

What Saith the Scripture?

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C. H. Spurgeon's
Faith's Checkbook

A Daily Devotional

for the month of

MAY

May 1

Full of Song

"The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands"

(Isaiah 55:12).

When sin is pardoned, our greatest sorrow is ended, and our truest pleasure begins. Such is the joy which the LORD bestows upon His reconciled ones, that it overflows and fills all nature with delight. The material world has latent music in it, and a renewed heart knows how to bring it out and make it vocal. Creation is the organ, and a gracious man finds out its keys, lays his hand thereon, and wakes the whole system of the universe to the harmony of praise. Mountains and hills, and other great objects, are, as it were, the bass of the chorus; while the trees of the wood, and all things that have life, take up the air of the melodious song.

When God's Word is made to prosper among us and souls are saved, then everything seems full of song. When we hear the confessions of young believers and the testimonies of well-instructed saints, we are made so happy that we must praise the LORD, and then it seems as if rocks and hills and woods and fields echo our joy-notes and turn the world into an orchestra. LORD, on this happy May Day, lead me out into thy tuneful world as rich in praise as a lark in full song.

May 2

Spiritual Sowing

"He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap Life Everlasting"

(Galatians 6:8).

Sowing looks like a losing business, for we put good corn into the ground never to see it anymore.

Sowing to the Spirit seems a very fanciful, dreamy business; for we deny ourselves and apparently get nothing for it. Yet if we sow to the Spirit by studying to live unto God, seeking to obey the will of God, and laying ourselves out to promote His honor, we shall not sow in vain. Life shall be our reward, even everlasting life. This we enjoy here as we enter into the knowledge of God, communion with God, and enjoyment of God. This life flows on like an ever-deepening, ever-widening river till it bears us to the ocean of infinite felicity, where the life of God is ours forever and ever.

Let us not this day sow to our flesh, for the harvest will be corruption, since flesh always tends that way; but with holy self-conquest let us live for the highest, purest, and most spiritual ends, seeking to honor our most holy LORD by obeying His most gracious Spirit. What a harvest will that be when we reap life everlasting! What sheaves of endless bliss will be reaped! What a festival will that harvest be! LORD, make us such reapers, for thy Son's sake.

May 3

Listen for the Signal

"And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines" (2 Samuel 5:24).

There are signs of the LORD's moving which should move us. The Spirit of God blows where He listeth, and we hear the sound thereof. Then is the time for us to be more than ever astir. We must seize the golden opportunity and make the most we can of it. It is ours to fight the Philistines at all times; but when the LORD Himself goes out before us, then we should be specially valiant in the war.

The breeze stirred the tops of the trees, and David and his men took this for the signal for an onslaught, and at their advance the LORD Himself smote the Philistines. Oh, that this day the LORD may give us an opening to speak for Him with many of our friends! Let us be on the watch to avail ourselves of the hopeful opening when it comes. Who knows but this may be a day of good tidings; a season of soul-winning. Let us keep our ear open to hear the rustle of the wind and our minds ready to obey the signal. Is not this promise, "Then shall the LORD go out before thee," a sufficient encouragement to play the man? Since the LORD goes before us, we dare not hold back.

May 4

Victory in Reverses

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7:8).

This may express the feelings of a man or woman downtrodden and oppressed. Our enemy may put out our light for a season. There is sure hope for us in the LORD; and if we are trusting in Him and holding fast our integrity, our season of downcasting and darkness will soon be over. The insults of

the foe are only for a moment. The LORD will soon turn their laughter into lamentation and our sighing into singing.

What if the great enemy of souls should for a while triumph over us, as he has triumphed over better men than we are; yet let us take heart, for we shall overcome him before long. We shall rise from our fall, for our God has not fallen, and He will lift us up. We shall not abide in darkness, although for the moment we sit in it; for our LORD is the fountain of light, and He will soon bring us a joyful day. Let us not despair or even doubt. One turn of the wheel, and the lowest will be at the top. Woe unto those who laugh now, for they shall mourn and weep when their boasting is turned into everlasting contempt. But blessed are all holy mourners, for they shall be divinely comforted.

May 5

Why Remain Captive

"The LORD thy God will turn thy captivity"
(Deuteronomy 30:3).

God's own people may sell themselves into captivity by sin. A very bitter fruit is this, of an exceeding bitter root. What a bondage it is when the child of God is sold under sin, held in chains by Satan, deprived of his liberty, robbed of his power in prayer and his delight in the LORD! Let us watch that we come not into such bondage; but if this has already happened to us, let us by no means despair.

But we cannot be held in slavery forever. The LORD Jesus has paid too high a price for our redemption to leave us in the enemy's hand. The way to freedom is, "Return unto the LORD thy God." Where we first found salvation we shall find it again. At the foot of Christ's cross, confessing sin, we shall find pardon and deliverance. Moreover, the LORD will have us obey His voice according to all that He has commanded us, and we must do this with all our heart and all our soul, and then our captivity shall end.

Often depression of spirit and great misery of soul are removed as soon as we quit our idols and bow ourselves in obedience before the living God. We need not be captives. We may return to Zion's citizenship, and that speedily. LORD, turn our captivity!

May 6

Cure for Envy

"Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cast off"
(Proverbs 23:17-18).

When we see the wicked prosper we are apt to envy them. When we hear the noise of their mirth and our own spirit is heavy, we half think that they have the best of it. This is foolish and sinful. If we knew them better, and specially if we remembered their end, we should pity them.

The cure for envy lies in living under a constant sense of the divine presence, worshiping God and communing with Him all the day long, however long the day may seem. True religion lifts the soul into a higher region, where the judgment becomes more clear and the desires are more elevated. The more of heaven there is in our lives, the less of earth we shall covet. The fear of God casts out envy of men.

The deathblow of envy is a calm consideration of the future. The wealth and glory of the ungodly are a vain show. This pompous appearance flashes out for an hour and then is extinguished. What is the prosperous sinner the better for his prosperity when judgment overtakes him? As for the godly man, his end is peace and blessedness, and none can rob him of his joy; wherefore, let him forgo envy and be filled with sweet content.

May 7

Let No Evil Remain

"And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of His anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as He hath sworn unto thy fathers"
(Deuteronomy 13:17).

Israel must conquer idolatrous cities and destroy all the spoil, regarding all that had been polluted by idolatry as an accursed thing to be burned with fire. Now, sin of all sorts must be treated by Christians in the same manner. We must not allow a single evil habit to remain. It is now war to the knife with sins of all sorts and sizes, whether of the body, the mind, or the spirit. We do not look upon this giving up of evil as deserving mercy, but we regard it as a fruit of the grace of God, which we would on no account miss.

When God causes us to have no mercy on our sins, then He has great mercy on us. When we are angry with evil, God is no more angry with us. When we multiply our efforts against iniquity, the LORD multiplies our blessings. The way of peace, of growth, of safety, of joy in Christ Jesus will be found by following out these words: "There shall nought of the cursed thing cleave to thine hand." LORD, purify me this day. Compassion, prosperity, increase, and joy will surely be given to those who put away sin with solemn resolution.

May 8

Help Wanted

"Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive"
(Matthew 20:7).

Yes, there is work in Christ's vineyard for old bodies. It is the eleventh hour, and yet He will let us work. What grace is this! Surely every old man ought to jump at this invitation! After men are

advanced in years nobody wants them as servants; they go from shop to shop, and employers look at their gray hairs and shake their heads. But Jesus will engage old people and give them good wages, too! This is mercy indeed. LORD, help the aged to enlist in Thy service without an hour's delay.

But will the LORD pay wages to worn-out old men? Do not doubt it. He says He will give you what is right if you will work in His field. He will surely give you grace here and glory hereafter. He will grant present comfort and future rest; strength equal to your day and a vision of glory when the night of death comes on. All these the LORD Jesus will as freely give to the aged convert as to one who enters His service in his youth.

Let me tell this to some unsaved old man or old woman and pray the LORD to bless it for Jesus' sake. Where can I find such persons? I will be on the lookout for them and kindly tell them the news.

May 9

Trust Means Joy

"For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His Holy Name"
(Psalm 33:21).

The root of faith produces the flower of heart-joy. We may not at the first rejoice, but it comes in due time. We trust the LORD when we are sad, and in due season He so answers our confidence that our faith turns to fruition, and we rejoice in the LORD. Doubt breeds distress, but trust means joy in the long run.

The assurance expressed by the psalmist in this verse is really a promise held out in the hands of holy confidence. Oh, for grace to appropriate it. If we do not rejoice at this moment, yet we shall do so, as surely as David's God is our God.

Let us meditate upon the LORD's holy name that we may trust Him the better and rejoice the more readily. He is in character holy, just, true, gracious, faithful, and unchanging. Is not such a God to be trusted? He is all wise, almighty, and everywhere present; can we not cheerfully rely upon Him? Yes, we will do so at once and do so without reserve. Jehovah-Jireh will provide; Jehovah-Shalom will send peace; Jehovah-Tsidkenu will justify; Jehovah-Shammah will be forever near; and in Jehovah-Nissi we will conquer every foe. They that know Thy name will trust Thee; and they that trust Thee will rejoice in Thee, O LORD.

May 10

Fear Only God

"So that we may boldly say, The LORD is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"
(Hebrews 13:6).

Because God will never leave nor forsake us, we may well be content with such things as we have.

Since the LORD is ours, we cannot be left without a friend, a treasure, and a dwelling place. This assurance may make us feel quite independent of men. Under such high patronage we do not feel tempted to cringe before our fellowmen and ask of them permission to call our lives our own; but what we say we boldly say and defy contradiction.

He who fears God has nothing else to fear. We should stand in such awe of the living LORD that all the threats that can be used by the proudest persecutor should have no more effect upon us than the whistling of the wind. Man in these days cannot do so much against us as he could when the apostle wrote the verse at the head of this page. Racks and stakes are out of fashion. Giant Pope cannot burn the pilgrims now. If the followers of false teachers try cruel mockery and scorn, we do not wonder at it, for the men of this world cannot love the heavenly seed. What then? We must bear the world's scorn. It breaks no bones. God helping us, let us be bold; and when the world rages, let it rage, but let us not fear it.

May 11

Wait for the Finals

"Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last"
(Genesis 49:19).

Some of us have been like the tribe of Gad. Our adversaries for a while were too many for us; they came upon us like a troop. Yes, and for the moment they overcame us; and they exulted greatly because of their temporary victory. Thus they only proved the first part of the family heritage to be really ours, for Christ's people, like Dan, shall have a troop overcoming them. This being overcome is very painful, and we should have despaired if we had not by faith believed the second line of our father's benediction, "He shall overcome at the last." "All's well that ends well," said the world's poet; and he spoke the truth. A war is to be judged, not by first success or defeats, but by that which happens "at the last." The LORD will give to truth and righteousness victory "at the last"; and, as Mr. Bunyan says, that means forever, for nothing can come after the last.

What we need is patient perseverance in well-doing, calm confidence in our glorious Captain. Christ, our LORD Jesus, would teach us His holy art of setting the face like a flint to go through with work or suffering till we can say, "It is finished." Hallelujah. Victory! Victory! We believe the promise. "He shall overcome at the last."

May 12

Servants Honored

"Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that waiteth on his master shall be honored"
(Proverbs 27:18).

He who tends the fig tree has figs for his pains, and he who waits on a good master has honor as his

reward. Truly the LORD Jesus is the very best of masters, and it is an honor to be allowed to do the least act for His sake. To serve some lords is to watch over a crab tree and eat the crabs as one's wages; but to serve the LORD Jesus is to keep a fig tree of the sweetest figs. His service is in itself delight, continuance in it is promotion, success in it is blessedness below, and the reward for it is glory above.

Our greatest honors will be gathered in that season when the figs will be ripe, even in the next world. Angels who are now our servitors will bear us home when our day's work is done. Heaven, where Jesus is, will be our honorable mansion, eternal bliss our honorable portion, and the LORD Himself our honorable companion. Who can imagine the full meaning of this promise: "He that waiteth on his master shall be honored"?

LORD, help me to wait upon my Master. Let me leave all idea of honor to the hour when Thou Thyself shalt honor me. May the Holy Spirit make me a lowly, patient worker and waiter!

May 13

Day Is at Hand

"And I will give him the Morning Star"
(Revelation 2:28).

Until the day break and the shadows flee away, what a blessing it is to see in Jesus "the morning star"! I remember when we read in the newspapers the idle tale that the star of Bethlehem had again appeared. On inquiry we found that it was only "the morning star"; but no great mistake had been made after all.

It is best to see Jesus as the sun; but when we cannot do so, the next best thing is to see Him as that star which prophesies the day and shows that the eternal light is near at hand. If I am not today all that I hope to be, yet I see Jesus, and that assures me that I shall one day be like Him. A sight of Jesus by faith is the pledge of beholding Him in His glory and being transformed into His image. If I have not at this hour all the light and joy I could desire, yet I shall have it; for as surely as I see the morning star I shall see the day. The morning star is never far from the sun.

Come, my soul, has the LORD given thee the morning star? Dost thou hold fast that truth, grace, hope, and love which the LORD has given thee? Then in this thou hast the dawn of coming glory. He that makes thee overcome evil, and persevere in righteousness, has therein given thee the morning star.

May 14

Surgery for Healing

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up"

(Hosea 6:1).

It is the LORD's way to tear before He heals. This is the honest love of His heart and the sure surgery of His hand. He also bruises before He binds up, or else it would be uncertain work. The law comes before the gospel, the sense of need before the supply of it. Is the reader now under the convincing, crushing hand of the Spirit? Has he received the spirit of bondage again to fear? This is a salutary preliminary to real gospel healing and binding up.

Do not despair, dear heart, but come to the LORD with all thy jagged wounds, black bruises, and running sores. He alone can heal, and He delights to do it. It is our LORD's office to bind up the brokenhearted, and He is gloriously at home at it. Let us not linger but at once return unto the LORD from whom we have gone astray. Let us show Him our gaping wounds and beseech him to know His own work and complete it. Will a surgeon make an incision and then leave his patient to bleed to death? Will the LORD pull down our old house and then refuse to build us a better one? Dost Thou ever wantonly increase the misery of poor anxious souls? That be far from Thee, O LORD.

May 15

God's High Places

"I will set him on high, because he hath known My Name"
(Psalm 91:14).

Does the LORD say this to me? Yes, if I have known His name. Blessed be the LORD, I am no stranger to Him. I have tried Him, proved Him, and known Him, and therefore do I trust Him. I know His name as a sin-hating God, for by His Spirit's convincing power I have been taught that He will never wink at evil. But I also know Him as the sin-pardoning God in Christ Jesus, for He has forgiven me all trespasses. His name is faithfulness, and I know it, for He has never forsaken me though my troubles have multiplied upon me.

This knowledge is a gift of grace, and the LORD makes it to be the reason why He grants another grace-gift, namely, setting on high. This is grace upon grace. Observe that if we climb on high, the position may be dangerous; but if the LORD sets us there it is safe. He may raise us to great usefulness, to eminent experience, to success in service, to leadership among workers, to a father's place among the little ones. If He does not do this, He may set us on high by near fellowship, clear insight, holy triumph, and gracious anticipation of eternal glory. When God sets us on high, Satan himself cannot pull us down. Oh, that this may be our case all through this day!

May 16

We Receive as We Give

"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy"
(Matthew 5:7).

It is not meet that the man who will not forgive should be forgiven, nor shall he who will not give to the poor have his own wants relieved. God will measure to us with our own bushels, and those who have been hard masters and hard creditors will find that the LORD will deal hardly with them. "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy."

This day let us try to give and to forgive. Let us mind the two bears - bear and forbear. Let us be kind, gentle, and tender. Let us not put harsh constructions upon men's conduct, nor drive hard bargains, nor pick foolish quarrels, nor be difficult to please. Surely we wish to be blessed, and we also want to obtain mercy: let us be merciful, that we may have mercy. Let us fulfill the condition, that we may earn the beatitude. Is it not a pleasant duty to be kind? Is there not much more sweetness in it than in being angry and ungenerous? Why, there is a blessedness in the thing itself! Moreover, the obtaining of mercy is a rich reward. What but sovereign grace could suggest such a promise as this. We are merciful to our fellow mortal in pence, and the LORD forgives us "all the debt."

May 17

No Need to Stint

"The upright shall have good things in possession"
(Proverbs 28:10).

The book of Proverbs is also a book of promises. Promises ought to be proverbs among the people of God. This is a very remarkable one. We are accustomed to think of our good things as in reversion, but here we are told that we shall have them in possession. Not all the malice and cunning of our enemies can work our destruction: they shall fall into the pit which they have digged. Our inheritance is so entailed upon us that we shall not be kept out of it, nor so turned out of the way as to miss it. But what have we now? We have a quiet conscience through the precious blood of Jesus. We have the love of God set upon us beyond all change. We have power with God in prayer in all time of need. We have the providence of God to watch over us, the angels of God to minister to us, and, above all, the Spirit of God to dwell in us. In fact, all things are ours. "Whether things present or things to come: all are yours." Jesus is ours. Yea, the divine Trinity in unity is ours. Hallelujah. Let us not pine and whine and stint and slave, since we have good things in possession. Let us live on our God and rejoice in Him all the day. Help us, O Holy Ghost!

May 18

Losses Overcome

"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten"
(Joel 2:25).

Yes, those wasted years over which we sigh shall be restored to us. God can give us such plentiful grace that we shall crowd into the remainder of our days as much of service as will be some recompense for those years of unregeneracy over which we mourn in humble penitence. The locusts of backsliding, worldliness, lukewarmness, are now viewed by us as a terrible plague. Oh, that they

had never come near us! The LORD in mercy has now taken them away, and we are full of zeal to serve Him. Blessed be His name, we can raise such harvests of spiritual graces as shall make our former barrenness to disappear. Through rich grace we can turn to account our bitter experience and use it to warn others. We can become the more rooted in humility, childlike dependence, and penitent spirituality by reason of our former shortcomings. If we are the more watchful, zealous, and tender, we shall gain by our lamentable losses. The wasted years, by a miracle of love, can be restored. Does it seem too great a boon? Let us believe for it and live for it, and we may yet realize it, even as Peter became all the more useful a man after his presumption was cured by his discovered weakness. LORD, aid us by Thy grace.

May 19

We May Speak for God

"Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth" (Jeremiah 15:19).

Poor Jeremiah! Yet why do we say so? The weeping prophet was one of the choicest servants of God and honored by Him above many. He was hated for speaking the truth. The word which was so sweet to him was bitter to his hearers, yet he was accepted of his LORD. He was commanded to abide in his faithfulness, and then the LORD would continue to speak through him. He was to deal boldly and truthfully with men and perform the LORD's winnowing work upon the professors of his day, and then the LORD gave him this word: "Thou shalt be as my mouth."

What an honor! Should not every preacher, yea, every believer, covet it? For God to speak by us, what a marvel! We shall speak sure, pure truth; and we shall speak it with power. Our word shall not return void; it shall be a blessing to those who receive it, and those who refuse it shall do so at their peril. Our lips shall feed many. We shall arouse the sleeping and call the dead to life.

O dear reader, pray that it may be so with all the sent servants of our LORD.

May 20

We Dare Not Doubt

"I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron" (Isaiah 45:2).

This was for Cyrus; but it is evermore the heritage of all the LORD's own spiritual servants. Only let us go forward by faith, and our way will be cleared for us. Crooks and turns of human craft and satanic subtlety shall be straightened for us; we shall not need to track their devious windings. The gates of brass shall be broken, and the iron bars which fastened them shall be cut asunder. We shall not need the battering ram nor the crowbar: the LORD Himself will do the impossible for us, and the

unexpected shall be a fact.

Let us not sit down in coward fear. Let us press onward in the path of duty, for the LORD hath said it: "I will go before thee." Ours not to reason why; ours but to dare and dash forward. It is the LORD's work, and He will enable us to do it: all impediments must yield before Him. Hath He not said, "I will break in pieces the gates of brass"? What can hinder His purpose or balk His decrees? Those who serve God have infinite resources. The way is clear to faith though barred to human strength. When Jehovah says, "I will," as He does twice in this promise, we dare not doubt.

May 21

Rain Without Clouds? Never!

"If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth"
(Ecclesiastes 11:3).

Why, then, do we dread the clouds which now darken our sky? True, for a while they hide the sun, but the sun is not quenched; He will shine out again before long. Meanwhile those black clouds are filled with rain; and the blacker they are, the more likely they are to yield plentiful showers. How can we have rain without clouds?

Our troubles have always brought us blessings, and they always will. They are the black chariots of bright grace. These clouds will empty themselves before long, and every tender herb will be the gladder for the shower. Our God may drench us with grief, but He will not drown us with wrath; nay, He will refresh us with mercy. Our LORD's love letters often come to us in black-edged envelopes. His wagons rumble, but they are loaded with benefits. His rod blossoms with sweet flowers and nourishing fruits. Let us not worry about the clouds but sing because May flowers are brought to us through the April clouds and showers.

O LORD, the clouds are the dust of Thy feet! How near Thou art in the cloudy and dark day! Love beholds Thee and is glad. Faith sees the clouds emptying themselves and making the little hills rejoice on every side.

May 22

Song of Confidence

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me: Thou shalt stretch forth Thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and Thy right hand shall save me"
(Psalm 138:7).

Wretched walking in the midst of trouble. Nay, blessed walking, since there is a special promise for it. Give me a promise, and what is the trouble? What doth my LORD teach me here to say? Why this -- "Thou wilt revive me." I shall have more life, more energy, more faith. Is it not often so, that trouble revives us, like a breath of cold air when one is ready to faint?

How angry are my enemies and especially the archenemy! Shall I stretch forth my hand and fight my foes! No, my hand is better employed in doing service for my LORD. Besides, there is no need, for my God will use His far-reaching arm, and He will deal with them far better than I could if I were to try. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the LORD." He will with His own right hand of power and wisdom save me, and what more can I desire?

Come, my heart, talk this promise over to thyself till thou canst use it as the song of thy confidence, the solace of thy holiness. Pray to be revived thyself and leave the rest with the LORD, who performeth all things for thee.

May 23

Full Reliance on God

"For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper"
(Psalm 72:12).

The needy cries; what else can he do? His cry is heard of God; what else need he do? Let the needy reader take to crying at once, for this will be his wisdom. Do not cry in the ears of friends, for even if they can help you it is only because the LORD enables them. The nearest way is to go straight to God and let your cry come up before Him. Straightforward makes the best runner: run to the LORD and not to secondary causes.

"Alas!" you cry, "I have no friend or helper." So much the better; you can rely upon God in both capacities - as without supplies and without helpers. Make your double need your double plea. Even for temporal mercies you may wait upon God, for He careth for His children in these temporary concerns. As for spiritual necessities, which are the heaviest of all, the LORD will hear your cry and will deliver you and supply you.

O poor friend, try your rich God. O helpless one, lean on His help. He has never failed me, and I am sure He will never fail you. Come as a beggar, and God will not refuse you help. Come with no plea but His grace. Jesus is King; will He let you perish of want? What! Did you forget this?

May 24

One a Majority!

"One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, He it is that fighteth for you, as He hath promised you"
(Joshua 23:10).

Why count heads? One man with God is a majority though there be a thousand on the other side. Sometimes our helpers may be too many for God to work with them, as was the case with Gideon, who could do nothing till he had increased his forces by thinning out their numbers. But the LORD's

hosts are never too few. When God would found a nation, He called Abram alone and blessed him. When He would vanquish proud Pharaoh, He used no armies, but only Moses and Aaron. The "one-man ministry," as certain wise men call it, has been far more used of the LORD than trained bands with their officers. Did all the Israelites together slay so many as Samson alone? Saul and his hosts slew their thousands but David his ten thousands.

The LORD can give the enemy long odds and yet vanquish him. If we have faith, we have God with us, and what are multitudes of men? One shepherd's dog can drive before him a flock of sheep. If the LORD sent thee, O my brother, His strength will accomplish His divine purpose. Wherefore, rely on the promise, and be very courageous.

May 25

God's Treasury

"The LORD shall open unto thee His good treasure"
(Deuteronomy 28:12).

This refers first to the rain. The LORD will give this in its season. Rain is the emblem of all those celestial refreshings which the LORD is ready to bestow upon His people. Oh, for a copious shower to refresh the LORD's heritage!

We seem to think that God's treasury can only be opened by a great prophet like Elijah, but it is not so, for this promise is to all the faithful in Israel, and, indeed, to each one of them. O believing friend, "the LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure." Thou, too, mayest see heaven opened and thrust in thy hand and take out thy portion, yea, and a portion for all thy brethren round about thee. Ask what thou wilt, and thou shalt not be denied if thou abidest in Christ and His words abide in thee.

As yet thou has not known all thy LORD's treasures, but He shall open them up to thine understanding. Certainly thou hast not yet enjoyed the fullness of His covenant riches, but He will direct thine heart into His love and reveal Jesus in thee. Only the LORD Himself can do this for thee; but here is His promise, and if thou wilt hearken diligently unto His voice and obey His will, His riches in glory by Christ Jesus shall be thine.

May 26

Commonest Things Blessed

"Ye shall serve the LORD your God, and He shall bless thy bread, and thy water"
(Exodus 23:25).

What a promise is this! To serve God is in itself a high delight. But what an added privilege to have the blessing of the LORD resting upon us in all things! Our commonest things become blessed when we ourselves are consecrated to the LORD. Our LORD Jesus took bread and blessed it; behold, we also eat of blessed bread. Jesus blessed water and made it wine: the water which we drink is far better

to us than any of the wine with which men make merry; every drop has a benediction in it. The divine blessing is on the man of God in everything, and it shall abide with him at every time.

What if we have only bread and water! Yet it is blessed bread and water. Bread and water we shall have. That is implied, for it must be there for God to bless it. "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy waters shall be sure." With God at our table, we not only ask a blessing, but we have one. It is not only at the altar but at the table that He blesses us. He serves those well who serve Him well. This table blessing is not of debt but of grace. Indeed, there is a trebled grace; He grants us grace to serve Him, by His grace feeds us with bread, and then in His grace blesses it.

May 27

As the Life -- So the Fruit

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our LORD Jesus Christ"
(2 Peter 1:8).

If we desire to glorify our LORD by fruitfulness, we must have certain things within us; for nothing can come out of us which is not first of all within us. We must begin with faith, which is the groundwork of all the virtues; and then diligently add to it virtue, knowledge, temperance, and patience. With these we must have godliness and brotherly love. All these put together will most assuredly cause us to produce, as our life fruit, the clusters of usefulness, and we shall not be mere idle knowers but real doers of the Word. These holy things must not only be in us, but abound, or we shall be barren. Fruit is the overflow of life, and we must be full before we can flow over.

We have noticed men of considerable parts and opportunities who have never succeeded in doing real good in the conversion of souls; and after close observation we have concluded that they lacked certain graces which are absolutely essential to fruit bearing. For real usefulness, graces are better than gifts. As the man is, so is his work. If we would do better, we must be better. Let the text be a gentle hint to unfruitful professors and to myself also.

May 28

Remind God of His Promise

"And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good"
(Genesis 32:12).

This is the sure way of prevailing with the LORD in prayer. We may humbly remind Him of what He has said. Our faithful God will never run back from His word, nor will He leave it unfulfilled; yet He loves to be enquired of by His people and put in mind of His promise. This is refreshing to their memories, reviving to their faith, and renewing to their hope. God's Word is given, not for His sake, but for ours. His purposes are settled, and He needs nothing to bind Him to His design of doing His people good; but He gives the promise for our strengthening and comfort. Hence He wishes us to

plead it and say to Him, "Thou saidst."

"I will surely do thee good" is just the essence of all the LORD's gracious sayings. Lay a special stress on the word surely. He will do us good, real good, lasting good, only good, every good. He will make us good, and this is to do us good in the very highest degree. He will treat us as He does his saints while we are here, and that is good. He will soon take us to be with Jesus and all His chosen, and that is supremely good. With this promise in our hearts we need not fear angry Esau nor anyone else. If the LORD will do us good, who can do us hurt?

May 29

Fishers Follow Him

"And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17).

Only by coming after Jesus can we obtain our heart's desire and be really useful to our fellow men. Oh, how we long to be successful fishers for Jesus! We would sacrifice our lives to win souls. But we are tempted to try methods which Jesus would never have tried. Shall we yield to this suggestion of the enemy? If so, we may splash the water, but we shall never take the fish. We must follow after Jesus if we would succeed. Sensational methods, entertainment, and so forth -- are these coming after Jesus? Can we imagine the LORD Jesus drawing a congregation by such means as are now commonly used? What is the result of such expedients? The result is nothing which Jesus will count up at the last great day.

We must keep to our preaching as our Master did, for by this means souls are saved. We must preach our LORD's doctrine and proclaim a full and free gospel, for this is the net in which souls are taken. We must preach with His gentleness, boldness, and love, for this is the secret of success with human hearts. We must work under divine anointing, depending upon the sacred Spirit. Thus, coming after Jesus, and not running before Him, not aside from Him, we shall be fishers of men.

May 30

Holy Foresight

"Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven" (Matthew 26:64).

Ah, LORD, Thou wast in Thy lowest state when before Thy persecutors Thou wast made to stand like a criminal! Yet the eyes of Thy faith could see beyond Thy present humiliation into Thy future glory. What words are these, "Nevertheless - hereafter!" I would imitate Thy holy foresight, and in the midst of poverty, or sickness, or slander, I also would say, "Nevertheless - hereafter." Instead of weakness, Thou hast all power; instead of shame, all glory; instead of derision, all worship, Thy cross has not dimmed the splendor of Thy crown, neither has the spittle marred the beauty of Thy face. Say, rather,

Thou are the more exalted and honored because of Thy sufferings.

So, LORD, I also would take courage from the "hereafter." I would forget the present tribulation in the future triumph. Help thou me by directing me into Thy Father's love and into Thine own patience, so that when I am derided for Thy name I may not be staggered but think more and more of the hereafter, and, therefore, all the less of today. I shall be with Thee soon and behold Thy glory. Wherefore, I am not ashamed but say in my inmost soul, "Nevertheless - hereafter."

May 31

"Be of Good Cheer"

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"
(John 16:33).

My LORD's words are true as to the tribulation. I have my share of it beyond all doubt. The flail is not hung up out of the way, nor can I hope that it will be laid aside so long as I lie upon the threshing floor. How can I look to be at home in the enemy's country, joyful while in exile, or comfortable in a wilderness? This is not my rest. This is the place of the furnace, and the forge, and the hammer. My experience tallies with my LORD's words.

I note how He bids me "be of good cheer." Alas! I am far too apt to be downcast. My spirit soon sinks when I am sorely tried. But I must not give way to this feeling. When my LORD bids me cheer up I must not dare to be cast down.

What is the argument which He uses to encourage me? Why, it is His own victory. He says, "I have overcome the world." His battle was much more severe than mine. I have not yet resisted unto blood. Why do I despair of overcoming? See, my soul, the enemy has been once overcome. I fight with a beaten foe. O world, Jesus has already vanquished thee; and in me, by His grace, He will overcome thee again. Therefore am I of good cheer and sing unto my conquering LORD.