how they can personally realize this result.**

**Mistakes in the telling there may be, and for these I ask the charity**

**of my readers. But the thing I want to say, and to say in such a way**

**that no one can fail to understand it, is not a mistake; and that thing**

**is this, that our religious lives ought to be full of joy, and peace,**

**and comfort, and that, if we become better acquainted with God, they**

**will be.**

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**Chapter 2**

**What is His Name?**

**"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of**

**Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me**

**unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say**

**unto them?"**

**The vital question of all ages and of every human heart is here**

**expressed, "What is his name?"**

**The whole fate of humanity hangs on the answer to this question.**

**As we know, the condition of a country depends upon the character of**

**its rulers. The state of an army depends upon the officers who command**

**it. And the more absolute the government, the more is this necessarily**

**the case.**

**We can see how it must be, therefore, that everything in a universe**

**will depend upon the sort of creator and ruler who has brought that**

**universe into existence, and that the whole welfare of the human beings**

**who have been placed there is of necessity bound up with the character**

**of their Creator. If the God who created us is a good God, then**

**everything must of necessity be all right for us, since a good God**

**cannot ordain any but good things. But if He is a bad God, or a**

**careless God, or an unkind God, then we cannot be sure that anything is**

**right, and can have no peace or comfort anywhere.**

**The true ground for peace and comfort is only to be found in the sort**

**of God we have. Therefore, we need first of all to find out what is His**

**name, or, in other words, what is His character--in short, what sort of**

**a God He is.**

**In Bible language name always means character. Names are not given**

**arbitrarily there, as with us, but are always given with reference to**

**the character or work of the person named. Creden in his Concordance**

**says that the names of God signify that which He really is, and are**

**used throughout the Bible to express His attributes, and His purposes,**

**His glory, His grace, His mercy, and His love, His wisdom, and power,**

**and goodness. A careful study of His names will make this plain.**

**When, therefore, the children of Israel asked, "What is his name?" they**

**meant, "Who and what is this God of whom you speak? What is His**

**character; what are His attributes; what does He do? In short, what**

**sort of a being is He?"**

**The psalmist says, "They that know thy name will put their trust in**

**thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." And again**

**he says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth**

**into it and is safe." "They that know thy name will put their trust in**

**thee." They cannot do anything else, because in knowing His name they**

**know His character and His nature, that He is a God whom it is safe to**

**trust to the uttermost. And there can be no doubt that a large part of**

**the unrest and discomfort in so many Christian hearts comes simply from**

**the fact that they do not yet know His name.**

**"Some trust in chariots and some in horses: but we will remember the**

**name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and are fallen, but we**

**are risen and stand upright." In all that we read concerning Israel of**

**old we find this constant refrain, that all they were and all they had**

**depended upon the fact that their God was the Lord. "Blessed is the**

**nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for**

**his own inheritance." "O Lord, there is none like thee, neither is**

**there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our**

**ears. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people: to make thee**

**a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from**

**before thy people, whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt? For thy people**

**Israel didst thou make thine own people forever, and thou, Lord,**

**becamest their God." "Happy is that people that is in the Lord."**

**Blessed is that nation, happy is that people whose God is the Lord! All**

**the blessing and happiness of Israel arose from the fact that their God**

**was the Lord. Nothing else was of sufficient importance to be mentioned**

**in the recapitulation of their advantages. The fact that their God was**

**the Lord Jehovah was enough to account for every good thing they**

**possessed.**

**The question of all questions for each one of us, therefore, is this**

**one, "What is his name?" To the Israelites God Himself answered this**

**question. And God said unto Moses, "I am that I am"; and He said, "Thus**

**shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto**

**you." And God said, moreover, unto Moses: "Thus shalt thou say unto the**

**children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham,**

**the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you; this is**

**my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations."**

**In the Gospel of John Christ adopts this name of "I am" as His own.**

**When the Jews were questioning Him as to His authority, He said unto**

**them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was I am." And in**

**the Book of Revelation He again declares: "I am Alpha and Omega, the**

**beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and**

**which is to come, the Almighty."**

**These simple words, I am, express therefore eternity and**

**unchangeableness of existence, which is the very first element**

**necessary in a God who is to be depended upon. No dependence could be**

**placed by any one of us upon a changeable God. He must be the same**

**yesterday, today, and forever, if we are to have any peace or comfort.**

**But is this all His name implies, simply "I am"? I am what?--we ask.**

**What does this "I am" include?**

**I believe it includes everything the human heart longs for and needs.**

**This unfinished name of God seems to me like a blank check signed by a**

**rich friend given to us to be filled in with whatever sum we may**

**desire. The whole Bible tells us what it means.**

**Every attribute of God, every revelation of His character, every proof**

**of His undying love, every declaration of His watchful care, every**

**assertion of His purposes of tender mercy, every manifestation of His**

**loving kindness--all are the filling out of this unfinished "I am."**

**God tells us through all the pages of His Book what He is. "I am," He**

**says, "all that my people need": "I am their strength"; "I am their**

**wisdom"; "I am their righteousness"; "I am their peace"; "I am their**

**salvation"; "I am their life"; "I am their all in all."**

**This apparently unfinished name, therefore, is the most comforting name**

**the heart of man could devise, because it allows us to add to it,**

**without any limitation, whatever we feel the need of, and even**

**"exceeding abundantly" beyond all that we can ask or think.**

**But if our hearts are full of our own wretched "I ams" we will have no**

**ears to hear His glorious, soul-satisfying "I am." We say, "Alas, I am**

**such a poor weak creature," or "I am so foolish," or "I am so**

**good-for-nothing," or "I am so helpless"; and we give these pitiful "I**

**ams" of ours as the reason of the wretchedness and discomfort of our**

**religious lives, and even feel that we are very much to be pitied that**

**things are so hard for us. While all the time we entirely ignore the**

**blank check of God's magnificent "I am," which authorizes us to draw**

**upon Him for an abundant supply for every need.**

**If you are an uncomfortable Christian, then the only thing to give you**

**a thoroughly comfortable religious life is to know God. The psalmist**

**says that they that know God's name will put their trust in Him, and it**

**is, I am convinced, impossible for anyone really to know Him and not to**

**trust Him. A trustworthy person commands trust; not in the sense of**

**ordering people to trust him, but by irresistibly winning their trust**

**by his trustworthiness.**

**What our Lord declares is eternally true, "I, if I be lifted up, will**

**draw all men unto me." When once you know Him, Christ is absolutely**

**irresistible. You can no more help trusting Him than you can help**

**breathing. And could the whole world but know Him as He is, the whole**

**world, sinners and all, would fall at His feet in adoring worship. They**

**simply could not help it. His surpassing loveliness would carry all**

**before it.**

**How then can we become acquainted with God?**

**There are two things necessary: first, God must reveal Himself; and**

**second, we must accept His revelation and believe what He reveals.**

**The apostle John tells us that "no man hath seen God at any time," but**

**"the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath**

**declared him." Christ, then, is the revelation of God. We have none of**

**us seen God, and we never can see Him in this present stage of our**

**existence, for we have not the faculties that would make it possible.**

**But He has incarnated Himself in Christ, and we can see Christ, since**

**He was a man like one of us.**

**A man, who should want to talk with ants, might stand over an anthill**

**and harangue for a whole day, and not one word would reach the ears of**

**the ants. They would run to and fro utterly unconscious of his**

**presence. As far as we know, ants have no faculties by which they can**

**receive human communications. But if a man could incarnate himself in**

**the body of an ant, and could go about among them, living an ant's life**

**and speaking the ants' language, he would make himself intelligible to**

**them at once. Incarnation is always necessary when a higher form of**

**life would communicate with a lower.**

**Christ revealed God by what He was, by what He did, and by what He**

**said. From the cradle to the grave, every moment of His life was a**

**revelation of God. We must go to Him then for our knowledge of God, and**

**we must refuse to believe anything concerning God that is not revealed**

**to us in Christ. All other revelations are partial, and therefore not**

**wholly true. Only in Christ do we see God as He is; for Christ is**

**declared to be the "express image" of God.**

**Just what God would have said and done under the circumstances, that**

**Christ said and did. "I do nothing of myself," was His continual**

**assertion. "I say nothing of myself; the Father that dwelleth in me he**

**doeth the works"; "I and my Father are one"; "He that seeth me seeth my**

**Father".**

**Words could not tell us more plainly than the Bible tells us that in**

**order to know God we have only to look at Christ; we have only to**

**"receive the testimony" of Christ.**

**Over and over we are assured that God and Christ are one. When the Jews**

**came to Christ, as He was walking in the porch of Solomon's Temple, and**

**asked Him to tell them plainly who He was, He answered, "I and my**

**Father are one." And to His disciples, at His last supper with them, He**

**said, in answer to their questions: "If ye had known me, ye should have**

**known my Father also, and from henceforth ye know him and have seen**

**him." But Philip could not understand this, and said, "Lord, show us**

**the Father, and it sufficeth us." And then Jesus repeated His former**

**statement even more strongly: "Have I been so long time with you, and**

**yet hast thou not known me Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the**

**Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"**

**Nothing is more emphatically stated in the New Testament than this**

**fact, that we are to behold the "light of the knowledge of the glory of**

**God in the face of Jesus Christ," and that we can behold it fully**

**nowhere else.**

**If we would know then the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of**

**what God meant when He gave to Moses that apparently unfinished name of**

**"I am," we shall find it revealed in Christ. He and He alone is the**

**translation of God. He and He alone is the image of the invisible God.**

**It is evident, therefore, that we must never accept any conception of**

**God that is contrary to what we see in Christ, and must utterly reject**

**any view of His character or of His acts, or any statement of His**

**relations with us as human beings, no matter how strongly upheld, which**

**is at variance with what Christ has revealed.**

**We are all aware that the Old Testament revelation of God seems**

**sometimes to contradict the revelation in Christ, and the question**

**arises as to which we are to receive as the truest. In view of the fact**

**that God Himself tells us that in these last days He has spoken to us**

**by His Son, who is the "brightness of his glory and the express image**

**of his person," we may not dare reject Christ's testimony, but must**

**look upon the Old Testament revelation, where it differs from the**

**revelation in Christ, as partial and imperfect; and must accept as a**

**true setting forth of God only that which we find in Christ. Christ**

**alone tells us the true and genuine name of God. In His last wonderful**

**prayer He says: "I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou**

**gavest me out of the world, and they have known that all things**

**whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee, for I have given unto them**

**the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have**

**known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that**

**thou didst send me."**

**Could we ask for greater authority than this?**

**In the whole life of Christ nothing is plainer or more emphatic than**

**the fact that He claimed continually to be a full and complete**

**manifestation of God. "The words that I speak unto you," He says, "I**

**speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the**

**works." Over and over He asserts that He says only what the Father**

**tells Him to say. "I speak to the world those things which I have heard**

**of him." "I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me I**

**speak these things."**

**The apostle declares most emphatically that it "pleased the Father"**

**that in Christ should "dwell all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."**

**And although we may not understand all that this means theologically,**

**we at least cannot fail to see that if we want to know God, we need**

**only to become acquainted with Christ's ways and Christ's character in**

**order to become acquainted with God's ways and God's character. "He**

**that hath seen me," He says, "hath seen the Father." And again He**

**declares that "neither knoweth any man the Father save the son, and he**

**to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." This settles it beyond the**

**possibility of cavil. We may, and we do, have all sorts of thoughts of**

**God, we may conjecture this or imagine that, but we are wasting our**

**energies in it all. We simply cannot know, no man can, except through**

**the revelation of Christ.**

**We may know a good many things about Him, but that is very different**

**from knowing Him Himself, as He really is in nature and character.**

**Other witnesses have told us of His visible acts, but from these we get**

**often very wrong impressions of His true character. No other witness**

**but Christ can tell us of the real secrets of God's bosom, for of none**

**other can it be said, as it is of Him, that "the only begotten Son who**

**is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." It will make all**

**the difference between comfort and discomfort in our Christian lives,**

**whether or not we believe this to be a fact. If we do believe it to be**

**a fact, then the stern Judge and hard Taskmaster whom we have feared,**

**even while we tried to follow Him, and whose service we have found so**

**irksome and so full of discomfort, will disappear; and His place will**

**be taken by the God of love who is revealed to us in "the face of Jesus**

**Christ," the God who cares for us as He cares for the sparrows, and for**

**the flowers of the field, and who tells us that He numbers even the**

**hairs of our head.**

**No human being could be afraid of a God like this.**

**If we have been accustomed, therefore, to approach God with any**

**mistrust of the kindness of His feelings toward us; if our religious**

**life has been poisoned by fear; if unworthy thoughts of His character**

**and will have filled our hearts with suspicions of His goodness; if we**

**have pictured Him as an unjust deposit of a self-seeking tyrant; if, in**

**short, we have imagined Him in any way other than that which has been**

**revealed to us in "the face of Jesus Christ," we must go back in all**

**simplicity of heart to the records of that lovely life, lived in human**

**guise among men, and must bring our conceptions of God into perfect**

**accord with the character and ways of Him who declares that He came to**

**manifest the name of God to men.**

**In reply then to the question, "What is His name?" I have only this one**

**thing to say, Ask Christ. We are told He was "God manifest in the**

**flesh," and that whoever sees Him sees the God who sent Him; therefore**

**it is perfectly plain that, if we want to know the name, we have only**

**to read the manifestation. And this means simply that we must study the**

**life, and words, and ways of Christ, and must say to ourselves, he that**

**seeth Christ seeth God, and what Christ was on earth that God is in**

**Heaven. All the darkness that enshrouds the character of God will**

**vanish if we will but accept the light Christ has shed on the matter,**

**and believe the "manifestation of His name" that Christ has given us,**

**and will utterly refuse to believe anything else.**

**When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night to ask Him how the things He was**

**saying could possibly be true, Jesus told him that, whether he**

**understood them or not, they still were true, and said with greatest**

**emphasis: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know,**

**and testify that we have seen." No one who believes in Christ at all**

**can doubt that He knew God; and no one can question whether or not we**

**ought to receive His testimony. He has assured us over and over again**

**that He knew what He was talking about, and that what He said was to be**

**received as the absolute truth, because He had come down from Heaven,**

**and therefore knew about heavenly things.**

**We none of us would dare openly to question the truth of this; and yet**

**practically a great many of God's children utterly ignore Christ's**

**testimony and choose instead to listen to the testimony of their own**

**doubting hearts, which tells them it is impossible that God could be as**

**loving in His care for us, or as tender toward our weakness and**

**foolishness, or as ready to forgive our sins, as Christ has revealed**

**Him to be. And yet I must repeat again and again, at the risk of being**

**accused of useless repetition, what so few people seem to realize, that**

**if there is one thing taught in the Bible more plainly than any other,**

**it is that the name, or, in other words, the character of His Father**

**which Christ gave, must be His real name and character. He declares of**

**Himself over and over that He was a living manifestation of the Father;**

**and in all He said and did He assures us that He was simply saying and**

**doing that which the Father would have said and done had he acted**

**directly out of Heaven, and from off His heavenly throne.**

**In the face of such unqualified assertions as these out of the lips of**

**our Lord Himself, it becomes, not only our privilege, but our bounded**

**duty to cast out of our conception of God every element that could in**

**any way conflict with the blessed life and character and teaching of**

**Christ. If we would know the real name of God, we must accept the name**

**Christ has revealed to us, and must listen to no other.**

**Whatever characteristics then we see in Christ, these are the filling**

**out of the "I am" of God. As we look at the life of Christ and listen**

**to His words, we can hear God saying, "I am rest for the weary; I am**

**peace for the storm-tossed; I am strength for the strengthless; I am**

**wisdom for the foolish; I am righteousness for the sinful; I am all**

**that the neediest soul on earth can want; I am exceeding abundantly,**

**beyond all you can ask or think, or blessing, and help, and care."**

**But here the doubter may say, "Ah yes, this is no doubt all true, but**

**how can I get hold of it? I am such a poor, unworthy creature that I**

**dare not believe such a fullness of grace can belong to me."**

**How can you get hold of it, you ask. You cannot get hold of it at all,**

**but you can let it get hold of you. It is a piece of magnificent good**

**news declared to you in the Bible; and you only need do with it exactly**

**what you do when any earthly good news is told you by a reliable**

**earthly source. If the speaker is trustworthy, you believe what he**

**says, and act in accordance. And you must do the same here. If Christ**

**is trustworthy when He tells you that He is the manifestation of God,**

**you must believe what He says, and act accordingly.**

**You must take your stand on His trustworthiness. You must say to**

**yourself, and to your friends if need be, "I am going to believe what**

**Christ says about God. No matter what the seemings may be, nor what my**

**own thoughts and feelings are, nor what anybody else may say, I know**

**that what Christ says about God must be true, for He knew, and nobody**

**else does, and I am going to believe Him right straight through, come**

**what may. He says that He was one with God, so all that He was God is,**

**and I will never be frightened of God any more. I will never again let**

**myself think of Him as a stern Lawgiver who is angry with me because of**

**my sins, nor as a hard Taskmaster who demands from me impossible tasks,**

**nor as a far-off unapproachable Deity, who is wrapped up in His own**

**glory, and is indifferent to my sorrows and my fears. All such ideas of**

**God have become impossible, now that I know that Christ was the true**

**manifestation of God."**

**If we will take our stand on this one fact, that Christ and God are**

**one, with an intelligent comprehension of what it involves, and will**

**refuse definitely and unwaveringly to cherish any thought of God that**

**is at variance with what Christ has revealed, life will be transformed**

**for us.**

**We may often have to set our faces like a flint to hold steadfastly**

**here; for our old doubts and fears will be sure to come back and demand**

**admittance; but we must turn our backs on them resolutely, and must**

**declare that now at last we know the name, or in other words, the**

**character of our God, and know that such things would be impossible to**

**Him; and that therefore we simply refuse point-blank to listen for a**

**moment to any such libels on His character or His ways.**

**It is unthinkable to suppose that when God told Moses His name was "I**

**am," He could have meant to say, "I am a stern Lawgiver," or "I am a**

**hard Taskmaster," or "I am a God who is wrapped up in my own glory, and**

**am indifferent to the sorrows or the fears of my people." If we should**

**try to fill in the blank of His "I am" with such things as these, all**

**the Christians the world over would be horrified. But do not the doubts**

**and fears of some of these very Christians say exactly these things in**

**secret every day of their lives?**

**May God grant that what we shall learn in our consideration of the**

**names of God may make all such doubts and fears impossible to us from**

**this time forth and forevermore.**

**Jesus is God! Oh, could I now**

**But compass land and sea,**

**To teach and tell this single truth,**

**How happy I should be!**

**Oh, had I but an angel's voice,**

**I would proclaim so loud--**

**Jesus, the good, the beautiful,**

**Is the image of our God!**

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**Chapter 3**

**The God Of All Comfort**

**"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father**

**of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our**

**tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any**

**trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."**

**Among all the names that reveal God, this, the "God of all comfort,"**

**seems to me one of the loveliest and the most absolutely comforting.**

**The words all comfort admit of no limitation and no deductions; and one**

**would suppose that, however full of discomforts the outward life of the**

**followers of such a God might be, their inward religious life must**

**necessarily be always and under all circumstances a comfortable life.**

**But, as a fact, it often seems as if exactly the opposite were the**

**case, and the religious lives of large numbers of the children of God**

**are full, not of comfort, but of the utmost discomfort. This discomfort**

**arises from anxiety as to their relationship to God, and doubts as to**

**His love. They torment themselves with the thought that they are too**

**good-for-nothing to be worthy of His care, and they suspect Him of**

**being indifferent to their trials and of forsaking them in times of**

**need. They are anxious and troubled about everything in their religious**

**life, about their disposition and feelings, their indifference to the**

**Bible, their want of fervency in prayer, their coldness of heart. They**

**are tormented with unavailing regrets over their past, and with**

**devouring anxieties for their future. They feel unworthy to enter God's**

**presence, and dare not believe that they belong to Him. They can be**

**happy and comfortable with their earthly friends, but they cannot be**

**happy or comfortable with God. And although He declares Himself to be**

**the God of all comfort, they continually complain that they cannot find**

**comfort anywhere; and their sorrowful looks and the doleful tones of**

**their voice show that they are speaking the truth.**

**Such Christians, although they profess to be the followers of the God**

**of all comfort, spread gloom and discomfort around them wherever they**

**go; and it is out of the question for them to hope that they can induce**

**anyone else to believe that this beautiful name, by which He has**

**announced Himself, is anything more than a pious phrase, which in**

**reality means nothing at all. And the manifestly uncomfortable**

**religious lives of so many Christians is, I am very much afraid,**

**responsible for a large part of the unbelief of the world.**

**The apostle says that we are to be living epistles known and read of**

**all men; and the question as to what men read in us is of far more**

**vital importance to the spread of Christ's kingdom than we half the**

**time realize. It is not what we say that tells, but what we are. It is**

**easy enough to say a great many beautiful things about God being the**

**God of all comfort; but unless we know what it is to be really and**

**truly comforted ourselves, we might as well talk to the winds. People**

**must read in our lives what they hear in our words, or all our**

**preaching is worse than useless. It would be well for us to ask**

**ourselves what they are reading in us. Is it comfort or discomfort that**

**voices itself in our daily walk and life?**

**But at this point I may be asked what I mean by the comfort God gives.**

**Is it a sort of pious grace, that may perhaps fit us for Heaven, but**

**that is somehow unfit to bear the brunt of our everyday life with its**

**trials and its pains? Or is it an honest and genuine comfort, as we**

**understand comfort, that enfolds life's trials and pains in an all**

**embracing peace?**

**With all my heart I believe it is the latter.**

**Comfort, whether human or divine, is pure and simple comfort, and is**

**nothing else. We none of us care for pious phrases, we want realities;**

**and the reality of being comforted and comfortable seems to me almost**

**more delightful than any other thing in life. We all know what it is.**

**When as little children we have cuddled up into our mother's lap after**

**a fall or a misfortune, and have felt her dear arms around us, and her**

**soft kisses on our hair, we have had comfort. When, as grown-up people,**

**after a hard day's work, we have put on our slippers and seated**

**ourselves by the fire, in an easy chair with a book, we have had**

**comfort. When, after a painful illness, we have begun to recover, and**

**have been able to stretch our limbs and open our eyes without pain, we**

**have had comfort. When someone whom we dearly love has been ill almost**

**unto death, and has been restored to us in health again, we have had**

**comfort. A thousand times in our lives probably, have we said, with a**

**sigh of relief, as a toil over or burdens laid down, "Well, this is**

**comfortable," and in that word comfortable there has been comprised**

**more a rest, and relief, and satisfaction, and pleasure, than any other**

**word in the English language could possibly be made to express. We**

**cannot fail, therefore, to understand the meaning of this name of God,**

**the "God of all comfort."**

**But alas, we have failed to believe it. It has seemed to us too good to**

**be true. The joy and delight of it, if it were really a fact, have been**

**more than our poor suspicious natures could take in. We may venture to**

**hope sometimes that little scraps of comfort may be vouchsafed to us;**

**but we have run away frightened at the thought of the "all comfort"**

**that is ours in the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**And yet what more could He have said about it than He has said: "As one**

**whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be**

**comforted." Notice the as and so in this passage: "As one whom his**

**mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." It is real comforting that**

**is meant here; the sort of comforting that a child feels when it is**

**"dandled on its mother's knees, and borne on her sides"; and yet how**

**many of us have really believed that God's comforting is actually as**

**tender and true as a mother's comforting, or even half or quarter so**

**real. Instead of thinking of ourselves as being "dandled" on His knees,**

**and hugged to His heart, as mothers hug, have we not rather been**

**inclined to look upon Him as a stern, unbending Judge, holding us at a**

**distance, and demanding our respectful homage, and critical of our**

**slightest faults? Is it any wonder that our religion, instead of making**

**us comfortable, has made us thoroughly uncomfortable? Who could help**

**being uncomfortable in the presence of such a Judge?**

**But I rejoice to say that that stern Judge is not there. He does not**

**exist. The God who does exist is a God who is like a mother, a God who**

**says to us as plainly as words can say it, "As one whom his mother**

**comforteth, so will I comfort you."**

**Over and over again He declares this. "I, even I, am he that comforteth**

**you," He says to the poor, frightened children of Israel. And then He**

**reproaches them with not being comforted. "Why," He says, "should you**

**let anything make you afraid when here is the Lord, your Maker, ready**

**and longing to comfort you. You have feared continually every day the**

**fury of the oppressor,' and have forgotten me who have stretched forth**

**the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth? Where is the fury of**

**the oppressor when I am by?"**

**The God who exists is the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**the God who so loved the world that He sent His Son, not to judge the**

**world, but to save it. He is the God who "anointed" the Lord Jesus**

**Christ to bind up the brokenhearted, and to proclaim liberty to the**

**captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and to**

**comfort all that mourn. Please notice that all. Not a few select ones**

**only, but all. Every captive of sin, every prisoner in infirmity, every**

**mourning heart throughout the whole world must be included in this**

**"all." It would not be "all" if there should be a single one left out,**

**no matter how insignificant, or unworthy, or even how feeble-minded**

**that one might be. I have always been thankful that the feeble-minded**

**are especially mentioned by Paul in his exhortations to the**

**Thessalonian Christians, when he is urging them to comfort one another.**

**In effect he says, Do not scold the feeble-minded, but comfort them.**

**The very ones who need comfort most are the ones that our God, who is**

**like a mother, wants to comfort--not the strong-minded ones, but the**

**feeble-minded.**

**For this is the glory of a religion of love. And this is the glory of**

**the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was anointed to comfort "all**

**that mourn." The "God of all comfort" sent His Son to be the comforter**

**of a mourning world. And all through His life on earth He fulfilled His**

**divine mission. When His disciples asked Him to call down fire from**

**Heaven to consume some people who refused to receive Him, He turned and**

**rebuked them, and said: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.**

**For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save**

**them." He received sinners and ate with them. He welcomed Mary**

**Magdalene when all men turned from her. He refused even to condemn the**

**woman who was taken in the very act of sin, but said to the scribes and**

**Pharisees who had brought her before Him, "He that is without sin among**

**you, let him first cast a stone at her"; and when, convicted by their**

**own consciences, they all went out one by one without condemning her,**

**He said to her, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."**

**Always and everywhere He was on the side of sinners. That was what He**

**was for. He came to save sinners. He had no other mission.**

**Two little girls were talking about God, and one said, "I know God does**

**not love me. He could not care for such a teeny, tiny little girl as I**

**am."**

**"Dear me, sis," said the other little girl, "don't you know that that**

**is just what God is for--to take care of teeny, tiny little girls who**

**can't take care of themselves, just like us?"**

**"Is He?" said the first little girl. "I did not know that. Then I don't**

**need to worry any more, do I?"**

**If any troubled doubting heart, any heart that is fearing continually**

**every day some form or other of evil should read these lines, let me**

**tell you again in trumpet tones that this is just what the Lord Jesus**

**Christ is for--to care for and comfort all who mourn. "All," remember,**

**every single one, even you yourself, for it would not be "all" if you**

**were left out. You may be so cast down that you can hardly lift up your**

**head, but the apostle tells us that He is the "God that comforteth**

**those that are cast down"; the comforting of Christ. All who mourn, all**

**who are cast down--I love to think of such a mission of comfort in a**

**world of mourning like ours; and I long to see every cast down and**

**sorrowing heart comforted with this comforting of God.**

**And our Comforter is not far off in Heaven where we cannot find Him. He**

**is close at hand. He abides with us. When Christ was going away from**

**this earth, He told His disciples that He would not leave them**

**comfortless, but would send "another Comforter" who would abide with**

**them forever. This Comforter, He said, would teach them all things, and**

**would bring all things to their remembrance. And then He declared, as**

**though it were the necessary result of the coming of this divine**

**Comforter: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as**

**the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart [therefore] be**

**troubled, neither let it be afraid." Oh, how can we, in the face of**

**these tender and loving words, go about with troubled and frightened**

**hearts.**

**"Comforter"--what a word of bliss, if we only could realize it. Let us**

**repeat it over and over to ourselves, until its meaning sinks into the**

**very depths of our being. And an "abiding" Comforter, too, not one who**

**comes and goes, and is never on hand when most needed, but one who is**

**always present, and always ready to give us "joy for mourning, and the**

**garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."**

**The very words abiding Comforter are an amazing revelation. Try to**

**comprehend them. If we can have a human comforter to stay with us for**

**only a few days when we are in trouble, we think ourselves fortunate;**

**but here is a divine Comforter who is always staying with us, and whose**

**power to comfort is infinite. Never, never ought we for a single minute**

**to be without comfort; never for a single minute ought we to be**

**uncomfortable.**

**I have often wondered whether those early disciples realized at all**

**what this glorious legacy of a Comforter meant. I am very sure the**

**majority of the disciples of Christ now do not. If they did, there**

**could not possibly be so many uncomfortable Christians about.**

**But you may ask whether this divine Comforter does not sometimes**

**reprove us for our sins, and whether we can get any comfort out of**

**this. In my opinion this is exactly one of the places where the comfort**

**comes in. For what sort of creatures should we be if we had no divine**

**Teacher always at hand to show us our faults and awaken in us a desire**

**to get rid of them?**

**If I am walking along the street with a very disfiguring hole in the**

**back of my dress, of which I am in ignorance, it is certainly a very**

**great comfort to me to have a kind friend who will tell me of it. And**

**similarly it is indeed a comfort to know that there is always abiding**

**with me a divine, all-seeing Comforter, who will reprove me for all my**

**faults, and will not let me go on in a fatal unconsciousness of them.**

**Emerson says it is far more to a man's interest that he should see his**

**own faults than that anyone else should see them, and a moment's**

**thought will convince us that this is true, and will make us thankful**

**for the Comforter who reveals them to us.**

**I remember vividly the comfort it used to be to me, when I was young,**

**to have a sister who always knew what was the right and proper thing to**

**do, and who, when we went out together, always kept me in order. I**

**never felt any anxiety or responsibility about myself if she was by,**

**for I knew she would keep a strict watch over me, and nudge me or**

**whisper to me if I was making any mistakes. I was always made**

**comfortable, and not uncomfortable, by her presence. But when it**

**chanced that I went anywhere alone, then I would indeed feel**

**uncomfortable, for then there was no one near to keep me straight.**

**The declaration is that He "comforts all our waste places"; and He does**

**this by revealing them to us, and at the same time showing us how He**

**can make our "wildernesses like Eden," and our "deserts like the garden**

**of the Lord."**

**You may object, perhaps, because you are not worthy of His comforts. I**

**do not suppose you are. No one ever is. But you need His comforting,**

**and because you are not worthy you need it all the more. Christ came**

**into the world to save sinners, not good people, and your unworthiness**

**is your greatest claim for His salvation.**

**In the same passage in Isaiah in which He tells us that He has seen our**

**ways and was "wroth" with us, He assures us that He will heal us and**

**restore comforts to us. It is just because He is wroth with us (wroth**

**in the sense in which love is always wroth with any fault in those it**

**loves), that therefore He "restores comforts" to us. And He does it by**

**revealing our sin and healing it.**

**The avenue to the comfortings of the divine Comforter lies through the**

**need of comfort. And this explains to me better than anything else the**

**reason why the Lord so often allows sorrow and trial to be our portion.**

**"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the**

**wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." We find ourselves, it may**

**be, in a "wilderness" of disappointment and of suffering, and we wonder**

**why the God who loves us should have allowed it. But he knows that it**

**is only in that very wilderness that we can hear and receive the**

**"comfortable words" He has to pour out upon us. We must feel the need**

**of comfort before we can listen to the words of comfort. And God knows**

**that it is infinitely better and happier for us to need His comforts**

**and receive them, than ever it could be not to need them and so be**

**without them. The consolations of God mean the substituting of a far**

**higher and better thing for what we lose to get them. The things we**

**lose are earthly things, those He substitutes are heavenly. And who of**

**us but would thankfully be "allured" by our God into any earthly**

**wilderness, if only there we might find the unspeakable joys of union**

**with Himself. Paul could say he "counted all things but loss" if he**

**might but "win Christ"; and, if we have even the faintest glimpse of**

**what winning Christ means, we will say so too.**

**But strangely enough, while it is easy for us when we are happy and do**

**not need comforting, to believe that our God is the "God of all**

**comfort," but as soon as we are in trouble and need it, it seems**

**impossible to believe that there can be any comfort for us anywhere. It**

**would almost seem as if, in our reading of the Bible, we had reversed**

**its meaning, and made it say, not "Blessed are they that mourn, for**

**they shall be comforted," but "Blessed are they that rejoice, for they,**

**and they only, shall be comforted." It is very strange how often in our**

**secret hearts we almost unconsciously alter the Bible words a little,**

**and so make the meaning exactly opposite to what it actually is; or**

**else we put in so many "ifs" and "buts" as to take the whole point out**

**of what is said. Take for instance, those beautiful words, "God that**

**comforteth those that are cast down," and ask ourselves whether we have**

**never been tempted to make it read in our secret hearts, "God who**

**forsaketh those who are cast down," or, "God who overlooks those who**

**are cast down," or, "God who will comfort those who are cast down if**

**they show themselves worthy of comfort"; and whether, consequently,**

**instead of being comforted, we have not been plunged into misery and**

**despair.**

**The psalmist tells us that God will "comfort us on every side," and**

**what an all-embracing bit of comfort this is. "On every side," no**

**aching spot to be left uncomforted. And yet, in times of special trial,**

**how many Christians secretly read this as though it said, "God will**

**comfort us on every side except just the side where our trials lie; on**

**that side there is no comfort anywhere." But God says every side, and**

**it is only unbelief on our part that leads us to make an exception of**

**our special side.**

**It is with too many, alas, just as it was with Israel of old. On one**

**side God said to Zion: "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and**

**break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his**

**people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted"; and on the other side**

**Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."**

**And then God's answer came in those wonderful words, full forever of**

**comfort enough to meet the needs of all the sorrows of all humanity:**

**"Forget thee! Can a mother forget? Yea, perhaps a mother may forget,**

**but I cannot. I have even graven thee upon the palms of my hands, so**

**that it is impossible for me to forget thee! Be comforted, then, and**

**sing for you."**

**But you may ask how you are to get hold of this divine comfort. My**

**answer is that you must take it. God's comfort is being continually and**

**abundantly given, but unless you will accept it you cannot have it.**

**Divine comfort does not come to us in any mysterious or arbitrary way.**

**It comes as the result of a divine method. The indwelling Comforter**

**"brings to our remembrance" comforting things concerning our Lord, and,**

**if we believe them, we are comforted by them. A text is brought to our**

**remembrance, perhaps, or the verse of a hymn, or some thought**

**concerning the love of Christ and His tender care for us. If we receive**

**the suggestion in simple faith, we cannot help being comforted. But if**

**we refuse to listen to the voice of our Comforter, and insist instead**

**on listening to the voice of discouragement or despair, no comfort can**

**by any possibility reach our souls.**

**It is very possible for even a mother to lavish in vain all her stores**

**of motherly comfort on a weeping child. The child sits up stiff and**

**sullen, and "refuses to be comforted." All her comforting words fall on**

**unbelieving ears. For to be comforted by comforting words it is**

**absolutely necessary for us to believe these words. God has spoken**

**"comforting words" enough, one would think, to comfort a whole**

**universe, and yet we see all around us unhappy Christians, and worried**

**Christians, and gloomy Christians, into whose comfortless hearts not**

**one of these comforting words seems to be allowed to enter. In fact, a**

**great many Christians actually think it is wrong to be comforted. They**

**feel too unworthy. And if any rays of comfort steal into their hearts,**

**they sternly shut them out; and like Rachel and Jacob, and the**

**psalmist, their souls "refuse to be comforted."**

**The apostle tells us that whatsoever things are written in the**

**Scriptures are for our learning, in order that we "through patience and**

**comfort of the Scriptures may have hope." But if we are to be comforted**

**by the Scriptures, we must first believe them. Nothing that God has**

**said can possibly comfort a person who does not believe it to be really**

**true. When the captain of a vessel tells us that his vessel is safe, we**

**must first believe him to be telling the truth, before we can feel**

**comfortable on board that vessel. When the conductor on a railway tells**

**us we are on the right train, before we can settle down comfortably in**

**our seats, we must trust his word. This is all so self-evident that it**

**might seem folly to call attention to it. But in religious matters it**

**often happens that the self-evident truths are the very ones most**

**easily overlooked; and I have actually known people who insisted on**

**realizing God's comfort while still doubting His words of comfort; and**

**who even thought they could not believe His comforting words at all,**

**until they had first felt the comfort in their own souls! As well might**

**the passenger on the railway insist on having a feeling of comfortable**

**assurance that he is on the right train, before he could make up his**

**mind to believe the word of the conductor. Always and in everything**

**comfort must follow faith, and can never precede it.**

**In this matter of comfort it is exactly as it is in every other**

**experience in the religious life. God says, "Believe, and then you can**

**feel." We say, "Feel, and then we can believe." God's order is not**

**arbitrary, it exists in the very nature of things; and in all earthly**

**matters we recognize this, and are never so foolish as to expect to**

**feel we have anything until we first believe that it is in our**

**possession. I could not possibly feel glad that I had a fortune in the**

**bank, unless I knew that it was really there. But in spiritual things**

**we reverse God's order (which is the order of nature as well), and**

**refuse to believe that we possess anything until we first feel as if we**

**had it.**

**Let me illustrate. We are, let us suppose, overwhelmed with cares and**

**anxieties. It often happens in this world. To comfort us in these**

**circumstances the Lord assures us that we need not be anxious about**

**anything, but may commit all our cares to Him, for He careth for us. We**

**are all familiar with the passages where He tells us to "behold the**

**fowls of the air," and to "consider the lilies of the field" and**

**assures us that we are of much more value than they, and that, if He**

**cares for them, He will much more care for us. One would think there**

**was comfort enough here for every care or sorrow all the wide world**

**over. To have God assume our cares and our burdens, and carry them for**

**us; the Almighty God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, who can control**

**everything, and foresee everything, and consequently can manage**

**everything in the very best possible way, to have Him declare that He**

**will undertake for us; what could possibly be a greater comfort? And**

**yet how few people are really comforted by it. Why is this? Simply and**

**only because they do not believe it. They are waiting to have an inward**

**feeling that His words are true, before they will believe them. They**

**look upon them as beautiful things for Him to say, and they wish they**

**could believe them, but they do not think they can be true in their own**

**special case, unless they can have an inward feeling that they are; and**

**if they should speak out honestly, they would confess that, since they**

**have no such inward feeling, they do not believe His words apply to**

**them; and as a consequence they do not in the least expect Him actually**

**to care for their affairs at all. "Oh, if I could only feel it was all**

**true," we say; and God says, "Oh, if you would only believe it is all**

**true!"**

**It is pure and simple unbelief that is at the bottom of all our lack of**

**comfort, and absolutely nothing else. God comforts us on every side,**

**but we simply do not believe His words of comfort.**

**The remedy for this is plain. If we want to be comforted, we must make**

**up our minds to believe every single solitary word of comfort God has**

**ever spoken; and we must refuse utterly to listen to any words of**

**discomfort spoken by our own hearts, or by our circumstances. We must**

**set our faces like a flint to believe, under each and every sorrow and**

**trial, in the divine Comforter, and to accept and rejoice in His**

**all-embracing comfort. I say, "set our faces like a flint," because,**

**when everything around us seems out of sorts, it is not always easy to**

**believe God's words of comfort. We must put our wills into this matter**

**of being comforted, just as we have to put our wills into all other**

**matters in our spiritual life. We must choose to be comforted.**

**It may seem impossible, when things look all wrong and uncared for, to**

**believe that God really can be caring for us as a mother cares for her**

**children; and, although we know perfectly well that He says He does**

**care for us in just this tender and loving way, yet we say, "Oh, if I**

**could only believe that, of course I should be comforted." Now here is**

**just where our wills must come in. We must believe it. We must say to**

**ourselves, "God says it, and it is true, and I am going to believe it,**

**no matter how it looks." And then we must never suffer ourselves to**

**doubt or question it again.**

**I do not hesitate to say that whoever will adopt this plan will come,**

**sooner or later, into a state of abounding comfort.**

**The psalmist says, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy**

**comforts delight my soul." But I am afraid that among the multitude of**

**our thoughts within us there are far too often many more thoughts of**

**our own discomforts than of God's comforts. We must think of His**

**comforts if we are to be comforted by them. It might be a good exercise**

**of soul for some of us to analyze our thoughts for a few days, and see**

**how many thoughts we actually do give to God's comforts, compared with**

**the number we give to our own discomforts. I think the result would**

**amaze us!**

**One word I must add in conclusion. If any of my readers are preachers**

**of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, I would like to ask them what**

**they are commissioned to preach.**

**The true commission in my opinion is to be found in Isaiah 40:1,2:**

**"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably**

**to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that**

**her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand**

**double for all her sins." "Comfort ye my people" is the divine command;**

**do not scold them. If it is the Gospel you feel called to preach, then**

**see to it that you do really preach Christ's Gospel and not man's.**

**Christ comforts, man scolds. Christ's Gospel is always good news, and**

**never bad news. Man's gospel is generally a mixture of a little good**

**news and a great deal of bad news; and even where it tries to be good**

**news, it is so hampered with "ifs" and "buts," and with all sorts of**

**man-made conditions, that it utterly fails to bring any lasting joy or**

**comfort.**

**The only Gospel that, to my thinking, can rightly be called the Gospel**

**is that one proclaimed by the angel to the frightened shepherds, who**

**were in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night: "Fear not,"**

**said the angel, "for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy,**

**which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city**

**of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."**

**Never were more comfortable words preached to any congregation. And if**

**only all the preachers in all the pulpits would speak the same**

**comfortable words to the people; and if all the congregations, who hear**

**these words, would believe them, and would take the comfort of them,**

**there would be no more uncomfortable Christians left anywhere. And over**

**the whole land would be fulfilled the apostle's prayer for the**

**Thessalonians: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our**

**Father, which hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation**

**and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in**

**every good word and work."**

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**Chapter 4**

**The Lord Our Shepherd**

**"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."**

**Perhaps no aspect in which the Lord reveals Himself to us is fuller of**

**genuine comfort than the aspect set forth in the Twenty-third Psalm,**

**and in its corresponding passage in the tenth chapter of John.**

**The psalmist tells me that the Lord is my Shepherd, and the Lord**

**Himself declares that He is the good Shepherd. Can we conceive of**

**anything more comforting?**

**It is a very wonderful thing that the highest and grandest truths of**

**the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ are so often shut up in the**

**simplest and commonest texts in the Bible. Those texts with which we**

**have been familiar from our childhood, which we learned in the nursery**

**at our mother's knee, which were used by those who loved us to explain**

**in the simplest possible way the love of our heavenly Father, and the**

**reasons for our trusting Him--these very texts, I have discovered,**

**contain in their simple statements the whole story.**

**I feel, therefore, that what we all need is just to get back into the**

**nursery again, and take up our childish verses once more, and, while**

**reading them with the intelligence of our grown-up years, to believe**

**them with all our old childish faith.**

**Let me carry you back then with me, my dear reader, to the children's**

**psalm, that one which is so universally taught to the little ones in**

**the nursery and in the infant school. Do we not each one of us remember**

**the Twenty-third Psalm, as long as we can remember anything, and can we**

**not recall even now something of the joy and pride of our childish**

**hearts when first we were able to repeat it without mistake? Since then**

**we have always known it, and at this moment its words, perhaps, sound**

**so old and familiar to some of you, that you cannot see what meaning**

**they can convey.**

**But in truth they tell us the whole story of our religion in words of**

**such wondrous depth of meaning that I very much doubt whether it has**

**ever yet entered into the heart of any mortal man to conceive of the**

**things they reveal.**

**Repeat these familiar words over to yourselves afresh: "The Lord is my**

**shepherd, I shall not want."**

**Who is it that is your shepherd?**

**The Lord! Oh, my friends, what a wonderful announcement! The Lord God**

**of Heaven and earth, the Almighty Creator of all things, He who holds**

**the universe in His hand as though it were a very little thing, He is**

**your Shepherd, and has charged Himself with the care and keeping of**

**you, as a shepherd is charged with the care and keeping of his sheep.**

**If your hearts will only take in this thought, I can promise you that**

**your religion will from henceforth be full of the profoundest comfort,**

**and all your old uncomfortable religion will drop off forever, as the**

**mist disappears in the blaze of the summer sun.**

**I had a vivid experience of this at one time in my Christian life. The**

**Twenty-third Psalm had, of course, always been familiar to me from my**

**nursery days, but it had never seemed to have any special meaning. Then**

**came a critical moment in my life when I was sadly in need of comfort,**

**but could see none anywhere. I could not at the moment lay my hands on**

**my Bible, and I cast about in my mind for some passage of Scripture**

**that would help me. Immediately there flashed into my mind the words,**

**"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." At first I turned from it**

**almost with scorn. "Such a common text as that," I said to myself, "is**

**not likely to do me any good"; and I tried hard to think of a more**

**recherch� one, but none would come; and at last it almost seemed as if**

**there were no other text in the whole Bible. And finally I was reduced**

**to saying "Well, if I cannot think of any other text, I must try to get**

**what little good I can out of this one," and I began to repeat to**

**myself over and over, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."**

**Suddenly, as I did so, the words were divinely illuminated, and there**

**poured out upon me such floods of comfort that I felt as if I could**

**never have a trouble again.**

**The moment I could get hold of a Bible I turned over its leaves with**

**eagerness to see whether it could possibly be true that such untold**

**treasures of comfort were really and actually mine, and whether I might**

**dare to let out my heart into the full enjoyment of them. And I did**

**what I have often found great profit in doing, I built up a pyramid of**

**declarations and promises concerning the Lord being our Shepherd that,**

**once built, presented an immovable and indestructible front to all the**

**winds and storms of doubt or trial that could assail it. And I became**

**convinced, beyond a shadow of doubt, that the Lord really was my**

**Shepherd, and that in giving Himself this name He assumed the duties**

**belonging to the name, and really would be, what He declares Himself to**

**be, a "good shepherd who giveth his life for his sheep."**

**He Himself draws the contrast between a good shepherd and a bad**

**shepherd, when He follows up His announcement "I am the good shepherd,"**

**with the words, "But he that is an hireling and not the shepherd, whose**

**own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and**

**fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep." And**

**through the mouth of His prophets the Lord pours down a scathing**

**condemnation upon all such faithless shepherds. "And the Lord saith**

**unto me," says the prophet Zechariah, "take unto thee yet the**

**instruments of a foolish shepherd....Woe to the idle shepherd that**

**leaveth the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right**

**eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be**

**utterly darkened."**

**Again the prophet Ezekiel says: "Thus saith the Lord God unto the**

**shepherds: Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves!**

**Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? ... The diseased have ye not**

**strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have**

**ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought back that**

**which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but**

**with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them ... Therefore, O ye**

**shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I**

**am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand,**

**and cause them to cease from feeding the flock."**

**Surely one would think that no Christian could ever accuse our divine**

**Shepherd of being as faithless and unkind as those He thus condemns.**

**And yet, if the secrets of some Christian hearts should be revealed, I**

**fear that it would be found that, although they do not put it into**

**words, and perhaps hardly know themselves that such are their feelings**

**about Him, yet at the bottom they do really look upon Him as a**

**faithless Shepherd.**

**What else can it mean when Christians complain that the Lord has**

**forsaken them; that they cry to Him for spiritual food and He does not**

**hear; that they are beset by enemies on every side and He does not**

**deliver them; that when their souls find themselves in dark places He**

**does not come to their rescue; that when they are weak He does not**

**strengthen them; and when they are spiritually sick He does not heal**

**them?**

**What are all these doubts and discouragements but secret accusations**

**against our good Shepherds of the very things which He Himself so**

**scathingly condemns?**

**A dear Christian, who had just discovered what it meant to have known**

**that that was what He was called, but it meant nothing to me; and I**

**believe I read the Twenty-third Psalm as though it was written, The**

**Lord is the sheep, and I am the shepherd, and, if I do not keep a tight**

**hold on Him, He will run away.' When dark days came I never for a**

**moment thought that He would stick by me, and when my soul was starving**

**and cried out for food, I never dreamed He would feed me. I see now**

**that I never looked upon Him as a faithful Shepherd at all. But now all**

**is different. I myself am not one bit better or stronger, but I have**

**discovered that I have a good Shepherd, and that is all I need. I see**

**now that it really is true that the Lord is my Shepherd, and that I**

**shall not want."**

**Dear fellow Christian, I pray you to look this matter fairly in the**

**face. Are you like the Christian I have quoted above? You have said, I**

**know, hundreds of times, "The Lord is my shepherd," but have you ever**

**really believed it to be an actual fact? Have you felt safe and happy**

**and free from care, as a sheep must feel when under the care of a good**

**shepherd, or have you felt yourself to be like a poor forlorn sheep**

**without a shepherd, or with an unfaithful, inefficient shepherd, who**

**does not supply your needs, and who leaves you in times of danger and**

**darkness?**

**I beg of you to answer this question honestly in your own soul. Have**

**you had a comfortable religious life or an uncomfortable one? If the**

**latter has been your condition, how can you reconcile it with the**

**statement that the Lord is your Shepherd, and therefore you shall not**

**want? You say He is your Shepherd, and yet you complain that you do**

**want. Who has made the mistake? You or the Lord?**

**But here, perhaps, you will meet me with the words, "Oh, no, I do not**

**blame the Lord, but I am so weak and so foolish, and so ignorant, that**

**I am not worthy of His care." But do you not know that sheep are always**

**weak, and helpless, and silly; and that the very reason they are**

**compelled to have a shepherd to care for them is just because they are**

**so unable to take care of themselves? Their welfare and their safety,**

**therefore, do not in the least depend upon their own strength, nor upon**

**their own wisdom, nor upon anything in themselves, but wholly and**

**entirely upon the care of their shepherd. And, if you are a sheep, your**

**self also must depend altogether upon your Shepherd, and not at all**

**upon yourself.**

**Let us imagine two flocks of sheep meeting at the end of the winter to**

**compare their experiences--one flock fat and strong and in good**

**condition, and the other poor and lean and diseased. Will the healthy**

**flock boast of themselves, and say, "See what splendid care we have**

**taken of ourselves, what good, strong, wise sheep we must be?" Surely**

**not. Their boasting would all be about their shepherd. "See what a good**

**shepherd we have had," they would say, "and how he has cared for us.**

**Through all the storms of the winter he has protected us, and has**

**defended us from every wild beast, and has always provided us with the**

**best of food."**

**Or, on the other hand, would the poor, wretched, diseased sheep blame**

**themselves and say, "Alas, what wicked sheep we must be, to be in such**

**a poor condition!" No, they too would speak only of their shepherd, but**

**how different would be their story! "Alas," they would say, "our**

**shepherd was very different from yours! He fed himself, but he did not**

**feed us. He did not strengthen us when we were weak, nor heal us when**

**we were sick, nor bind us up when we were broken nor look for us when**

**we were lost. It is true he stayed by us in clear and pleasant weather,**

**when no enemies were nigh, but in times of danger or of storm, he**

**forsook us and fled. Oh, that we had had a good shepherd like yours!"**

**We all understand this responsibility of the shepherd in the case of**

**sheep; but the moment we transfer the figure to our religion, we at**

**once shift all the responsibility off the Shepherd's shoulders, and lay**

**it upon the sheep; and demand of the poor human sheep the wisdom, and**

**care, and power to provide, that can only belong to the divine Shepherd**

**and be met by Him; and of course the poor human sheep fail, and their**

**religious lives become thoroughly uncomfortable, and even sometimes**

**most miserable.**

**I freely confess there is a difference between sheep and ourselves in**

**this, that they have neither the intelligence nor the power to withdraw**

**themselves from the care of their shepherd, while we have. We cannot**

**imagine one of them saying, "Oh, yes, we have a good shepherd who says**

**he will take care of us, but then we do not feel worthy of his care,**

**and therefore we are afraid to trust him. He says he has provided for**

**us green pastures and a safe and comfortable fold; but we are such poor**

**good-for-nothing creatures that we have not dared to enter his fold,**

**nor feed in this pastures. We have felt it would be presumption; and,**

**in our humility, we have been trying to do the best we could for**

**ourselves. The strong, healthy sheep may trust themselves to the**

**shepherd's care, but not such miserable half-starved sheep as we are.**

**It is true we have had a very hard time of it, and are in a sad and**

**forlorn condition; but then we are such poor unworthy creatures that we**

**must expect this, and must try to be resigned to it."**

**Silly as sheep are, we know well no sheep could be so silly as to talk**

**in this way. And here comes the difference. We are so much wiser than**

**sheep, in our own estimation, that we think the sort of trust sheep**

**exercise will not do for us; and, in our superior intelligence, we**

**presume to take matters into our own hands, and so shut ourselves out**

**from the Shepherd's care.**

**Now the fact is simply this, if any sheep in the flock of Christ find**

**themselves in a poor condition, there are only two explanations**

**possible. Either the Lord is not a good Shepherd and does not care for**

**His sheep, or else, His sheep have not believed in His care, and have**

**been afraid or ashamed to trust themselves to it. I know not one of you**

**will dare to say, or even to think, that the Lord can be anything but a**

**good Shepherd, if He is a Shepherd at all. The fault, therefore, must**

**lie just here; either you have not believed He was your Shepherd at**

**all, or else, believing it, you have refused to let Him take care of**

**you.**

**I entreat you to face this matter boldly, and give yourselves a**

**definite answer. For not only your own welfare and comfort are**

**dependent upon your right apprehension of this blessed relationship,**

**but also the glory of your Shepherd is at stake. Have you ever thought**

**of the grief and dishonor this sad condition of yours brings upon Him?**

**The credit of a shepherd depends upon the condition of his flock. He**

**might make a great boast of his qualifications as a shepherd, but it**

**would all go for nothing if the flocks he had charge of were in a**

**diseased condition, with many missing, and many with lean ribs and**

**broken bones.**

**If an owner of sheep is thinking of employing a shepherd, he requires a**

**reference from the shepherd's last employer, that he may learn from him**

**how his flock fared under this shepherd's care. Now, the Lord makes**

**statements about Himself as a good Shepherd. He is telling the**

**universe, the world, and the Church, "I am the good shepherd"; and if**

**they ask, "Where are Thy sheep, what condition are they in?" can He**

**point to us as being a credit to His care? And is it not grievous if**

**any of us refuse to let the Shepherd take care of us, and so bring**

**discredit upon His name by our forlorn condition? The universe is**

**looking on to see what the Lord Jesus Christ is able to make of us, and**

**what kind of sheep we are, whether we are well fed, and healthy, and**

**happy. Their verdict concerning Him will largely depend upon what they**

**see in us.**

**When Paul was writing to the Ephesians that he had been called to**

**preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make**

**all men see what was the fellowship of the mystery which had been hid**

**in God from the beginning of the world, he added the significant words**

**that the object of it all was "to the intent that now unto**

**principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the**

**church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose**

**which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

**Well may we be lost in amazement at the thought that God has purposed**

**such a glorious destiny for His sheep as to make known to the universe**

**His "manifold wisdom" by means of what He has done for us! Surely this**

**should make us eager to abandon ourselves to Him in the most generous**

**trust for salvation to the very uttermost, that He may get great glory**

**in the universe, and the whole world may be won to trust Him.**

**But if we will not let Him save us, if we reject His care, and refuse**

**to feed in His pastures, or to lie down in His fold, then we shall be a**

**starved and shivering flock, sick, and wretched, and full of**

**complaints, bringing dishonor upon Him, and, by our forlorn condition,**

**hindering the world from coming to Him.**

**I do not wonder that unbelievers are not drawn into the church, when I**

**contemplate the condition of believers. I do not wonder that in some**

**churches there are no conversions from one end of the year to the**

**other. If I were a poor sheep, wandering in the wilderness, and I were**

**to see some poor, wretched, sick-looking sheep peeping out of a fold,**

**and calling me to come in, and I were to look into the fold, and should**

**see it hard, bare, and uncomfortable, I do not think I would be much**

**tempted to go into such a fold.**

**Somebody said once that some churches were too much like well-ordered**

**graveyards: people were brought in and buried, and that was the end of**

**it. Of course you cannot expect living people to want to take up their**

**abodes in graveyards. We must have a fold that shows sheep in good**

**condition if we expect outsiders to come into that fold; and if we want**

**to attract others to the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must**

**ourselves be able to show them that it is a satisfying and comfortable**

**salvation. No one wants to add to their earthy discomforts by getting**

**an uncomfortable religion, and it is useless to expect to win outsiders**

**by the sight of our wretchedness.**

**Surely, if you do not care for yourselves, you cannot fail to care for**

**the dishonor you bring upon your divine Shepherd by your poor and**

**wretched condition. You long to serve Him, and to bring Him glory; and**

**you can do it if you will but show to all the world that He is a**

**Shepherd whom it is safe to trust.**

**Let me help you to do this. First face the fact of what a Shepherd must**

**necessarily be and do in order to be a good Shepherd, and then face the**

**fact that the Lord is really, and in the very highest sense of the**

**term, a good Shepherd. Then say the words over to yourself with all the**

**will power you can muster, "The Lord is my Shepherd. He is. He is. No**

**matter what I feel, He says He is, and He is. I am going to believe it,**

**come what may." Then repeat the words with a different emphasis each**

**time:**

**The Lord is my Shepherd.**

**The Lord is my Shepherd.**

**The Lord is my Shepherd.**

**The Lord is my Shepherd.**

**Realize to yourself what your ideal Shepherd would be, all that you**

**would require from anyone filling such a position of trust and of**

**responsibility, and then know that an ideal far beyond yours, and a**

**conception of the duties of such a position higher than any you ever**

**dreamed of, were in the mind of our Lord when He said, "I am the good**

**shepherd." He, better than any other, knew the sheep He had undertaken**

**to save, and He knew the Shepherd's duties. He knew that the Shepherd**

**is responsible for His flock, and that He is bound, at any loss of**

**comfort, or of health, or even of life itself, to care for them and to**

**bring them all home safely to the Master's fold. Therefore, He said:**

**"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me that of all which he**

**hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at**

**the last day." And again He said, "The good shepherd giveth his life**

**for the sheep." And still again: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know**

**them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they**

**shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."**

**Centuries before Jesus came to be the Shepherd, the Father said:**

**"Therefore I will save my flock. And I will set up one shepherd over**

**them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed**

**them, and he shall be their shepherd." And it seems to me, I catch a**

**glimpse of the Father's yearning love as I read these words; and I feel**

**sure He laid help upon One who is mighty; and that none, therefore, who**

**are in this flock need fear any evil.**

**He has undertaken His duties, knowing perfectly well what the**

**responsibilities are. He knows that He has to do with very silly sheep,**

**who have no strength to protect themselves, no wisdom to guide**

**themselves, and nothing to recommend them but their utter helplessness**

**and weakness. But none of these things baffle Him. His strength and His**

**skill are sufficient to meet every emergency that can possibly arise.**

**There is absolutely only one thing that can hinder Him, and that is, if**

**the sheep will not trust Him and refuse to let Him take care of them.**

**If they stand off at a distance, and look at the food He has provided,**

**and long for it, and cry for it, but refuse to eat it, He cannot**

**satisfy their hunger. If they linger outside the shelter He has made,**

**and are afraid to go in and enjoy it because they feel too distrustful**

**or too unworthy, He cannot protect them. No sheep is so silly as to act**

**in this way, but we human beings, who are so much wiser than sheep, do**

**it continually. No sheep, could it talk, would say to the shepherd: "I**

**long for the food you have provided, and for the shelter and peace of**

**your fold, and I wish I might dare to enjoy them; but, alas! I feel too**

**unworthy. I am too weak and foolish; I do not feel grateful enough; I**

**am afraid I do not feel quite hungry enough, or enough in earnest about**

**wanting it. I dare not presume to think you mean all these good things**

**for me." One can imagine how grieved and wounded a good shepherd would**

**be at such a speech as this. And surely our Lord has given us a glimpse**

**into His tender sorrow over those who would not trust Him, when He**

**beheld Jerusalem and wept over it, saying: "If thou hadst known, even**

**thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!**

**But now they are hid from thine eyes." Ah, dear Christians, have you**

**not sometimes grieved and wounded your divine Shepherd by just such**

**speeches? If you have, let me entreat of you to get over for a few**

**moments on the Shepherd's side of the question, and try to think how He**

**feels, and what His mind concerning you is. If He is your Shepherd,**

**then He wants to care for you in the very best possible way; for He is**

**a good Shepherd, and cares for His sheep. It is no matter what you**

**think about it, or how you feel. You are not the Shepherd, you are only**

**the sheep, and the great point is what He thinks and how He feels. Lose**

**sight of yourself for a moment, and try to put yourself in the**

**Shepherd's place. Consider your condition as He considers it. See Him**

**coming out to seek you in your far-off wandering. See His tender,**

**yearning love, His unutterable longing to save you. Believe His own**

**description of Himself, and take Him at His own sweet word.**

**If our faith were but more simple,**

**We would take Him at His word;**

**And our lives would be all gladness**

**In the sunshine of our Lord.**

**Ah, yes, this is the trouble. Our faith is not simple enough to take**

**Him at His word, but we must needs add all sorts of "buts" and "ifs" of**

**our own; and obscure the sunshine of His love with clouds of our own**

**imagining. If we but only knew the things which belong to our peace,**

**how quickly we would throw aside every "if" and "but" of unbelief, and**

**how rapturously we would plunge ourselves headlong into an**

**unquestioning faith in all that He has told us of His almighty and**

**never-failing love and care! But you may ask me, if all this is true of**

**the Shepherd, what is the part of the sheep? absolutely trustworthy;**

**and nothing complicated in obedience, when we have perfect confidence**

**in the power we are obeying.**

**Let me entreat you, then, to begin to trust and to follow your Shepherd**

**now and here. Abandon yourself to His care and guidance, as a sheep in**

**the care of a shepherd, and trust Him utterly.**

**You need not be afraid to follow Him whithersoever He leads, for He**

**always leads His sheep into green pastures and beside still waters. No**

**matter though you may seem to yourself to be in the very midst of a**

**desert, with nothing green about you inwardly or outwardly and you may**

**think you will have to make a long journey before you can get into any**

**green pastures, the good Shepherd will turn the very place where you**

**are into green pastures; for He has power to make the desert rejoice**

**and blossom as the rose; and He has promised that "instead of the thorn**

**shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the**

**myrtle-tree"; and "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and**

**streams in the desert."**

**Or perhaps you may say, "My life is all a tempest of sorrow or of**

**temptation, and it will be a long while before I can walk beside any**

**still waters." But has not your Shepherd before this said to the raging**

**seas, "Peace! be still. And there was a great calm"? And can He not do**

**it again?**

**Thousands of the flock of Christ can testify that when they have put**

**themselves absolutely into His hands, He has quieted the raging**

**tempest, and has turned their deserts into blossoming gardens. I do not**

**mean that there will be no more outward trouble, or care, or suffering;**

**but these very places will become green pastures and still waters**

**inwardly to the soul. The Shepherd knows what pastures are best for His**

**sheep, and they must not question or doubt, but must trustingly follow**

**Him. Perhaps He sees that the best pastures for some of us are to be**

**found in the midst of opposition or of earthly trials. If He leads you**

**there, you may be sure they are green pastures for you, and that you**

**will grow to be made strong by feeding in them.**

**But words fail to tell the half of what the good Shepherd does for the**

**flock that trusts him. He does indeed, according to His promise, make**

**with them a covenant of peace, and causes the evil beasts to cease out**

**of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep**

**in the woods. And He makes them and the places round about them a**

**blessing; and He causes the shower to come down in its season; and**

**there are showers of blessing. And the tree of the field yields her**

**fruit, and the earth yields her increase; and they are safe in their**

**land, and are no more a prey to the heathen, and none can make them**

**afraid.**

**And now you will probably ask me how you can get the Lord to be your**

**Shepherd. My answer is that you do not need to get Him to be your**

**Shepherd at all, for He already is your Shepherd. All that is needed is**

**for you to recognize that He is, and yield yourself to His control.**

**When the announcement is made in a family to the children who have been**

**longing for a little sister, that one has just been born to them, they**

**do not go on saying, "Oh, how we wish we had a little sister!" or,**

**"what can we do to get a little sister?" But they begin at once to**

**shout for joy, and to dance about calling out to everybody, "Hurrah!**

**Hurrah! We have a little sister now."**

**And since likewise the announcement has been made to all of us by the**

**angel of the Lord: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of**

**great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day**

**in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord," we have no**

**need and no right to go on crying out, "Oh, if I only had a Saviour!"**

**or, "What shall I do to make Christ my Saviour?" He is already born our**

**Saviour, and we must begin at once to rejoice that He is, and must give**

**ourselves into His care. There is nothing complicated about it. It is**

**simply to believe it, and act as if it were true. And every soul that**

**will begin from today believing in the good Shepherd and trusting**

**itself to His care will sooner or later find itself feeding in His**

**green pastures, and walking beside His still waters.**

**What else can the Lord, who is our Shepherd, do with His sheep, but**

**just this? He has no folds that are not good folds, no pastures that**

**are not green pastures, and no waters but still waters. They may not**

**look so outwardly; but we who have tried them can testify that, let the**

**outward seeming be what it may, His fold and His pastures are always**

**places of peace and comfort to the inward life of the soul.**

**If you seem to have difficulties in understanding all this, and if the**

**life of full trust looks complicated and mysterious, I would advise you**

**not to try to understand it, but simply to begin to live it. Just take**

**our nursery psalm and say, "this is my psalm, and I am going to believe**

**it. I have always known it by heart, but it has never meant much to me.**

**But now I have made up my mind to believe that the Lord really is my**

**Shepherd and that He will care for me as a shepherd cares for his**

**sheep. I will not doubt nor question it again." And then just abandon**

**yourself to His care, as the sheep abandon themselves to the care of**

**their shepherd, trusting Him fully, and following whithersoever He**

**leads.**

**But we must not forget that while sheep trust unconsciously and by**

**instinct, we shall need to trust intelligently and of purpose for our**

**instincts, alas, are all against trusting. We shall have to make an**

**effort to trust. We shall have to choose to do it. But we can do this,**

**however weak and ignorant we may be. We may not understand all it means**

**to be a sheep of such a Shepherd, but He knows. And if our faith will**

**but claim Him in this blessed and wondrous relationship, He will care**

**for us according to His love, and His wisdom, and His power, and not**

**according to our poor comprehension of it.**

**It really seems to me as if we did not need any other passage out of**

**the whole Bible besides this nursery psalm to make our religious lives**

**full of comfort. I confess I do not see where there is any room left**

**for the believer to worry, who actually believes this psalm. With the**

**Lord for our Shepherd, how is it possible for anything to go wrong?**

**With Him for our Shepherd, all that this psalm promises must be ours;**

**and when we have learned thus to know Him, we will be able to say with**

**a triumph of trust: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me [pursue,**

**overtake] all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of**

**the Lord forever." Even the future will lose all its terrors for us,**

**and our confidence in our Shepherd will deliver us from all fear of**

**evil tidings.**

**And I can only say, in conclusion, that if each one of you will just**

**enter into this relationship with Christ, and really be a helpless,**

**docile, trusting sheep, and will believe Him to be your Shepherd,**

**caring for you with all the love, and care, and tenderness that that**

**name involves, and will follow Him whithersoever He leads, you will**

**soon lose all your old spiritual discomfort, and will know the peace of**

**God that passeth all understanding to keep your hearts and minds in**

**Christ Jesus.**

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**Chapter 5**

**He Spake To Them Of The Father**

**"They understood not that he spake to them of the Father."**

**One of the most illuminating names of God is the one especially**

**revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ, the name of Father. I say especially**

**revealed by Christ, because, while God had been called throughout the**

**ages by many other names, expressing other aspects of His character,**

**Christ alone has revealed Him to us under the all-inclusive name of**

**Father--a name that holds within itself all other names of wisdom and**

**power, and above all of love and goodness, a name that embodies for us**

**a perfect supply for all our needs. Christ, who was the only begotten**

**Son in the bosom of the Father, was the only one who could reveal this**

**name, for He alone knew the Father. "As the Father knoweth me," He**

**said, "even so know I the Father" "Not that any man hath seen the**

**Father save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father."**

**In the Old Testament God was not revealed as the Father so much as a**

**great warrior fighting for His people, or as a mighty king ruling over**

**them and caring for them. The name of Father is only given to Him a**

**very few times there, six or seven times at the most; while in the New**

**Testament it is given about two or three hundred times. Christ, who**

**knew Him, was the only one who could reveal Him. "no man," He said,**

**"knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will**

**reveal him."**

**The vital question then that confronts each one of us is whether we**

**individually understand that Christ speaks to us of the Father. We know**

**He uses the word Father continually, but do we in the least understand**

**what the word means? Have we even so much as an inkling of what the**

**Father is?**

**All the discomfort and unrest of the religious life of so many of God's**

**children come, I feel sure, from this very thing, that they do not**

**understand that God is actually and truly their Father. They think of**

**Him as a stern Judge, or a severe Taskmaster, or at the best as an**

**unapproachable dignitary, seated on a far-off throne, dispensing**

**exacting laws for a frightened and trembling world; and in their terror**

**lest they should fail to meet His requirements they hardly know which**

**way to turn. But of a God who is a Father, tender, and loving, and full**

**of compassion, a God who, like a father, will be on their side against**

**the whole universe they have no conception.**

**I am not afraid to say that discomfort and unrest are impossible to the**

**souls that come to know that God is their real and actual Father.**

**But before I go any farther I must make it plain that it is a Father,**

**such as our highest instincts tell us a good father ought to be, of**

**whom I am speaking. Sometimes earthly fathers are unkind, or**

**tyrannical, or selfish, or even cruel, or they are merely indifferent**

**and neglectful; but none of these can by any stretch of charity be**

**called good fathers. But God, who is good, must be a good father or not**

**a father at all. We must all of us have known good fathers in this**

**world, or at least can imagine them. I knew one, and he filled my**

**childhood with sunshine by his most lovely fatherhood. I can remember**

**vividly with what confidence and triumph I walked through my days,**

**absolutely secure in the knowledge that I had a father. And I am very**

**sure that I have learned to know a little about the perfect fatherhood**

**of God, because of my experience with this lovely earthly father.**

**But God is not only a father, He is a mother as well, and we have all**

**of us known mothers whose love and tenderness have been without bound**

**or limit. And it is very certain that the God who created them both,**

**and who is Himself father and mother in one, could never have created**

**earthly fathers and mothers who were more tender and more loving than**

**He is Himself. Therefore if we want to know what sort of a Father He**

**is, we must heap together all the best of all the fathers and mothers**

**we have ever known or can imagine, and we must tell ourselves that this**

**is only a faint image of God, our Father in Heaven.**

**When our Lord was teaching His disciples how to pray, the only name by**

**which He taught them to address God was, "Our Father which art in**

**heaven." And this surely meant that we were to think of Him only in**

**this light. Millions upon millions of times during all the centuries**

**since then has this name been uttered by the children of God**

**everywhere; and yet how much has it been understood? Had all who used**

**the name known what it meant, it would have been impossible for the**

**misrepresentations of His character, and the doubts of His love and**

**care, that have so desolated the souls of His children throughout all**

**the ages, to have crept in. Tyranny, unkindness, and neglect might**

**perhaps be attributed to a God whose name was only a king, or a judge,**

**or a lawgiver; but of a God, who is before all else a father, and, of**

**necessity, since He is God, a good father, no such things could**

**possibly be believed. Moreover, since He is an "everlasting Father," He**

**must in the very nature of things act, always and under all**

**circumstances, as a good father ought to act, and never in any other**

**way. It is inconceivable that a good father could forget, or neglect,**

**or be unfair to his children. A savage father might, or a wicked**

**father; but a good father never! And in calling our God by the blessed**

**name of Father, we ought to know that, if He is a father at all, He**

**must be the very best of fathers, and His fatherhood must be the**

**highest ideal of fatherhood of which we can conceive. It is, as I have**

**said, a fatherhood that combines both father and mother in one, in our**

**highest ideals of both, and comprises all the love, and all the**

**tenderness, and all the compassion, and all the yearning, and all the**

**self-sacrifice, that we cannot but recognize to be the inmost soul of**

**parentage, even though we may not always see it carried out by all**

**earthly parents.**

**But you may say what about the other names of God, do they not convey**

**other and more terrifying ideas? They only do so because this blessed**

**name of Father is not added to them. This name must underlie every**

**other name by which He has ever been known. Has He been called a Judge?**

**Yes, but He is a Father Judge, one who judges as a loving father would.**

**Is He a King? Yes, but He is a King who is at the same time the Father**

**of His subjects, and who rules them with a father's tenderness. Is He a**

**Lawgiver? Yes, but He is a Lawgiver who gives laws as a father would,**

**remembering the weakness and ignorance of his helpless children. "Like**

**as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear**

**him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." It is**

**not "as a judge judges, so the Lord judges"; not "as a taskmaster**

**controls, so the Lord controls"; not "as a lawgiver imposes laws, so**

**the Lord imposes laws"; but, "as a father pitieth, so the Lord**

**pitieth."**

**Never, never must we think of God in any other way than as "our**

**Father." All other attributes with which we endow Him in our**

**conceptions must be based upon and limited by this one of "our Father."**

**What a good father could not do, God, who is our Father, cannot do**

**either; and what a good father ought to do, God, who is our Father, is**

**absolutely sure to do.**

**In our Lord's last prayer in John 17, He says that He has declared to**

**us the name of the Father in order that we may discover the wonderful**

**fact that the Father loves us as He loved His Son. Now, which one of us**

**really believes this? We have read this chapter over, I suppose,**

**oftener than almost any other chapter in the Bible, and yet do we any**

**of us believe that it is an actual, tangible fact, that God loves us as**

**much as He loved Christ? If we believed this to be actually the case,**

**could we, by any possibility, ever have an anxious or rebellious**

**thought again? Would we not be absolutely and utterly sure always under**

**every conceivable circumstance that the divine Father, who loves us**

**just as much as He loved His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**would of course care for us in the best possible way, and could not**

**tell us so emphatically not to be anxious or troubled about anything,**

**for He knew His Father and knew that it was safe to trust Him utterly.**

**It is very striking that He so often said, "Your heavenly Father, not**

**mine only, but yours just as much. Your heavenly Father," He says,**

**"cares for the sparrows and the lilies, and of course, therefore, he**

**will care for you who are of so much more value than many sparrows."**

**How supremely foolish it is then for us to be worried and anxious about**

**things, when Christ has said that our heavenly Father knows that we**

**have need of all these things! For of course, being a good father, He**

**must in the very nature of the case, when He knows our need, supply it.**

**What can be the matter with us that we do not understand this?**

**Again, our Lord draws the comparison between earthly fathers and our**

**heavenly Father, in order to show us, not how much less good and tender**

**and willing to bless is our heavenly Father, but how much more. "if ye,**

**being evil," He says, "know how to give good gifts unto your children,**

**how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to**

**them that ask him." Can we conceive of a good earthly father giving a**

**stone or a serpent to a hungry child instead of bread or fish? Would**

**not our whole souls revolt from a father who could do such things? And**

**yet, I fear, there are a great many of God's children who actually**

**think that their heavenly Father does this sort of thing to them, and**

**gives them stones when they ask for bread, or curses when they ask for**

**blessings. And perhaps these very people may belong to the Society for**

**the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, a society which is the nation's**

**protest against such behavior on the part of earthly fathers; and yet**

**they never have thought of the dreadful wickedness of charging their**

**heavenly Father with things which they are banded together to punish in**

**earthly fathers!**

**But it is not only that our heavenly Father is willing to give us good**

**things. He is far more than willing. Our Lord says, "Fear not, little**

**flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."**

**There is no grudging in His giving, it is His "good pleasure" to give;**

**He likes to do it. He wants to give you the kingdom far more than you**

**want to have it. Those of us who are parents know how eager we are to**

**give good things to our children, often far more eager than our**

**children are to have them; and this may help us to understand how it is**

**that it is God's "good pleasure" to give us the kingdom. Why, then,**

**should we ask Him in such fear and trembling, and why should we torment**

**ourselves with anxiety lest He should fail to grant what we need?**

**There can be only one answer to these questions, and that is, that we**

**do not know the Father.**

**We are told that we are of the "household of God." Now the principle is**

**announced in the Bible that if any man provides not for his own**

**household, he has "denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."**

**Since then we are of the "household of God," this principle applies to**

**Him, and if He should fail to provide for us, His own words would**

**condemn Him. I say this reverently, but I want to say it emphatically,**

**for so few people seem to have realized it.**

**It was in my own case a distinct era of immense importance when I first**

**discovered this fact of the responsibility of my Father in Heaven. As**

**it were, in a single moment, the burden of life was lifted off my**

**shoulders and laid on His, and all my fears, and anxieties, and**

**questionings dropped into the abyss of His loving care. I saw that the**

**instinct of humanity, which demands that the parents who bring a child**

**into the world are bound by every law, both human and divine, to care**

**for and protect that child according to their best ability, is a**

**divinely implanted instinct; and that it is meant to teach us the**

**magnificent fact that the Creator, who has made human parents**

**responsible toward their children, is Himself equally responsible**

**toward His children. I could have shouted for joy! And from that glad**

**hour my troubles were over. For when this insight comes to a soul, that**

**soul must, in the very nature of things, enter into rest.**

**With such a God, who is at the same time a Father, there is no room for**

**anything but rest. And when, ever since that glad day, temptations to**

**doubt or anxiety or fear have come to me, I have not dared in the fact**

**of what I then learned to listen to them, because I have seen that to**

**do so would be to cast a doubt on the trustworthiness of my Father in**

**Heaven.**

**We may have been accustomed to think that our doubts and fears were**

**because of our own unworthiness and arose from humility; and we may**

**even have taken them as a sign of especial piety, and have thought they**

**were in some way pleasing to God. But if, in their relations with their**

**earthly parents, children should let in doubts of their love, and fears**

**lest their care should fail, would these doubts and fears be evidences**

**of filial piety on the children's part, and would they be at all**

**pleasing to their parents?**

**If God is our Father, the only thing we can do with doubts, and fears,**

**and anxious thoughts is to cast them behind our backs forever, and have**

**nothing more to do with them ever again. We can do this. We can give up**

**our doubts just as we would urge a drunkard to give up his drink. We**

**can pledge against doubting. And if once we see that our doubts are an**

**actual sin against God, and imply a question of His trustworthiness, we**

**will be eager to do it. We may have cherished our doubts heretofore**

**because perhaps we have thought they were a part of our religion, and a**

**becoming attitude of soul in one so unworthy; but if we now see that**

**God is in very truth our Father, we will reject every doubt with**

**horror, as being a libel on our Father's love and our Father's care.**

**What more can any soul want than to have a God whose name is "our**

**Father," and whose character and ways must name? As Philip said, so we**

**find it to be, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." It does indeed**

**suffice, beyond what words can express!**

**A friend of mine went one day to see a poor negro woman living in one**

**of the poorest parts of Philadelphia, whose case had been reported to**

**her as being one of great need. She found things even worse than she**

**had feared. The poor woman was old, crippled with rheumatism, and lived**

**alone in a poor little room with only the help of a kind neighbor now**

**and then to do things for her; and yet she was bright and cheerful, and**

**full of thanksgiving for her many mercies. My friend marveled that**

**cheerfulness or thankfulness could be possible under such**

**circumstances, and said, "But do you never get frightened at the**

**thought of what may happen to you, all alone here, and so lame as you**

**are?"**

**The old negro saint looked at her with surprise, and said in a tone of**

**the utmost amazement, "Frightened! Why, honey, doesn't you know I have**

**got a Father, and doesn't you know He takes care of me the whole**

**endurin' time?" And then, as my friend looked perplexed, she added in a**

**tone of wondering reproof, "Why, honey, sholy my Father is your Father**

**too, and you knows about Him, and you knows He always takes care of His**

**chilluns." It was a lesson my friend never forgot.**

**"Behold," says the apostle John, "what manner of love the Father hath**

**bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." The**

**"manner of love" bestowed upon us is the love of a father for his son,**

**a tender protecting love, that knows our weakness and our need, and**

**cares for us accordingly. He treats us as sons, and all He asks in**

**return is that we shall treat Him as a Father, whom we can trust**

**without anxiety. We must take the son's place of dependence and trust,**

**and must let Him keep the father's place of care and responsibility.**

**Because we are the children and He is the Father, we must let Him do**

**the father's part. Too often we take upon our own shoulders the**

**father's part, and try to take care of and provide for ourselves. But**

**no good earthy father would want his children to take upon their young**

**shoulders the burden of his duties, and surely much less would our**

**heavenly Father want to lay upon us the burden of His.**

**No wonder we are told to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for**

**us. He careth for us; of course He does. It is His business, as a**

**Father, to do so. He would not be a good Father if He did not. All He**

**asks of us is to let Him know when we need anything, and then leave the**

**supplying of that need to Him; and He assures us that if we do this the**

**"peace of God that passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and**

**minds." The children of a good, human father are at peace because they**

**trust in their father's care; but the children of the heavenly Father**

**too often have no peace because they are afraid to trust in His care.**

**They make their requests known to Him perhaps, but that is all they do.**

**It is a sort of religious form they feel it necessary to go through.**

**But as to supposing that He really will care for them, no such idea**

**seems to cross their minds; and they go on carrying their cares and**

**burdens on their own shoulders, exactly as if they had no Father in**

**Heaven, and had never asked him to care for them.**

**What utter folly it all is! For if ever an earthly father was worthy of**

**the confidence of his children, surely much more is our heavenly Father**

**worthy of our confidence. And why it is that so few of His children**

**trust Him can only be because they have not yet found out that He is**

**really their Father; or else that, calling Him Father every day in**

**their prayers, they still have never seen that He is the sort of Father**

**a good and true human father is, a Father who is loving, and tender,**

**pitiful, and full of kindness toward the helpless beings whom He has**

**brought into existence, and whom He is therefore bound to protect. This**

**sort of Father no one could help trusting; but the strange and far-off**

**Creator, whose fatherhood stops at our creation, and has no care for**

**our fate after once we are launched into the universe, no one could be**

**expected to trust.**

**The remedy, therefore, for your discomfort and unrest is to be found in**

**becoming acquainted with the Father.**

**"For," says the apostle, "ye have not received the spirit of bondage**

**again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we**

**cry, Abba, Father." Is it this "spirit of adoption" that reigns in your**

**hearts, my readers, or is it the "spirit of bondage"? Your whole**

**comfort in the religious life depends upon which spirit it is; and no**

**amount of wrestling or agonizing, no prayers, and no efforts will be**

**able to bring you comfort, while the "spirit of adoption" is lacking in**

**your heart.**

**But you may ask how you are to get this "spirit of adoption." I can**

**only say that it is not a thing to be gotten. It comes; and it comes as**

**the necessary result of the discovery that God is in very truth a real**

**Father. When we have made this discovery, we cannot help feeling and**

**acting like a child; and this is what the "spirit of adoption" means.**

**It is nothing mystical nor mysterious; it is the simple natural result**

**of having found a Father where you thought there was only a Judge.**

**The great need for every soul, therefore, is to make this supreme**

**discovery. And to do this we have only to see what Christ tells us**

**about the Father, and then believe it. "Verily, verily," He declares,**

**"I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have**

**seen," but, He adds sadly, "ye receive not our witness." In order to**

**come to the knowledge of the Father, we must receive the testimony of**

**Christ, who declares: "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of**

**myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Over**

**and over He repeated this, and in John, after grieving over the fact**

**that so few received his testimony, He adds these memorable words: "He**

**that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is**

**true."**

**The whole authority of Christ stands or falls with this. If we receive**

**His testimony, we set to our seal that God is true. If we reject that**

**testimony, we make Him a liar.**

**"If ye had known me," says Christ, "ye should have known my Father**

**also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." The thing**

**for us to do then is to make up our minds that from henceforth we will**

**receive His testimony, and will "know the Father." Let other people**

**worship whatever sort of a God they may, for us there must be**

**henceforth "but one God, even the Father."**

**"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in**

**earth (as there be gods many, and lords many), but to us there is but**

**one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one**

**Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."**

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**Chapter 6**

**Jehovah**

**"That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most**

**High over all the earth."**

**Among all the names of God perhaps the most comprehensive is the name**

**Jehovah. Cruden describes this name as the incommunicable name of God.**

**The word Jehovah means the self-existing One, the "I am"; and it is**

**generally used as a direct revelation of what God is. In several places**

**an explanatory word is added, revealing some one of His special**

**characteristics; and it is to these that I want particularly to call**

**attention. They are as follows:**

**Jehovah-jireh, i.e., The Lord will see, or the Lord will provide.**

**Jehovah-nissi, i.e., The Lord my Banner.**

**Jehovah-shalom, i.e., The Lord our Peace.**

**Jehovah-tsidkenu, i.e., The Lord our Righteousness.**

**Jehovah-shammah, i.e., The Lord is there.**

**These names were discovered by God's people in times of sore need; that**

**is, the characteristics they describe were discovered, and the names**

**were the natural expression of these characteristics.**

**When Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, and saw no way of escape,**

**the Lord provided a lamb for the sacrifice and delivered Isaac; and**

**Abraham made the grand discovery that it was one of the characteristics**

**of Jehovah to see and provide for the needs of His people. Therefore he**

**called Him Jehovah-jireh--the Lord will see, or the Lord will provide.**

**The counterparts to this in the New Testament are very numerous. Over**

**and over our Lord urges us to take no care, because God careth for us.**

**"Your heavenly Father knoweth," He says, "that ye have need of all**

**these things." If the Lord sees and knows our need, it will be a matter**

**of course with Him to provide for it. Being our Father, He could not do**

**anything else. As soon as a good mother sees that her child needs**

**anything, at once she sets about supplying that need. She does not even**

**wait for the child to ask, the sight of the need is asking enough.**

**Being a good mother, she could not do otherwise.**

**When God, therefore, says to us, "I am he that seeth thy need," He in**

**reality says also, "I am he that provideth," for He cannot see, and**

**fail to provide.**

**"Why do I not have everything I want, then?" you may ask. Only because**

**God sees that what you want is not really the thing you need, but**

**probably exactly the opposite. Often, in order to give us what we need,**

**the Lord is obliged to keep from us what we want. Your heavenly Father**

**knoweth what things ye have need of, you do not know; and were all your**

**wants gratified, it might well be that all your needs would be left**

**unsupplied. It surely ought to suffice us that our God is indeed**

**Jehovah-jireh, the Lord who will see, and who will therefore provide.**

**But I am afraid a great many Christians of the present day have never**

**made Abraham's discovery, and do not know that the Lord is really**

**Jehovah-jirah. They are trusting Him, it may be, to save their souls in**

**the future, but they never dream He wants to carry their cares for them**

**now and here. They are like a man I have heard of, with a heavy load on**

**his back, who was given a lift by a friend, and who thankfully availed**

**himself of it. Climbing into the conveyance, but still keeping his**

**burden on his back, he sat there bowed down under the weight of it.**

**"Why do you not put your burden down on the bottom of the carriage?"**

**asked his friend.**

**"Oh," replied the man, "it is a great deal to ask you to carry me**

**myself, and I could not ask you to carry my burden also." You wonder**

**that anyone could be so foolish, and yet are you not doing the same?**

**Are you not trusting the Lord to take care of yourself, but are still**

**going on carrying your burdens on your own shoulders? Which is the**

**silliest--that man or you?**

**Jehovah-nissi, i.e., "The Lord my banner," was a discovery made by**

**Moses when Amalek came to fight with Israel in Rephidim, and the Lord**

**gave the Israelites a glorious victory. Moses realized that the Lord**

**was fighting for them, and he built an altar to Jehovah-nissi, "The**

**Lord my banner." The Bible is full of developments of this name. "The**

**Lord is a man of war"; "The Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for**

**you"; "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace"; "Be**

**not afraid nor dismayed, by reason of this great multitude, for the**

**battle is not yours, but God's"; "God himself is with us for our**

**captain."**

**Nothing is more abundantly proved in the Bible than this, that the Lord**

**will fight for us if we will but let Him. He knows that we have no**

**strength nor might against our spiritual enemies; and, like a tender**

**mother when her helpless children are attacked by an enemy, He fights**

**for us; and all He asks of us is to be still and let Him. This is the**

**only sort of spiritual conflict that is ever successful. But we are**

**very slow to learn this, and when temptations come, instead of handing**

**the battle over to the Lord, we summon all our forces to fight them**

**ourselves. We believe, perhaps, that the Lord is somewhere near, and,**

**if the worst comes to the worst, will step in to help us; but for the**

**most part we feel that we ourselves, and we only, must do all the**

**fighting. Our method of fighting consists generally in a series of**

**repentings, and making resolutions and promises, and weary struggles**

**for victory, and then failing again; and again repentance, and**

**resolutions, and promises, and renewed struggles, and all this over,**

**and over, and over again, each time telling ourselves that now at last**

**we certainly will have the victory, and each time failing even worse**

**than before. And this may go on for weeks, or months, or even years,**

**and no real or permanent deliverance ever comes.**

**But you may ask, "Are we not to do any fighting ourselves?" Of course**

**we are to fight, but not in this fashion. We are to fight the "good**

**fight of faith," as Paul exhorted Timothy; and the fight of faith is**

**not a fight of effort or of struggle, but it is a fight of trusting. It**

**is the kind of fight that Hezekiah fought when he and his army marched**

**out to meet their enemy, singing songs of victory as they went, and**

**finding their enemy all dead men. Our part in this fight is to hand the**

**battle over to the Lord, and to trust Him for the victory.**

**And we are to put on His armor, not our own. The apostle tells us what**

**it is. It is the girdle of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness,**

**and the preparation of the gospel of peace on our feet, and the helmet**

**of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God; but**

**above all, he says, we are to take the shield of faith wherewith we**

**shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.**

**There is nothing here about promises or resolutions; nothing about**

**hours and days of agonizing struggles, and of bitter remorse. "Above**

**all things taking the shield of faith." Above all things faith. Faith**

**is the one essential thing, without which all else is useless. And it**

**means that we must not only hand the battle over to the Lord, but we**

**must leave it with Him, and must have absolute faith that He will**

**conquer. It is here where the fight comes in. It seems so unsafe to sit**

**still, and do nothing but trust the Lord; and the temptation to take**

**the battle back into our own hands is often tremendous. To keep hands**

**off in spiritual matters is as hard for us as it is for the drowning**

**man to keep hands off the one who is trying to rescue him. We all know**

**how impossible it is to rescue a drowning man who tries to help his**

**rescuer, and it is equally impossible for the Lord to fight our battles**

**for us when we insist upon trying to fight them ourselves. It is not**

**that He will not, but He cannot. Our interference hinders His working.**

**Spiritual forces cannot work while earthly forces are active.**

**Our Lord tells us that without Him we can do nothing, and we have read**

**and repeated His words hundreds of times; but does anyone really**

**believe they are actually true? If we should drag out into the light**

**our secret thoughts on the subject, should we not find them to be**

**something like this: "When Christ said those words He meant of course**

**to say that we cannot of ourselves do much, or at any rate no great**

**things. But nothing; ah, no, that is impossible. We are not babies, and**

**we are certainly meant to use all the strength we have in fighting our**

**enemies; and, when our own strength gives out, we can then call upon**

**the Lord to help us." In spite of all our failures, we cannot help**

**thinking that, if only we should try harder and be more persistent, we**

**should be equal to any encounter. But we entirely overlook the vital**

**fact that our natural powers are of no avail in spiritual regions or**

**with spiritual enemies. The grub of the dragonfly, that lives at the**

**bottom of the pond, may be a finely developed and vigorous grub; but,**

**when it becomes a dragonfly, the powers of its grub life, that availed**

**for creeping about in the mud, would be useless for winging its flight**

**in the free air.**

**And just as our skill in walking on the earth would avail us nothing if**

**we had to fly in the air, so our natural powers are of no avail in**

**spiritual warfare. They are, in fact, if we try to depend on them, real**

**hindrances, just as trying to walk would hinder us, if we sought to**

**float or to fly. We can easily see, therefore, that the result of**

**trusting in ourselves, when dealing with our spiritual enemies, must**

**inevitable be very serious. It not only causes failure, but in the end**

**it causes rebellion; and a great deal of what is called "spiritual**

**conflict" might far better be named "spiritual rebellion." God has told**

**us to cease from our own efforts, and to hand our battles over to Him,**

**and we point blank refuse to obey Him. We fight, it is true, but it is**

**not a fight of faith, but a fight of unbelief. Our spiritual**

**"wrestling," of which we are often so proud, is really a wrestling, not**

**for God against His enemies, but against Him on the side of His**

**enemies. We allow ourselves to indulge in doubts and fears, and as a**

**consequence we are plunged into darkness, and turmoil, and wrestlings**

**of spirit. And then we call this "spiritual conflict," and look upon**

**ourselves as an interesting and "peculiar case." The single word that**

**explains our "peculiar case" is the word unbelief, and the simple**

**remedy is to be found in the word faith.**

**But you may ask, what about "wrestling Jacob"? Did he not gain his**

**victory by wrestling? To this I reply, that on the contrary he gained**

**his victory by being made so weak that he could not wrestle any longer.**

**It was not Jacob who wrestled with the angel, but the angel who**

**wrestled with Jacob. Jacob was the one to be overcome; and when the**

**angel found that Jacob's resistance was so great that he could not**

**"prevail against him," he was obliged to make him lame by putting his**

**thigh out of joint; and then the victory was won. As soon as Jacob was**

**too weak to resist any longer, he prevailed with God. He gained power**

**when he lost it. He conquered when he could no longer fight.**

**Jacob's experience is ours. The Lord wrestles with us in order to bring**

**us to a place of entire dependence on Him. We resist as long as we have**

**any strength; until at last He is forced to bring us to a place of**

**helplessness, where we are obliged to yield; and then we conquer by**

**this very yielding. Our victory is always the victory of weakness. Paul**

**knew this victory when he said: "And the Lord said unto me, My grace is**

**sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most**

**gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power**

**of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities,**

**in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for**

**Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."**

**Who would ask for a more magnificent victory than this!**

**And this victory will be ours, if we take the Lord to be our Banner,**

**and commit all our battles to Him.**

**The name of Jehovah-shalom, or "The Lord our peace," was discovered by**

**Gideon when the Lord had called him to a work for which he felt himself**

**to be utterly unfitted. "Oh, my Lord," he had said, "wherewith shall I**

**save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least**

**of my father's house." And the Lord answered him, saying: "Surely I**

**will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man ...**

**And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee: fear not; for thou**

**shalt not die." Then Gideon believed the Lord; and, although the battle**

**had not yet been fought, and no victories had been won, with the eye of**

**faith he saw peace already secured and he built an altar unto the Lord,**

**and called it Jehovah-shalom, i.e., "The Lord our peace."**

**Of all the needs of the human heart none is greater than the need for**

**peace; and none is more abundantly promised in the Gospel. "Peace I**

**leave with you," says our Lord, "my peace I give unto you. Let not your**

**heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And again He says: "These**

**things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the**

**world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome**

**the world."**

**Our idea of peace is that it must be outward before it can be inward,**

**that all enemies must be driven away, and all troubles cease. But the**

**Lord's idea was of an interior peace that could exist in the midst of**

**turmoil, and could be triumphant over it. And the ground of this sort**

**of peace is found in the fact, not that we have overcome the world, or**

**that we ever can, but that Christ has overcome it. Only the conqueror**

**can proclaim peace, and the people, whose battles He has fought, can do**

**nothing but enter into it. They can neither make nor unmake it. But, if**

**they choose, they can refuse to believe in it, and so can fail to let**

**it reign in their hearts. You may be afraid to believe that Christ has**

**made peace for you, and so may live on in a weary state of warfare; but**

**nevertheless, He has done it, and all your continued warfare is worse**

**than useless.**

**The Bible tells us that Christ is our peace, and consequently, whether**

**I feel as if I had peace or not, peace is really mine in Christ, and I**

**must take possession of it by faith. Faith is simply to believe and**

**assert the thing that God says. If He says there is peace, faith**

**asserts that there is, and enters into the enjoyment of it. If He has**

**proclaimed peace in the Bible, I must proclaim it in my own heart, let**

**the seemings be what they may. "The kingdom of God is righteousness,**

**peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost," and the soul that has not taken**

**possession of peace has not yet fully entered into this kingdom.**

**Practically I believe we can always enter into peace by a simple**

**obedience to Philippians 4:6,7: "Be careful for nothing; but in**

**everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your**

**requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth**

**all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ**

**Jesus." The steps here are very plain, and they are only two. First,**

**give up all anxiety; and second, hand over your cares to God; and then**

**stand steadfastly here; peace must come. It simply must, for there is**

**no room for anything else.**

**The name Jehovah-tsidkenu, "The Lord our righteousness," was revealed**

**by the Lord Himself through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, when he**

**was announcing the coming of Christ. "Behold, the day is come, saith**

**the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King**

**shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the**

**earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely,**

**and this is the name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah-tsidkenu, The**

**Lord our righteousness."**

**Greater than any other need is our need for righteousness. Most of the**

**struggles and conflicts of our Christian life come from our fights with**

**sin, and our efforts after righteousness. And I need not say how great**

**are our failures. As long as we try to conquer sin or attain to**

**righteousness by our own efforts, we are bound to fail. But if we**

**discover that the Lord is our righteousness, we shall have the secret**

**of victory. In the Lord Jesus Christ we have a fuller revelation of**

**this wonderful name of God. The apostle Paul in his character as the**

**"ambassador for Christ" declares that God hath made Christ to be sin**

**for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And**

**again he says that Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness,**

**and sanctification, and redemption. I am afraid that very few**

**Christians really understand what this means. We repeat the words as**

**belonging to our religious vocabulary, and in a vague sort of way think**

**of them as being somehow a part of the salvation of Christ, but what**

**part or of what practical use we have very little real idea.**

**To me this name of God, the Lord our righteousness, seems of such**

**tremendously practical use that I want if possible to make it plain to**

**others. But it is difficult; and I cannot possibly explain it**

**theologically. But experimentally it seems to me like this: We are not**

**to try to have a stock of righteousness laid up in ourselves, from**

**which to draw a supply when needed, but we are to draw continual fresh**

**supplies as we need them from the righteousness that is laid up for us**

**in Christ. I mean, that if we need righteousness of any sort, such as**

**patience, or humility, or love, it is useless for us to look within,**

**hoping to find a supply there, for we never will find it; but we must**

**simply take it by faith, as a possession that is stored up for us in**

**Christ, who is our righteousness. If I cannot tell theologically how**

**this is done, I know experimentally that it can be done, and that the**

**results are triumphant. I have seen sweetness and gentleness poured**

**like a flood of sunshine into dark and bitter spirits, when the hand of**

**faith has been reached out to grasp them as a present possession,**

**stored up for all who need in Christ. I have seen sharp tongues made**

**tender, anxious hearts made calm, and fretful spirits made quiet by the**

**simple step of taking by faith the righteousness that is ours in**

**Christ.**

**The apostle, after proving to us in the third chapter of Romans the**

**absolute impossibility of any satisfying righteousness coming to us by**

**the law (that is, by our own efforts) goes on to say: "But now the**

**righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by**

**the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by**

**faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for**

**there is no difference."**

**It is faith and faith only that can appropriate this righteousness that**

**is ours in Christ. Just as we appropriate by faith the forgiveness that**

**is ours in Christ, so must we appropriate by faith the patience that is**

**ours in Him, or the gentleness, or the meekness, or the long-suffering,**

**or any other virtue we may need. Our own efforts will not procure**

**righteousness for us, any more than they will procure forgiveness. And**

**yet how many Christians try! Paul describes them when he says: "For I**

**bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to**

**knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going**

**about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted**

**themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the**

**law for righteousness to every one that believeth."**

**Would that all such zealous souls could discover this wonderful name of**

**God, "The Lord our righteousness," and would give up at once and**

**forever seeking to establish their own righteousness, and would submit**

**themselves to the righteousness of God. The prophet tells us that our**

**own righteousness, even if we could attain to any, is nothing but**

**filthy rags; and Paul prays that he may be found in Christ, not having**

**his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through**

**the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.**

**Do we at all comprehend the meaning of this prayer? And are we prepared**

**to join in it with our whole hearts? If so, our struggle after**

**righteousness will be over. Jehovah-tsidkenu will supply all our needs.**

**The name Jehovah-shammah, or "the Lord is there," was revealed to the**

**prophet Ezekiel when he was shown by a vision, the twenty-fifth year of**

**their captivity, what was to be the future home of the children of**

**Israel. He described the land and the city of Jerusalem, and ended his**

**description by saying: "And the name of that city shall be called**

**Jehovah-shammah, or the Lord is there."**

**To me this name includes all the others. Wherever the Lord is, all must**

**go right for His children. Where the good mother is, all goes right, up**

**to the measure of her ability, for her children. And how much more God.**

**His presence is enough. We can all remember how the simple presence is**

**enough. We can all remember how the simple presence of our mothers was**

**enough for us when we were children. All that we needed of comfort,**

**rest, and deliverance was insured to us by the mere fact of our mother,**

**as she sat in her accustomed chair with her work, or her book, or her**

**writing, and we had burst in upon her with our doleful budget of**

**childish woes. If we could but see that the presence of God is the same**

**assurance of comfort, and rest, and deliverance, only infinitely more**

**so, a well-spring of joy would be opened up in our religious lives that**

**would drive out every vestige of discomfort and distress.**

**All through the Old Testament the Lord's one universal answer to all**

**the fears and anxieties of the children of Israel was the simple words,**

**"I will be with thee." He did not need to say anything more. His**

**presence was to them a perfect guarantee that all their needs would be**

**supplied; and the moment they were assured of it, they were no longer**

**afraid to face the fiercest foe.**

**You may say, "Ah, yes, if the Lord would only say the same thing to me,**

**I should not be afraid either." Well, He has said it, and has said it**

**in unmistakable terms. When the "angel of the Lord" announced to Joseph**

**the coming birth of Christ, he said: "They shall call his name**

**Emmanuel; which being interpreted is, God with us." In this short**

**sentence is revealed to us the grandest fact the world can ever**

**know--that God, the Almighty God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, is**

**not a far-off God, dwelling in a Heaven of unapproachable glory, but**

**has come down in Christ to dwell with us right here in this world, in**

**the midst of our poor, ignorant, helpless lives, as close to us as we**

**are to ourselves. If we believe in Christ at all, we are shut up to**

**believing this, for this is His name, "God with us."**

**Both these names then, Jehovah-shammah and Emmanuel, mean the same**

**thing. They mean that God is everywhere present in His universe,**

**surrounding everything, and sustaining everything, and holding all of**

**us in His safe and blessed keeping. They mean that we can find no place**

**in all His universe of which it cannot be said, "The Lord is there."**

**The psalmist says: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? And whither**

**shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art**

**there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the**

**wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even**

**there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."**

**We cannot drift from the love and care of an ever-present God. And**

**those Christians who think He has forsaken them, and who cry out for**

**His presence, are crying out in ignorance of the fact that He is always**

**and everywhere present with them. In truth they cannot get out of His**

**presence, even should they try. Oh, that they knew this wonderful and**

**satisfying name of God!**

**Speak to Him, thou, for He hears; and spirit with spirit may meet;**

**Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.**

**Let us sum up, once more, the teaching of these five names of God. What**

**is it they say to us?**

**Jehovah-jireh, i.e., "I am he who sees thy need, and therefore provides**

**for it."**

**Jehovah-nissi, i.e., "I am the captain, and thy banner, and he who will**

**fight thy battles for thee."**

**Jehovah-shalom, i.e., "I am thy peace. I have made peace for thee, and**

**my peace I give unto thee."**

**Jehovah-tsidkenu, i.e., "I am thy righteousness. In me thou wilt find**

**all thou needest of wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and**

**redemption."**

**Jehovah-shammah, i.e., "I am with thee. I am thy ever-present,**

**all-environing God and Saviour. I will never leave thee nor forsake**

**thee. Wherever thou goest, there I am, and there shall my hand hold**

**thee, and my right hand lead thee."**

**All this is true, whether we know it and recognize it or not. We may**

**never have dreamed that God was such a God as this, and we may have**

**gone through our lives thus far starved, and weary, and wretched. But**

**all the time we have been starving in the midst of plenty. The fullness**

**of God's salvation has awaited our faith; and "abundance of grace and**

**of the gift of righteousness" have awaited our receiving.**

**Would that I could believe that for some of my readers all this was**

**ended, and that henceforth they would see that these all-embracing**

**names of God leave no tiny corner of their need unsupplied. Then would**

**they be able to testify with the prophet to all around them: "Behold,**

**God is my salvation: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song;**

**he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall we draw water**

**out of the wells of salvation."**

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**Chapter 7**

**"The Lord Is Good"**

**"O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that**

**trusteth in him."**

**Have you ever asked yourself what you honestly think of God down at the**

**bottom of your heart whether you believe Him to be a good God or a bad**

**God? I dare say the question will shock you, and you will be horrified**

**at the suggestion that you could by any possibility think that God is a**

**bad God. But before you have finished this chapter, I suspect some of**

**you will be forced to acknowledge that, unconsciously perhaps, but**

**nonetheless truly, you have, by your doubts and your upbraiding,**

**attributed to Him a character that you would be horrified to have**

**attributed to yourself.**

**I shall never forget the hour when I first discovered that God was**

**really good. I had, of course, always known that the Bible said He was**

**good, but I had thought it only meant He was religiously good; and it**

**had never dawned on me that it meant He was actually and practically**

**good, with the same kind of goodness He has commanded us to have. The**

**expression, "The goodness of God," had seemed to me nothing more than a**

**sort of heavenly statement, which I could not be expected to**

**understand. And then one day I came in my reading of the Bible across**

**the words, "O taste and see that the Lord is good," and suddenly they**

**meant something. The Lord is good, I repeated to myself. What does it**

**mean to be good? What but this, the living up to the best and highest**

**that one knows. To be good is exactly the opposite of being bad. To be**

**bad is to know the right and not to do it, but to be good is to do the**

**best we know. And I saw that, since God is omniscient, He must know**

**what is the best and highest good of all, and that therefore His**

**goodness must necessarily be beyond question. I can never express what**

**this meant to me. I had such a view of the real actual goodness of God**

**that I saw nothing could possibly go wrong under His care, and it**

**seemed to me that no one could ever be anxious again. And over and**

**over, when appearance have been against Him, and when I have been**

**tempted to question whether He had not been unkind, or neglectful, or**

**indifferent, I have been brought up short by the words, "The Lord is**

**good"; and I have seen that it was simply unthinkable that a God who**

**was good could have done the bad things I had imagined.**

**You shrink with horror, perhaps, from the suggestion that you could**

**under any circumstances, even in the secret depths of your heart,**

**attribute to God what was bad. And yet you do not hesitate to accuse**

**Him of doing things, which if one of your friends should do them, you**

**would look upon as most dishonorable and unkind. For instance,**

**Christians get into trouble; all looks dark, and they have no sense of**

**the Lord's presence. They begin to question whether the Lord has not**

**forsaken them, and sometimes even accuse Him of indifference and**

**neglect. And they never realize that these accusations are tantamount**

**to saying that the Lord does not keep His promises, and does not treat**

**them as kindly and honorable as they expect all their human friends to**

**treat them. If one of our human friends should forsake us because we**

**were in trouble, we would consider such a friend as very far from being**

**good. How is it, then, that we can even for one moment accuse our Lord**

**of such actions? No, dear friend, if the Lord is good, not pious only,**

**but really good, it must be because He always under every circumstance**

**acts up to the highest ideal of that which He Himself has taught us is**

**goodness. Goodness in Him must mean, just as it does with us, the**

**living up to the best and highest He knows.**

**Practically, then, it means that He will not neglect any of His duties**

**toward us, and that He will always treat us in the best possible way.**

**This may sound like a platitude, and you may exclaim, "Why tell us**

**this, for it is what we all believe?" But do you? If you did, would it**

**be possible for you ever to think He was neglectful, or indifferent, or**

**unkind, or self-absorbed, or inconsiderate? Do not put on a righteous**

**air, and say, "Oh, but I never do accuse Him of any such things. I**

**would not dare to." Do you not? Have you never laid to His charge**

**things you would scorn to do yourselves? How was it when that last**

**grievous disappointment came? Did you not feel as if the Lord had been**

**unkind in permitting such a thing to come upon you, when you were**

**trying so hard to serve Him? Do you never look upon His will as a**

**tyrannical and arbitrary will, that must be submitted to, or course,**

**but that could not by any possibility be loved? Does it never seem to**

**you a hard thing to say, "Thy will be done"? But could it seem hard if**

**you really believed that the Lord is good, and that He always does that**

**which is good?**

**The Lord Jesus took great care to tell us that He was a good Shepherd,**

**because He knew how often appearances would be against Him, and how**

**tempted we should be to question His goodness. "I am a good Shepherd,"**

**He says in effect, "not a bad one. Bad shepherds neglect and forsake**

**their sheep, but I am a good Shepherd, and never neglect nor forsake My**

**sheep. I give My life for the sheep." His ideal of goodness in a**

**shepherd was that the shepherd must protect the sheep entrusted to his**

**care, even at the cost of his own life; and He came up to His own**

**ideal. Now, can we not see that if we really believe that He is good,**

**not in some mysterious, religious way, but in this common-sense, human**

**way, we shall be brought out into a large place of peace and comfort at**

**once. If I am a sheep, and the Lord is a good Shepherd, in the ordinary**

**common-sense definition of good, how utterly secure I am! How sure I**

**may be of the best of care in every respect! How safe I am for time and**

**for eternity!**

**Let us be honest with ourselves. Have we never in our secret hearts**

**accused the Lord of the characteristics that He has told us in Ezekiel**

**are the marks of a bad shepherd. Have we not thought that He cared for**

**His own comfort or glory more than He cared for ours? Have we not**

**complained that He has not strengthened us when we were weak, or bound**

**up our broken hearts, or sought for us when we were lost? Have we not**

**even actually looked upon our diseased, and helpless, and lost**

**condition, as a reason why He would not any longer have anything to do**

**with us? In what does this differ from if we should say out plump and**

**plain, the Lord is a bad shepherd, and does not fulfill His duties to**

**His sheep. You shrink in horror, perhaps, at this translation of your**

**inward murmurings and complainings, but what else, I ask you, can they**

**in all honesty mean? It is of vital importance now and then to drag out**

**our secret thoughts and feelings about the Lord into the full light of**

**the Holy Spirit, that we may see what our attitude about Him really is.**

**It is fatally easy to get into a habit of wrong thoughts about God,**

**thoughts which will insensibly separate us from Him by a wide gulf of**

**doubt and unbelief. More than anything else, more even than sin, wrong**

**thoughts about God sap the foundations of our spiritual life, and**

**grieve His heart of love. We can understand this from ourselves.**

**Nothing grieves us so much as to have our friends misjudge and**

**misunderstand us, and attribute to us motives we scorn. And nothing, I**

**believe, so grieves the Lord. It is, in fact, idolatry. For what is**

**idolatry but creating and worshipping a false God, and what are we**

**doing but this very thing, when we allow ourselves to misjudge Him, and**

**attribute to Him actions and feelings that are unkind and**

**untrustworthy.**

**It is called in the Bible a speaking against God. "Yea, they spake**

**against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"**

**This seemed a very innocent question to ask. But God had promised to**

**supply all their needs in the wilderness; and to ask this question**

**implied a secret want of confidence in His ability to do as He had**

**promised; and it was therefore, in spite of its innocent appearance, a**

**real "speaking against" Him. A good God could not have led His people**

**into the wilderness, and then have failed to "furnish a table" for**

**them; and to question whether He was able to do it was to imply that He**

**was not good. In the same way we are sometimes sorely tempted to ask a**

**similar question. Circumstances often seem to make it so impossible for**

**God to supply our needs, that we find ourselves tempted over and over**

**to "speak against" Him by asking if He can. Often as He has done it**

**before, we seem unable to believe He can do it again, and in our hearts**

**we "limit" Him, because we do not believe His Word or trust in His**

**goodness.**

**If our faith were what it ought to be, no circumstances, however**

**untoward, could make us "limit" the power of God to supply our needs.**

**The God who can make circumstances can surely control circumstances,**

**and can, even in the wilderness, "furnish a table" for all who trust in**

**Him.**

**There are many similar questions to be found in the Bible, each one**

**throwing doubts upon the goodness of God, and each one, I am afraid, is**

**a duplicate of questions asked by God's children now.**

**"Is God among us or not?"**

**"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"**

**"Is God's mercy clean gone forever?"**

**"Hath God in anger shut up his tender mercies?"**

**"Do God's promises fail forevermore?"**

**"O God, why hast thou cast us off forever?"**

**"Why hast thou made me thus?"**

**Let us consider these questions for a little, and see whether we can**

**find any counterparts to them in our own secret questionings.**

**"Is God among us or not?"**

**He has declared to us in unmistakable terms, as He did to the children**

**of Israel, that He is always with us, and will never forsake us; and**

**yet when trouble comes, we begin, as they did, to doubt His Word and to**

**question whether He really can be there. Moses called this, when the**

**Israelites did it, "tempting the Lord," and it deserves the same**

**condemnation when we do it. No one can ask such a question without**

**casting a doubt upon the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the Lord;**

**and to ask it is, if we only knew it, to insult Him, and to libel His**

**character. I know that it is, alas! a common question even among God's**

**own children, and I know also that many of them think it is only true**

**humility to ask it, and that, for such unworthy creatures as they feel**

**themselves to be, it would be the height of presumption to be sure of**

**His presence with them. But what about His own Word in the matter? He**

**has declared to us in every possible way that He is with us, and will**

**never leave us nor forsake us, and dare we "make him a liar" by**

**questioning the truth of His Word? A good God cannot lie, and we must**

**give up forever asking such a question as this. The Lord is with us as**

**truly as we are with ourselves, and we have simply just got to believe**

**that He is, no matter what the seemings may be.**

**"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"**

**To ask this question is to "speak against" Him as grievously as it**

**would be to ask a good mother if she had forgotten her child. And yet**

**the Lord Himself says: "Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, they**

**may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Those of us who are mothers**

**know very well how grieved and insulted we should feel if anyone should**

**suggest the possibility of our forgetting our children; and we mothers**

**at least, if no one else does, should be able to understand how such**

**questioning must grieve the Lord.**

**"Is God's mercy clean gone forever?" "Hath God in anger shut up his**

**tender mercies?"**

**To ask these two questions of a good God is to insult Him. It would be**

**as impossible for His tender mercies to be shut up toward us, or for**

**His mercy to go from us forever, as it would be for the tender mercies**

**of a mother come to an end. The psalmist says: "The Lord is good to**

**all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." In the very nature**

**of things this must be, because He is a good God, and cannot do**

**otherwise.**

**"Do God's promises fail forevermore?"**

**There come times in every Christian's life when we are tempted to ask**

**this question. Everything seems to be going wrong, and all God's**

**promises seem to have failed. But if we remember that the Lord is good,**

**we shall see that He would cease to be good if such a thing could be. A**

**man who breaks his promises is looked upon as a dishonorable and**

**untrustworthy man; and a God who could break His, if one could imagine**

**such a thing, would be dishonorable and untrustworthy also. And to ask**

**such a question is to cast a stigma on His goodness, that may well be**

**characterized as "speaking against God." No matter how affairs may**

**look, we may be sure of this, that because God is good no promise of**

**His has ever failed, or can ever fail. Heaven and earth may pass away,**

**but His Word never.**

**"O God, why hast thou cast us off forever?"**

**It will be impossible for a good God to cast us off as it would be for**

**a good mother to cast off her child. We may be in trouble and darkness,**

**and may feel as if we were cast off and forsaken, but our feelings have**

**nothing to do with the facts, and the fact is that God is good, and**

**could not do it. The good Shepherd does not cast off the sheep that is**

**lost, and take no further care of it, but He goes out to seek for it,**

**and He seeks until He finds it. To suspect Him of casting us off**

**forever is to wound and grieve His faithful love, just as it would**

**wound a good mother's heart is she should be supposed capable of**

**casting off her child, let that child have wandered as far as it may.**

**The thing is impossible in either case, but far more impossible in the**

**case of God than even in the case of the best mother that ever lived.**

**"Why hast thou made me thus?"**

**This is a question we are very apt to ask. There is, I imagine, hardly**

**one of us who has not been tempted at one time or another to "reply**

**against God" in reference to the matter of our own personal make-up. We**

**do not like our peculiar temperaments or our especial characteristics,**

**and we long to be like someone else who has, we think, greater gifts of**

**appearance or of talent. We are discontented with our make-up, both**

**inward and outward, and we feel sure that all our failures are because**

**of our unfortunate temperaments; and we are inclined to blame our**

**Creator for having "made us thus."**

**I remember vividly a time in my life when I was tempted to be very**

**rebellious about my own make-up. I was a plain-spoken, energetic sort**

**of an individual, trying to be a good Christian, but with no especial**

**air of piety about me. But I had a sister who was so saintly in her**

**looks, and had such a pious manner, that she seemed to be the**

**embodiment of piety; and I felt sure I could be a great deal better**

**Christian if only I could get her saintly looks and manner. But all my**

**struggles to get them were useless. My natural temperament was far too**

**energetic and outspoken for any appearance of saintliness, and many a**

**time I said upbraidingly in my heart to God, "Why hast thou made me**

**thus?" But one day I came across a sentence in an old mystic book that**

**seemed to open my eyes. It was as follows: "Be content to be what thy**

**God has made thee"; and it flashed on me that it really was a fact that**

**God had made me, and that He must know the sort of creature He wanted**

**me to be; and that if He had made me a potato vine, I must be satisfied**

**to grow potatoes, and must not want to be a rosebush and grow roses;**

**and if He had fashioned me for humble tasks, I must be content to let**

**others do the grander work. We are "God's workmanship," and God is**

**good, therefore His workmanship must be good also; and we may securely**

**trust that before He is done with us, He will make out of us something**

**that will be to His glory, no matter how unlike this we may as yet feel**

**ourselves to be.**

**The psalmist seemed to delight in repeating over and over again this**

**blessed refrain, "for the Lord is good." It would be worth while for**

**you to take your concordances and see how often he says it. And he**

**exhorted everyone to join him in saying it. "Let the redeemed of the**

**Lord say so," was his earnest cry. We must join our voices to his--The**

**Lord is good--The Lord is good. But we must not say it with our lips**

**only, and then by our actions give the lie to our words. We must "say"**

**it with our whole being, with thought, word, and action, so that people**

**will see we really mean it, and will be convinced that it is a**

**tremendous fact.**

**A great many things in God's divine providences do not look like**

**goodness to the eye of sense, and in reading the Psalms we wonder**

**perhaps how the psalmist could say, after some of the things he**

**records, "for his mercy endureth forever." But faith sits down before**

**mysteries such as these, and says, "The Lord is good, therefore all**

**that He does must be good, no matter how it looks, and I can wait for**

**His explanations."**

**A housekeeping illustration has often helped me here. If I have a**

**friend whom I know to be a good housekeeper, I do not trouble over the**

**fact that at housecleaning time things in her house may seem to be more**

**or less upset, carpets up, and furniture shrouded in coverings, and**

**even perhaps painting and decorating making some rooms uninhabitable. I**

**say to myself, "My friend is a good housekeeper, and although things**

**look so uncomfortable now, all this upset is only because she means in**

**the end to make it far more comfortable than ever it was before." This**

**world is God's housekeeping; and although things at present look**

**grievously upset, yet, since we know that He is good, and therefore**

**must be a good Housekeeper, we may be perfectly sure that all this**

**present upset is only to bring about in the end a far better state of**

**things than could have been without it. I dare say we have all felt at**

**times as though we could have done God's housekeeping better than He**

**does it Himself, but, when we realize that God is good, we can feel**

**this no longer. And it comforts me enormously, when the world seems to**

**me to be going all wrong, just to say to myself, "It is not my**

**housekeeping, but it is the Lord's; and the Lord is good, therefore His**

**housekeeping must be good too; and it is foolish for me to trouble."**

**A deeply taught Christian was asked by a despairing child of God, "Does**

**not the world look to you like a wreck?**

**"Yes," was the reply, in a tone of cheerful confidence; "yes, like the**

**wreck of a bursting seed." Any of us who have watched the first**

**sproutings of an oak tree from the heart of a decaying acorn will**

**understand what this means. Before the acorn can bring forth the oak,**

**it must become itself a wreck. No plant ever came from any but a**

**wrecked seed.**

**Our Lord uses this fact to teach us the meaning of His processes with**

**us. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into**

**the ground and die, it abideth alone: but, if it die, it bringeth forth**

**much fruit."**

**The whole explanation of the apparent wreckage of the world at large,**

**or of our own personal lives in particular, is here set forth. And,**

**looked at in this light, we can understand how it is that the Lord can**

**be good, and yet can permit the existence of sorrow and wrong in the**

**world He has created, and in the lives of the human beings He loves.**

**It is His very goodness that compels Him to permit it. For He knows**

**that, only through such apparent wreckage, can the fruition of His**

**glorious purposes for us be brought to pass. And we whose hearts also**

**long for that fruition will, if we understand His ways, be able to**

**praise Him for all His goodness, even when things seem hardest and most**

**mysterious.**

**The apostle tells us that the will of God is "good and acceptable, and**

**perfect." The will of a good God cannot help being "good"--in fact, it**

**must be perfect'; and, when we come to know this, we always find it**

**"acceptable"; that is we come to love it. I am convinced that all**

**trouble about submitting to the will of God would disappear, if once we**

**could see clearly that His will is good. We struggle and struggle in**

**vain to submit to a will that we do not believe to be good, but when we**

**see that it is really good, we submit to it with delight. We want it to**

**be accomplished. Our hearts spring out to meet it.**

**I worship thee, sweet Will of God!**

**And all thy ways adore;**

**And, every day I live, I seem**

**To love thee more and more.**

**I love to kiss each print where thou**

**Hast set thine unseen feet:**

**I cannot fear thee, blessed Will!**

**Thine empire is so sweet.**

**Space fails me to tell all that I might of the infinite goodness of the**

**Lord. Each one must "taste and see" for himself. And if he will but do**

**it honestly and faithfully, the words of the psalmist will become true**

**of him: "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness,**

**and shall sing of thy righteousness."**

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**Chapter 8**

**The Lord Our Dwelling Place**

**"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."**

**The comfort or discomfort of our outward lives depends more largely**

**upon the dwelling place of our bodies than upon almost any other**

**material thing; and the comfort or discomfort of our inward life**

**depends similarly upon the dwelling place of our souls.**

**Our dwelling place is the place where we live, and not the place we**

**merely visit. It is our home. All the interests of our earthly lives**

**are bound up in our home; and we do all we can to make them attractive**

**and comfortable. But our souls need a comfortable dwelling place even**

**more than our bodies; inward comfort, as we all know, is of far greater**

**importance than outward; and, where the soul is full of peace and joy,**

**outward surroundings are of comparatively little account.**

**It is of vital importance, then, that we should find out definitely**

**where our souls are living. The Lord declares that He has been our**

**dwelling place in all generations, but the question is, Are we living**

**in our dwelling place? The psalmist says of the children of Israel that**

**"they wandered in the wilderness, in a solitary way; they found no city**

**to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." And I am**

**afraid there are many wandering souls in the church of Christ, whom**

**this description of the wandering Israelites would exactly fit. All**

**their Christian lives they have been wandering in a spiritual**

**wilderness, and have found no city to dwell in, and, hungry and**

**thirsty, their souls have fainted in them. And yet all the while the**

**dwelling place of God has been standing wide open, inviting them to**

**come in and take up their abode there forever. Out Lord Himself urges**

**this invitation upon us. "Abide in me," He says, "and I in you"; and He**

**goes on to tell us what are the blessed results of this abiding, and**

**what are the sad consequences of not abiding.**

**The truth is, our souls are made for God. He is our natural home, and**

**we can never be at rest anywhere else. "My soul longeth, yea, even**

**fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out**

**for the living God." We always shall hunger and faint for the courts of**

**the Lord, as long as we fail to take up our abode there.**

**God only is the creature's home; Though rough and straight the road,**

**Yet nothing else can satisfy The soul that longs for God.**

**How shall we describe this living dwelling place? David describes it**

**when he says: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;**

**the God of my rock; in him will I trust; he is my shield, and the horn**

**of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour; thou savest**

**me from violence."**

**So we see that our dwelling place is also our fortress, and our high**

**tower, and our rock, and our refuge. We all know what a fortress is. It**

**is a place of safety, where everything that is weak and helpless can be**

**hidden from the enemy and kept in security. And when we are told that**

**God, who is our dwelling place, is also our fortress, it can mean only**

**one thing, and that is, that if we will but live in our dwelling place,**

**we shall be perfectly safe and secure from every assault of every**

**possible enemy that can attack us. "For in the time of trouble he shall**

**hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide**

**me; he shall set me up upon a rock." "He that dwelleth in the secret**

**place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."**

**"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of**

**man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of**

**tongues."**

**In the "secret of God's tabernacle" no enemy can find us, and no**

**troubles can reach us. The "pride of man" and the "strife of tongues"**

**find no entrance into the "pavilion" of God. The "secret of his**

**presence" is a more secure refuge than a thousand Gibraltars. I do not**

**mean that no trials come. They may come in abundance, but they cannot**

**penetrate into the sanctuary of the soul, and we may dwell in perfect**

**peace even in the midst of life's fiercest storms.**

**But alas! how few of us know this. We use David's language, it may be,**

**but to us it is only a figure of speech that has no reality in it. We**

**say the things he said, in the conventional, pious tone that is**

**considered proper when speaking of religious matters. "Oh, yes, the**

**Lord is my dwelling place I know, and I have committed myself and all**

**my interests to His keeping, as of course every Christian ought to do.**

**But"--and here one's natural tones are resumed--"but then I cannot**

**forget that I am a poor good-for-nothing sort of person, and have no**

**strength to conquer my temptations; and I can hardly expect that I can**

**be kept in the perfect security David speaks of." And here will follow**

**a story of all sorts of fears, and anxieties, exactly as if the**

**dwelling place of god had never been heard of, and as if the soul was**

**wandering alone and unprotected in a world of trouble and danger.**

**There is a psalm that I call the "Dwelling Place of God." It is the**

**Ninety-first Psalm, and it gives us a wonderful description of what**

**this dwelling place is. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the**

**most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of**

**the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I**

**trust." Our idea of a fortress is generally of a hard, granite**

**building, where one would be safe, perhaps, but also at the same time**

**sadly uncomfortable. But there are other sorts of fortresses that are**

**soft, and tender, and full of comfort; and this psalm describes them.**

**"He shall cover thee with his feathers," just as the mother hen covers**

**her little helpless chickens in the fortress of her warm, brooking**

**wings. The fortress of a mother's heart, whether it be of a human**

**mother, or a hen mother, or a tiger mother, is the most impregnable**

**fortress the world knows, and yet the tenderest. And it is this sort of**

**a fortress that the Lord is. "Under his wings shalt thou trust": "He**

**shall carry them in his bosom"; "underneath are the everlasting arms."**

**Wings, bosom, arms! What blessed fortresses are these! And how safe is**

**everything enfolded by them. Nature is full of such fortresses. Listen**

**to what a late writer says of the tiger mother. "When her children are**

**born, some power teaches the tiger to be gentle. A spirit she cannot**

**resist, for it is the spirit of her Creator, enters her savage heart.**

**It is a tiger's impulse to resent an injury. Pluck her by the hair,**

**smite her on the flank, she will leap upon and rend you. But to resent**

**an injury is not her strongest impulse. Watch those impotent kitten**

**creatures playing with her. They are so weak, a careless movement of**

**her giant paw will destroy them; but she makes no careless movement.**

**They have caused her a hundredfold the pain your blow produced; yet she**

**does not render evil for evil. These puny mites of helpless impotence**

**she strokes with love's light in her eyes; she licks the shapeless**

**forms of her tormentors, and, as they plunge at her, love transforms**

**each groan of her anguish into a whinny of delight. She moves her**

**massive head in a way which shows that He who bade you turn the other**

**cheek created her. When strong enough to rise, the terrible creature**

**goes forth to sacrifice herself for her own. She will starve that they**

**may thrive. She is terrible for her little ones, as God is terrible for**

**His."**

**We have all seen these mother fortresses hundreds of times, and have**

**called them Godlike. And one would think that the sight would have made**

**us fly to our refuge in the dwelling place of God, and leave outside**

**all fear! But the trouble is, we point-blank refuse to believe that the**

**Bible means any such good news. Not in words, perhaps, but in effect,**

**we say, "The Lord's arms are not so dependable as the strong, loving**

**arms of the weakest earthly mother; the Lord's bosom is not as tender**

**as the tiger's bosom; the Lord's wings are not as brooding as the wings**

**of the little mother hen. We know that all these beautiful earthly**

**fortresses are made and fashioned by Him, but we cannot believe that He**

**Himself is equal to them. To have Him for our fortress does not really**

**mean to us anything half so safe or half so tender as to have a mother**

**for our fortress." And so mothers are trusted, and God is not!**

**And yet how safe the psalmist declares this divine dwelling place to**

**be! Notice how he says, that we who are in this dwelling place shall be**

**afraid of nothing; not for the terror by night, nor the arrow by day,**

**nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the**

**destruction that wasteth at noonday; thousands shall fall beside us and**

**around us, but no evil shall befall the soul that is hidden in this**

**divine dwelling place; no plague shall come nigh those who have made**

**God their "habitation."**

**All the terrors and all the plagues that have made our religious lives**

**so uncomfortable, an even so wretched, are provided for here, and from**

**all of them we shall be delivered, if we make the Lord our habitation.**

**This does not mean that we shall have no outward trials. Plagues in**

**abundance may attack your body and your goods, but your body and your**

**goods are not yourself; and nothing can come nigh you, the real**

**interior you, while you are dwelling in God.**

**A large part of the pain of life comes from the haunting "fear of evil"**

**which so often besets us. Our lives are full of supposes. Suppose this**

**should happen, or suppose that should happen; what could we do; how**

**could we bear it? But, if we are living in the "high tower" of the**

**dwelling place of God, all these supposes will drop out of our lives.**

**We shall be "quiet from the fear of evil," for no threatenings of evil**

**can penetrate into the "high tower" of God. Even when walking through**

**the valley of the shadow of death, the psalmist could say, "I will fear**

**no evil"; and, if we are dwelling in God, we can say so too.**

**But you may ask here how you are to get into this divine dwelling**

**place. To this I answer that you must simply move in. If a house should**

**be taken for us by a friend, and we were told it was ready, and that**

**the lease and all the necessary papers were duly attested and signed,**

**we should not ask how we could get into it--we should just pack up and**

**move in. And we must do the same here. God says that He is our dwelling**

**place, and the Bible contains all the necessary papers, duly attested**

**and signed. And our Lord invites us, nay more, commands us to enter in**

**and abide there. In effect He says, "God is your dwelling place, and**

**you must see to it that you take up your abode there. You must move**

**in."**

**But how, you ask, how can I move in? You must do it by faith. God has**

**said that He is your dwelling place, and now you must say it too. "I**

**will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him**

**will I trust." Faith takes up the Word of God, and asserts it to be**

**true. Christ says, "Abide," and we must say, "I will abide." Thus we**

**"make him our habitation" by faith. He is our habitation already, as to**

**His side of it; but we must make Him so, as to our side of it, by**

**believing that He is, and by continually asserting it. Coleridge says:**

**Faith is an affirmation and an act, That bids eternal truth be present**

**fact.**

**And we must make the eternal truth that the Lord is our dwelling place**

**become present fact by the affirmation of our faith, and by putting on**

**the thoughts and actions that would naturally result from having moved**

**into the tabernacle of God.**

**And one of the first things we would have to do would be to give up**

**forever all worry and anxiety. It is unthinkable that worry and anxiety**

**could enter into the dwelling place of God; and when we enter there, we**

**must leave them behind.**

**We talk about obeying the commands of the Lord, and make a great point**

**of outward observances and outward duties, and all the while neglect**

**and ignore the commands as to the inward life, which are a thousandfold**

**more important. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be**

**afraid," is one of our Lord's commands that is almost universally**

**disobeyed; and yet I question whether our disobedience of any other**

**command is so grievous to His heart. I am very sure for myself, that I**

**would be far more grieved if my child should mistrust me, and should**

**feel her interests were unsafe in my care, than if in a moment of**

**temptation she should disobey me. And I am convinced that none of us**

**have appreciated how deeply it wounds the loving heart of our Lord,**

**when He finds that His people do not feel safe in His care.**

**We can know this by ourselves. Suppose one of our friends should commit**

**something to our keeping, receiving from us every assurance that we**

**would keep it safe, and then should go away and worry over it, as we**

**worry over the things we commit to God, and should express to others**

**the anxieties about it that we allow ourselves to express about the**

**things we have put into God's care. How, I would like to know, would we**

**feel about it? Would we not be deeply hurt and wounded; and would we**

**not finally be inclined to hand the thing back into our friend's own**

**care, and to say, "Since it is very plain that you do not trust me, had**

**you not better take care of your things yourself?" It is amazing that**

**God's own children can dare to be anxious, after once they have**

**committed a matter to Him; it is such a libel on His trustworthiness.**

**And of course outsiders judge it in this way, and think to themselves**

**that to have the Lord for your dwelling place does not evidently amount**

**to much after all, or those who profess to be living there could not be**

**so troubled.**

**He who cares for the sparrows, and numbers the hairs of our head,**

**cannot possibly fail us. He is an impregnable fortress into which no**

**evil can enter and no enemy penetrate. I hold it, therefore, as a**

**self-evident truth that the moment I have really committed anything**

**into this divine dwelling place, that moment all fear and anxiety**

**should cease. While I keep anything in my own care, I may well fear and**

**tremble, for it is indeed to the last degree unsafe; but in God's care,**

**no security could be more absolute.**

**The psalmist says: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the**

**righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The only point, therefore, is**

**to "run into" this strong tower and stay there forever. It would be the**

**height of folly, when the enemy was surrounding us on every side to**

**stand outside of a fortress and cry out for safety. If I want to be**

**safe, I must go in.**

**"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" said our Lord, "thou that killest the**

**prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I**

**have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her**

**chickens under her wings, and ye would not." If the little children**

**wants to be safe, it must "run into" the fortress of its mother's**

**wings. A great many people stay outside of God's dwelling place,**

**because they feel themselves too unworthy and too weak to dare to go**

**in. What would we think of the little chicken that would see the hawk**

**coming, would hear the mother calling, and see her outspread wings, but**

**would stand outside, trembling with fright, saying, "Oh, I am such a**

**poor, weak, foolish, helpless little chicken that I am afraid I am not**

**worthy to go under my mother's wings"? If the mother hen could speak, I**

**am sure she would say, "You poor, foolish little thing, it is just**

**because you are weak, and helpless, and good for nothing, that I want**

**you under my wings. If you were a great, big, strong rooster, able to**

**take care of yourself, I would not want you at all." Need I make the**

**application?**

**But we must not only "run into" our dwelling place. The psalmist says:**

**"I will abide in thy tabernacle forever: I will trust in the covert of**

**thy wings"; and we must do the same. This "abiding in his tabernacle**

**forever" is, I am free to confess, sometimes very hard. It is**

**comparatively easy to take a step of faith, but it is a far more**

**difficult thing to abide steadfastly in the place into which we have**

**stepped. A great many people "run into" God's fortress on Sunday, and**

**come out of it again as soon as Monday morning dawns. Some even run**

**into it when they kneel down to say their prayers at night, and come**

**out of it five minutes afterward when they get into bed. Of course,**

**this is the height of folly. One cannot imagine any sensible refugee**

**running into a fortress one day, and the next day running out among the**

**enemy again. We should think such a person had suddenly lost all his**

**senses. But is it not even more foolish when it comes to the soul? Are**

**our enemies any less active on Mondays than they are on Sundays, or are**

**we any better able to cope with them when we are in bed than when we**

**were kneeling at our prayers?**

**The question is, Do we want to pay visits only to the dwelling place of**

**God, or do we want to live there? Do we want to "trust in the covert of**

**his wings" today, and tomorrow be exposed to the buffetings of our**

**enemies outside? No one would deliberately choose the latter, but far**

**too many drift into it. Our abiding in Christ is altogether a matter of**

**faith, but we fail to realize this. We think our earnest wrestlings or**

**our strenuous efforts are a large part of the matter; and, when these**

**slacken, our faith weakens. But if there is one thing more certain than**

**another, it is that the whole Christian life is to be lived by faith.**

**Without faith it is impossible to please God; and it is perfect folly**

**to fancy that any amount of fervency or earnestness or anything**

**whatever of our own doing can take its place; and it is manifestly**

**useless to waste our time and energy over things that amount to**

**nothing.**

**What we must do is to put all our will power and all our energy into**

**faith. We must "set our faces like a flint" to move into the dwelling**

**place of God, and to abide there steadfastly, let the temptations to**

**doubt or discouragement be what they may.**

**"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide**

**under the shadow of the Almighty. Abiding and trusting are synonymous**

**words, and mean exactly the same thing. While I trust the Lord, I am**

**abiding in Him. If I trust Him steadfastly, I am abiding in Him**

**steadfastly; if I trust Him intermittently, I am running into Him and**

**running out again. I used to think there was some mystery about abiding**

**in Christ, but I see now that it only means trusting Him fully. When**

**once you understand this, it becomes really the simplest matter in the**

**world. We sometimes say, speaking of two human beings, that they "live**

**in each other's hearts," and we simply mean that perfect love and**

**confidence exists between them, and that doubts of one another are**

**impossible. If my trust in the fortress of the Lord is absolute, I am**

**abiding in that fortress; and this is the whole story.**

**The practical thing to do, therefore, in face of the fact that God is**

**declared to be our fortress and our high tower, is, by a definite act**

**of surrender and faith, to put ourselves and all our interests of every**

**kind into this divine dwelling place, and then dismiss all care or**

**anxiety about them from our minds. Since the Lord is our dwelling**

**place, nothing can possibly come to any harm that is committed to His**

**care. As long as we believe this, our affairs remain in His care; the**

**moment we begin to doubt, we take our affairs into our own hands, and**

**they are no longer in the divine fortress. Things cannot be in two**

**places at once. If they are in our own care, they cannot be in God's**

**care; and if they are in God's care, they cannot be in our own. This is**

**as clear as daylight, and yet, for the want of a little common sense,**

**people often get mixed up over it. They put their affairs into God's**

**fortress, and at the same time put them into their own fortress as**

**well, and then wonder why they are not taken care of. This is all**

**folly. Either trust the Lord out and out, or else trust yourself out**

**and out; but do not try to mix the two trusts, for they will not mix.**

**It will help you practically if you will put your trust into words. Say**

**definitely, "God is my dwelling place, and I am going to abide in Him**

**forever. It is all settled; I am in this divine habitation, and I am**

**safe here, and I am not going to move out again." You must meet all**

**assaults of doubt and discouragement with the simple assertion that you**

**are there, and that you know you will not be confounded; let other**

**people do as they may, but you must declare that you at any rate are**

**going to abide in your divine dwelling place forever. And then, having**

**taken this stand, you must utterly refuse to reconsider the matter. It**

**is all settled; and there is nothing more to be said about it.**

**In all this I do not, or course, mean that we are to lie in bed and let**

**things go. I am talking about the inward aspect of our affairs, not the**

**outward. Outwardly we may have to be full of active carefulness, but it**

**must all be from the inward basis of a soul that has hidden itself and**

**all its interests in the dwelling place of God, and that is therefore**

**"careful for nothing" in the beautiful Bible sense of having no anxious**

**thoughts. To be thus without care inwardly is the surest foundation for**

**successful outward care; and the soul that is hidden in the dwelling**

**place of God is the soul that will be able to bear triumphantly earth's**

**greatest trials, and to conquer its strongest foes.**

**There is one point I must not fail to mention. When we move into a new**

**house, we not only move in ourselves, but we take with us all our**

**belongings of every sort or description, and above all we take our**

**family. No one would be so foolish as to leave anything he cared for or**

**anyone he loved outside. But I am afraid there are some of God's**

**children, who move into the dwelling place of God themselves, but who,**

**by their lack of faith, leave outside those they love best; and more**

**often than not it is their children who are so abandoned. We would be**

**horrified at a father who, in a time of danger, should flee into a**

**fortress for safety, but should leave his children outside; and yet**

**hundreds of Christians do this very thing. Every anxious thought in**

**which we indulge about our children proves that we have not really**

**taken them with us into the dwelling place of God.**

**What I mean is this, that if we trust for ourselves, we must trust for**

**our loved ones also, and especially for our children. God is more their**

**Father than their earthly fathers are and if they are dear to us, they**

**are far dearer to Him. We cannot, therefore, do anything better for**

**them than to trust them to His care, and hardly anything worse than to**

**try to keep them in our own. I knew a Christian mother who trusted**

**peacefully for her own salvation, but was racked with anxiety about her**

**sons, who seemed entirely indifferent to all religious subjects. One**

**evening she heard about the possibility of putting those we love into**

**the fortress of God by faith and leaving them there; and, like a flash**

**of heavenly light, she saw the inconsistency of hiding herself in God's**

**fortress and leaving her beloved sons outside. At once her faith took**

**them into the fortress with her, and she abandoned them to the care of**

**God. So fully and completely did she do this that all her anxiety**

**vanished, and perfect peace dawned upon her soul. She told me she felt**

**somehow that her sons were God's sons now--no longer hers--and that He**

**loved them far better than she could, and would care for them far more**

**wisely and effectually. She held herself in readiness to do for them**

**whatever the Lord might suggest; but she felt that He was the One who**

**would know what was best, and she was content to leave the matter in**

**His hands.**

**She went home from that meeting and called her sons into her room,**

**telling them what had happened; she said, "You know, my dear boys, how**

**anxious and troubled I have been about you, and how continually I have**

**preached to you, and I am afraid have often worried you. But now I have**

**learned to trust, and I have put you by faith into the fortress of God,**

**and have left you in His care. I am sure that He will care for you far**

**better than your poor mother ever could, and will save you in His own**

**way. My anxieties are over."**

**I did not see her again for a year, but when I did, she came up to me**

**with a beaming face; and with tears of joy filling her eyes, she said,**

**"Rejoice with me, dear friend, that I learned how to put my boys into**

**the fortress of God. They have been safe there ever since, and all of**

**them are good Christian boys today."**

**The conclusion of the whole matter, then, is simply this, that we must**

**make up our minds to move into our dwelling place in God and to take**

**there with us all our possessions, above all, those we love. We must**

**hide ourselves in Him away from ourselves, away from all others, and we**

**must lose sight of everything that is outside of Him except as we see**

**it through His eyes. God's eyes are the windows of God's house, and the**

**only windows there are; and seen through His eyes, all things will put**

**on a new aspect. We shall see our trials as blessings, and our enemies**

**as disguised friends. We shall be calm and at rest in the face of all**

**the frets and worries of life, untouched by any of them. "For he that**

**dwelleth in God dwelleth in a peaceable habitation and in a quiet**

**resting place."**

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**Chapter 9**

**Much More Versus Much Less**

**"But where sin abounded grace did much more abound."**

**In our preceding chapters we have been trying to learn something about**

**the Lord and His great salvation; and now the vital point is, what view**

**do we take of it all? A very great deal of the comfort or discomfort of**

**our religious lives depends on the view we take of things. I do not**

**mean of course that our view of things affects their reality in any**

**way, but what I do mean is that our view makes all the difference in**

**our apprehension of this reality; and while our safety comes from what**

**things really are, our comfort comes from what we suppose them to be.**

**There is an expression used over and over again in the Bible to**

**describe the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which gives a view of**

**that salvation, so amazing and so perfectly satisfying, that I cannot**

**help wondering whether any of us have ever yet grasped its full**

**meaning. One thing is certain, that no one who grasps it could ever be**

**uncomfortable or miserable again. It is the expression, "much more,"**

**and it is used to tell us, if only we would believe it, that there is**

**no need which any human being can ever know that cannot be much more**

**than met by the glorious salvation that is provided. But we are**

**continually tempted to think that much less would be a truer term; and**

**that, so far from this salvation being much more than our needs, it**

**turns out in actual experience to be much less. And this "much less"**

**view, if I may so express it, is in danger of making our whole**

**spiritual lives a misery to us.**

**If all we have been learning in our preceding chapters of the fullness**

**of God's salvation is indeed true, it would seem as if nothing but the**

**language of "much more" could ever be used by any child of God. But**

**since there are some Christians, who seem by their thoughts and their**

**actions to declare that they consider the language of "much less" to be**

**the only prudent language for poor sinners, I want us carefully to**

**consider the matter in the light of what the Bible tells us, and**

**discover whether we are really justified in saying much more.**

**It is, I believe, a far more vital question for each one of us than may**

**appear at first sight. For if God declares that the salvation He has**

**provided is much more than enough to meet our needs, and if we insist**

**on declaring in our secret thoughts that it is much less, we are**

**casting discredit on His trustworthiness, and are storing up for**

**ourselves untold discomfort and misery.**

**"Much less" is the language of the seen thing, "much more" is the**

**language of the unseen thing. "Much less" seems on the surface to be**

**far more reasonable than "much more," because every seen thing confirms**

**it. Our weakness and foolishness are visible; God's strength and wisdom**

**are invisible. Our need is patent before our very eyes; God's supply is**

**hidden in the secret of His presence, and can only be realized by**

**faith.**

**It seems a paradox to tell us that we must see unseen things. How can**

**it be possible? But there are other things to see than those which**

**appear on surfaces, and other eyes to look through than those we**

**generally use. An ox and a scientist may both look at the same field,**

**but they will see very different things there. To see unseen things**

**requires us to have that interior eye opened in our souls which is able**

**to see below surfaces, and which can pierce through the outer**

**appearance of things into their inner realities. This interior eye**

**looks not at the seen things, which are temporal, but at the things**

**that are not seen, which are eternal; and the vital question for each**

**one of us is, whether that interior eye has been opened in us yet, and**

**whether we can see the things that are eternal, or whether our vision**

**is limited to the things that are temporal only.**

**Can and do we say of the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ that it is**

**much more than our need, or that it is much less?**

**There is a wonderful instance in the history of the children of Israel,**

**when they saw the unseen things with such clearness of vision, that the**

**"much less" of their enemy, and of the seen things around them, was**

**powerless to disturb them. The story is told in II Chronicles 32:1-15.**

**An enemy had come up against Judah, and had threatened to overwhelm**

**them. This enemy had been so universally successful hitherto in all his**

**wars with the nations round about that he had no doubt he would be able**

**to conquer the Israelites also. But Hezekiah, the king of Israel,**

**looked not at the seen enemy, but at the unseen God, and he saw that**

**God was the strongest; and he spake comfortable to the people, and**

**said: "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the**

**king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there**

**be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us**

**is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles." What a**

**tremendous contrast: on one side an arm of flesh; on the other, the**

**Lord our God! No wonder the people "rested themselves" upon a**

**declaration such as this.**

**And yet, I cannot help questioning whether if we had been there, we**

**would have had faith enough to have so rested ourselves?**

**When Sennacherib saw their faith, he was enraged, and upbraided them**

**with this folly in being persuaded by Hezekiah to expose themselves to**

**the risk of death by thirst and famine in the vain hope that the Lord**

**would deliver them. And then comes the taunt of the "much less": "Know**

**you not," he said, "what I and my father have done unto all the people**

**of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands in any way**

**able to deliver their lands out of mine hand? Who was there among all**

**the gods of those nations that could deliver his people out of mine**

**hand, that your God shall be able to deliver you out mine hand? Now**

**therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this**

**manner, neither yet believe him; for no god of any nation or kingdom**

**was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, how much less shall**

**your God deliver you out of mine hand."**

**"How much less"--what a temptation to unbelief was contained in those**

**words! All the seen things were on that side; and it did look**

**impossible, in the face of the fact that all the nations round about**

**had been defeated, that the nation of Israel, no stronger, and no**

**better equipped than the others, should find deliverance. But Hezekiah**

**kept his eyes and the eyes of the people fixed on the unseen things,**

**and their faith stood firm; and the Lord in whom they trusted did not**

**fail them, but sent them a grand deliverance. The "much less" of the**

**enemy was turned for the Israelites into a "much more" of victory. The**

**man who had promised them defeat and death was himself defeated; he was**

**obliged to return to his own land with "shame of face," and was there**

**slain by his disappointed relatives.**

**Is there nothing analogous to this story in our own personal history?**

**Have we never been taunted with the discouraging thought that God is**

**"much less" able to deliver us than His promises would lead us to**

**expect? And when we have looked at the formidable seen things of our**

**need has it not sometimes seemed to us as if it would be equivalent to**

**giving ourselves over to "die by famine and thirst," if we were brought**

**to the point of having absolutely nothing else to trust to but the Lord**

**alone? I remember hearing of a Christian who was in great trouble, and**

**who had tried every way for deliverance, but in vain, who said finally**

**to another in a tone of the utmost despair, "Well, there is nothing**

**left for me now but to trust the Lord."**

**"Alas!" exclaimed the friend in the greatest consternation, "is it**

**possible it has come to that?"**

**We may shrink with horror from the thought of using such an expression,**

**but, if we are honest with ourselves, I believe we shall be obliged to**

**confess that sometimes, in the very bottom of our hearts, we have**

**indulged in just this feeling. To come to the point of having nothing**

**left to trust in but the Lord has, I am afraid, seemed to us at times a**

**desperate condition of things. And yet, if our Lord is to be believed,**

**His "much mores" of grace are abundantly equal to the worst emergency**

**that can befall us. The apostle tells us that God is able to do**

**"exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think"; and this**

**describes what His "much mores" mean. We can think of very wonderful**

**things in the way of salvation--spiritual blessing that would transform**

**life for us, and make the whole universe resplendent with joy and**

**triumph--and we can ask for them. But do we really believe that God is**

**able and willing to do for us "exceeding abundantly" above all that we**

**can ask or think? Is the language of our hearts "much more" or "much**

**less"?**

**In another place we are told that "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." If God has prepared more for us than**

**it has ever entered into our hearts to conceive, surely we can have no**

**question about obtaining that which has entered into our hearts, and**

**"much more" beside. What can it be then but downright unbelief that**

**leads any of us to harbor a thought of God's salvation being "much**

**less" than the things it has entered into our hearts to long for.**

**Let us settle it then that the language of our souls must henceforth be**

**not the "much less" of unbelief, but the "much more" of faith. And I**

**feel sure we shall find that God's "much mores" will be enough to cover**

**the whole range of our needs, both temporal and spiritual.**

**"For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of**

**God and the gift by grace which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath**

**abounded unto man." This is a "much more" that really reaches, if only**

**we could understand it, into the deepest depth of human need. There is**

**no question in our minds as to the fact that "many be dead," but how is**

**it with the "much more" of grace that is to abound unto many? Are we**

**sure of the grace that is to abound unto many? Are we as sure of the**

**grace as we are of the death? Do we really believe that the remedy is**

**"much more" than the disease? Does the salvation seem to us "much more"**

**than the need? Or do we believe in our hearts that it is "much less"?**

**Which does God declare?**

**One of the deepest needs of our souls is the need for being saved. Is**

**there a "much more" to meet this need? What does the apostle say? "But**

**God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners,**

**Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood,**

**we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies,**

**we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being**

**reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The question of salvation**

**seems to me to be absolutely settled by these "much mores." Since**

**Christ has died for us, and has thereby reconciled us to God (not God**

**to us, He did not need reconciling), of course "much more," if only we**

**will let Him, will He now save us. There can be no question as to**

**whether He will save us. There can be no question as to whether He will**

**or will not, for the greater must necessarily include the lesser, and,**

**having done the greater, "much more" will He do the lesser. We none of**

**us doubt that He did the greater, and, in the face of these "much**

**mores," we dare not doubt He will do the lesser.**

**Now the practical point for us in all this is, Do we really believe it?**

**Have we got rid of all doubts as to our salvation? Can we speak with**

**assurance of forgiveness and of eternal life? Do we say with the**

**timidity of unbelief, "I hope I am a child of God"; or do we lift up**

**our heads, with joyous confidence in God as our Father, and say with**

**John, "Now are we the sons of God"? Is it in this respect "much more"**

**with us, or "much less"?**

**We long and pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, but it seems all in**

**vain. We feel that our prayers are not answered. But our Lord gives**

**faith a wonderful "much more" to lay hold of for this. "If ye then,**

**being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much**

**more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask**

**him?" There is not one of us who does not know how thankful and eager**

**good parents are to give good gifts to their children--how they thrust**

**them on the children often before the child is ready to receive, or**

**even knows that it has a need. And yet, who of us really believes that**

**God is actually "much more" eager to give the Holy Spirit to them that**

**ask Him? Is it not rather that many feel secretly that He is "much**

**less" willing, and that we will have to beg, and entreat, and wrestle,**

**and wait, for this sorely needed gift? If we could only believe this**

**"much more," how full of faith our asking would be in regard to it. We**

**should then truly be able to believe that we actually did receive that**

**for which we had asked, and should find that we were in actual**

**possession of the Holy Spirit as our present and personal Comforter and**

**Guide; and all our weary struggles and agonizing prayers for this**

**promised gift would be over.**

**Sorer, perhaps, than any other need is our need of victory over sin and**

**over circumstances. Like Juggernaut cars they roll over us with**

**irresistible power, and crush us into the dust. And the language of**

**"much less" seems the only language that our souls dare utter. But God**

**has given us for this a most triumphant "much more." "For, if by one**

**man's offense, death reigned by one, much more they which receive**

**abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in**

**life by one, Jesus Christ."**

**We have known the reigning of that spiritual death which comes by sin,**

**and have groaned under its power. But how much do we know of that "much**

**more" reigning in life by Jesus Christ of which the apostle speaks?**

**That is, have we now greater victories than we used to have defeats? Do**

**we reign over things "much more" than they once reigned over us?**

**I mean this, that in the Gospel it is promised that we shall be "more**

**than conquerors" over the very things that once conquered us, and the**

**question is whether we really are. We have been reigned over by**

**thousands of things, by the fear of man, by our peculiar temperaments,**

**by our outward circumstances, by our irritable tempers, even by bad**

**weather, by our environment of every kind. We have been slaves where we**

**ought to have been kings. We have found our reigning to be "much less"**

**rather than "much more." Why is this? Simply because we have not**

**"received" enough of the abundance of grace that is ours in Christ. We**

**have let unbelief cheat us out of our rightful possessions. We are**

**called to be kings and are "made to have dominion," but here God**

**declares that it shall be "much more" of a dominion than it was**

**formerly a bondage; have we so found it? If not, why not? The lack**

**cannot possibly be on God's side. He has not failed to provide the**

**"much more" of victory. It must be that we have in some way failed to**

**avail ourselves of it. And I cannot but believe that our failure arises**

**from the fact that we have substituted our "much less" for God's "much**

**more"; and in our heart of hearts have not believed there really is a**

**sufficiency in the gift of righteousness in Christ to enable us to**

**reign. We have failed through our unbelief to "receive the abundance of**

**grace" that is necessary for reigning.**

**What then is our remedy? Only this--to abandon forever our "much less"**

**of unbelief, and to accept as true God's declaration of "much more,"**

**and to claim at once the promised victory. And according to our faith**

**it must and will be unto us.**

**But these assurances of the "much mores" of God's salvation are not for**

**our spiritual needs only, but for our temporal needs as well. Do not be**

**anxious, He says, about earthly things, for "if God so clothe the grass**

**of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall**

**he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"**

**I know that to many Christians this passage and others like it are so**

**familiar that they have almost lost all meaning. But they do mean**

**something, and something almost too wonderful for belief. They tell us**

**that God cares for us human beings "much more" than He cares for the**

**universe around us, and that He will watch over and provide for us much**

**more than He will even for it.**

**Incredible, yet true! How often we have marveled at the orderly working**

**of the universe, and have admired the great creative Power that made it**

**and now controls it! But none of us, I suppose, has ever felt it**

**necessary to take the burden of the universe upon our own shoulders. We**

**have trusted the Creator to manage it all without our help. Although I**

**must confess, from the way some people find fault with the Creator's**

**management of things, and the advice they seem to feel it necessary to**

**give Him in their prayers, one would think the whole burden was resting**

**upon them!**

**But even where we have fully recognized that the universe is altogether**

**in God's care, we have failed to see that we also are there, and have**

**never dreamed that it could be true that "much more" than He cares for**

**the universe will He care for us. We have looked at the seen things of**

**our circumstances and our surroundings, and at the greatness of our**

**need and our own helplessness, and have been anxious and afraid. We**

**have burdened ourselves with the care of ourselves, feeling in our**

**unbelief that, instead of being of "much more" value than the fowls of**

**the air, or the lilies of the field, we are in reality of infinitely**

**"much less"; and it seems to us that the God who cares for them is not**

**at all likely to care for us. We say with the psalmist: "When I**

**consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars,**

**which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?**

**and the son of man that thou visited him?" Man so puny, so**

**insignificant, of so little account when compared with the great, wide**

**universe, what is he, we ask, that God should care for him? And yet God**

**declares that He does care for him, and that He even cares for him much**

**more than He cares for the universe. Much more, remember, not much**

**less. So that every thought of anxiety about ourselves must be**

**immediately crushed with the common-sense reflection that, since we are**

**not so foolish as to be anxious about the universe, we must not be so**

**much more foolish as to be anxious about ourselves.**

**In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord gives us the crowning "much more"**

**of all. "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will**

**he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?**

**If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children,**

**how much more shall your Father which is in heaven gives good things to**

**them that ask him?"**

**In this "much more" we have a warrant for the supply of every need.**

**Whatever our Father sees to be good for us is here abundantly promised.**

**And the illustration used to convince us is one of universal**

**application. In all ranks and condition of life, among all nations, and**

**even in the hearts of birds and beasts the mother instinct never fails**

**to provide for its offspring the best it can compass. Under no**

**conditions of life will a mother, unless she is wicked beyond compare,**

**give a stone when asked for bread, or a serpent when asked for fish.**

**And could our God, who created the mother heart, be worse than a**

**mother? No, no, a thousand times no! What He will do is "much more,"**

**oh, so much more than even the tenderest mother could do. And if**

**mothers "know how," as surely they do, to give good things to their**

**children, "how much more" does He. But do we really believe this "much**

**more"? Our hours of anxious tossing on our beds must answer. If God is**

**actually much more willing and able to give good things to us than**

**parents are to give good things to their children, then all possibility**

**of doubt or anxiety as to our prayers being answered must vanish**

**forever. All "good things" must be given to us when we ask, as**

**inevitably as the mother who is able feeds her child when it asks her**

**for bread. As inevitably, do I say? Ah, dear friends, far more**

**inevitably. For it is "how much more" shall your Father which is in**

**Heaven. Which of us has fathomed the meaning of this "how much more"?**

**But at least this it must mean, that all human readiness to hear and**

**answer the cry of need can only be a faint picture of God's readiness,**

**and that, therefore, we can never dare to doubt again. And if parents**

**would not give a stone for bread, neither would He; so that when we**

**ask, we must be absolutely sure that we do receive the "good thing" for**

**which we asked, whether what we receive looks like it or not.**

**The mother of St. Augustine, in her longing for the conversion of her**

**son, prayed that he might not go to Rome, as she feared its**

**dissipations. God answered her by sending him to Rome to be converted**

**there. Things we call good are often God's evil things, and our evil is**

**His good. But, however things may look, we always know that God must**

**give the best because He is God and could do no other.**

**"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how**

**shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Since He has**

**done the supreme thing of having given us Christ, "much more" will He**

**do the less by giving us all things with Him. And yet we continually**

**hear God's own children lamenting their spiritual poverty, and their**

**state of spiritual starvation, and even, it seems sometimes, thinking**

**it rather a pious thing to do and a mark of true humility. But what is**

**this but glorying in the "much less" of their unbelief, instead of in**

**the "much more" of God.**

**"Oh, I am such a poor creature," I heard a child of God say once with**

**actual complacency when urged to some victory of faith; "I am such a**

**poor creature that I cannot expect to attain to the heights you grand**

**Christians reach." "Poor creature," indeed; of course you are, and so**

**are we all! But God is not poor, and it is His part to supply your**

**needs, not your part to supply His. He is able, no matter what unbelief**

**may say, to "make all grace abound toward you, that ye always having**

**all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work." "All,"**

**"always," "every"--what all-embracing words these are! They include our**

**needs to their utmost limit, and leave us no room for any question. How**

**can we, how dare we, in the face of such declarations, ever doubt or**

**question again?**

**We have only touched upon the wonders of grace hidden in these "much**

**mores" of God. We can never exhaust their meaning in this life. But let**

**us at least resolve henceforth to lay aside every "much less" of**

**unbelief on all the lines of salvation, and out of the depths of our**

**utter weakness, sinfulness, and need assert with a conquering faith**

**always and everywhere the mighty "much more" of the grace of God!**

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**Chapter 10**

**Self-Examination**

**"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."**

**Probably no subject connected with the religious life has been the**

**cause of more discomfort and suffering to tender consciences than has**

**this subject of self-examination; and none has led more frequently to**

**the language of "much less," which we found in our last chapter to be**

**so great an obstacle to all spiritual growth. And yet it has been so**

**constantly impressed upon us that it is our duty to examine ourselves,**

**that the eyes of most of us are continually turned inward, and our gaze**

**is fixed on our own interior states and feelings to such an extent that**

**self, and not Christ, has come at last to fill the whole horizon.**

**By self I mean here all that centers around this great big "me" of**

**ours. Its vocabulary rings out the changes on "I," "me," "my." It is a**

**vocabulary with which we are all very familiar. The questions we ask**

**ourselves in our times of self-examination are proof of this. Am I**

**earnest enough? Have I repented enough? Have I the right sort of**

**feelings? Do I realize religious truth as I ought? Are my prayers**

**fervent enough? Is my interest in religious things as great as it ought**

**to be? Do I love God with enough fervor? Is the Bible as much of a**

**delight to me as it is to others? All these, and a hundred more**

**questions about ourselves and our experiences fill up all our thoughts,**

**and sometimes our little self-examination books as well; and day and**

**night we ring the changes on the person pronoun "I," "me," "my," to the**

**utter exclusion of any thought concerning Christ, or any word**

**concerning "He," "His," "Him."**

**The misery of this, many of us know only too well. But the idea that**

**the Bible is full of commands to self-examination is so prevalent that**

**it seems one of the most truly pious things we can do; and, miserable**

**as it makes us, we still feel it is our duty to go on with it in spite**

**of an ever-increasing sense of hopelessness and despair.**

**In view of this idea many will be surprised to find that there are only**

**two texts in the whole Bible that speak of self-examination, and that**

**neither of these can at all be made to countenance the morbid**

**self-analysis that results from what we call self-examination.**

**One of these passages I have quoted at the head of this chapter:**

**"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." This is simply an**

**exhortation to the Corinthians, who were in a sadly backsliding**

**condition, to settle definitely whether they were still believers or**

**not. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." It does not say**

**examine whether you are sufficiently earnest, or whether you have the**

**right feelings, or whether your motives are pure, but simply and only,**

**whether you are "in the faith." In short, do you believe in Christ or**

**do you not? A simple question that required only a simple,**

**straightforward answer, Yes or No. This is what it meant for the**

**Corinthians then, and it is what it means for us now.**

**The other passage reads: "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and**

**drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and**

**blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of**

**that bread and drink of that cup." Paul was here writing of the abuses**

**of greediness and drunkenness which had crept in at the celebration of**

**the Lord's Supper; and, in this exhortation to examine themselves, he**

**was simply urging them to see to it that they did none of these things,**

**but partook of this religious feast in a decent and orderly manner.**

**In neither of these passages is there any hint of that morbid searching**

**out of one's emotions and experiences that is called self-examination**

**in the present day. And it is amazing that out of two such simple**

**passages should have been evolved a teaching fraught with so much**

**misery to earnest, conscientious souls.**

**The truth is there is no Scripture authority whatever for this disease**

**of modern times; and those who are afflicted with it are the victims of**

**mistaken ideas of God's ways with His children.**

**Some of my readers, however, are probably asking themselves whether I**

**have not overlooked a large class of passages that tell us to "watch";**

**and whether these passages do not mean watching ourselves, or, in other**

**words, self-examination. I will quote one of these passages as a**

**sample, that we may see what their meaning really is. "But of that day**

**and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven,**

**neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye**

**know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far**

**journey, who left his home, and gave authority to his servants, and to**

**every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye**

**therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at**

**even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest**

**coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say**

**unto all, Watch."**

**I think if we carefully examine this passage and others like it, we**

**shall see that instead of teaching self-examination, they teach**

**something that is exactly the opposite. They tell us to "watch," it is**

**true, but they do not tell us to watch ourselves. They are plainly**

**commands to forget ourselves in watching for Another. The return of the**

**Lord is the thing we are to watch for. His coming footsteps, and not**

**our own past footsteps, are to be the object of our gazing. We are to**

**watch as a porter watches for the return of the master of the house,**

**and are to be ready as a good watchman should be to receive and welcome**

**Him at any moment that He may appear.**

**"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find**

**watching." Watching what? Themselves? No, watching for Him, of course.**

**If we can imagine a porter, instead of watching for the return of his**

**master, spending his time morbidly analyzing his own past conduct,**

**trying to discover whether he had been faithful enough, and becoming so**

**absorbed in self-examination as to let the master's call go unheeded**

**and the master's return unnoted, we shall have a picture of what goes**

**on in the experience of the soul that is given up to the mistaken habit**

**of watching and looking at self instead of watching and looking for**

**Christ.**

**These passages, therefore, instead of teaching self-examination, teach**

**exactly the opposite. God says, "Look unto me, and ye shall be saved";**

**but the self-analyzing soul says, "I must look unto myself, if I am to**

**have any hope of being saved. It must be by getting myself right that**

**salvation is to come." And yet the phrase, "Looking unto Jesus," is**

**generally acknowledged to be one of the watchwords of the Christian**

**religion; and all Christians everywhere will unhesitatingly declare**

**that, or course, this is the one thing we all ought to do. But, after**

**saying this, they will go on in their old way of self-introspection,**

**trying to find some salvation in their own inward feelings, or in their**

**own works of righteousness, and being continually plunged into despair**

**because they never find it.**

**It is a fact that we see what we look at, and cannot see what we look**

**away from; and we cannot look unto Jesus while we are looking at**

**ourselves. The power for victory and the power for endurance are to**

**come from looking unto Jesus and considering Him, not from looking unto**

**or considering ourselves, or our circumstances, or our sins, or our**

**temptations. Looking at ourselves causes weakness and defeat. The**

**reason for this is that when we look at ourselves, we see nothing but**

**ourselves, and our own weakness, and poverty, and sin; we do not and**

**cannot see the remedy and the supply for these, and as a matter of**

**course we are defeated. The remedy and the supply are there all the**

**time, but they are not to be found in the place where we are looking,**

**for they are not in self but in Christ; and we cannot be looking at**

**ourselves and looking at Christ at the same time. Again I repeat that**

**it is in the inexorable nature of things that what we look at that we**

**shall see, and that, if we want to see the Lord, we must look at the**

**Lord and not at self. It is a simple question of choice for us, whether**

**it shall be I or Christ; whether we shall turn our backs on Christ and**

**look at ourselves, or whether we shall turn our backs on self and look**

**at Christ.**

**I was very much helped many years ago by the following sentence in a**

**book by Adelaide Proctor: "For one look at self take ten looks at**

**Christ." It was entirely contrary to all I had previously thought**

**right; but it carried conviction to my soul, and delivered me from a**

**habit of morbid self-examination and introspection that had made my**

**life miserable for years. It was an unspeakable deliverance. And my**

**experience since leads me to believe that even a better motto would be,**

**"Take no look at self at all, but look only and always at Christ."**

**The Bible law in regard to the self-life is not that the self-life must**

**be watched and made better, but that it must be "put off." The apostle,**

**when urging the Ephesian Christians to walk worthy of the vocation**

**wherewith they had been called, tells them that they must "put off" the**

**old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. The "old**

**man" is, of course, the self-life, and this self-life (which we know**

**only too well is indeed corrupt according to deceitful lusts) is not to**

**be improved, but to be "put off." It is to be crucified. Paul says that**

**our old man is crucified, put to death, with Christ; and he declares of**

**the Colossians that they could no longer lie, seeing that they had "put**

**of the old man with his deeds." Some people's idea of crucifying the**

**"old man" is to set him up on a pinnacle, and then walk around him and**

**stick nagging pins into him to make him miserable, but keeping him**

**alive all the time. But, if I understand language, crucifixion means**

**death, not making miserable; and to crucify the old man means to kill**

**him outright, and to put him off as a snake puts off its dead and**

**useless skin.**

**It is of no use, then, for us to examine self and to tinker with it in**

**the hope of improving it, for the thing the Lord wants us to do with it**

**is to get rid of it. Fenelon, in his Spiritual Letters, says that the**

**only way to treat self is to refuse to have anything to do with it. He**

**says we must turn our backs on this great big "I" of ours, and to say**

**to it, "I do not know you, and am not interested in you, and I refuse**

**to pay any attention to you whatever." But self is always determined to**

**secure attention, and would rather be thought badly of than not to be**

**thought of at all. And self-examination with all its miseries often**

**gives a sort of morbid satisfaction to the self-life in us, and even**

**deludes self into thinking it a very humble and pious sort of self**

**after all.**

**The only safe and scriptural way is to have nothing to do with self at**

**all, either with good self or with bad self, but simply to ignore self**

**altogether; and to fix our eyes, and our thoughts, and our expectations**

**on the Lord and on Him alone. We must substitute for the personal**

**pronouns "I," "me," "my," the pronoun "He," "Him," "His"; and must ask**

**ourselves, not "am I good?" but "is He good?"**

**The psalmist says: "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he shall**

**pluck my feet out of the net." As long as our eyes are toward our own**

**feet, and toward the net in which they are entangled, we only get into**

**worse tangles. But when we keep our eyes toward the Lord, He plucks our**

**feet out of the net. This is a point in practical experience that I**

**have tested hundreds of times, and I know it is a fact. No matter what**

**sort of a snarl I may have been in, whether inward or outward, I have**

**always found that while I kept my eyes on the snarl and tried to**

**unravel it, it grew worse and worse; but when I turned my eyes away**

**from the snarl and kept them fixed on the Lord, He always sooner or**

**later unraveled it and delivered me.**

**Have you ever watched a farmer plowing a field? If you have, you will**

**have noticed that in order to make straight furrows he is obliged to**

**fix his eyes on a tree, or a post in the fence, or some object at the**

**farther end of the field, and to guide his plow unwaveringly toward**

**that object. If he begins to look back at the furrow behind him in**

**order to see whether he has made a straight furrow, his plow begins to**

**jerk from side to side, and the furrow he is making becomes a zigzag.**

**If we would make straight paths for our feet we must do what the**

**apostle says he did. We must forget the things that are behind, and,**

**reaching forth to those which are before, we must press toward the mark**

**for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

**To forget the things that are behind is an essential part of the**

**pressing forward toward the prize of our high calling; and I am**

**convinced this prize can never be reached unless we will consent to**

**this forgetting. When we do consent to it, we come near to putting an**

**end to all our self-examination; for, if we may not look back over our**

**past misdoings, we shall find but little food for self-reflective acts.**

**We complain of spiritual hunger, and torment ourselves to know why our**

**hunger is not satisfied. The psalmist says: "The eyes of all wait upon**

**thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season." Having our eyes**

**upon ourselves and on our own hunger will never bring a supply of**

**spiritual meat. When a man's larder is empty and he is starving, his**

**eyes are not occupied with looking at the emptiness of his larder, but**

**are turned toward the source from which he hopes or expects to get a**

**supply of food. To examine self is to be like a man who should spend**

**his time in examing his empty larder instead of going to the market for**

**a supply to fill it. No wonder such Christians seem to be starving to**

**death in the midst of all the fullness there is for them in Christ.**

**They never see that fullness, for they never look at it; and again I**

**repeat that the thing we look at is the thing we see.**

**I feel as if I could not repeat this evident truism too often, for**

**somehow people seem to lay aside their common sense when they come to**

**the subject of religion, and seem to expect to see things upon which**

**they have deliberately kept their backs turned. They cry out, "O Lord,**

**reveal thyself"; but instead of looking at Him they look at themselves,**

**and keep their gaze steadily fixed on their own inward feelings, and**

**then wonder at the "mysterious dealings" of God in hiding His face from**

**their fervent prayers. But how can they see what they do not look at?**

**It is never God who hides His face from us, but it is always we who**

**hide our face from Him, by "turning to him the back and not the face."**

**The prophet reproaches the children of Israel with this, and adds that**

**they "set up their abominations in the house which is called by God's**

**name." When Christians spend their time examining their own condition,**

**raking up all their sins, and bemoaning their shortcomings, what is**

**this but to set up the "abomination" of their own sinful self upon the**

**chief pedestal in their hearts, and to make it the center of their**

**whole religious life, and of all their care and efforts. They gaze at**

**this great, big, miserable self until it fills their whole horizon, and**

**they "turn their back" on the Lord, until He is lost sight of**

**altogether.**

**I will venture to say that there are many Christians who, for one look**

**at the Lord, will give a thousand looks at self, and who, for one hour**

**spent in rejoicing in Him, will spend hundreds of hours bemoaning**

**themselves.**

**We are never anywhere commanded to behold our emotions, nor our**

**experiences, nor even our sins, but we are commanded to turn our backs**

**upon all these, and to behold the Lamb of God who taketh away our sins.**

**One look at Christ is worth more for salvation than a million looks at**

**self. Yet so mistaken are our ideas, we seem unable to avoid thinking**

**that the mortification which results from self-examination must have in**

**it some saving power, because it makes us so miserable. For we have to**

**travel a long way on our heavenly journey before we fully learn that**

**there is no saving power in misery, and that a cheerful, confident**

**faith is the only successful attitude for the aspiring soul.**

**In Isaiah we see God's people complaining because they fasted, and He**

**did not see; afflicted their souls, and He took no knowledge; and God**

**gave them this significant answer: "Is it such a fast that I have**

**chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head**

**as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou**

**call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?" Whoever else is**

**pleased with the miseries of our self-examination, it is very certain**

**that God is not. He does not want us to bow down our heads as a**

**bulrush, any more than He wanted His people of old to do it; and He**

**calls upon us, as He did upon them, to forget our own miserable selves,**

**and to go to work to lessen the miseries of others. "Is not this the**

**fast that I have chosen," He says, "to loose the bands of wickedness,**

**to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that**

**ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and**

**that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou**

**seest the naked, that thou cover him?"**

**This service for others is of infinitely greater value to the Lord than**

**the longest seasons of self-examination and self-abasement. And I am**

**convinced that He has shown us here what is the surest way of**

**deliverance out of the slough of misery into which our habits of**

**self-examination have plunged us. He declares emphatically that if we**

**will only keep the sort of "fast" He approves of, by giving up our own**

**"fast" of afflicting our souls and bowing down our heads as a bulrush,**

**and will instead "draw out our souls to the hungry," and will try to**

**bear the burdens and relieve the miseries of others, then shall our**

**light rise in obscurity, and our darkness be as the noonday; and the**

**Lord shall guide us continually, satisfying our souls in drought, and**

**making fat our bones; we shall be like a watered garden, and like a**

**spring of water whose waters fail not.**

**All this is exactly what we have been striving for, but our strivings**

**have been in our own way, not in God's. The fast we have chosen has**

**been to afflict our souls, to bow down our heads as bulrushes, and to**

**sit in sackcloth and ashes; and, as a consequence, instead of our bones**

**being made fat, and our souls refreshed like a watered garden, we have**

**found only leanness, and thirst, and misery. Our own fasts, no matter**

**how fervently they may be carried on, nor how many groans and tears may**

**accompany them can never bring us anything else.**

**Now let us try God's fast. Let us lay aside all care for ourselves, and**

**care instead for our needy brothers and sisters. Let us stop trying to**

**do something for our own poor miserable self-life, and begin to try to**

**do something to help the spiritual lives of others. Let us give up our**

**hopeless efforts to find something in ourselves to delight in, and**

**delight ourselves only in the Lord and in His service. And if we will**

**but do this, all the days of our misery will be ended.**

**But some may ask whether it is not necessary to examine ourselves in**

**order to find out what is wrong and what needs mending. This would, of**

**course, be necessary if we were our own workmanship, but since we are**

**God's workmanship and not our own, He is the One to examine us, for He**

**is the only One who can tell what is wrong. The man who makes watches**

**is the one to examine a watch when it is out of order, and to set it**

**straight. We have too much good sense to meddle with our watches; why**

**is it that we have not enough good sense to give up meddling with**

**ourselves? Surely we must see that the examining of the Lord is the**

**only kind of examination that is of any use. His examination is like**

**that of a physician who examines in order to cure; while our**

**self-examination is like that of the patient who only becomes more of a**

**hypochondriac the more he examines the symptoms of his disease.**

**But the question may be asked whether, when there has been actual sin,**

**there ought not to be self-examination and self-reproach at least for a**

**time. This is a fallacy which deceives a great many. It seems too much**

**to believe that we can be forgiven without first going through a season**

**of self-reproach. But what is the Bible teaching? John tells us that if**

**we confess our sins (not bewail them, nor yet try to excuse them), but**

**simply confess them, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,**

**and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. All that God wants is that**

**we should turn to Him at once, acknowledge our sin, and believe in His**

**forgiveness; and every minute that we delay doing this, in order to**

**spend the time in self-examination and self-reproach, is only adding**

**further sin to that which we have already committed. If ever we need to**

**look away from self, and to have our eyes turned to the Lord, it is**

**just when we become conscious of having sinned against Him. The greater**

**the multitude of our enemies, the greater and more immediate our need**

**of God.**

**All through the Bible we are taught this lesson of death to self and**

**life in Christ alone. "Not I, but Christ," was not intended to be a**

**unique experience of Paul's, but was simply a declaration of what ought**

**to be the experience of every Christian. We sing sometimes, "Thou O**

**Christ, art all I want," but as a fact, we really want a great many**

**other things. We want good feelings, we want fervor and earnestness, we**

**want realizations, we want satisfying experiences; and we continually**

**examine ourselves to try to find out why we do not have these things.**

**We think if we could only discover our points of failure, we should be**

**able to set them straight. But there is no healing or transforming**

**power in gazing at our failures. The only road to Christlikeness is to**

**behold, not our own hatefulness, but His goodness and beauty. We grow**

**like what we look at, and if we spend our lives looking at our hateful**

**selves, we shall become more and more hateful. Do we not find as a fact**

**that self-examination, instead of making us better, always seems to**

**make us worse? Beholding self, we are more and more changed into the**

**image of self. While on the contrary if we spend our time beholding the**

**glory of the Lord, that is, letting our minds dwell upon His goodness**

**and His love, and trying to drink in His spirit, the inevitable result**

**will be that we shall be, slowly perhaps, but surely, changed into the**

**image of the Lord upon whom we are gazing.**

**Fenelon says that we should never indulge in any self-reflective acts,**

**either of mortification at our failures, or of congratulation at our**

**successes; but that we should continually consign self and all self's**

**doings to oblivion, and should keep our interior eyes upon the Lord**

**only. It is very hard in self-examination not to try to find excuses**

**for our faults; and our self-reflective acts are often in danger of**

**being turned into self-glorying ones. The only way is to ignore self**

**altogether and to forget there is any such being in existence.**

**No one who does not understand this can possibly appreciate the comfort**

**and relief it is to be done with self and all self-reflective acts. I**

**have known Christian workers whose lives have been one long torment**

**because of these self-reflective acts; and I am convinced that the**

**"Blue Mondays," of which so many clergymen complain, are nothing but**

**the result of an indulgence in self-reflective acts concerning their**

**services in the church the day before.**

**The only way to treat all forms of self-reflective acts, of whatever**

**kind, is simply to give them up. They always do harm and never good.**

**They are bound to result in one of two things: either they fill us full**

**of self-praise and self-satisfaction, or they plunge us into the depths**

**of discouragement and despair; and whichever it may be, the soul is in**

**this way inevitably shut out from any sight of God and of His**

**salvation.**

**One of the most effectual ways of conquering the habit is to make a**

**rule that, whenever we are tempted to examine ourselves, we will always**

**at once begin to examine the Lord instead, and will let thoughts of His**

**love and His all-sufficiency sweep out all thoughts of our own**

**unworthiness or our own helplessness.**

**I have been trying in this book to set the Lord before our eyes in all**

**the beauty of His character and His ways in the hope that the sight**

**will be so ravishing as to take our eyes off everything else. But no**

**revelation of God will be of any use if we will not look at it, but**

**will persist in turning our backs on what has been revealed, and in**

**gazing instead at our own inward experiences. For again I must repeat**

**that we cannot see self and see the Lord at the same time, and that**

**while we are examining self we cannot be looking at Him.**

**Fenelon says concerning self-examination: "There is something very**

**hidden and very deceptive in the suffering it causes; for while you**

**seem to yourself to be wholly occupied with the glory of God, in your**

**inmost soul it is self alone that occasions all your trouble. You are**

**indeed desirous that God should be glorified, but you wish it should**

**take place by means of your perfection, and you thus cherish the**

**sentiments of self-love. It is simply a refined pretext for dwelling in**

**self ... It is a sort of infidelity to simple faith when we desire to**

**be continually assured that we are doing well. It is, in fact, a desire**

**to know what we are doing, which we shall never know, and of which it**

**is the will of God we should be ignorant. It is trifling by the way, in**

**order to reason about the way. The safest and shortest course is to**

**renounce, forget, and abandon self, and, through faithfulness to God,**

**to think no more of it. This is the whole of religion--to get out of**

**self and self-love in order to get into God."**

**What we must do, therefore, is to shut the door definitely and**

**resolutely at once and forever upon self, and all of self's**

**experiences, whether they be good or bad; and to say with the psalmist:**

**"I have set the Lord [not self] always before me; because he is at my**

**right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my**

**glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope."**

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**Chapter 11**

**Things That Cannot Be Shaken**

**"And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things**

**that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which**

**cannot be shaken may remain."**

**After all we have been considering of the unfathomable love and care of**

**God, it might seem to those, who do not understand the deepest ways of**

**love, that no trials or hardness could ever come into the lives of His**

**children. But if we look deeply into the matter, we shall see that**

**often love itself must needs bring the hardness. "Whom the Lord loveth**

**he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure**

**chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom**

**the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof**

**all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."**

**If love sees those it loves going wrong, it must, because of its very**

**love, do what it can to save them; and the love that fails to do this**

**is only selfishness. Therefore, just because of His unfathomable love,**

**the God of love, when He sees His children resting their souls on**

**things that can be shaken, must necessarily remove those things from**

**their lives in order that they may be driven to rest only on the things**

**that cannot be shaken; and this process of removing is sometimes very**

**hard.**

**We will all acknowledge, I think, that if our souls are to rest in**

**peace and comfort, it can only be on unshakable foundations. It is no**

**more possible for the soul to be comfortable when it is trying to rest**

**on "things that can be shaken," than it is for the body. No one can**

**rest comfortably in a shaking bed, or sit in comfort on a rickety**

**chair.**

**Foundations to be reliable must always be unshakable. The house of the**

**foolish man, which is built on the sand, may present a very fine**

**appearance in clear and sunshiny weather; but when storms arise, and**

**the winds blow, and floods come that house will fall, and great will be**

**the fall of it. The wise man's house, on the contrary, which is built**

**on the rock, is able to withstand all the stress of the storm, and**

**remains unshaken through winds and floods, for it is "founded on the**

**rock."**

**It is very possible in the Christian life to build one's spiritual**

**house on such insecure foundations, that when storms beat upon it, the**

**ruin of that house is great. Many a religious experience that has**

**seemed fair enough when all was going well in life has tottered and**

**fallen when trials have come, because its foundations have been**

**insecure. It is therefore of vital importance to each one of us to see**

**to it that our religious life is built upon "things that cannot be**

**shaken."**

**Of course the immediate thought that will come to every mind is that it**

**must be "built upon the rock Christ Jesus." This is true; but the great**

**point is what is meant by that expression. It is one of those religious**

**phrases that is often used conventionally with no definite or real**

**meaning attached to it. Conventionally we believe that Christ is the**

**only Rock upon which to build, but practically, though perhaps**

**unconsciously, we believe that in order to have a rock upon which it**

**will be really safe to build, many other things must be added to**

**Christ. We think, for instance, that the right frames and feelings must**

**be added, or the right doctrines or dogmas, or whatever else may seem**

**to each one of us to constitute the necessary degree of security. And**

**if we were only perfectly honest with ourselves, I suspect we should**

**often find that our dependence was almost wholly upon these additions**

**of our own; and that Christ Himself, as our rock of dependence, was of**

**altogether secondary importance.**

**What we ought to mean when we talk of building upon the Rock Christ**

**Jesus is what I am trying all through this book to make plain, and that**

**is that the Lord is enough for our salvation, just the Lord only**

**without any additions of our own, the Lord Himself, as He is in His own**

**intrinsic character, our Creator and Redeemer, and our all-sufficient**

**portion.**

**The "foundation of God standeth sure," and it is the only foundation**

**that does. Therefore, we need to be "shaken" from off every other**

**foundation in order that we may be forced to rest on the foundation of**

**God alone. And this explains the necessity for those "shakings" through**

**which so many Christians seem called to pass. The Lord sees that they**

**are building their spiritual houses on flimsy foundations, which will**

**not be able to withstand the "vehement beating" of the storms of life;**

**and not in anger but in tenderest love, He shakes our earth and our**

**heaven until all that "can be shaken" is removed, and only those**

**"things which cannot be shaken" are left behind.**

**The apostle tells us that the things that are shaken are the "things**

**that are made"; that is, the things that are manufactured by our own**

**efforts, feelings that we get up, doctrines that we elaborate, good**

**works that we perform. It is not that these things are bad things in**

**themselves. It is only when the soul begins to rest on them instead of**

**upon the Lord that He is compelled to "shake" us from off them. And**

**this shaking applies, we are told, "not to the earth only, but also to**

**Heaven." This means, I am sure, that it is possible to have "things**

**that are made" even in religious matters.**

**How much of the so-called religiousness of many Christians consists of**

**these "things that are made," I cannot say; but I sometimes think the**

**great overturnings and tossings in matters of faith, which so distress**

**Christians in these times, may be only the necessary shaking of the**

**"things that are made," in order that only that which "cannot be**

**shaken" may remain.**

**There are times, it may be, in our religious lives, when our experience**

**seems to us as settled and immovable as the roots of the everlasting**

**mountains. But there comes an upheaval, and all our foundations are**

**shaken and thrown down, and we are ready to despair and to question**

**whether we can be Christians at all. Sometimes it is an upheaval in our**

**outward circumstances, and sometimes it is in our inward experience. If**

**people have rested on their good words and their faithful service, the**

**Lord is often obliged to take away all power for work or else all**

**opportunity in order that the soul may be driven from its false resting**

**place and forced to rest in the Lord alone. Sometimes the dependence is**

**upon good feelings or pious emotions, and the soul has to be deprived**

**of these before it can learn to depend only upon God. Sometimes it is**

**upon "sound doctrine" that the dependence is placed, and the man feels**

**himself to be occupying an invulnerable position, because his views are**

**so correct, and his doctrines are so orthodox; and then the Lord is**

**obliged to shake his doctrines, and to plunge him, it may be, into**

**confusion and darkness as to his views.**

**It was at just such a moment as this that my own soul caught its first**

**real sight of God; and what had seemed certain spiritual ruin and**

**defeat was turned into the most triumphant victory.**

**Or it may be that the upheaval comes in our outward circumstances.**

**Everything has seemed so firmly established in prosperity that no dream**

**of disaster disturbs us. Our reputation is assured, our work has**

**prospered, our efforts have all been successful beyond our hopes, and**

**our soul is at ease; and the need for God is in danger of becoming far**

**off and vague. And then the Lord is obliged to put an end to it all,**

**and our prosperity crumbles around us like a house built on sands, and**

**we are tempted to think He is angry with us. But in very truth it is**

**not anger, but tenderest love. His very love it is that compels Him to**

**take away the outward prosperity that is keeping our souls from**

**entering into the interior spiritual kingdom for which we long. When**

**the fig tree ceases to blossom, and there is not fruit in the vines;**

**when the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no**

**meat; when the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be**

**no herd in the stalls, then, and often not until then, will our souls**

**learn to rejoice in the Lord only, and to joy in the God of our**

**salvation.**

**Paul declared that he counted all things but loss that he might win**

**Christ; and when we learn to say the same, the peace and joy that the**

**Gospel promises become our permanent possession.**

**"What iniquity," asks the Lord of the children of Israel, "have your**

**fathers found in me that they are gone far from me and have walked**

**after vanity? For my people have committed two evils; they have**

**forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out**

**cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Like the Israelites,**

**we too forsake the fountain of living waters, and try to hew out for**

**ourselves cisterns of our own devising. We seek to slake our thirst**

**with our own experiences or our own activities, and then wonder that we**

**still thirst. And it is to save us from perishing for want of water**

**that the Lord finds it necessary to destroy our broken cisterns; since**

**only so can we be forced to drink from the fountain of living waters.**

**We are told that if we "trust in vanity," vanity shall be our**

**recompense; and many a time have we found this to be true. Have you**

**ever crossed a dangerous swamp abounding in quicksands, where every**

**step was a risk, and where firm-looking hillocks continually deceived**

**you into a false dependence, causing you to sink in the mire and water**

**concealed beneath their deceptive appearances? If you have, you will be**

**able to understand what it means to "trust in vanity," and you will**

**appreciate the blessedness of any dispensation that shall discover to**

**you the rottenness of your false dependencies, and shall drive you to**

**trust in that which is safe and permanent. When our feet are walking on**

**"miry clay," we can have nothing but welcome for the divine Guide who**

**shall bring us out from the clay, and shall "set our feet upon a rock,"**

**and "establish our goings," even though the ways in which He calls us**

**to walk may seem narrow and hard.**

**The prophet Jeremiah, when lamenting the sins of his people, says: "We**

**have made lies our refuge, and under falsehoods have we hid ourselves,"**

**and he adds that the Lord had declared He would sweep away the refuge**

**of lies, and would cause the waters to overflow the hiding place. It**

**might look, as far as the outward seeming goes, as though it was God's**

**wrath that did this, and many a frightened Christian thinks it is; but**

**His wrath is only against the refuges of lies, not against us, and love**

**could do no less than destroy these refuges in order that we may be**

**delivered.**

**A dear old friend of mine, who was very much interested in my spiritual**

**welfare, gave me a little book called, The Seventeen False Rests of the**

**Soul, evidently feeling that I was in danger of settling down upon one**

**or another of these false rests. The book set forth in quaint old**

**language the idea that the soul was continually tempted to sit down**

**upon some falsity, as though it were a final resting place, and that**

**God was continually obliged to "unbottom" all such false resting**

**places, as though one should unbottom a chair and let the sitter fall**

**through. All these seventeen false rests were described, and it was**

**shown how the soul, being "unbottomed" off each one successively,**

**settled down at last upon the only true rest in God. This "unbottoming"**

**is only another word for the "shakings" and "emptyings" of which I have**

**been writing. It is always a painful process, and often a most**

**discouraging one. Everything seems unstable, and rest seems utterly**

**unattainable. No sooner do we find an experience or a doctrine in which**

**we think we may surely rest, than a great "shaking" comes, and we are**

**forced out again. And this process must continue until all that can be**

**shaken is removed, and only "those things which cannot be shaken"**

**remain.**

**Often the answer to our most fervent prayers for deliverance comes in**

**such a form that it seems as if the "very foundations of the hills**

**moved and were shaken"; and we do not always see at first that it is by**

**means of this very shaking that the deliverance for which we have**

**prayed is to be accomplished, and we are to be brought forth into the**

**"large place" for which we long.**

**The old mystics used to teach what they called "detachment"; meaning**

**the cutting loose of the soul from all that could hold it back from**

**God. This need for "detachment" is the secret of many of our**

**"shakings." We cannot follow the Lord fully so long as we are tied fast**

**to anything else, any more than a boat can sail out into the boundless**

**ocean so long as it is tied fast to the shore.**

**If we could reach the "city which hath sure and steadfast foundations,"**

**we must go out like Abraham from all other cities, and must be detached**

**from every earthly tie. Everything in Abraham's life that could be**

**shaken was shaken. He was, as it were, emptied from vessel to vessel,**

**here today and gone tomorrow; all his resting places were disturbed,**

**and no settlement or comfort anywhere. We, like Abraham, are looking**

**for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and**

**therefore we too shall need to be emptied from vessel to vessel. But we**

**do not realize this, and when the overturnings and shakings come, we**

**are in despair and think we shall never reach the city that hath**

**foundations at all. But it is these very shakings that make it possible**

**for us to reach it. The psalmist had learned this, and after all the**

**shakings and emptying of his eventful life, he cried: "My soul, wait**

**thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock**

**and my salvation: he is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my**

**salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength and my refuge is in**

**God."**

**At last God was everything to him; and then he found that God was**

**enough.**

**And it is the same with us. When everything in our lives and experience**

**is shaken that can be shaken, and only that which cannot be shaken**

**remains, we are brought to see that God only is our rock and our**

**foundation, and we learn to have our expectation from Him alone.**

**"Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the**

**mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters**

**thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the**

**swelling thereof ... God is in the midst of her, she shall not be**

**moved. God shall help her, and that right early." "Shall not be**

**moved"--what an inspiring declaration! Can it be possible that we, who**

**are so easily moved by the things of earth, can arrive at a place where**

**nothing can upset our temper or disturb our calm? Yes, it is possible;**

**and the apostle Paul knew it. When he was on his way to Jerusalem,**

**where he foresaw that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him, he could say**

**triumphantly, "But none of these things move me." Everything in Paul's**

**life and experience that could be shaken had been shaken, and he no**

**longer counted his life, or any of life's possessions, dear unto him.**

**And we, if we will but let God have His way with us, may come to the**

**same place so that neither the fret and fear of the little things of**

**life, nor its great and heavy trials, can have power to move us from**

**the peace that passeth all understanding, which is declared to be the**

**portion of those who have learned to rest only on God.**

**In that wonderful Revelation made to John in the "isle that is called**

**Patmos," where the Spirit tells to the churches what awaits those who**

**overcome, we have a statement that expresses in striking terms just**

**what I mean. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of**

**my God; and he shall go no more out." To be as immovable as a pillar in**

**the house of our God is an end for which one would gladly endure all**

**the "shakings" and "unbottomings" that may be necessary to bring us**

**there!**

**"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have**

**grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly**

**fear; for our God is a consuming fire." A great many people are afraid**

**of the consuming fire of God, but that is only because they do not**

**understand what it is. It is the fire of God's love, that must in the**

**very nature of things consume everything that can harm His people; and**

**if our hearts are set on being what the love of God would have us be,**

**His fire is something we shall not be afraid of, but shall warmly**

**welcome.**

**Implacable is love.**

**Foes may be bought or teased**

**From their malign intent;**

**But he goes unappeased,**

**Who is on kindness bent.**

**Let us thank God, then, that He is "on kindness bent" toward us, and**

**that the consuming fire of His love will not cease to burn until it has**

**refined us as silver is refined. For the promise is that He shall sit**

**as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He shall purge us as gold and**

**silver are purged in order that we may offer unto Him an offering in**

**righteousness; and He gives us this inspiring assurance, that if we**

**will but submit to this purifying process, we shall become "pleasant**

**unto the Lord," and all nations shall call us blessed, "for ye shall be**

**a delightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts."**

**To be "pleasant" and delightsome" to the Lord may seem to us**

**impossible, when we look at our shortcomings and our unworthiness. But**

**when we think of this lovely, consuming fire of God's love, we can be**

**of good heart and take courage, for He will not fail nor be discouraged**

**until all our dross and reprobate silver is burned up, and we ourselves**

**come forth in His likeness and are conformed to His image.**

**Our souls long for the "kingdom which cannot be moved," and He "who is**

**on kindness bent," will, if we will let Him, shake everything in our**

**lives that can be shaken, and will unbottom us off every false rest,**

**until only that which cannot be shaken shall remain.**

**One of the most impressive sermons I ever heard was preached by a**

**sweet-faced old Quaker lady, who rose in the stillness and said,**

**"Yesterday Sister Tabitha broke all to pieces my best china teapot, but**

**the Lord, whom I trust, kept my soul in perfect peace, and enabled me**

**not to utter a single word of reproach." That was all; the sermon**

**ended; but into every heart there entered a sense of what it would mean**

**to be kept in the immovable kingdom of the love of God.**

**And this kingdom may be our home, if we will but submit to the shakings**

**of God, and will learn to rest only and always on Him.**

**May He hasten the day for each one of us!**

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**Chapter 12**

**A Word To The Wavering Ones**

**"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is**

**like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not**

**that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."**

**It would be difficult to find any one thing that produces more**

**discomfort in the religious life than does a wavering faith. The figure**

**given us by the apostle James exactly describes it--"a wave of the sea**

**driven by the wind and tossed." And just as it is impossible for a**

**traveler to reach his destination by advancing one day, and retracing**

**his steps the next, so is it equally impossible for the wavering soul,**

**while it wavers, to reach any place of settled peace.**

**In our last chapter we considered the shakings of God; and it might be**

**thought that our waverings would be akin to His shakings. But God's**

**shakings are caused by His love, and are for our blessing, and always**

**lead to rest and peace; while our waverings are caused by our want of**

**faith, and always lead to discomfort and turmoil.**

**A wavering Christian is a Christian who trusts in the love of God one**

**day and doubts it the next, and who is alternately happy or miserable**

**accordingly. He mounts to the hilltop of joy at one time, only to**

**descend at another time into the valley of despair. He is driven to and**

**fro by every wind of doctrine, is always striving and never attaining,**

**and is a prey to each changing influence, caused by his state of**

**health, or by the influences around him, or even by the state of the**

**weather.**

**You would suppose that even the most ignorant child of God would know**

**without telling that this sort of experience is all wrong, and that to**

**waver in one's faith after such a fashion is one of the things most**

**dishonoring to the Lord, whose truth and faithfulness it so impugns.**

**But as a fact, there are many Christians whose eyes are so blinded in**

**the matter, that they actually think this tendency to waver is a**

**tribute to the humility of their spirits, and who exalt every fresh**

**attack of doubt into a secret and most pious virtue. A wavering**

**Christian will say complacently, "Oh, but I know myself to be so**

**unworthy, that I am sure it is right for me to doubt," and they will**

**imply by their tone of superiority, that their hearer, if truly humble,**

**would doubt also.**

**In fact, I knew one really devoted Christian, whose religious life was**

**one long torment of doubt, who said to me once in solemn earnestness,**

**after I had been urging him to have more faith, "My dear friend, if**

**once I should be so presumptuous as to feel sure that God loved me, I**

**should be certain I was on the direct road to hell." He thought, no**

**doubt, that such an assurance could only arise from a feeling that he**

**was good enough to be worthy of God's love, and that to feel this would**

**be presumption. And in this he would have been right, for to think**

**ourselves good enough to be worthy of God's love would be presumption**

**indeed. But the ground for our assurance is not to come from our own**

**goodness, but from the goodness of God; and while we never can be and**

**never ought to be satisfied with the first, there cannot possibly be**

**any question to one who believes the Bible as to the all-sufficiency of**

**the last.**

**To see the absurdity, not to call it by any harsher name, of the**

**position of doubt taken up by this dear Christian, it is only necessary**

**to consider how it would work with any of our human relations in life.**

**Try to imagine what it would be in the marriage relation, or in the**

**relation of children to a parent, both of which relations are used by**

**the Lord as figures of our relation to Himself. Suppose either wife or**

**husband should have a wavering experience of confidence in the other,**

**one day trusting, and the next day doubting; would this be considered a**

**sign of true humility on the doubter's part, and therefore a thing to**

**be cherished as a virtue? Or, similarly, if children should waver in**

**their confidence toward their earthly parents, as Christians seem to**

**feel at liberty to do with their heavenly Parent, what name could be**

**found severe enough by which to call such unofficial conduct? Of course**

**in earthly relations such wavering might come from the fact that one of**

**the parties concerned was unworthy of confidence, and in this case it**

**could be excused. But in the case of God there could not possibly be**

**any such excuse; although the wavering faith of some of His children**

**may, I am afraid, sometimes lead outsiders to conclude that He cannot**

**be worthy of much confidence, or their faith would be more steadfast.**

**We would shrink in horror from being the cause of any such imputation**

**on the character of God; but I think, if we are honest with ourselves,**

**we will be forced to acknowledge that our wavering faith is calculated**

**to convey just such an impression; and that it really is, therefore, in**

**its essence disloyalty to a trustworthy God, and should be mourned over**

**as a grievous sin. The truth is, although we may not know it, our**

**wavering comes, not from humility, but from a subtle and often**

**unconscious form of pride. True humility accepts the love that is**

**bestowed upon it, and the gifts of that love, with a meek and happy**

**thankfulness, while pride shrinks from accepting gifts and kindnesses,**

**and is afraid to believe in the disinterested goodness of the one who**

**bestows them. Were we truly humble, we would accept God's love with**

**thankful meekness, and, while acknowledging our own unworthiness, would**

**only think of it as enhancing His grace and goodness in choosing us as**

**the recipients of such blessings.**

**A wavering faith is not only disloyal to God, but it is a source of**

**untold misery to ourselves, and cannot in any way advance our spiritual**

**interests, but must always under all circumstances hinder and upset**

**them. The apostle tells us that we are made partakers of Christ if we**

**"hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." To be**

**steadfast is the exact contrary of wavering, and to expect the results**

**of steadfastness as the outcome of wavering is as foolish as it would**

**be to expect to reach the top of a mountain by alternately climbing two**

**steps and sliding back three. And yet many people expect this very**

**thing. They make a "beginning of confidence," and for a little time,**

**while the freshness of it lasts, are full of joy and triumph. Then**

**trials come, and temptations; and doubts begin to intrude; and instead**

**of treating these doubts as enemies to be resisted and driven away,**

**they receive them as friends, and give them entertainment; and sooner**

**or later they begin to waver in their faith and in their allegiance,**

**and from that moment all settled peace is gone. When skies are bright**

**and all goes well with them, their faith revives, and they are happy;**

**but when skies are dark and things go wrong doubts triumph, and they**

**waver again.**

**I was having a conversation with a very eminent clergyman on the**

**possibility of a religious life of abiding peace and rest, and he told**

**me frankly that he did not believe it was possible, and that he thought**

**most Christian experience was like his own. "Now I," he said, "when I**

**want to write my sermons, I get up on the mountaintop by prayer and by**

**climbing. I put my foot first on one promise and then on another, and**

**so, by hard climbing and much praying, I reach the summit, and can**

**begin my sermon. All goes swimmingly for a little while, and then**

**suddenly an interruption comes, some trouble with my children, or some**

**domestic upset in the house, or some quarrel with a neighbor, and down**

**I tumble from the mountaintop, and can only get back again by another**

**wearisome climb. "Sometimes," he said, "I stay on the summit for two or**

**three days, and once in a great while, even for two or three weeks. But**

**as to there being any possibility of being seated in heavenly places in**

**Christ, and abiding there continually, I cannot believe it."**

**I am sure this will describe the experience of many of God's children,**

**who are hungering and thirsting for the peace and rest Christ has**

**promised them, but who seem unable to attain to it for more than a few**

**moments at a time. They may get now and then a faint glimmer of faith,**

**and peace seems to be coming, and then all the old doubts spring up**

**again with tenfold power. "Look at your heart," they say; "see how cold**

**it is, how indifferent. How can you for a moment believe that God can**

**love such a poor, unworthy creature as you are?" And it all sounds so**

**reasonable that they are plunged into darkness again.**

**The whole trouble arises from a want of faith. It seems commonplace to**

**say it, for I have to say it so often, but in the spiritual life it is**

**to us always, always, ALWAYS according to our faith. This is a**

**spiritual law that can neither be neglected nor evaded. It is not an**

**arbitrary law which we might hope could be repealed in our own especial**

**case, but it is inherent in the very nature of things, and is therefore**

**unalterable. And equally inherent in the nature of things is its**

**converse, that if it is to be to us according to our faith, so will it**

**also be to us according to our doubts.**

**The whole root and cause then of our wavering experience is not, as we**

**may have thought, our sins, but is simply and only our doubts. Doubts**

**create an impassable gulf between our souls and the Lord, just as**

**inevitably as they do between us and our earthly friends; and no amount**

**of fervor or earnestness can bridge this gulf in one case any more than**

**in the other. "Let not that man that wavereth think that he shall**

**receive anything of the Lord." This is not because God is angry, and**

**visits His displeasure in this way on the man who doubts, but it is**

**because of that inherent nature of things that makes it impossible for**

**doubt and confidence to exist together, whether in earthly relations or**

**heavenly, and which neither God nor man can alter. "To whom sware he**

**that they should not enter into his rest but to them that believed not.**

**So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief." It was not that**

**God would not allow them to enter in as a punishment for their**

**unbelief, but they simply could not. It was an impossibility. Faith is**

**the only door into the kingdom of Heaven, and there is no other. If we**

**will not go in by that door, we cannot get in at all, for there is no**

**other way.**

**God's salvation is not a purchase to be made, nor wages to be earned,**

**nor a summit to be climbed, nor a task to be accomplished; but it is**

**simply and only a gift to be accepted, and can only be accepted by**

**faith. Faith is a necessary element in the acceptance of any gift,**

**whether earthly or heavenly. My friends may put their gifts upon my**

**table, or even place them in my lap, but unless I believe in their**

**friendliness and honesty of purpose enough to accept these gifts, they**

**can never become really mine.**

**It is plain, therefore, that the Bible is simply announcing, as it**

**always does, the nature of things, when it declares that "according to**

**your faith" it shall be unto you. And the sooner we settle down to this**

**the better. All our wavering comes from the fact that we do not believe**

**in this law. We acknowledge, of course, that it is in the Bible, but we**

**think it cannot really mean what it says, and that there must be some**

**additions made to it; for instance, as "according to our fervency it**

**shall be unto us," or "according to our importunity," or "according to**

**our worthiness." And, if the whole truth were told, we are inclined to**

**think that these additions of ours are, if anything, by far the most**

**important part of the whole matter. As a consequence of this, our**

**attention is mostly directed to getting these matters settled, and we**

**watch our own frames and feelings, and search into our own worthiness**

**or unworthiness with so much assiduity that we overlook almost**

**altogether the one fundamental principle of faith, without which**

**nothing whatever can be done. Moreover, as our disposition and feelings**

**are the most variable things in the universe, and our sense of**

**worthiness or unworthiness changes with our changing feelings, our**

**experience cannot but waver; and the possibility of a steadfast faith**

**recedes farther and farther into the background. We in short make the**

**faithfulness of God, and the truth of His Word, depend upon the state**

**of our feelings.**

**I am very certain that if any of our friends should treat us in this**

**doubting fashion, we would be wounded and indignant beyond measure; and**

**no feeling of unworthiness on their part could excuse them in our eyes**

**for such a wavering of their confidence in us. In fact, we would far**

**rather our friends should even sin against us than doubt us. No form of**

**sinfulness ever hindered the Lord Jesus while on earth from doing His**

**mighty works. The only thing that hindered Him was unbelief. In His own**

**town, and among His own neighbors and friends, where naturally He would**

**have liked to have performed some of His miracles, we are told that,**

**"He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." It was**

**not that He would not, but simply that He could not. And He cannot in**

**our case, any more than in theirs.**

**But I am afraid some of you may think I am making a mistake, and that,**

**in spite of what God has said, the man whose faith wavers can after**

**all, if he is only fervent and earnest enough, receive something from**

**the Lord. That means that you do not believe that God understands the**

**laws of His kingdom as well as you yourself do, and that it is safer to**

**follow your own ideas rather than His Word. And yet you must know that**

**hitherto your doubts have brought you nothing but darkness and misery.**

**Recall the days, and weeks, and even perhaps months and years of a**

**halting, stumbling, uncomfortable, religious life, and ask yourself**

**honestly whereto the cause of it all has not been your wavering faith.**

**If you believe one day that God loves you and is favorable to you, and**

**the next day doubt His love, and fear He is angry with you, does it not**

**stand to reason that you must waver in your experience from joy to**

**misery; and that only a steadfast faith in His love and care could give**

**you an unwavering experience?**

**The one question, therefore, for all whose faith wavers is how to put**

**an end at once and forever to their wavering. And here I am thankful to**

**say that I know of a perfect remedy The only thing you have to do is to**

**give it up. Your wavering is caused by your doubting, and by nothing**

**else. Give up your doubting, and your wavering will stop. Keep on with**

**your doubting, and your wavering will continue. The whole matter is as**

**simple as daylight; and the choice is in your own hands.**

**Perhaps you may think this is an extreme statement, for it has probably**

**never entered your heads that you could give up doubting altogether.**

**But I assert that you can. You can simply refuse to doubt. You can shut**

**the door against every suggestion of doubt that comes, and can by faith**

**declare exactly the opposite. Your doubt says, "God does not forgive my**

**sins." Your faith must say, "He does forgive me; He says He does, and I**

**choose to believe Him. I am His forgiven child." And you must assert**

**this steadfastly, until all your doubts vanish. You have no more right**

**to say that you are of such a doubting nature that you cannot help**

**doubting, than to say you are of such a thieving nature that you cannot**

**help thieving. One is as easily controlled as the other. You must give**

**up your doubting just as you would give up your thieving. You must**

**treat the temptation to doubt exactly as a drunkard must treat the**

**temptation to drink; you must take a pledge against it.**

**The process I believe to be the most effectual is to lay our doubts,**

**just as we lay our other sins, upon God's altar, and make a total**

**surrender of them. We must give up all liberty to doubt, and must**

**consecrate our power of believing to Him, and must trust Him to keep us**

**trusting. We must make our faith in His Word as inevitable and**

**necessary a thing as is our obedience to His will. We must be as loyal**

**to our heavenly Friend as we are to our earthly friends, and must**

**refuse to recognize the possibility of such thing as any questioning or**

**doubting of His love or His faithfulness, or of any wavering in our**

**absolute faith in His Word.**

**Of course temptations to waver will come, and it will sometimes look to**

**us impossible that the Lord can love such disagreeable, unworthy beings**

**as we feel ourselves to be. But we must turn as deaf an ear to these**

**insinuations against the love of God as we would to any insinuations**

**against the love of our dearest friend. The fight to do this may**

**sometimes be very severe, and may even at times seem almost**

**unendurable. But our unchanging declaration must continually be,**

**"though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Our steadfast faith will**

**unfailingly bring us, sooner or later, a glorious victory.**

**Probably it will often seem to us as if it would be a righteous thing,**

**in view of our many shortcomings, and only what a truly humble soul**

**would do, to waver in our faith and to question whether the salvation**

**of the Lord Jesus can be meant for us. But if we at all understand what**

**the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ is, we cannot fail to recognize**

**that all this is only temptation; and that what we must do is to lift**

**up the shield of faith persistently against it; for the shield of faith**

**always does and always will quench every fiery dart of the enemy.**

**The Spirit of God never under any circumstance could suggest a doubt of**

**the love of God. Wherever doubts come from, one thing is certain, they**

**do not come from Heaven. All doubts are from an evil source, and they**

**must always be treated as the suggestions of an enemy. We cannot, it is**

**true, prevent the suggestions of doubt making themselves heard in our**

**hearts, any more than we can prevent our ears from hearing the oaths of**

**wicked men in the streets. But just as we can refuse to approve of or**

**join in the oaths of these men, so can we refuse to pay any attention**

**to these suggestions of doubt. The cases are exactly similar. But while**

**in the case of the oaths, we know without any question that it would be**

**wicked to join in with them, in the case of the doubts we have a**

**lurking feeling that, after all, doubts may have something pious in**

**them, and ought to be encouraged. But I believe one is as displeasing**

**to God as the other.**

**Again I would repeat that the only way to treat the doubts that make**

**you waver is to give them up. An absolute surrender is the only remedy.**

**It is like the drunkard with his drink, half measures are of no manner**

**of use. Total abstinence is the only hope.**

**The most practical way of doing this is not only to make the interior**

**surrender, but to meet, as I have said, each doubt with a flat denial;**

**and to carry the war into the enemy's country, as it were, by an**

**emphatic assertion of faith in direct opposition to the doubt. For**

**instance, if the doubt arises as to whether God can love anyone so**

**sinful and unfaithful as you feel yourself to be, you must at once**

**assert in definite words in your own heart, and if possible aloud to**

**someone, that God does love you; that He says He does, and that His**

**Word is a million times more trustworthy than any of your feelings, no**

**matter how well founded they may seem to you to be. If you cannot find**

**anyone to whom to say this, then write it in a letter, or else say it**

**aloud to yourself and to God. Be very definite about it.**

**If in anything you have had a "beginning of confidence," if you have**

**ever laid hold of any promise or declaration of the Lord's, hold on**

**steadfastly to that promise or declaration without wavering, let come**

**what may. There can be no middle ground. If it was true once, it is**

**true still, for God is unchangeable. The only thing that can deprive**

**you of it is your unbelief. While you believe, you have it. "Whatsoever**

**things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye**

**shall have them."**

**Let nothing shake your faith. Should even sin unhappily overtake you,**

**you must not let it make you doubt. At once, on the discovery of any**

**sin, take I John 1:9 and act on it. "If we confess our sins, he is**

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

**unrighteousness." Confess your sin, therefore, immediately upon the**

**discovery of it, and believe at once that God does forgive it, as He**

**declares, and does again cleanse you from all unrighteousness. No sin,**

**however grievous, can separate us from God for one moment, after it has**

**been treated in this fashion. To allow sin to cause your faith to waver**

**is only to add a new sin to the one already committed. Return at once**

**to God in the way the Bible teaches, and let your faith hold**

**steadfastly to His Word. Believe it, not because you feel it, or see**

**it, but because He says it. Believe it, even when it seems to you that**

**you are believing a lie. Believe it actively and steadfastly, through**

**dark and through light, through ups and through downs, through times of**

**comfort and through times of despair, and I can promise you, without a**

**fear, that your wavering experience will be ended.**

**"Therefore, beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always**

**abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor**

**is not in vain in the Lord." To be "immovable" in one's religious life**

**is the exact opposite of wavering. In the Forty-sixth Psalm we can see**

**what it is. The earth may be removed, and the mountains may be carried**

**into the midst of the sea, our whole universe may seem to be in ruins,**

**but while we trust in the Lord we "shall not be moved."**

**The man who wavers in his faith is upset by the smallest trifles; the**

**man who is steadfast in his faith can look on calmly at the ruin of all**

**his universe.**

**To be thus immovable in one's religious life is a boon most ardently to**

**be desired, and it may be ours if we will only hold the beginning of**

**our confidence steadfast to the end.**

**Faith is sweetest of worships to him who so loves**

**His unbearable splendors in darkness to hide;**

**And to trust in Thy Word, dearest Lord, is true love,**

**For those prayers are most granted which seem most denied.**

**And faith throws her arms around all Thou hast told her,**

**And able to hold as much more, can but grieve;**

**She could hold Thy grand self, Lord! if Thou wouldst reveal it.**

**And love makes her long to have more to believe.**

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**Chapter 13**

**Discouragement**

**"The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."**

**The church of Christ abounds with people who are "discouraged because**

**of the way." Either inwardly or outwardly, and oftentimes both, things**

**look all wrong, and there seems no hope of escape. Their souls faint in**

**them, and their religious lives are full of discomfort and misery.**

**There is nothing that so paralyzes effort as discouragement, and**

**nothing that more continually and successfully invites defeat. The**

**secret of failure or success in any matter lies far more in the soul's**

**interior attitude than in any other cause or causes. It is a law of our**

**being, which is only now beginning to be discovered, that the inward**

**man counts for far more in every conflict than anything the outward man**

**do or may possess.**

**And nowhere is this truer than in the spiritual life. Again I must**

**repeat what I find it necessary to say so continually, that the Bible**

**declares from beginning to end that faith is the law of the spiritual**

**life, and that according to our faith it always shall be and always**

**will be unto us. Then, since faith and discouragement cannot, in the**

**very nature of things, exist together, it is perfectly manifest that**

**discouragement must be an absolute barrier to faith. And that where**

**discouragement rules, the converse to the law of faith must rule also,**

**and it shall be to us, not according to our faith, but according to our**

**discouragement.**

**In fact, just as courage is faith in good, so discouragement is faith**

**in evil; and, while courage opens the door to good, discouragement**

**opens it to evil.**

**An allegory that I heard very early in my Christian life has always**

**remained in my memory as one of those warnings to motorists that we**

**often see at the top of hills on country roads, "This hill is**

**dangerous"; and it has many a time warned me away from the dangerous**

**descent of discouragement.**

**The allegory declared that once upon a time Satan, who desired to**

**entrap a devoted Christian worker, allied a council of his helpers to**

**decide on the best way of doing it, and to ask for volunteers. After**

**the case had been explained, an imp offered himself to do the work.**

**"How will you do it?" asked Satan.**

**"Oh," replied the imp, "I will paint to him the delights and pleasures**

**of a life of sin in such glowing colors that he will be eager to enter**

**upon it."**

**"That will not do," said Satan, shaking his head. "The man has tried**

**sin, and he knows better. He knows it leads to misery and ruin, and he**

**will not listen to you."**

**Then another imp offered himself, and again Satan asked, "What will you**

**do to win the man over?"**

**"I will picture to him the trials and the self-denials of a righteous**

**life, and will make him eager to escape from them."**

**"Ah, that will not do either," said Satan, "for he has tried**

**righteousness, and he knows that its paths are paths of peace and**

**happiness."**

**Then a third imp started up and declared that he was sure he could**

**bring the man over.**

**"Why, what will you do," asked Satan, "that you are so sure?"**

**"I will discourage his soul," replied the imp triumphantly.**

**"That will do, that will do," exclaimed Satan, "you will be successful.**

**Go and bring back your victim."**

**An old Quaker has this saying, "All discouragement is from the Devil";**

**and I believe he stated a far deeper and more universal truth than we**

**have yet fully understood. Discouragement cannot have its source in**

**God. The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is a religion of faith, of**

**good cheer, of courage, of hope that maketh not ashamed. "Be**

**discouraged," says our lower nature, "for the world is a place of**

**temptation and sin." "Be of good cheer," says Christ, "for I have**

**overcome the world." There cannot possibly be any room for**

**discouragement in a world which Christ has overcome.**

**We must settle it then, once for all, that discouragement comes from an**

**evil source, only and always. I know this is not the general idea, at**

**least in the spiritual region of things. In temporal things, perhaps,**

**we have more or less learned that discouragement is foolish, and even**

**wrong; but, when it comes to spiritual things, we are apt to reverse**

**the order, and make that commendable in one case, which is**

**reprehensible in the other; and we even succeed in persuading ourselves**

**that to be discouraged is a very pious state of mind, and an evidence**

**of true humility.**

**The causes for our discouragement seem so legitimate, that to be**

**discouraged seems to our short-sightedness the only right and proper**

**state of mind to cultivate. The first and perhaps the most common of**

**these causes is the fact of our own incapacity. It is right for us to**

**be cast down, we think, because we know ourselves to be such poor,**

**miserable, good-for-nothing creatures. It would be presumption, in the**

**face of such incapacity, to be anything but discouraged.**

**Moses is an illustration of this. The Lord had called him to lead the**

**children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and Moses, looking at this**

**own natural infirmities and weaknesses, was discouraged, and tried to**

**excuse himself: "I am not eloquent, but I am slow of speech and of a**

**slow tongue. They will not believe me nor hearken unto my voice."**

**Naturally, one would think that Moses had plenty of cause for**

**discouragement, and for discouragement very similar to that which is**

**likely to assail us, when, because of our distrust in our own**

**eloquence, or our own power to convince those to whom we are to be**

**sent, we shrink from the work to which the Lord may be calling us. But**

**notice how the Lord answered Moses, for in the same way I am convinced**

**does He answer us. He did not do, what no doubt Moses would have liked**

**best, try to convince him that he really was eloquent, or that his**

**tongue was not slow of speech. He passed all this by as being of no**

**account whatever, and simply called attention to the fact that, since**

**He had made man's mouth and would Himself be with the mouth He had**

**made, there could not possibly be any cause for discouragement, even if**

**Moses did have all the infirmities of speech of which he had**

**complained. "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or**

**who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I,**

**the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach**

**thee what thou shalt say."**

**When the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah telling him that He had**

**organized him to be a prophet to the nations, Jeremiah felt himself to**

**be entirely unequal to such a work, and said: "Ah, Lord God, behold, I**

**cannot speak, for I am a child." But the Lord answered: "Say not, I am**

**a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatever**

**I say to thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am**

**with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord."**

**Gideon is another illustration. The Lord had called him to undertake**

**the deliverance of His people from the oppression of the Midianites,**

**and had said to him: "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel**

**from the hands of the Midianites: have I not sent thee?" This ought to**

**have been enough for Gideon, but he was a poor unknown man, of no**

**family or position, and no apparent fitness for such a great mission;**

**and, looking at himself and his own deficiencies, he naturally became**

**discouraged, and said: "Wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my**

**family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."**

**Other men, he felt, who had power and influence, might perhaps**

**accomplish this great work, but not one so poor and insignificant as**

**himself. How familiar this sort of talk must sound to the victims of**

**discouragement among my readers, and how sensible and reasonable it**

**seems! But what did the Lord think of it? "And the Lord said unto him,**

**Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one**

**man"--simply and only the promise, "Surely I will be with thee." Not**

**one word of encouragement did He give Gideon, nor does He give us as to**

**our own capacities or fitness for the work required, but merely the**

**bare statement of the fact of being sufficient for all possible needs,**

**"I will be with thee." To all words of discouragement in the Bible this**

**is the invariable answer, "I will be with thee"; and it is an answer**

**that precludes all possibility of argument or of any further**

**discouragement. I thy Creator and thy Redeemer, I thy strength and thy**

**wisdom, I thy omnipresent and omniscient God, I will be with thee, and**

**will protect thee through everything; no enemy shall hurt thee, no**

**strife of tongues shall disturb thee; My presence shall be thy safety**

**and thy sure defense.**

**One would think that in the face of such assertions as these not even**

**the most fainthearted among us could find any loophole for**

**discouragement. But discouragement comes in many subtle forms, and our**

**spiritual enemies attack us in many disguises. Our own especial make-up**

**or temperament is one of the most common and insidious of our enemies.**

**Other people, who are made differently, can be cheerful and courageous,**

**we think, but it is right that we should be discouraged when we see the**

**sort of people we are, how foolish, how helpless, how unfit to grapple**

**with any enemies! And there would indeed be ample cause for**

**discouragement if we were to be called upon to fight our battles**

**ourselves. We would be right in thinking we could not do it. But if the**

**Lord is to fight them for us, it puts an entirely different complexion**

**on the matter, and our want of ability to fight becomes an advantage**

**instead of a disadvantage. We can only be strong in Him when we are**

**weak in ourselves, and our weakness, therefore, is in reality our**

**greatest strength.**

**The children of Israel can give us a warning lesson here. After the**

**Lord had delivered them out of Egypt, and had brought them to the**

**borders of the promised land, Moses urged them to go up and possess it.**

**"Behold," he said, "the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee; go**

**up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee;**

**fear not, neither be discouraged." But the circumstances were so**

**discouraging, and they felt themselves to be so helpless, that they**

**could not believe God would really do all He had said; and they**

**murmured in their tents, and declared that it must be because the Lord**

**hated them that He had brought them out of Egypt in order to deliver**

**them into the hands of their enemies. "And they said, Whither shall we**

**go up? Our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is**

**greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to**

**heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there."**

**When we read the report of the spies we cannot be surprised at their**

**discouragement; and we can even believe they would have felt that**

**courage under such circumstances would be only foolhardiness. "The land**

**through which we have gone to search it," the spies declared, "is a**

**land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof: and all the men that we**

**saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the**

**sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as**

**grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." Nothing could have seemed**

**humbler than for them to look upon themselves as poor, good-for-nothing**

**grasshoppers; and true humility would have seemed to teach that it**

**would be the height of presumption for grasshoppers to try to conquer**

**giants. We also often feel ourselves to be but grasshoppers in the face**

**of the giants of temptation and trouble that assail us, and we think**

**ourselves justified in being discouraged. But the question is not,**

**whether we are grasshoppers, but whether God is; for it is not we who**

**have to fight these giants, but God.**

**In vain, Moses reminded the Israelites of this. In vain he assured them**

**that they had no need to be afraid of even the sons of the Anakims, for**

**the Lord their God would fight for them. He even reminded them of past**

**deliverances, and asked them if they did not remember how that "in the**

**wilderness the Lord thy God bear thee as a man doth bear his son in all**

**the way that ye went"; but they were still too discouraged to believe.**

**And the result was that not one of that "evil generation" was allowed**

**to see the Promised Land, except only Caleb and Joshua, who had**

**steadfastly believed that God could and would lead them in.**

**Such are the fruits of giving way to discouragement, and such is the**

**reward of a steadfast faith.**

**The apostle in commenting on this story in Hebrews says: "And to whom**

**sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that**

**believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of**

**unbelief."**

**Is there no parallel in all this to our case? Do we not look at our**

**weakness instead of looking at the Lord's strength; and have we not**

**sometimes become so discouraged as to sink into such "anguish of**

**spirit," that we cannot even hearken to the Lord's own declarations**

**that He will fight for us and will give us the victory? Our souls long**

**to enter into the rest the Lord has promised; but giants and cities**

**great and walled up to Heaven seem to stand in our pathway, and we are**

**afraid to believe. So we too, like the Israelites, cannot enter in**

**because of unbelief.**

**How different it would be if we only had faith enough to say with the**

**psalmist: "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not**

**fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be**

**confident...For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his**

**pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me. He shall**

**set me up upon a rock." How joyfully and triumphantly would we be able**

**to enter into rest, if this were our language!**

**Another very subtle cause for discouragement is to be found in what is**

**called the fear of man. There seems to exist in this world a company of**

**beings called "they" who lord it over life with an iron hand of**

**control. What will "they" say? What will "they" think? are among the**

**most frequent questions that assail the timid soul when it seeks to**

**work for the Lord. At every turn this omnipotent and ubiquitous "they"**

**stands in our way to discourage us and make us afraid. This form of**

**discouragement is apt to come under the subtle disguise of a due**

**consideration for the opinion of others; but it is especially**

**dangerous, because it exalts this "they" into the place of God, and**

**esteems "their" opinions above His promises. The only remedy here, as**

**in all other forms of discouragement, is simply the reiteration of the**

**fact that God is with us. "Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with**

**thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." "For he hath said, I will never**

**leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, Thy Lord is my**

**helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." How can any**

**heart, however timid, dare to indulge in discouragement in the face of**

**such assertions as these?**

**There is, however, one sort of discouragement that is very common, and**

**that seems as if it must be right, even though in all other cases it**

**may be wrong, and that is the discouragement that arises from our own**

**failures. It was from this sort of discouragement that the children of**

**Israel suffered after their defeat at Ai. They had "committed a**

**trespass in the accursed thing," and "therefore they could not stand**

**before their enemies"; and so great was their discouragement that it is**

**said, "wherefore the hearts of the people melted and became as water,"**

**and "Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face**

**before the ark of the Lord, until the eventide, he and all the elders**

**of Israel, and put dust upon their heads." When God's own people "turn**

**their backs before their enemies" one might well think they ought**

**indeed to "lie on their faces," and "put dust on their heads," because**

**of the dishonor they have brought upon His great name. Discouragement**

**and despair would seem the only proper and safe condition after such**

**failures. But evidently the Lord thought otherwise, for He said to**

**Joshua, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou upon thy face?" The proper**

**thing to do after a failure is not to abandon ourselves to utter**

**discouragement, humble as this may appear; but at once to face the**

**evil, and get rid of it, and afresh and immediately to consecrate**

**ourselves again to the Lord. "Up, sanctify yourselves," is always God's**

**command. "Lie down and be discouraged" is always our temptation.**

**But you may ask whether a sense of sin produced by the convictions of**

**the Holy Spirit ought not to cause discouragement. If I see myself to**

**be a sinner, how can I help being discouraged? To this I answer that**

**the Holy Spirit does not convict us of sin in order to discourage us,**

**but to encourage us. His work is to show us our sin, not that we may**

**lie down in despair under its power, but that we may get rid of it. A**

**good mother points out the faults of her children for the purpose of**

**helping them correct those faults; and the convictions of the Holy**

**Spirit are in truth one of our greatest privileges, if we only had the**

**sense to see it; for they mean, not that we are to give up in**

**discouragement, but that we are to be encouraged to believe that**

**deliverance is coming.**

**The good housewife discovers the stains on her table linen, not in**

**order that she may have it thrown aside as no longer fit for use, but**

**in order that she may have it cleansed for future use; and, if she has**

**a good laundress, she will not be discouraged by the worst of stains.**

**Surely then when God says to us, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they**

**shall be as white as snow," it is pure unbelief on our part to allow**

**ourselves to be discouraged at even the worst of our failures, for**

**God's "washing of regeneration" must be at least as effectual as the**

**washing of any human laundress could possibly be.**

**Fenelon says concerning this: "It is of great importance to guard**

**against discouragement on account of our faults. Discouragement is not**

**a fruit of humility, but of pride, and nothing can be worse. It springs**

**from a secret love of our own excellence. We are hurt at feeling what**

**we are. If we become discouraged we are the more enfeebled, and from**

**our reflections on our own imperfections, a chagrin arises that is**

**often worse than the imperfection itself. Poor nature longs from**

**self-love to behold itself perfect; it is vexed that it is not so, it**

**is impatient, haughty, and out of temper with itself and with everybody**

**else. Sad state; as though the work of God could be accomplished by our**

**ill-humor. As though the peace of God could be attained by our interior**

**restlessness."**

**Discouragement, from whatever source it may come, produces many sad**

**results. One of its very worst is that it leads people to "murmur," and**

**to "speak against God." When the children of Israel were "discouraged**

**because of the way," we are told that they "spake against God," and**

**asked all sorts of God-dishonoring questions. And I believe, if we**

**could examine the causes of the rebelling and murmuring thoughts that**

**sometimes beset us, we could find that they always begin in**

**discouragement. The truth is that discouragement is really, in its**

**essence, a "speaking against God," for it necessarily implies some sort**

**of a failure on His part to come up to that which His promises have led**

**us to expect of Him. The psalmist recognizes this, and says concerning**

**the discouraging questions His people asked in the days of their**

**wilderness wandering, "Yes, they spake against God'; they said, Can God**

**furnish a table in the wilderness?'" It appears, therefore, that even**

**our questions as to God's power or willingness to help us, which**

**perhaps seem to us so reasonable and even so humble, are really a**

**"speaking against God," and are displeasing to Him, because they reveal**

**the sad fact that we "believe not in him, and trust not in his**

**salvation."**

**Another grievous quality in discouragement is its contagiousness.**

**Nothing is more catching than discouragement. When the spies sent out**

**by Moses brought up, as we have seen, and "evil report of the promised**

**land," and told of the giants there, they so "discouraged the hearts of**

**their brethren," that the people "lifted up their voices and cried,"**

**and utterly refused to go into the very land which the Lord had given**

**them, and which they had started out to possess.**

**The "evil report" that so many Christians bring of their failures and**

**their disappointments in the Christian life is one of the most**

**discouraging things in our intercourse with one another. The hearts of**

**many young Christians are, I believe, far too often thus discouraged by**

**their older brethren, who have but little idea of the harm they are**

**doing by their doleful accounts of the trials of the way.**

**I can never look back without shame to a time in my own life when I**

**"discouraged the heart" of a young Christian friend, by the "evil**

**report" I gave her of the "giants" of doubt and difficulty I had met**

**with in my Christian pathway. And afterward, when a stronger faith in**

**God had delivered me from all fear of these giants, I found that my**

**former evil report had so effectually "discouraged her heart" that it**

**was a long time before I could induce her to hearken to the good report**

**I had then to bring.**

**So important did the Lord feel it to be that no one should discourage**

**the heart of another that when Moses was giving to the Israelites God's**

**laws concerning their methods of warfare, he said: "And the officers**

**shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is**

**there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his**

**house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart."**

**Discouraged people, if they must be discouraged, ought at least to keep**

**their discouragements to themselves, hidden away in the privacy of**

**their own bosoms lest they should discourage the hearts of their**

**brethren. We know from experience that courage is contagious, and that**

**one really brave soul in moments of danger can save a crowd from a**

**panic. But we too often fail to remember that the converse of this is**

**true, and that one fainthearted man or woman can infect a whole crowd**

**with fear. We consequently think nothing of expressing with the utmost**

**freedom the foolish and wicked discouragements that are paralyzing all**

**our own courage. We even sometimes, strange to say, sing our**

**discouragements in our hymns at church or in prayer meeting.**

**Where is the blessedness I knew**

**When first I saw the Lord?**

**Where is that soul-refreshing view**

**Of Jesus and His Word?**

**What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,**

**How sweet their memory still;**

**But now I find an aching void,**

**The world can never fill.**

**Or this:**

**And shall we then forever live**

**At this poor dying rate,**

**Our love so faint, so cold to thee,**

**And Thine to us so great?**

**In vain we tune our formal songs,**

**In vain we strive to rise;**

**Hosannas languish on our tongues,**

**And our devotion dies.**

**To sing such hymns seems to me the greatest travesty on the worship of**

**God that could well be conceived of. If there are "aching voids" in our**

**experience, if our "love is cold and faint," and if we are living at a**

**"poor, dying rate," at least let us keep it to ourselves. Because**

**"hosannas languish on our tongues" is no reason why complainings and**

**murmurings should be exalted into their place. Surely we cannot think**

**it can be pleasing to God to hear them. What would we think of wives**

**who should meet together to sing such things about their relation to**

**their husbands? I do not believe they would be tolerated in society a**

**single day.**

**If the church of Christ would only expurgate all the hymns of**

**discouragement from its hymn books, and would allow none but hymns of**

**courage and good cheer to be sung by its members, I believe the faith**

**of Christians would go up with a mighty bound. "Be of good cheer" is**

**the command of the Lord for His disciples, always and under all**

**circumstances; and He founded this command on the tremendous fact that**

**He had overcome the world, and that therefore there was nothing left**

**for us to be discouraged about. As I have said before, if we only**

**understood what it means that Christ has overcome the world, I believe**

**we would be aghast at the very idea of any one of His followers ever**

**being discouraged again.**

**If you had been an Israelite in those days, which would you rather have**

**been, dear reader, the spies who brought an evil report of the land,**

**and so discouraged the hearts of their brethren as to bring upon them**

**the dreary forty years of wilderness wandering, or Caleb and Joshua,**

**who "stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once**

**and possess the land; for we are well able to overcome it"?**

**Which will you be now?**

**In the divine review of this episode, Moses spoke of Caleb as one who**

**had "wholly followed" the Lord; and this "wholly following" consisted**

**simply and only in the fact that Caleb had given his brethren a good**

**report of land, and, when his colleagues had made the heart of the**

**people to melt by their evil report, had encouraged them to go up and**

**possess it.**

**I hardly think that this is the general interpretation of what "wholly**

**following" means; and I fear that many otherwise really devoted**

**Christians fail in this essential point and seem to make it almost the**

**principal mission of their lives to discourage the hearts of their**

**brethren by the doleful and despairing reports they bring of the**

**difficulties and dangers of the way.**

**How different it would be if discouragement were looked upon in its**

**true light as a "speaking against God," and only encouraging words were**

**permitted among Christians and encouraging reports heard! How many**

**times would the children of Israel have failed in conquering their**

**enemies had there been no men of faith among them to encourage and**

**cheer them? And, on the other hand, who can tell how many spiritual**

**defeats and disasters your discouragements, dear reader, may have**

**brought about in your own life, and in the lives of those around you?**

**In one of Isaiah's prophecies which begins with, "Comfort ye, comfort**

**ye my people, saith your God," he gives us a wonderful description of**

**God as the ground of comfort, and then sets forth what His people ought**

**to be; and says in the course of the latter: "They helped everyone his**

**neighbor, and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the**

**carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the**

**hammer him that smote the anvil."**

**Shall we follow their example, and from henceforth encourage one**

**another instead of discouraging?**

**If I am asked how we are to get rid of discouragements, I can only say,**

**as I have had to say of so many other wrong spiritual habits, we must**

**give them up. It is never worth while to argue against discouragement.**

**There is only one argument that can meet it, and that is the argument**

**of God. When David was in the midst of what were perhaps the most**

**discouraging moments of his life, when he had found his city burned,**

**and his wives stolen, and he and the men with him had wept until they**

**had no more power to weep; and when his men, exasperated at their**

**misfortunes, spake of stoning him, then we are told, "But David**

**encouraged himself in the Lord his God"; and the result was a**

**magnificent victory, in which all that they had lost was more than**

**restored to them. This always will be, and always must be the result of**

**a courageous faith, because faith lays hold of the omnipotence of God.**

**Over and over the psalmist asks himself this question: "Why art thou**

**cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" And each**

**time he answers himself with the argument of God: "Hope thou in God;**

**for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my**

**God." He does not analyze his disquietude, or try to argue it away, but**

**he turns at once to the Lord and by faith begins to praise Him.**

**It is the only way. Discouragement flies where faith appears; and, vice**

**versa, faith flies when discouragement appears. We must choose between**

**them, for they will not mix.**

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**Chapter 14**

**The Shout Of Faith**

**"And when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout**

**with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and**

**the people shall ascend up, every man straight before him."**

**The shout of a steadfast faith is an experience that is in direct**

**contrast to the moans of a wavering faith, and to the wails of**

**discouraged hearts, both of which we have been considering in our last**

**two chapters. In the history of the children of Israel there were many**

**occasions when they indulged in these moanings and wailings and always**

**to their sad undoing; but on one occasion at least they gave a**

**magnificent shout of steadfast faith that brought them a glorious**

**victory. And among the many "secrets of the Lord" that are discovered**

**by the soul in its onward progress, I do not know of any that is more**

**practically valuable than the secret of this shout of faith.**

**The occasion when it took place was at the time when the Israelites had**

**just crossed the River Jordan, and were about to take possession of the**

**Promised Land. God had said to Joshua, just before they crossed: "Now**

**therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto**

**the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every**

**place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given**

**unto you, as I said unto Moses."**

**With this warrant they had crossed the river and entered into the land,**

**no doubt expecting to get immediate possession. But at once upon their**

**entrance they were brought face to face with one of those "cities great**

**and walled up to heaven" that had so discouraged the heart of the spies**

**forty years before. Well might they be appalled at the sight of it. To**

**the eye of sense there seemed no possibility that they could ever**

**conquer Jericho. They had no engines of warfare with which to attack**

**it; and one can easily imagine the despair that must have seized upon**

**them when they found themselves confronted with the walls and**

**fortresses of such a city.**

**But the Lord had said to Joshua: "See, I have given into thine hand**

**Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor." He had not**

**said, "I will give," but, "I have given." It belonged to them already;**

**but now they were called upon to take possession of it. It was as if a**

**king should bestow an estate upon a courtier who was away in a foreign**

**land, and this courtier should come back to take possession of it.**

**But the great question was, How? It looked impossible. But the Lord**

**declared His plan; and after a few directions as to the order of their**

**march, and blowing of their trumpets, He closed with these strange**

**words: "And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast**

**with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the**

**people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall**

**fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up, every man straight**

**before him" (Joshua 6:5).**

**Strange words but true, for it came to pass just as the Lord had said.**

**On the seventh day, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua**

**said to the people, "Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city." "And**

**it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and**

**the people shouted with a great shout, that the walls fell down flat,**

**so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before**

**him, and they took the city."**

**Now, no one can suppose for a moment that this shout caused the walls**

**to fall. And yet the secret of their victory lay in just this shout.**

**For it was the shout of a faith which dared, on the authority of God's**

**Word alone, to claim a promised victory while as yet there were no**

**signs of this victory being accomplished. And according to their faith**

**God did unto them; so that, when they shouted, He made the walls to**

**fall.**

**God had declared that He had given them the city, and faith reckoned**

**this to be true. Unbelief might well have said, "It would be better not**

**to shout until the walls do actually fall, for, should there be any**

**failure about it, the men of Jericho will triumph, and we shall bring**

**dishonor on the name of our God." But faith laughed at all such**

**prudential considerations, and, confidently resting on God's Word, gave**

**a shout of victory while yet to the eye of sense that victory seemed**

**impossible. And long centuries afterward the Holy Ghost thus records**

**this triumph of faith in Hebrews: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell**

**down, after they were compassed about seven days."**

**Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees**

**And looks at that alone;**

**Laughs at impossibilities,**

**And cries, It shall be done.**

**Jehoshaphat is another example of this shout of faith. He was told that**

**a great multitude was coming up against him from beyond the sea, and he**

**realized that he and his people had "no might" against them, and he**

**could not tell "what to do." He did not waste his time and his energies**

**in trying to prepare engines of warfare or in arranging plans for a**

**battle, but he at once "set himself to seek the Lord." He stood in the**

**congregation of the people, and said: "O Lord God of our fathers, art**

**not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of**

**the heathen? And in thine hand is there not power and might, so that**

**none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God, who didst drive**

**out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest**

**it to the seed of Abraham, thy friend, forever?... And now behold, the**

**children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir ... come to cast us out of**

**thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt**

**thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company**

**that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are**

**upon thee."**

**To this appeal the Lord answered through the mouth of His prophet in**

**the following words: "Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor**

**dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours**

**but God's ... Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set**

**yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you.**

**O Judah and Jerusalem, fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out**

**against them; for the Lord will be with you."**

**Without a thought of doubt Jehoshaphat and the children of Israel**

**believed the Word of the Lord and began at once to praise Him**

**beforehand for the victory that they were sure was coming. The next**

**morning they rose early and went out to meet their enemy; and**

**Jehoshaphat, instead of exhorting them as an ordinary general would**

**have done to look to their arms and to be brave in battle, simply**

**called upon them to have a courageous faith. "Hear me, O Judah, and ye**

**inhabitants of Jerusalem," he said, "believe in the Lord your God, so**

**shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."**

**Jehoshaphat then consulted with the people; and as their faith proved**

**equal to his own, they appointed singers to go out before the army to**

**sing praises as they went forward to meet the enemy. And it came to**

**pass that when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord began to set**

**ambushments against the enemy, so that they smote one another; and when**

**the children of Israel came to a watchtower in the wilderness, from**

**which they could see the great multitude that had come up against them,**

**"behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped."**

**By this wonderful method of warfare they were made even "more than**

**conquerors"; for they were "three days in gathering the spoil, it was**

**so much."**

**David's fight with Goliath is another example of this method of**

**victory. To the eye of sense David had no chance whatever of conquering**

**the mighty giant, who had been defying the armies of Israel. But David,**

**looking with the eye of faith, could see the unseen divine forces that**

**were fighting on his side, and when Saul said to him: "Thou art not**

**able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but**

**a youth, and he a man of war from his youth," David stood firm in his**

**faith; and, after recounting some of his past deliverances, said**

**calmly: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out**

**of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this**

**Philistine." Saul, partly convinced by this strong faith, said, "Go,**

**and the Lord be with thee." He could not, however, quite give up all**

**trust in his own accustomed armor, and he armed David with a helmet of**

**brass, and a coat of mail, and his own powerful sword, and David**

**"assayed to go." But David soon found that he would not be able to**

**fight in this sort of armor, and he put it off, and took instead the**

**simple weapons that the Lord had blessed before--his staff, and his**

**sling, and five smooth stones out of the brook; and thus equipped, he**

**drew near to the giant.**

**When the giant saw the stripling who had come to fight him, he**

**disdained him, and said contemptuously: "Come to me, and I will give**

**thy flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field." And**

**truly to the eye of the sense it looked as though this must necessarily**

**be the end of such an apparently unequal battle. But David's faith**

**triumphed, and he shouted a shout of victory before even the battle had**

**begun. "Thou comest to me," he said, "with a sword, and with a spear,**

**and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts,**

**the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou defiest. This day will the**

**Lord deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee, and take thy**

**head from thee ... that all the earth may know that there is a God in**

**Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with**

**sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you**

**into our hands."**

**In the face of such faith as this, what could even a giant do? Every**

**word of that triumphant shout of victory was fulfilled; and the mighty**

**enemy was delivered into the hands of the stripling he had disdained.**

**And so it will always be. Nothing can withstand the triumphant faith**

**that links itself to omnipotence. For "this is the victory that**

**overcometh the world, even our faith."**

**The secret of all successful warfare lies in this shout of faith. It is**

**a secret incomprehensible to those who know nothing of the unseen**

**divine power that waits on the demands of faith; a secret that must**

**always seem, to those who do not understand it, the height of folly and**

**imprudence.**

**We are all called to be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and to fight**

**the "good fight of faith" against worse enemies than those which**

**attacked the Israelites. Our enemies are interior, and the giant that**

**defies us is the strength of our temptations and the powerlessness of**

**our own strength to resist. It is a hard, and often a very discouraging**

**fight, and many of God's children are weighed down under a dreary sense**

**of apparently hopeless failure. They have sinned and repented again, so**

**often, that they can see no hope of victory, and are ready to despair.**

**They hate sin, and they love righteousness, and they long for victory,**

**but the good that they would they do not, and the evil that they would**

**not that they do. In the language of the apostle they find a law in**

**their members warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them**

**into captivity to the law of sin that is in their members. They know**

**they ought to conquer, but they do not know how. And it is for these**

**that this chapter is written. If they can but discover the secret of**

**this shout of faith they will know how, for it is absolutely certain**

**that it never fails to bring victory.**

**In John 16:33 our Lord reveals the ground of this triumphant shout of**

**faith. "Be of good cheer," He says, "for I have overcome the world."**

**Not "I will overcome," but "I have overcome." It is already done; and**

**nothing remains but for us to enter into the power of it. Joshua did**

**not say to the people, "Shout, for the Lord will give you the city,"**

**but "Shout, for he hath given it." It has always seemed to me that it**

**must have drained all Joshua's will power to his lips to render it**

**possible for him to make such a statement, in face of the fact that the**

**walls of the city were at that very minute standing up as massive and**

**as impregnable as ever. But God was a reality to Joshua, and he was not**

**afraid to proclaim the victory that had been promised, even before it**

**was accomplished.**

**There is a great difference between saying, "The Lord will give," and**

**"The Lord hath given." A victory promised in the future may be hindered**

**or prevented by a thousand contingencies, but a victory already**

**accomplished cannot be gainsaid. And when our Lord assures us, not that**

**He will overcome the world, but that He has already done so, He gives**

**an assured foundation for a shout of the most triumphant victory.**

**Henceforward the forces of sin are a defeated and demoralized foe; and,**

**if we believe the words of Christ, we can meet them without fear, since**

**we have been made more than conquerors through Him who loves us.**

**It is a well-known fact that as long as a defeated army can keep its**

**defeat a secret, it can still make some show of resistance. But the**

**moment it finds out that its defeat is known, it loses all heart and**

**becomes utterly demoralized, and has no resource left but to retreat.**

**The secret then lies in this that we must meet sin, not as a foe that**

**has yet to be conquered, but as one that has already been conquered.**

**When Rahab helped the spies who had been sent by Joshua to escape from**

**the king of Jericho, she made this confession: "I know that the Lord**

**hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and**

**that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you." If we were**

**gifted with eyes that could see the unseen kingdom of evil, I believe**

**we also should find that a terror and faintness has fallen upon all the**

**forces of that unknown region, and that they see in every man and woman**

**of faith a sure and triumphant conqueror.**

**It is because we do not know this secret that we meet our spiritual**

**enemies with such fear and trembling, and suffer such disastrous**

**defeats.**

**A Christian I know, who had been fearfully beset by temptation against**

**which she had seemed to struggle in vain, was told this secret by one**

**who had discovered it. It brought conviction at once, and she went**

**forth to a fresh battle with the assurance of an already accomplished**

**victory. It is needless to say that she was victorious; and she said**

**afterward that it seemed to her as if she could almost hear the voice**

**of the tempter saying as he slunk away, "Alas! it is all up with me**

**now. She had found out the secret. She knows that I am an already**

**conquered foe, and I am afraid I shall never be able to overcome her**

**again!"**

**We are told that "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that**

**he might destroy the works of the devil"; and again: "Ye know that he**

**was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin"; and again:**

**"Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by**

**the sacrifice of himself." We must accept it as a fact, therefore, that**

**sin is for us a conquered foe. And if our faith will only lay hold of**

**this fact, reckoning sin to be dead to us, and ourselves to be dead to**

**sin; and will dare, when we come in sight of temptation, to raise the**

**shout of victory, we shall surely find as the Israelites did that every**

**wall will fall down flat, and that a pathway will be opened straight**

**before us to take the city!**

**Our enemies are giants now just as truly as they were in Israel's day;**

**and cities as great as Jericho, with walls as high, confront us in our**

**heavenly pathway. Like the Israelites of old, we have no human weapons**

**with which to conquer them. Our armor, like theirs, must be the "armor**

**of God." Our shield is the same invisible shield of faith that**

**protected them; and our sword must be, as theirs was, the sword of the**

**Spirit which is the Word, that is, the promises and declarations of**

**God. When our faith puts on this "armor of God," and lays hold of this**

**"sword of the Spirit," and we confront our enemy with a shout of**

**undaunted faith, we cannot fail to conquer the mightiest giant, or to**

**take the strongest city.**

**But alas! how different is the usual method of our Christian warfare.**

**Instead of a triumphant shout of victory, we meet our temptations with**

**feeble resolutions, or with futile arguments, or with halfhearted**

**self-upbraiding, or, failing all else, with despairing prayers. "O**

**Lord, save me!" we cry; "O Lord, deliver me!" And when no deliverance**

**has come, and the temptation has swept aside all our arguments and all**

**our resolutions, and we have been grievously defeated, then we have**

**cried out in our despair that God has failed us, and that there is for**

**us no truth in the apostle's declaration that with every temptation**

**there is a way of escape that we may be able to bear it. This is the**

**usual and the unsuccessful way of meeting temptation, as many of us**

**know to our cost. But what we ought to do is very different. We must**

**recognize it as a fact that sin is a conquered foe, and must meet it,**

**therefore, with a shout of victory instead of with a cry for help.**

**Where we prayed that the Lord would save us, we must make now the**

**assertion that He does save us, and that he saves us now. We must add**

**the little letter s to the word save, and make it the present instead**

**of the future tense.**

**The walls may look as high and as immovable as ever; and prudence may**

**say it is not safe to shout until the victory is actually won. But the**

**faith that can shout in the midst of the sorest stress of temptation,**

**"Jesus saves me; He saves me now!" such a faith will be sure to win a**

**glorious and a speedy victory. Many of God's children have tried this**

**plan, and have found it to work far beyond even their expectations.**

**Temptations have come in upon them like a flood--temptations to**

**irritability, or to wicked thoughts, or to bitterness of spirit, or to**

**a thousand other things, and they have seen their danger; and their**

**fears and their feelings have declared that there was no hope of**

**escape. But their faith has laid hold of this grand fact that Christ**

**has conquered; and they have fixed their gaze on the unseen power of**

**God's salvation, and have given their shout of victory, "The Lord**

**saves! He saves me now! I am more than conqueror through Him that loves**

**me!" And the result is always a glorious victory.**

**It may sometimes seem so impossible that the Lord can or does save that**

**the words will not say themselves inside, but have to be said aloud,**

**forcing one's lips to utter them over and over, shutting one's eyes and**

**closing one's ears against every suggestion of doubt no matter how**

**plausible it may seem. These declarations of faith often seem untrue at**

**first, so apparently real are the seen reasons for doubt and**

**discouragement. But the unseen facts are truer than the seen, and if**

**the faith that lays hold of them is steadfastly persisted in, they**

**never fail in the end to prove themselves to be the very truth of God.**

**"According to our faith" it always must be unto us, sooner or later,**

**and when we shout the shout of faith, the Lord invariably gives the**

**victory of faith.**

**I knew a Christian man who had entered upon this life of faith. He had**

**naturally a violent temper and went about his work among his ungodly**

**companions was sorely beset with temptations to give way to it. He knew**

**it was wrong, and he struggled valiantly against it, but all in vain.**

**Finally, one morning on his way to work he called in despair at the**

**house of his Christian teacher and told him his difficulties. After**

**explaining the suddenness of the temptations that came upon him, and**

**the lack of time even to pray for help before he was overcome, he said,**

**"Now can you tell me of any short road to victory; something that I can**

**lay hold of just at the needed moment?"**

**"Yes," replied the minister; "when the temptation comes, at once lift**

**up your heart to the Lord, and by faith claim the promised victory.**

**Shout the shout of faith, and the temptation will flee before you."**

**After a little explanation of the glorious fact that sin is an already**

**conquered foe, the man seemed to understand and went on his way to take**

**his place in the ranks with his fellow men at the station where they**

**were engaged in hauling freight. As usual he was met by taunts and**

**sneers; and in addition he found that they had jostled him out of his**

**rightful place in the ranks. The temptation to anger was almost**

**overwhelming, but, folding his arms, he said inwardly over and over,**

**"Jesus saves me; He saves me now!" At once his heart was filled with**

**peace, and the victory was complete. Again he was tried; a heavy box**

**was so rolled as to fall on his foot badly injuring him, and again he**

**folded his arms and repeated his shout of victory, and at once all was**

**calm. And so the day passed on. Trials and temptations abounded, but**

**his triumphant shout carried him safely through them all, and the fiery**

**darts of the enemy were all quenched by the shield of faith which he**

**continually lifted up. Nighttime found him more than conqueror through**

**Him who loved him; and even his fellow carmen were forced to own the**

**reality and the beauty of a religion that could so triumph over their**

**aggravating assaults.**

**The psalmist, after telling of the enemies who were daily trying to**

**swallow him up, declared triumphantly: "When I cry unto thee, then**

**shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me."**

**Dear reader, do you know what the psalmist knew? Do you know that God**

**is for you, and that He will cause your enemies to turn back? If you**

**do, then go out to meet your temptations, singing a song of triumph as**

**you go. Meet your very next temptation in this way. At this first**

**approach begin to give thanks for the victory. Claim continually that**

**you are more than conqueror through Him that loves you, and refuse to**

**be daunted by any foe. Shout the shout of faith with Joshua, and**

**Jehoshaphat, and David, and Paul; and I can assure you that when you**

**shout, the Lord will "set ambushments," and all your enemies shall fall**

**down dead before you.**

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**Chapter 15**

**Thanksgiving Versus Complaining**

**"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus**

**concerning you."**

**Thanksgiving or complaining--these words express two contrastive**

**attitudes of the souls of God's children in regard to His dealings with**

**them; and they are more powerful than we are inclined to believe in**

**furthering or frustrating His purposes of comfort and peace toward us.**

**The soul that gives thanks can find comfort in everything; the soul**

**that complains can find comfort in nothing.**

**God's command is "In everything give thanks"; and the command is**

**emphasized by the declaration, "for this is the will of God in Christ**

**Jesus concerning you." It is an actual positive command; and if we want**

**to obey God, we have simply got to give thanks in everything. There is**

**no getting around it.**

**But a great many Christians have never realized this; and, although**

**they may be familiar with the command, they have always looked upon it**

**as a sort of counsel of perfection to which mere flesh and blood could**

**never be expected to attain. And they, unconsciously to themselves**

**perhaps, change the wording of the passage to make it say "be resigned"**

**instead of "give thanks," and "in a few things" instead of "in**

**everything," and they leave out altogether the words, "for this is the**

**will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."**

**If brought face to face with the actual wording of the command, such**

**Christians will say, "Oh, but it is an impossible command. If**

**everything came direct from God, one might do it perhaps, but most**

**things come through human sources, and often are the result of sin, and**

**it would not be possible to give thanks for these." To this I answer**

**that it is true we cannot always give thanks for the things themselves,**

**but we can always give thanks for God's love and care in the things. He**

**may not have ordered them, but He is in them somewhere, and He is in**

**them to compel, even the most grievous, to work together for our good.**

**The "second causes" of the wrong may be full of malice and wickedness,**

**but faith never sees second causes. It sees only the hand of God behind**

**the second causes. They are all under His control, and not one of them**

**can touch us except with His knowledge and permission. The thing itself**

**that happens cannot perhaps be said to be the will of God, but by the**

**time its effects reach us they have become God's will for us, and must**

**be accepted as from His hands.**

**The story of Joseph is an illustration of this. Nothing could have**

**seemed more entirely an act of sin, nor more utterly contrary to the**

**will of God than his being sold to the Ishmaelites by his wicked**

**brethren; and it would not have seemed possible for Joseph, when he was**

**being carried off into slavery in Egypt, to give thanks. And yet, if he**

**had known the end from the beginning, he would have been filled with**

**thanksgiving. The fact of his having been sold into slavery was the**

**direct doorway to the greatest triumphs and blessings of his life. And,**

**at the end, Joseph himself could say to his wicked brethren: "As for**

**you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." To the**

**eye of sense it was Joseph's wicked brethren who had sent him into**

**Egypt, but Joseph, looking at it with the eye of faith, said, "God did**

**send me."**

**We can all remember, I think, similar instances in our own lives when**

**God has made the wrath of man to praise Him, and has caused even the**

**hardest trails to work together for our greatest good. I recollect once**

**in my own life when a trial was brought upon me by another person, at**

**which I was filled with bitter rebellion and could not see in it from**

**beginning to end anything to be thankful for. But, as it was in the**

**case of Joseph, that very trial worked out for me the richest blessings**

**and the greatest triumphs of my whole life; and in the end I was filled**

**with thanksgiving for the very things that had caused me such bitter**

**rebellion before. If only I had had faith enough to give thanks at**

**first, how much sorrow would have been spared me.**

**But I am afraid that the greatest heights to which most Christians in**

**their shortsightedness seem able to rise is to strive after resignation**

**to things they cannot alter, and to seek for patience to endure them.**

**And the result is that thanksgiving is almost an unknown exercise among**

**the children of God; and, instead of giving thanks in everything, many**

**of them hardly give thanks in anything. If the truth were told,**

**Christians as a body must be acknowledged to be but a thankless set. It**

**is considered in the world a very discourteous thing for one man to**

**receive benefits from another man and fail to thank him, and I cannot**

**see why it is not just as discourteous a thing not to thank God. And**

**yet we find people who would not for the world omit an immediate note**

**of thanks upon the reception of any gift, however trifling, from a**

**human friend, but who have never given God real thanks for any one of**

**the innumerable benefits He has been showering upon them all their long**

**lives.**

**Moreover, I am afraid a great many not only fail to give thanks, but**

**they do exactly the opposite, and allow themselves instead to complain**

**and murmur about God's dealings with them. Instead of looking out for**

**His goodness, they seem to delight in picking out His shortcomings, and**

**think they show a spirit of discernment in criticizing His laws and His**

**ways. We are told that "when the people complained, it displeased the**

**Lord"; but we are tempted to think that our special complaining,**

**because it is spiritual complaining, cannot displease Him since it is a**

**pious sort of complaining, and is a sign of greater zeal on our part,**

**and of deeper spiritual insight than is possessed by the ordinary**

**Christian.**

**But complaining is always alike, whether it is on the temporal or the**

**spiritual plane. It always has in it the element of fault-finding.**

**Webster says to complain means to make a charge or an accusation. It is**

**not merely disliking the thing we have to bear, but it contains the**

**element of finding fault with the agency that lies behind it. And if we**

**will carefully examine the true inwardness of our complainings, I think**

**we shall generally find they are founded on a subtle fault-finding with**

**God. We secretly feel as if He were to blame somehow; and, almost**

**unconsciously to ourselves, we make mental charges against Him.**

**On the other hand, thanksgiving always involves praise of the giver.**

**Have you ever noticed how much we are urged in the Bible to "praise the**

**Lord"? It seemed to be almost the principal part of the worship of the**

**Israelites. "Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good: sing praises to**

**his name, for it is pleasant." This is the continual refrain of**

**everything all through the Bible. I believe, if we should count up, we**

**would find that there are more commands given and more examples set for**

**the giving of thanks "always for all things" than for the doing or the**

**leaving undone of anything else.**

**It is very evident from the whole teaching of Scripture that the Lord**

**loves to be thanked and praised just as much as we like it. I am sure**

**that it gives Him real downright pleasure, just as it does us; and that**

**our failure to thank Him for His "good and perfect gifts" wounds His**

**loving heart, just as our hearts are wounded when our loved ones fail**

**to appreciate the benefits we have so enjoyed bestowing upon them. What**

**a joy it is to us to receive from our friends an acknowledgment of**

**their thanksgiving for our gifts, and is it no likely that it is a joy**

**to the Lord also?**

**When the apostle is exhorting the Ephesian Christians to be "followers**

**of God as dear children," one of the exhortations he gives in**

**connection with being filled with the Spirit is this: "Giving thanks**

**always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord**

**Jesus Christ." "Always for all things" is a very sweeping expression,**

**and it is impossible to suppose it can be whittled down to mean only**

**the few and scanty thanks, which seem all that many Christians manage**

**to give. It must mean, I am sure, that there can be nothing in our**

**lives which has not in it somewhere a cause for thanksgiving, and that,**

**no mater who or what may be the channel to convey it, everything**

**contains for us a hidden blessing from God.**

**The apostle tells us that "every creature of God is good, and nothing**

**to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." But it is very**

**hard for us to believe things are good when they do not look so. Often**

**the things God sends into our lives look like curses instead of**

**blessings; and those who have no eyes that can see below surfaces judge**

**by the outward seemings only and never see the blessed realities**

**beneath.**

**How many "good and perfect gifts" we must have had during our lives,**

**which we have looked upon only as curses, and for which we have never**

**returned one thought of thanks! And for how many gifts also, which we**

**have even acknowledged to be good, have we thanked ourselves, or our**

**friends, or our circumstances, without once looking behind the earthly**

**givers to thank the heavenly Giver, from whom in reality they all come!**

**It is as if we should thank the messengers who bring us our friends'**

**gifts, but should never send any word of thanks to our friends**

**themselves.**

**But, even when we realize that things come directly from God, we find**

**it very hard to give thanks for what hurts us. Do we not, however, all**

**know what it is to thank a skillful physician for his treatment of our**

**diseases, even though that treatment may have been very severe. And**

**surely we should no less give thanks to our divine Physician, when He**

**is obliged to give us bitter medicine to cure our spiritual diseases,**

**or to perform a painful operation to rid us of something that harms.**

**But instead of thanking Him we complain against Him; although we**

**generally direct our complaints, not against the divine Physician**

**himself who has ordered our medicine, but against the "bottle" in which**

**He has sent it. This "bottle" is usually some human being, whose**

**unkindness or carelessness, or neglect, or cruelty has caused our**

**suffering; but who has been after all only the instrumentality or**

**"second cause" that God has used for our healing.**

**Good common sense tells us that it would be folly to rail against the**

**bottles in which the medicines, prescribed by our earthy physicians,**

**come to us; and it is equal folly to rail against the "second causes"**

**that are meant to teach us the lessons our souls need to learn.**

**When the children of Israel found themselves wandering in the**

**wilderness, they "murmured against Moses and Aaron," and complained**

**that they had brought them forth into the wilderness to kill them with**

**hunger. But in reality their complaining was against God, for it was**

**really He who had brought them there, and not Moses and Aaron, who were**

**only the "second causes." And the psalmist in recounting the story**

**afterward called this murmuring against Moses and Aaron a "speaking**

**against God." Divine history takes no account of second causes, but**

**goes directly to the real cause behind them.**

**We may settle it, therefore, that all complaining is at the bottom**

**"speaking against God," whether we are conscious of it or not. We may**

**think, as the Israelites did, that our discomforts and deprivations**

**have come from human hands only, and may therefore feel at liberty to**

**"murmur against" the second causes which have, we may think, brought**

**about our trials. But God is the great Cause behind all second causes.**

**The second causes are only the instrumentalities that He uses; and when**

**we murmur against these, we are really murmuring, not against the**

**instrumentalities, but against God Himself. Second causes are powerless**

**to act, except by God's permission; and what He permits becomes really**

**His arranging. The psalmist tells us that when the Lord heard the**

**complainings of His people "He was wroth," and His anger came up**

**against them "because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his**

**salvation." And, at the bottom, all complainings mean just this, that**

**we do not believe in God, and do not trust in His salvation.**

**The psalmist says: "I will praise the name of God with a song, and**

**magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better**

**than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." A great many people**

**seem quite ready and willing to offer up an "ox or a bullock," or some**

**great sacrifice to the Lord, but never seem to have realized that a**

**little genuine praise and thanksgiving offered to Him now and then**

**would "please him better" than all their great sacrifices made in His**

**cause.**

**As I said before, the Bible is full of this thought from beginning to**

**end. Over and over it is called a "sacrifice of thanksgiving," showing**

**that it is as really an act of religious worship, as is any other**

**religious act. In fact, the "sacrifice of thanksgiving" was one of the**

**regular sacrifices ordained by God in the Book of Leviticus. "Oh that**

**men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works**

**to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of**

**thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing." By Him, therefore,**

**let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the**

**fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.**

**It is such an easy thing to offer the "sacrifice of thanksgiving," that**

**one would suppose everybody would be keen to do it. But somehow the**

**contrary seems to be the case; and if the prayers of Christians were**

**all to be noted down for any one single day, I fear it would be found**

**that with them, as it was with the ten lepers who had been cleansed,**

**nine out of every ten had offered no genuine thanks at all. Our Lord**

**Himself was grieved at these ungrateful lepers, and said: "Were there**

**not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that**

**returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." Will He have to ask**

**the same question regarding any of us? We have often, it may be,**

**wondered at the ingratitude of those nine cleansed lepers; but what**

**about our own ingratitude? Do we not continually pass by blessings**

**innumerable without notice, and instead fix our eyes on what we feel to**

**be our trials and our losses, and think and talk about these, until our**

**whole horizon is filled with them, and we almost begin to think we have**

**no blessings at all?**

**We can judge of how this must grieve the Lord by our own feelings. A**

**child who complains about the provision the parent has made wounds that**

**parent's heart often beyond words. Some people are always complaining,**

**nothing ever pleases them, and no kindness seems ever to be**

**appreciated. We know how uncomfortable the society of such people makes**

**us; and we know, on the contrary, how life is brightened by the**

**presence of one who never complains, but who finds something to be**

**pleased with in all that comes. I believe far more misery than we**

**imagine is caused in human hearts by the grumblings of those they love;**

**and I believe also that woundings we never dream of, are given to the**

**heart of our Father in Heaven by the continual murmuring of His**

**children.**

**How often is it despairingly said of fretful, complaining spirits upon**

**whom every care and attention has been lavished, "Will nothing ever**

**satisfy them?" And how often must God turn away, grieved by our**

**complainings, when His love has been lavished upon us in untold**

**blessings. I have sometimes thought that if we could but realize this,**

**we would check our inordinate grief over even the trials that come from**

**the death of those we love, and would try, for His dear sake, to be**

**cheerful and content even in our lonely and bereft condition.**

**I remember hearing of a dear girl who was obliged to undergo a serious**

**and very painful treatment for some disease, and the doctors had**

**dreaded the thought of her groans and outcries. But to their amazement**

**not even a moan escaped her lips, and all the time she smiled at her**

**father who was present, and uttered only words of love and tenderness.**

**The doctors could not understand it, and when the worst was over one of**

**them asked how it could have been. "Ah," she said, "I knew how much my**

**father loved me, and I knew how he would suffer if he saw that I**

**suffered, so I tried to hide my suffering; and I smiled to make him**

**think I did not mind."**

**Can any of us do this for our heavenly Father?**

**Job was a great complainer; and we may perhaps think, as we read his**

**story, that if ever anyone had good cause for complaining, he had. His**

**circumstances seemed to be full of hopeless misery. "My soul is weary**

**of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the**

**bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; show me**

**wherefore thou contendest with me. Is it good unto thee that thou**

**shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine**

**hands?"**

**We can hardly wonder at Job's complaint. And yet could he but have seen**

**the divine side of all his troubles, he would have known that they were**

**permitted in the tenderest love, and were to bring him a revelation of**

**God such as he could have had by no other means. Could he have seen**

**that this was to be the outcome he would not have uttered a single**

**complaint, but would have given triumphant thanks for the trials which**

**were to bring him such a glorious fruition. And could we but see, in**

**our heaviest trials, the end from the beginning, I am sure that**

**thanksgiving would take the place of complaining in every case.**

**The children of Israel were always complaining about something. They**

**complained because they had no water; and when water was supplied they**

**complained that it was bitter to their taste. And we likewise complain**

**because the spiritual water we have to drink seems bitter to our taste.**

**Our souls are athirst, and we do not like the supply that seems to be**

**provided. Our experiences do not quench our thirst, our religious**

**exercises seem dull and unsatisfying; we feel ourselves to be in a dry**

**and thirsty land where no water is. We have turned from the "Fountain**

**of living waters," and then we complain because the cisterns we have**

**hewed out for ourselves hold no water.**

**The Israelites complained about their food. They had so little**

**confidence in God that they were afraid they would die of starvation;**

**and then when the heavenly manna was provided they complained again**

**because they "loathed such light food." And we also complain about our**

**spiritual food. Like the Israelites, we have so little confidence in**

**God that we are always afraid we shall die of spiritual starvation. We**

**complain because our preacher does not feed us, or because our**

**religious privileges are very scanty, or because we are not supplied**

**with the same spiritual fare as others are, who seem to us more highly**

**favored; and we covet their circumstances or their experiences. We have**

**asked God to feed us, and then our souls "loathe" the food He gives,**

**and we think it is too "light" to sustain or strengthen us. We have**

**asked for bread, and we complain that He has given a stone.**

**But, if we only knew it, the provision our divine Master has made of**

**spiritual drink and spiritual food is just that which is best for us,**

**and is that for which we would be the most thankful if we knew. The**

**amazing thing is that we cannot believe now, without waiting for the**

**end, that the Shepherd knows what pasture is best for His sheep. Surely**

**if we did, our hearts would be filled with thanksgiving and our mouths**

**with praise even in the wilderness.**

**Jonah was a wonderful illustration of this. His prayer of thanksgiving**

**out of the "belly of hell" is a tremendous lesson. "I have cried by**

**reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the**

**belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast**

**me into the deep, in the midst of the sea: and the floods compassed me**

**about; all thy billows and thy waves passed over me ... But I will**

**sacrifice unto thee with a voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that I**

**have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."**

**No depth of misery, not even the "belly of hell," is too great for the**

**sacrifice of thanksgiving. We cannot, it is true, give thanks for the**

**misery, but we can give thanks to the Lord in the misery, just as Jonah**

**did. No matter what our trouble, the Lord is in it somewhere; and, of**

**course, being there, He is there to help and bless us. Therefore, when**

**our "souls faint within us" because of our troubles, we have only to**

**remember this, and to thank Him for His presence and His love.**

**It is not because things are good that we are to thank the Lord, but**

**because He is good. We are not wise enough to judge as to things,**

**whether they are really, in their essence, joys or sorrows. But we**

**always know that the Lord is good, and that His goodness makes it**

**absolutely certain that everything He provides or permits must be good;**

**and must therefore be something for which we would be heartily**

**thankful, if only we could see it with His eyes.**

**In a little tract called "Mrs. Pickett's Missionary Box," a poor woman,**

**who had never done anything but complain all her life long, and who,**

**consequently, had got to thinking that she had no benefits for which to**

**give thanks, received a missionary box with the words written on it:**

**"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" And**

**she was asked by her niece, who believed in being thankful, to put a**

**penny into the box for every benefit she could discover in her life. I**

**will let her tell her own story.**

**" Great benefits I have!' says I, standing with my arms akimbo, an'**

**lookin' that box all over. Guess the heathen won't get much out of me**

**at that rate.' an' I jest made up my mind I would keep count, jest to**

**show myself how little I did have. Them few pennies won't break me,' I**

**thought, and I really seemed to kinder enjoy thinkin' over the hard**

**times I had.**

**"Well, the box sat there all that week, an' I used to say it must be**

**kinder lonesome with nothin' in it; for not a penny went into it until**

**next missionary meetin' day. I was sittin' on the back steps gettin' a**

**breath of fresh air, when Mary came home, an' sat down alongside o' me**

**an' began to tell me about the meetin', an' it was all about Injy an'**

**the widders there, poor creturs, an' they bein' abused, an' starved,**

**an' not let to think for themselves--you know all about it better'n I**

**do!--an' before I thought I up an' said-**

**" Well, if I be a widder, I'm thankful I'm where I kin earn my own**

**livin', an' no thanks to nobody, an' no one to interfere!'**

**"Then Mary, she laughed an' said there was my fust benefit. Well, that**

**sorter tickled me, for I thought a woman must be pretty hard up for**

**benefits when she had to go clear off to Injy to find them, an' I**

**dropped in one penny, an' it rattled round a few days without any**

**company. I used to shake it every time I passed the shelf, an' the**

**thought of them poor things in Injy kep' a comin' up before me, an' I**

**really was glad when I got a new boarder for me best room, an' felt as**

**if I'd oughter put in another. An' next meetin', Mary she told me about**

**China, an' I thought about that till I put in another because I warn't**

**a Chinese. An' all the while I felt kinder proud of how little there**

**was in that box. Then one day, when I got a chance to turn a little**

**penny sellin' eggs, which I warn't in the habit of, Mary brought the**

**box in, where I was countin' of my money, and says-**

**" A penny for your benefit, Aunt Mirandy.'**

**"An' I says, This ain't the Lord's benefit.'**

**"An' she answered, If tain't His, whose is it?' An' she begun to hum**

**over somethin' out of one of the poetry books that she was always a**

**readin' of-**

**God's grace is the only grace, And all grace is the grace of God.'**

**"Well, I dropped in my penny, an' them words kep' ringin' in my ears,**

**till I couldn't help puttin' more to it, on account of some other**

**things I never thought of callin' the Lord's benefits before. An' by**

**that time, what with Mary's tellin' me about them meetin's, an' me most**

**always findin' somethin' to put in a penny for, to be thankful that I**

**warn't it, an' what with gettin' interested about it all, and sorter**

**searchin' round a little now and then to think of somethin' or other to**

**put a penny in for, there really come to be quite a few pennies in the**

**box, an' it didn't ralle near so much when I shook it."**

**There is a psalm which I call our Benefit Psalm. It is Psalm 103, and**

**it recounts some of the benefits the Lord has bestowed upon us, and**

**urges us not to forget them. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not**

**all his benefit." Our dear sister's Benefit Box had taught her**

**something of the meaning of this psalm. All her life she had been**

**forgetting the benefits the Lord had bestowed upon her, but now she was**

**beginning to remember them.**

**Have we begun to remember ours?**

**If during the past year we had kept count of those benefits for which**

**we had actually given thanks, how many pennies, I wonder, would our**

**boxes have contained?**

**We sometimes sing at mission meetings a hymn of thanksgiving, with the**

**chorus, "Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will**

**surprise you what the Lord has done." And sometimes I have wondered**

**whether any of us who were singing it so heartily had ever kept the**

**slightest record of our blessings, or even in fact knew that we had**

**any.**

**For the trouble is that very often God's gifts come to us wrapped up in**

**such rough coverings that we are tempted to reject them as worthless;**

**or the messengers who bring them come in the guise of enemies, and we**

**want to shut the door against them, and not give them entrance. But we**

**lose far more than we know when we reject even the most unlikely.**

**Evil is only the slave of good,**

**And sorrow the servant of joy:**

**And the soul is mad that refuses food**

**From the meanest in God's employ.**

**We are commanded to enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into**

**His courts with praise, and I am convinced that the giving of thanks is**

**the key that opens these gates more quicky than anything else. Try it,**

**dear reader. The next time you feel dead, cold, and low-spirited begin**

**to praise and thank the Lord. Enumerate to yourself the benefits He has**

**bestowed upon you, thank Him heartily for each one, and see if your**

**spirits do not begin to rise, and your heart get warmed up.**

**Sometimes it may be that you feel too disheartened to pray; then try**

**giving thanks instead; and, before you know it, you will find yourself**

**"glad" in the multitude of His loving-kindnesses and His tender**

**mercies.**

**One of my friends told me that her little boy one night flatly refused**

**to say his prayers. He said there was not a single thing in all the**

**world he wanted, and he did not see what was the good of asking for**

**things that he did not want. A happy thought came to his mother as she**

**said, "Well, Charlie, suppose then we give thanks for all the things**

**you have got." The idea pleased the child, and he very willingly knelt**

**down and began to give thanks. He thanked God for his marbles, and for**

**a new top that had just been given him, and for his strong legs that**

**could run so fast, and that he was not blind like a little boy he knew,**

**and for his kind father and mother, and for his nice bed, and for one**

**after another of his blessings, until the list grew so long that at**

**last he said he believed he would never get done. And when finally they**

**rose from their knees, he said to his mother, with his face shining**

**with happiness, "Oh, Mother, I never knew before how perfectly splendid**

**God is!" And I believe, if we sometimes followed the example of this**

**little boy, we too would find out, as never before, the goodness of our**

**God.**

**It is very striking to notice how much thanksgiving had to do with the**

**building of the Temple. When they had collected the treasures for the**

**Temple. When they had collected the treasures for the Temple, David**

**gave thanks to the Lord for enabling them to do it. When the Temple was**

**finished, they gave thanks again. And then a wonderful thing happened,**

**for it came to pass as the trumpeters and singers were as one to make**

**one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord ... that then**

**the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that**

**the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the**

**glory of the Lord had filled the house of God. When the people praised**

**and gave thanks, then the house was filled with the glory of the Lord.**

**And we may be sure that the reason our hearts are not oftener filled**

**with the "glory of the Lord" is because we do not often enough make our**

**voices to be heard in praising and thanking Him.**

**If the giving of thanks is the way to open the gates of the Lord,**

**complaining on the other hand closes these gates. Jude quotes a**

**prophecy of Enoch's concerning murmurers: "The Lord cometh," he says,**

**"to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly**

**among them ... of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have**

**spoken against him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after**

**their own lusts."**

**People who are "murmurers" and "complainers" make in their complainings**

**more "hard speeches" against the Lord than they would like to own, or**

**than they will care at the last day to face. And it is not to be**

**wondered that the judgment of God, instead of the "glory of God," is**

**the result.**

**I wish I had room to quote all the passages in the Bible about giving**

**thanks and praises to the Lord. It is safe to say that there are**

**hundreds and hundreds of them; and it is an amazing thing how they can**

**have been so persistently ignored. I beg of you to read the last seven**

**psalms, and see what you think. They are simply full to overflowing**

**with a list of the things for which the psalmist calls upon us to give**

**thanks; all of them are things relating to the character and the ways**

**of God, which we dare not dispute. They are not for the most part**

**private blessings of our own, but are the common blessings that belong**

**to all humanity, and that contain within themselves every private**

**blessing we can possibly need. But they are blessings which we**

**continually forget, because we take them for granted, hardly noticing**

**their existence, and never give thanks for them.**

**But the psalmist knew how to count his many blessings and name them one**

**by one, and he would have us to do likewise. Try it, dear reader, and**

**you will indeed be surprised to see what the Lord has done. Go over**

**these psalms verse by verse, and blessing by blessing, and see if, like**

**the little boy of our story, you are not made to confess that you never**

**knew before "how perfectly splendid God is."**

**The last verse of the Book of Psalms, taken in connection with the**

**vision of John in the Book of Revelation, is very significant. The**

**psalmist says, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." And**

**in the Book of Revelation, John, who declares himself to be our brother**

**and our companion in tribulation, tells us that he heard this being**

**done. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and**

**under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,**

**heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory and power, be unto him**

**that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."**

**The time for universal praise is sure to come some day. Let us begin to**

**do our part now.**

**I heard once of a discontented, complaining man who, to the great**

**surprise of his friends, became bright, and happy, and full of**

**thanksgiving. After watching him for a little while, and being**

**convinced that the change was permanent, they asked him what had**

**happened. "Oh," he replied, "I have changed my residence. I used to**

**live in Grumbling Lane, but now I have moved into Thanksgiving Square,**

**and I find that I am so rich in blessings that I am always happy."**

**Shall we each one make this move now?**

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**Chapter 16**

**Conformed To The Image Of Christ**

**"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to**

**the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many**

**brethren."**

**God's ultimate purpose in our creation was that we should finally be**

**"conformed to the image of Christ." Christ was to be the firstborn**

**among many brethren, and His brethren were to be like Him. All the**

**discipline and training of our lives is with this end in view; and God**

**has implanted in every human heart a longing, however unformed and**

**unexpressed, after the best and highest it knows.**

**Christ is the pattern of what each one of us is to be when finished. We**

**are "predestinated" to be conformed to His image, in order that He**

**might be the firstborn among many brethren. We are to be "partakers of**

**the divine nature" with Christ; we are to be filled with the spirit of**

**Christ; we are to share His resurrection life, and to walk as He**

**walked. We are to be one with Him, as He is one with the Father; and**

**the glory God gave to Him, He is to give to us. And when all this is**

**brought to pass, then, and not until then, will God's purpose in our**

**creation be fully accomplished, and we stand forth "in his image and**

**after his likeness."**

**Our likeness to His image is an accomplished fact in the mind of God,**

**but we are, so to speak, in the manufactory as yet, and the great**

**master Workman is at work upon us. "It doth not yet appear what we**

**shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him;**

**for we shall see him as he is."**

**And so it is written: "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the**

**last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first**

**which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which**

**is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is**

**the Lord from heaven. As is the earthly, such are they also that are**

**earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.**

**And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the**

**image of the heavenly."**

**It is deeply interesting to see that this process, which was begun in**

**Genesis, is declared to be completed in Revelation, where the "one like**

**unto the Son of man" gave to John this significant message to the**

**overcomers: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of**

**my God; and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name**

**of my God, and the name of the city of my God which is new Jerusalem,**

**which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him**

**my new name." Since name always means character in the Bible, this**

**message can only mean that at last God's purpose is accomplished, and**

**the spiritual evolution of man is completed--he has been made, what God**

**intended from the first, so truly into His likeness and image, as to**

**merit having written upon him the name of God!**

**Words fail before such a glorious destiny as this! But our Lord**

**foreshadows it in His wonderful prayer when He asks for His brethren**

**that "they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,**

**that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou**

**hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them:**

**that they may be one even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me,**

**that they may be made perfect in one." Could oneness be closer or more**

**complete?**

**Paul also foreshadows this glorious consummation when he declares that**

**if we suffer with Christ we shall also be glorified together with Him,**

**and when he asserts that the "sufferings of this present time are not**

**worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." The**

**whole Creation waits for the revealing of this glory, for Paul goes on**

**to say that the "earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the**

**manifestation of the sons of God." And he adds finally: "And not only**

**they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit,**

**even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to**

**wit, the redemption of our body."**

**In view of such a glorious destiny, at which I dare not do more than**

**hint, shall we not cheerfully welcome the processes, however painful**

**they may be, by which we are to reach it? And shall we not strive**

**eagerly and earnestly to be "laborers together with God" in helping to**

**bring it about? He is the great master Builder, but He wants our**

**co-operation in building up the fabric of our characters, and He**

**exhorts us to take heed how we build. We are all of us at every moment**

**of our lives engaged in this building. Sometimes we build with gold,**

**and silver, and precious stones, and sometimes we build with wood, and**

**hay, and stubble. And we are solemnly warned that every man's work is**

**to be made manifest, "for the day shall declare it, because it shall be**

**revealed by fire." There is no escaping this. We cannot hope, when that**

**day comes, to conceal our wood, and hay, and stubble, however**

**successfully we may have managed to do so beforehand.**

**To my mind there is no more solemn passage in the whole Bible than the**

**one in Galations which says: "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for**

**whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to**

**the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the**

**Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." It is the awful**

**inevitableness of this that is so awe-inspiring. It is far worse than**

**any arbitrary punishment; for punishment can sometimes be averted, but**

**there is no possibility of altering the working of a natural law such**

**as this.**

**In a Catechism I saw were the following questions and answers:**

**Q. What is the reward for generosity?**

**A. More generosity.**

**Q. What is the punishment for meanness?**

**A. More meanness.**

**No Catechism ever spoke more truly. We all of us know it for ourselves.**

**In the parable of the talents our Lord illustrates this inevitable law.**

**The condemnation on the unfaithful servant may have sometimes seemed to**

**us unfair, but it was only the reaping of what that servant had sowed.**

**"Take therefore the talent from him and give it unto him which hath ten**

**talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have**

**abundance: but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that**

**which he hath." This is no arbitrary pronouncement, but is simply a**

**revelation of the inherent nature of things from which none of us can**

**escape.**

**But in order to be laborers together with God, we must not only build**

**with His materials but also by His processes, and of these we are often**

**very ignorant. Our idea of building is of hard laborious work done in**

**the sweat of our brow; but God's idea is far different. Paul tells us**

**what it is. "We all," he says, "with open face beholding as in a glass**

**the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to**

**glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Our work is to "behold," and**

**as we behold the Lord effects the marvelous transformation, and we are**

**"changed into the same image by the Spirit of the Lord." This means, of**

**course, to behold not in our earthly sense of merely looking at a**

**thing, but in the divine sense of really seeing the thing. We are to**

**behold with our spiritual eyes the glory of the Lord, and are to**

**continue beholding it. The glory of the Lord does not mean, however, a**

**great shine or halo. The real glory of the Lord is the glory of what He**

**is and of what He does--the glory of character. And it is this we are**

**to behold.**

**Let me give an illustration. Someone offends me, and I am tempted to**

**get angry and retaliate. But I look at Christ and think of what He**

**would have done, and dwell upon the thought of His gentleness and**

**meekness and His love for the offending one; and, as I look, I begin to**

**want to be like Him, and I ask in faith that I may be made a "partaker**

**of his nature," and anger and revenge die out of my heart, and I love**

**my enemy and long to serve him.**

**It is by this sort of beholding Christ that we are to be changed into**

**His image; and the nearer we keep to Him the more rapid the change will**

**be.**

**I have heard of a wonderful mirror known to science, which is called**

**the parabolic mirror. It is a hollow cone lined with a mirror all over**

**its inside surface. It possesses the power of focusing rays of light in**

**different degrees of intensity in proportion to the increasing nearness**

**to its meeting point at the top end of the cone, the power being more**

**and more intense as the terminal point is approached. It has been**

**discovered by science that at a certain stage in this advance toward**

**the interior point where all the sides of the mirror meet in absolute**

**oneness, the power of the focus concentrates all the light-giving**

**properties of the sun's rays into such an intense brilliancy, as to**

**make visible things never before discerned by the human eye, rendering**

**even flesh transparent, and enabling us to see through the outer**

**covering of our bodies to the inner operations beneath.**

**Advancing a little farther into the interior of our mirror, the heat**

**properties of the sun's rays are so concentrated as to generate a heat**

**sufficient to melt iron in sixteen seconds, and to dissipate in**

**fourteen seconds the alloy of gold, leaving only the solid globule of**

**the pure metal.**

**Advancing farther still, the photographing properties of the sunlight**

**are so concentrated as to impress an ineffaceable image of the mirror**

**upon anything that is passed for only one second through the focus.**

**Advancing still farther, nearly to the point of oneness, the**

**magnetizing powers of light are so concentrated that anything exposed**

**to it for a single instant becomes a powerful magnet, drawing afterward**

**all things to itself.**

**Whether all this is scientifically correct or not, I am not enough of a**

**scientist to know, but at least it will serve as an allegory to show**

**the progress of the soul as it is changed from glory to glory in its**

**evolution "into his image."**

**First, as we behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we come to**

**the light focus, which reveals our sinfulness and our need. "Then spake**

**Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that**

**followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of**

**life."**

**Second, as we draw closer, we reach the heat focus, where all our dross**

**and reprobate silver is burned up. For He is like a refiner's fire, and**

**like fuller's soap: and "he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of**

**silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold**

**and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in**

**righteousness."**

**Third, as we draw closer still, we come to the photographing focus,**

**where the image of Christ is indelibly impressed upon our souls, and we**

**are made like Him because we see Him as He is. "We know that when he**

**shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."**

**Fourth and finally, as we come to the point of oneness, we reach the**

**magnetic focus, where our character is so conformed to Christ, that men**

**seeing it will be irresistibly drawn to glorify our Father which is in**

**Heaven.**

**If we would be conformed to the image of Christ, then we must live**

**closer and ever closer to Him. We must become better and better**

**acquainted with His character and His ways; we must look at things**

**through His eyes, and judge all things by His standards.**

**It is not by effort or by wrestling that this conformity is to be**

**accomplished; it is by assimilation. According to a natural law, we**

**grow like those with whom we associate, and the stronger character**

**always exercises the controlling influence. And, as divine law is all**

**one with natural law, only working in a higher sphere and with more**

**unhindered power, it need not seem mysterious to us that we should**

**become like Christ by a spiritual union with Him.**

**But again I must repeat that this union with Christ cannot come by our**

**own efforts, no matter how strenuous they may be. Christ is to "dwell**

**in our hearts by faith," and He can dwell there in no other way. Paul,**

**when he tells us that he was crucified with Christ, says: "Nevertheless**

**I live: yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now**

**live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave**

**himself for me."**

**"Christ liveth in me," this is the transforming secret. If Christ**

**liveth in me, His life must, in the very nature of things, be**

**manifested in my mortal flesh, and I cannot fail to be changed from**

**glory to glory into His image.**

**Our Lord's teaching about this is very emphatic. "Abide in me," He**

**says, "and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except**

**it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the**

**vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the**

**same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."**

**This is literally true. If we abide in Him, and He in us, we can no**

**more help bring forth fruit than can the branches of a flourishing**

**vine. In the very nature of things the fruit must come.**

**But we cannot take the "old man" into Christ. We must put off the old**

**man with his deeds before we can "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." And**

**the apostle, in writing to the Colossians, bases his exhortations to**

**holiness of life on the fact that they had done this. "Lie not one to**

**another," he says, "seeing that ye have put off the old man with his**

**deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after**

**the image of him that created him."**

**Sin must disappear at the incoming of Christ; and no soul that is not**

**prepared to surrender all that is contrary to His will can hope to**

**welcome Him. The "old man" must be put off if the new man is to reign.**

**But both the putting off and the putting on must be done by faith.**

**There is no other way. As I have tried to explain elsewhere, we must**

**move our personality, our ego, our will out of self and into Christ. We**

**must reckon ourselves to be dead to self, and alive only to God.**

**"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto**

**God through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Neither yield ye your members as**

**instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God**

**as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments**

**of righteousness unto God."**

**The same kind of reckoning of faith, which brings the forgiveness of**

**sins within our grasp, brings also this union with Christ. To those who**

**do not understand the law of faith, this will no doubt be as great a**

**mystery as the secrets of gravitation were before the law of**

**gravitation was discovered; but, to those who understand it, the law of**

**faith works as unerringly and as definitely as the law of gravitation,**

**and produces its results as certainly. No one can read the seventh**

**chapter of Hebrews and fail to see that faith is an all-conquering**

**force. I believe myself it is the creative force of the universe. It is**

**the higher law that controls all the lower laws beneath it; and what**

**looks like a miracle is simply the working of this higher controlling**

**law.**

**Faith is, as I say, the law of Creation. "Through faith we understand**

**that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which**

**are seen were not made of things which are seen were not made of things**

**which do appear." We are told that "God spake and it was done, he**

**commanded and it stood fast." And our Lord tells us that if we have**

**faith we can do the same. "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have**

**faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto**

**this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and**

**shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which**

**he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.**

**Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray,**

**believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."**

**Faith, we are told, calls those things which be not as though they**

**were; and, in so calling them, brings them into being. Therefore,**

**although we cannot see any tangible sign of change when by faith we put**

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

**by faith put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness**

**and true holiness, yet nevertheless, it has really been done, and faith**

**has accomplished it. I cannot explain this theologically, but I can**

**fearlessly assert that it is a tremendous practical reality; and that**

**those souls who abandon the self-life, and give themselves up the Lord**

**to be fully possessed by Him, do find that He takes possession of the**

**inner springs of their being, and works there to will and to do of His**

**good pleasure.**

**Paul prayed for the Ephesians that "Christ might dwell in their hearts**

**by faith," and this is the whole secret of being conformed to His**

**image. If Christ is dwelling in my heart I must necessarily be**

**Christlike. I cannot be unkind, or irritable, or self-seeking, or**

**dishonest; but His gentleness, and sweetness, and tender compassion,**

**and loving submission to the will of His Father must be manifested in**

**my daily walk and conversation.**

**We shall not be fully changed into the image of Christ until He shall**

**appear, and we shall "see him as he is." But meanwhile, according to**

**our measure, the life of Jesus is to be made "manifest in our mortal**

**flesh." Is it made manifest in ours? Are we so "conformed to the image"**

**of Christ that men in seeing us see a glimpse of Him also?**

**A Methodist minister's wife told me that at one time, when they had**

**moved to a new place, her little boy came in after the first afternoon**

**of play, and exclaimed joyfully, "Oh, Mother, I have found such a**

**lovely, good little girl to play with, that I never want to go away**

**again."**

**"I am very glad, darling," said the loving mother, happy over her**

**child's happiness. "What is the little girl's name?"**

**"Oh," replied the child, with a sudden solemnity, "I think her name is**

**Jesus."**

**"Why, Frank!" exclaimed the horrified mother, "what do you mean?"**

**"Well, Mother," he said deprecatingly, "she was so lovely that I did**

**not know what she could be called but Jesus."**

**Are our lives so Christlike that anyone could have such a thought of**

**us? Is it patent to all around us that we have been with Jesus? Is it**

**not, alas, often just the contrary? Are not some of us so cross and**

**uncomfortable in our living that exactly the opposite thing would have**

**to be said about us?**

**Paul says we are to be "epistles of Christ," known and read of all men,**

**"written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in**

**tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." I firmly believe**

**that if every child of God, all the world over, would begin from this**

**day onward to be an "epistle of Christ," living a truly Christlike life**

**at home and abroad, it would not be a month before the churches would**

**all be crowded with inquirers, coming in to see what was the religion**

**that could so transform human nature into something divine.**

**The world is full of unbelievers in the reality of the Christian**

**religion, and nothing will convince them but facts which they cannot**

**disprove. We must meet them with transformed lives. If they see that**

**whereas once we were cross, now we are sweet; once we were proud, now**

**we are humble; once we were fretful, now we are patient and calm; and**

**if we are able to testify that it is the religion of Christ that has**

**wrought this change, they cannot help but be impressed.**

**A Christian man who, on account of his earnest work, had gained a great**

**reputation for piety, had unfortunately gained an equally great**

**reputation for a bad temper and a sharp tongue. But at last, for some**

**reason which no one could understand, a change seemed to come over him,**

**and his temper and his tongue became as sweet and as gentle as they had**

**before been violent and sharp. His friends watched and wondered, and at**

**last one of them approached him on the subject, and asked him if he had**

**changed his religion. "No," replied the man, "I have not changed my**

**religion, but I have at last let my religion change me."**

**How much has our religion changed us?**

**It is very easy to have a church religion, or a prayer meeting**

**religion, or a Christian-work religion; but it is altogether a**

**different thing to have an everyday religion. To "show piety at home"**

**is one of the most vital parts of Christianity, but it is also one far**

**too rare; and it is not at all an uncommon thing to find Christians who**

**"do their righteousness" before outsiders "to be seen of men," but who**

**fail lamentably in showing their piety at home. I knew a father of a**

**family who was so powerful in prayer at the weekly prayer meeting, and**

**so impressive in exhortation that the whole church was much edified by**

**his piety; but who, when he went home after the meetings, was so cross**

**and ugly that his wife and family were afraid to say a word in his**

**presence.**

**"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for**

**they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the**

**streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have**

**their reward." These words, "They have their reward," seem to me among**

**the most solemn in the Bible. What we do to be seen of men is seen of**

**men, and that is all there is to it. There is no conformity to the**

**image of Christ in this sort of righteousness that bears everyday**

**trials cheerfully, and is patient under home provacations; that returns**

**good for evil, and meets all the homely friction of daily life with**

**sweetness and gentleness; that suffereth long and is kind; that envieth**

**not; that flaunteth not itself; that is not puffed up; that seeketh not**

**its own; is not easily provoked; and thinketh no evil; that beareth all**

**things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.**

**This is what it means to be conformed to the image of Christ! Do we**

**know anything of such righteousness as this?**

**We sometimes talk about performing what we call our "religious duties,"**

**meaning by this expression our church services, or our stated seasons**

**of devotion, or our Christian work of one sort or another; and we never**

**dream that it is far more our "religious duty" to be Christlike in our**

**daily walk and conversation than to be faithful even in these other**

**things, desirable as they may be in themselves.**

**The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was a righteousness of**

**words and phrases and of ceremonial observances, and this is often very**

**impressive to outsiders. But, because it was nothing more, our Lord**

**condemns it in unmeasured terms: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,**

**hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise, and cummin, and have**

**omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith:**

**these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe**

**unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto**

**whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are**

**within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." And He adds:**

**"Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are**

**full of hypocrisy and iniquity."**

**It is very easy to say beautiful things about the religious life, but**

**to be what we say is an altogether different matter. I know a Sunday**

**school teacher who had been teaching her scholars a great deal about**

**casting all your cares on the Lord, and trusting Him in times of trial;**

**and they had been very much impressed. But at last a trouble came into**

**the life of this teacher, and some of her scholars saw her in her own**

**home while it lasted. To their amazement and distress they saw her**

**fretting, and chafing, and worrying, and complaining, acting, in short,**

**just as if there was no God to trust, or as if His ways were not ways**

**of love and goodness. It was all "object lesson" to those children that**

**undid all the good which that teacher's previous teaching had seemed**

**likely to accomplish; and one of them, who was very observant, said to**

**me triumphantly, "I thought it could not be true while Miss \_\_\_\_\_ was**

**telling us about how we might trust the Lord for everything; and now I**

**see it was only goody talk, for she doesn't do it herself."**

**A cross Christian, or an anxious one, a discouraged gloomy Christian, a**

**doubting Christian, a complaining Christian, an exacting Christian, a**

**selfish, cruel, hardhearted Christian, a self-indulgent Christian, a**

**Christian with a sharp tongue or a bitter spirit; a Christian, in**

**short, who is not Christlike may preach to the winds with as much hope**

**of success, as to preach to his own family or friends, who see him as**

**he is. There is no escape from this inevitable law of things, and we**

**may as well recognize it at once. If we want our loved ones to trust**

**the Lord, volumes of talk about it will not be one-thousandth part as**

**convincing to them as the sight of a little real trust on our own part**

**in the time of need. The longest prayer and the loudest preaching are**

**of no avail in any family circle, however they may do in the pulpit,**

**unless there is on the part of the preacher a living out of the things**

**preached.**

**Some Christians seem to think that the fruits which the Bible calls for**

**are some form of outward religious work, such as holding meetings,**

**visiting the poor, conduction charitable institutions, and so forth.**

**Whereas the fact is that the Bible scarcely mentions these at all as**

**fruits of the Spirit, but declares that the fruit of the Spirit is**

**love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,**

**meekness, temperance. A Christlike character must necessarily be the**

**fruit of Christ's indwelling. Other things will no doubt be the outcome**

**of this character; but first and foremost comes the character, or all**

**the rest is but a hollow sham. A late writer has said: "A man can never**

**be more than his character makes him. A man can never do more nor**

**better than deliver or embody that which his character. Nothing**

**valuable can come out of a man that is not first in the man. Character**

**must stand behind and back up everything--the sermon, the poem, the**

**picture, the book. None of them is worth a straw without it."**

**In order to become conformed to the image of Christ, we must of**

**necessity be made "partakers of the divine nature." And, where this is**

**the case, that divine nature must necessarily manifest itself. Our**

**tastes, our wishes, our purposes will become like Christ's tastes, and**

**wishes, and purposes; we shall change eyes with Him, and see things as**

**He sees them. This is inevitable; for where the divine nature is, its**

**fruits cannot fail to be manifest; and, where they are not manifest, we**

**are forced to conclude that that individual, no matter how loud his**

**professions, has not yet been made a partaker of the divine nature.**

**I can hear someone asking, But do you really mean to say that, in order**

**to be made partakers of the divine nature, we must cease from our own**

**efforts entirely, and must simply by faith put on Christ, and must let**

**Him live in us and work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure?**

**And do you believe He will then actually do it?**

**To this I answer most emphatically, Yes, I mean just that. I mean that**

**if we abandon ourselves entirely to Him, He comes to abide in us, and**

**is Himself our life. We must commit our whole lives to Him, our**

**thoughts, our words, our daily walk, our downsittings, our uprisings.**

**By faith we must abandon ourselves, and, as it were, move over into**

**Christ, and abide in Him. By faith we must put off the old man, and by**

**faith we must put on the new man. By faith we must reckon ourselves**

**dead unto sin, and alive unto God; as truly dead as alive. By faith we**

**must realize that our daily life is Christ living in us; and, ceasing**

**from our own works, we must suffer Him to work in us to will and to do**

**of His good pleasure. It is no longer truth about Him that must fill**

**our hearts, but it is Himself--the living, loving, glorious Christ--who**

**will, if we let Him, in very deed make us His dwelling place, and who**

**will reign and rule within us, and "subdue all things unto himself."**

**"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things**

**are passed away; behold, all things are become new."**

**It was no mere figure of speech when our Lord in that wonderful Sermon**

**on the Mount said to His disciples: "Be ye therefore perfect even as**

**your Father in heaven is perfect." He meant, of course, according to**

**our measure, but He meant that reality of being conformed to His image**

**to which we have been predestined. And in the Epistle to the Hebrews we**

**are shown how it is to be brought about. "Now the God of peace, that**

**brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the**

**sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect**

**in every good work to do his will; working in you that which is well**

**pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory forever**

**and ever. Amen."**

**It is to be by His working in us, and not by our working in ourselves,**

**that this purpose of God in our creation is to be accomplished; and if**

**it should look as regards some of us that we are too far removed from**

**any conformity to the image of Christ for such a transformation ever to**

**be wrought, we must remember that our Maker is not finished making us**

**yet. The day will come, if we do not hinder, when the work begun in**

**Genesis shall be finished in Revelation, and the whole Creation, as**

**well as ourselves, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption**

**into the glorious liberty of the children of God.**

**"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain**

**together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have**

**the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within**

**ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our**

**body."**

**Tis, shall Thy will be done for me? or mine,**

**And I be made a thing, not after Thine;**

**My own, and full of paltriest pretense?**

**Shall I be born of God, or of mere man?**

**Be made like Christ, or on some other plan?**

**What though Thy work in me transcends my sense,**

**Too fine, too high for me to understand.**

**I trust entirely. Oh, Lord, with Thy labor grand!**

**I have not knowledge, wisdom, insight, thought,**

**Nor understanding fit to justify**

**Thee in Thy work, O Perfect. Thou hast brought**

**Me up to this, and lo! what thou hast wrought**

**I cannot call it good. But I can cry**

**"O enemy, the Maker hath not done;**

**One day thou shalt behold, and from the sight wilt run."**

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**Chapter 17**

**God Is Enough**

**"My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him. He**

**only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be**

**moved. In God is my salvation, and my glory: the rock of my strength**

**and my refuge is in God."**

**The last and greatest lesson that the soul has to learn is the fact**

**that God, and God alone, is enough for all its needs. This is the**

**lesson that all His dealings with us are meant to teach; and this is**

**the crowning discovery of our whole Christian life. God is enough!**

**We have been considering in this book some aspects of the character and**

**the ways of God as revealed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ; and also**

**some of the mistakes which prevent us from appropriating the fullness**

**that is ours in Him. And now in conclusion I want to tell, as best I**

**can, what seems to me the outcome of the whole matter.**

**If God is what He would seem to be from the revealings we have been**

**considering; if He is indeed the "God of all comfort," as we have seen;**

**if He is our Shepherd; if He is really and truly our Father; if, in**

**short, all the many aspects we have been studying of His character and**

**His ways are actually true, then we must, it seems to me, come to the**

**positive conviction that He is, in Himself alone, enough for all our**

**possible needs, and that we may safely rest in Him absolutely and**

**forever.**

**Most Christians have, I suppose, sung more often than they could count,**

**these words in one of our most familiar hymns:**

**Thou, O Christ, art all I want,**

**More than all in Thee I find.**

**But I doubt whether all of us could honestly say that the words have**

**expressed any reality in our own experience. Christ has not been all we**

**want. We have wanted a great many things besides Him. We have wanted**

**fervent feelings about Him, or realizations of His presence with us, or**

**an interior revelation of His love; or else we have demanded**

**satisfactory schemes of doctrine, or successful Christian work, or**

**something of one sort or another, besides Himself, that will constitute**

**a personal claim upon Him. Just Christ Himself, Christ alone, without**

**the addition of any of our experiences concerning Him, has not been**

**enough for us in spite of all our singing; and we do not even see how**

**it is possible that He could be enough.**

**The psalmist said in those old days: "My soul, wait thou only upon God:**

**for my expectation is from him." But now the Christian says, "My soul,**

**wait thou upon my sound doctrines, for my expectation is from them";**

**or, "My soul, wait thou on my good disposition and feelings, or upon my**

**righteous works, or upon my fervent prayers, or upon my earnest**

**striving, for my expectation is from these." To wait upon God only**

**seems one of the unsafest things they can do, and to have their**

**expectation from Him alone is like building on the sand. They reach out**

**on every side for something to depend on, and, not until everything**

**else fails, will they put their trust in God alone. George Macdonald**

**says: "We look upon God as our last and feeblest resource. We only go**

**to Him when we have nowhere else to go. And then we learn that the**

**storms of life have driven us, not upon the rocks, but into the desired**

**haven."**

**No soul can be really at rest until it has given up all dependence on**

**everything else and has been forced to depend on the Lord alone. As**

**long as our expectation is from other things, nothing but**

**disappointment awaits us. Feelings may change, and will change with our**

**changing circumstances; doctrines and dogmas may be upset; Christian**

**work may come to naught; prayers may seem to lose their fervency;**

**promises may seem to fail; everything that we have believed in or**

**depended upon may seem to be swept away, and only God is left, just**

**God, the bare God, if I may be allowed the expression; simply and only**

**God.**

**We say sometimes, "If I could only find a promise to fit my case, I**

**could then be at rest." But promises may be misunderstood or**

**misapplied, and, at the moment when we are leaning all our weight upon**

**them, they may seem utterly to fail us. But the Promiser, who is behind**

**His promises, and is infinitely more than His promises, can never fail**

**nor change. The little child does not need to have any promises from**

**its mother to make it content; it has its mother herself, and she is**

**enough. Its mother is better than a thousand promises. In our highest**

**ideal of love or friendship, promises do not enter. One party may love**

**to make promises, just as our Lord does, but the other party does not**

**need them; the personality of lover or friend is better than all their**

**promises. And should every promise be wiped out of the Bible, we would**

**still have God left, and God would be enough. Again I repeat it, only**

**God, He Himself, just as He is, without the addition of anything on our**

**part, whether it be disposition or feelings, or experiences, or good**

**works, or sound doctrines, or any other thing either outward or inward.**

**"God only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense: I shall not be**

**moved."**

**I do not mean by this that we are not to have feelings, or experiences,**

**or revelations, or good works, or sound doctrines. We may have all of**

**these, but they must be the result of salvation, and never the**

**procuring cause; and they can never be depended upon as being any**

**indication of our spiritual condition. They are all things that come**

**and go, and are dependent often upon the state of our health, or the**

**condition of our surroundings, or even sometimes upon the quarter of**

**the wind. Some people, for instance, can never believe that God loves**

**them when the wind is in slightest degree as the groundwork for our**

**confidence or our joy, we are sure to come to grief. What I do mean is**

**that we are to hold ourselves absolutely independent of them all,**

**resting in only the grand, magnificent fact that God is, and that He is**

**our Saviour; our inner life prospers just as well and is just as**

**triumphant without these personal experiences or personal doings as it**

**is with them. We are to find God, the fact of God, sufficient for all**

**our spiritual needs, whether we feel ourselves to be in a desert or in**

**a fertile valley. We are to say with the prophet: "Although the**

**fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the**

**labor of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, the**

**flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the**

**stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my**

**salvation."**

**The soul is made for this, and can never find rest short of it. All**

**God's dealings with us, therefore, are shaped to this end; and He is**

**often obliged to deprive us of all joy in everything else in order that**

**He may force us to find our joy only and altogether in Himself. It is**

**all very well, perhaps, to rejoice in His promises, or to rejoice in**

**the revelations He may have granted us, or in the experiences we may**

**have realized; but to rejoice in the Promiser Himself--Himself**

**alone--without promises, or experiences, or revelations, this is**

**crowning point of Christian life; and this is the only place where we**

**can know the peace which passes all understanding, and which nothing**

**can disturb.**

**It is difficult to explain just what I mean. We have so accustomed**

**ourselves to consider all these accompaniments of the spiritual life as**

**being the spiritual life itself that it is hard to detach ourselves**

**from them. We cannot think that the Lord can be anything to us unless**

**we find in ourselves something to assure us of His love and His care.**

**And when we talk about finding our all in Him, we generally mean that**

**we find it in our feelings or our views about Him. If, for instance, we**

**feel a glow of love toward Him, then we can say heartily that He is**

**enough; but when this glow fails, as sooner or later it is almost sure**

**to do, then we no longer feel that we have found our all in Him. The**

**truth is that what satisfies us is not the Lord, but our own feelings**

**about the Lord. But we are not conscious of this; and consequently when**

**our feelings fail we think it is the Lord who has failed, and we are**

**plunged into darkness.**

**Of course, all this is very foolish, but it is such a common experience**

**that very few can see how foolish it is. Perhaps an illustration may**

**help us to clearer vision. Let us think of a man accused of a crime,**

**standing before a judge. Which would be the thing of moment for that**

**man: his own feelings toward the judge, or the judge's feelings toward**

**him? Would he spend his time watching his own emotions, and trying to**

**see whether he felt that the judge was favorable to him or would he**

**watch the judge and try to discover from his looks or his words whether**

**or not to expect a favorable judgment? Of course we will say at once**

**that the man's own feelings are not of the slightest account in the**

**matter, and that only the opinions and feelings of the judge are worth**

**a moment's thought. The man might have all the "glows" and all the**

**"experiences" conceivable, but these would avail absolutely nothing.**

**Upon the judge only would everything depend.**

**This is what we would call a self-evident fact.**

**In the same way, if we will only bring our common sense to bear upon**

**the subject, we cannot help seeing that the only really vital thing in**

**our relations with the Lord is, not what are our feelings toward Him,**

**but what are His feelings toward us. The man who is being tried must**

**find in the judge all he needs, if he is to find it at all. His**

**sufficiency cannot possibly be of himself, but it must be of the one**

**upon whom his fate depends. And our sufficiency, the apostle says, is**

**not of ourselves but of God.**

**This, then, is what I mean by God being enough. It is that we find in**

**Him, in the fact of His existence, and of His character, all that we**

**can possibly want for everything. God is, must be our answer to every**

**question and every cry of need. If there is any lack in the One who has**

**undertaken to save us, nothing supplementary we can do will avail to**

**make it up; and if there is no lack in Him, then He, of Himself and in**

**Himself, is enough.**

**I wish it were possible to make my meaning plain, for I believe it is**

**the secret of permanent deliverance from all the discomfort and unrest**

**of every Christian life. Your discomfort and unrest arise from your**

**strenuous but useless efforts to get up some satisfactory basis of**

**confidence within yourselves; such, for instance, as what you consider**

**to be the proper feelings, or the right amount of fervor or**

**earnestness, or at least, if nothing else, a sufficient degree of**

**interest in spiritual matters. And because none of these things are**

**ever satisfactory (and, I may tell you, never will be), it is**

**impossible for your religious life to be anything but uncomfortable.**

**But if we see that all our salvation from beginning to end depends on**

**the Lord alone; and if we have learned that He is able and willing to**

**do for us "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think," then**

**peace and comfort cannot fail to reign supreme. Everything depends upon**

**whether the Lord, in and of Himself, is enough for our salvation, or**

**whether other things must be added on our part to make Him sufficient.**

**The thing that helped me personally more than anything else to come to**

**a conviction that God was really enough for me was an experience I had**

**some years ago. It was at a time in my religious life when I was**

**passing through a great deal of questioning and perplexity, and I felt**

**that no Christian had ever had such peculiar difficulties as mine**

**before. There happened to be staying near me just then for a few weeks**

**a lady who was considered to be a deeply spiritual Christian, and to**

**whom I had been advised to apply for spiritual help. I summoned up my**

**courage, therefore, one afternoon and went to see her, pouring out my**

**troubles; I expected of course that she would take a deep interest in**

**me, and would be at great pains to do all she could to help me.**

**She listened patiently enough, and did not interrupt me; but when I had**

**finished my story, and had paused, expecting sympathy and**

**consideration, she simply said, "Yes, all you say may be very true, but**

**then, in spite of it all, there is God." I waited a few minutes for**

**something more, but nothing came, and my friend and teacher had the air**

**of having said all that was necessary.**

**"But," I continued, "surely you did not understand how very serious and**

**perplexing my difficulties are."**

**"Oh, yes, I did," replied my friend, "but then, as I tell you, there is**

**God." And I could not induce her to make any other answer. It seemed to**

**me most disappointing and unsatisfactory. I felt that my peculiar and**

**really harrowing experiences could not be met by anything so simple as**

**merely the statement, "Yes, but there is God." I knew God was there, of**

**course, but I felt I needed something more than just God; and I came to**

**the conclusion that my friend, for all her great reputation as a**

**spiritual teacher, was at any rate not able to grapple with a peculiar**

**case such as mine.**

**However, my need was so great that I did not give up with my first**

**trial, but went to her again and again, always with the hope that she**

**would sometime begin to understand the importance of my difficulties**

**and would give me adequate help. It was of no avail. I was never able**

**to draw forth any other answer. Always to everything would come the**

**simple reply, with an air of entirely dismissing the subject, "Yes, I**

**know; but there is God." And at last by dint of her continual**

**repetition I became convinced that my friend really and truly believed**

**that the mere fact of the existence of God, as the Creator and Redeemer**

**of mankind, and of me as a member of the race, was an all-sufficient**

**answer to every possible need of His creatures. And at last, because**

**she said it so often and seemed so sure, I began dimly to wonder**

**whether after all God might not be enough, even for my need,**

**overwhelming and secular as I felt it to be. From wondering I came**

**gradually to believing, that, being my Creator and Redeemer, He must be**

**enough; and at last a conviction burst upon me that He really was**

**enough, and my eyes were opened to the fact of the absolute and utter**

**all-sufficiency of God.**

**My troubles disappeared like magic, and I did nothing but wonder how I**

**could ever have been such an idiot as to be troubled by them, when all**

**the while there was God, the Almighty and all-seeing God, the God who**

**had created me, and was therefore on my side, and eager to care for me**

**and help me. I had found out that God was enough and my soul was at**

**rest.**

**The all-sufficiency of God ought to be as complete to the child of God**

**as the all-sufficiency of a good mother is to the child of that mother.**

**We all know the utter rest of the little child in the mother's presence**

**and the mother's love. That its mother is there is enough to make all**

**fears and all troubles disappear. It does not need the mother to make**

**any promises; she herself, just as she is, without promises and without**

**explanations, is all that the child needs.**

**My own experience as a child taught me this, beyond any possibility of**

**question. My mother was the remedy for all my own ills, and, I fully**

**believed, for the ills of the whole world, if only they could be**

**brought to her. And when anyone expressed doubts as to her capacity to**

**remedy everything, I remembered with what fine scorn I used to**

**annihilate them, by saying, "Ah! but you don't know my mother."**

**And now, when any tempest-tossed soul fails to see that God is enough,**

**I feel like saying, not with scorn, but with infinite pity, "Ah, dear**

**friend, you do not know God! Did you know Him, you could not help**

**seeing that He is the remedy for every need of your soul, and that He**

**is an all-sufficient remedy. God is enough, even though no promise may**

**seem to fit your case, nor any inward assurance give you confidence.**

**The Promiser is more than His promises; and His existence is a surer**

**ground of confidence than the most fervent inward feelings."**

**Oh, utter but the name of God**

**Down in the heart of hearts,**

**And see how from the soul at once**

**All anxious fear departs.**

**But someone may say, "All this is no doubt true, and I could easily**

**believe it, if I could only be sure it applied to me. But I am so**

**good-for-nothing and so full of sin, that I do not feel as if I had any**

**claim to such riches of grace."**

**All the more, if you are good-for-nothing and full of sin, have you a**

**claim on the all-sufficiency of God. Your very good-for-nothingness and**

**sinfulness are your loudest claims. As someone has said, it is only the**

**sinner that wants salvation who stands in the Saviour's path. And the**

**Bible declares that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;**

**not to save the righteous, not to save the fervent, not to save the**

**earnest workers, but simply and only to save sinners. Why then should**

**we spend our time and energies in trying to create a claim, which after**

**all is no claim, but only a hindrance.**

**As long as our attention is turned upon ourselves and our own**

**experiences, just so long is it turned away from the Lord. This is**

**plain common sense. As I have said elsewhere, we can only see the thing**

**we look at, and while we are looking at ourselves, we simply cannot**

**"behold God." It is not that He hides Himself; He is always there in**

**full view of all who look unto Him; but if we are looking in another**

**direction, we cannot expect to see Him.**

**Heretofore, it may be, our eyes have been so fixed upon ourselves that**

**all our interior questioning has been simply and only as regarded our**

**own condition. Is my love for God warm enough? Am I enough in earnest?**

**Are my feeling toward Him what they ought to be? Have I enough zeal? Do**

**I feel my need as I ought? And we have been miserable because we have**

**never been able to answer these questions satisfactorily. Although we**

**do not know it, it has been a mercy we never could answer them**

**satisfactorily, for, if we had, the self in us would have been exalted,**

**and we should have been filled with self-congratulation and pride.**

**If we want to see God, our interior questioning must be, not about**

**ourselves, but about Him. How does God feel toward me? Is His love for**

**me warm enough? Has He enough zeal? Does He feel my need deeply enough?**

**Is He sufficiently in earnest? Although these questions may seem**

**irreverent to some, they simply embody the doubts and fears of a great**

**many doubting hearts, and they only need to be asked in order to prove**

**the fact that these doubts and fears are in themselves the real**

**irreverence. We all know what would be the triumphant answers to such**

**questions. No doubts could withstand their testimony; and the soul that**

**asks and answers them honestly will be shut up to a profound and**

**absolute conviction that God is and must be enough.**

**"All things are yours," declares the apostle, "whether Paul, or**

**Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present,**

**or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is**

**God's." It would be impossible for any statement to be more**

**all-embracing. And all things are yours because you belong to Christ,**

**not because you are so good and so worthy, but simply and only because**

**you belong to Christ. All things we need are part of our inheritance in**

**Him, and they only await our claiming. Let our needs and difficulties**

**be as great as they may, there is in these "all things" a supply**

**exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.**

**Because He is, all must go right for us. Because the mother is, all**

**must go right, up to the measure of her ability, for her children; and**

**infinitely more must this be true of the Lord. To the child there is,**

**behind all that changes and can change, the one unchangeable fact of**

**the mother's existence. While the mother lives, the child must be cared**

**for; and, while God lives, His children must be cared for as well. What**

**else could He do, being what He is? Neglect, indifference,**

**forgetfulness, ignorance are all impossible to Him. He knows**

**everything, He cares about everything, He can manage everything, and He**

**loves us. What more could we ask?**

**God's saints in all ages have known this, and have realized that God**

**was enough for them. Job said out of the depths of sorrows and trials,**

**which few can equal, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."**

**David could say in the moment of his keenest anguish, "yea, though I**

**walk through the valley of the shadow of death," yet "I will fear no**

**evil, for thou art with me." And again he could say: "God is our refuge**

**and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we**

**fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried**

**into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be**

**troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof ... God**

**is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and**

**that right early."**

**Paul could say triumphantly in the midst of many and grievous trials:**

**"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor**

**principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor**

**height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us**

**from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

**Therefore, O doubting and sorrowful Christian hearts, in the face of**

**all we have learned concerning the God of all comfort, cannot your**

**realize with Job, and David, and Paul, and the saints of all ages that**

**nothing else is needed to quiet all your fears, but just this, that God**

**is. His simple existence is all the warrant your need requires for its**

**certain relieving. Nothing can separate you from His love, absolutely**

**nothing, neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor**

**powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth,**

**nor any other creature. Every possible contingency is provided for**

**here; and not one of them can separate you from the love of God which**

**is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**After such a declaration as this, how can any of us dare to question or**

**doubt God's love? And, since He loves us, He cannot exist and fail to**

**help us. Do we not know by our own experience what an imperative**

**necessity it is for love to pour itself out in blessing on the ones it**

**loves; and can we not understand that God, who is love, who is, if I**

**may say so, made out of love, simply cannot help blessing us. We do not**

**need to beg Him to bless us, He simply cannot help it.**

**Therefore God is enough! God is enough for time, God is enough for**

**eternity. God is enough!**

**Only to sit and think of God,**

**Oh, what a joy it is!**

**To think the thought, to breathe the name**

**Earth has no higher bliss.**

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