

Spurgeon's Devotionals-Gospel of Luke

MORNING AND EVENING
C H SPURGEON
GOSPEL OF LUKE

Note: There is one devotional from Faith's Checkbook and also several quotations interspersed.

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Luke 1:46, 47

I, of all men, am perhaps the subject of the deepest depression at times. Yet there lives not a person who can say more truthfully than I, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46, 47).—10.352

Luke 2:18

January 26th — Evening Reading

"All they that heard it wondered at those things." — Luke 2:18

We must not cease to wonder at the great marvels of our God. It would be very difficult to draw a line between holy wonder and real

worship; for when the soul is overwhelmed with the majesty of God's glory, though it may not express itself in song, or even utter its voice with bowed head in humble prayer, yet it silently adores. Our incarnate God is to be worshipped as "the Wonderful." That God should consider His fallen creature, man, and instead of sweeping him away with the besom of destruction, should Himself undertake to be man's Redeemer, and to pay his ransom price, is, indeed marvellous! But to each believer redemption is most marvellous as he views it in relation to himself. It is a miracle of grace indeed, that Jesus should forsake the thrones and royalties above, to suffer ignominiously below for you. Let your soul lose itself in wonder, for wonder is in this way a very practical emotion. Holy wonder will lead you to grateful worship and heartfelt thanksgiving. It will cause within you godly watchfulness; you will be afraid to sin against such a love as this. Feeling the presence of the mighty God in the gift of His dear Son, you will put off your shoes from off your feet, because the place whereon you stand is holy ground. You will be moved at the same time to glorious hope. If Jesus has done such marvellous things on your behalf, you will feel that heaven itself is not too great for your expectation. Who can be astonished at anything, when he has once been astonished at the manger and the cross? What is there wonderful left after one has seen the Saviour? Dear reader, it may be that from the quietness and solitariness of your life, you are scarcely able to imitate the shepherds of Bethlehem, who told what they had seen and heard, but you can, at least, fill up the circle of the worshippers before the throne, by wondering at what God has done.

Luke 2:19

January 27th — Evening Reading

"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." — Luke 2:19

There was an exercise, on the part of this blessed woman, of three powers of her being: her memory-she kept all these things; her affections-she kept them in her heart; her intellect-she pondered them; so that memory, affection, and understanding, were all exercised about the things which she had heard. Beloved, remember what you have heard of your Lord Jesus, and what He has done for you; make your heart the golden pot of manna to preserve the memorial of the heavenly bread whereon you have fed in days gone by. Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have either felt, or known, or believed, and then let your fond affections hold Him fast for evermore. Love the person of your Lord! Bring forth the alabaster box of your heart, even though it be broken, and let all the precious ointment of your affection come streaming on His pierced feet. Let your intellect be exercised concerning the Lord Jesus. Meditate upon what you read: stop not at the surface; dive into the depths. Be not as the swallow which toucheth the brook with her wing, but as the fish which penetrates the lowest wave. Abide with your Lord: let Him not be to you as a wayfaring man, that tarrieth for a night, but constrain Him, saying, "Abide with us, for the day is far spent." Hold Him, and do not let Him go. The word "ponder, ' means to weigh. Make ready the balances of judgment. Oh, but where are the scales that can weigh the Lord Christ? "He taketh up the isles as a very little thing:"-who shall take Him up? "He weigheth the mountains in scales"-in what scales shall we weigh Him? Be it so, if your understanding cannot comprehend, let your affections apprehend; and if your spirit cannot compass the Lord Jesus in the grasp of understanding, let it embrace Him in the arms of affection.

Luke 2:20

January 28th — Evening Reading

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." — Luke 2:20

What was the subject of their praise? They praised God for what they had heard-for the good tidings of great joy that a Saviour was born unto them. Let us copy them; let us also raise a song of thanksgiving that we have heard of Jesus and His salvation. They also praised God for what they had seen. There is the sweetest music-what we have experienced, what we have felt within, what we have made our own-"the things which we have made touching the King." It is not enough to hear about Jesus: mere hearing may tune the harp, but the fingers of living faith must create the music. If you have seen Jesus with the God-giving sight of faith, suffer no cobwebs to linger among the harpstrings, but loud to the praise of sovereign grace, awake your psaltery and harp. One point for which they praised God was the agreement between what they had heard and what they had seen. Observe the last sentence-"As it was told unto them." Have you not found the gospel to be in yourselves just what the Bible said it would be? Jesus said He would give you rest-have you not enjoyed the sweetest peace in Him? He said you should have joy, and comfort, and life through believing in Him-have you not received all these? Are not His ways ways of pleasantness, and His paths paths of peace? Surely you can say with the queen of Sheba, "The half has not been told me." I have found Christ more sweet than His servants ever said He was. I

looked upon His likeness as they painted it, but it was a mere daub compared with Himself; for the King in His beauty outshines all imaginable loveliness. Surely what we have "seen" keeps pace with, nay, far exceeds, what we have "heard." Let us, then, glorify and praise God for a Saviour so precious, and so satisfying.

Luke 3:4

January 3rd — Evening Reading

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." — Luke 3:4

The voice crying in the wilderness demanded a way for the Lord, a way prepared, and a way prepared in the wilderness. I would be attentive to the Master's proclamation, and give Him a road into my heart, cast up by gracious operations, through the desert of my nature. The four directions in the text must have my serious attention.

Every valley must be exalted. Low and grovelling thoughts of God must be given up; doubting and despairing must be removed; and self-seeking and carnal delights must be forsaken. Across these deep valleys a glorious causeway of grace must be raised.

Every mountain and hill shall be laid low. Proud creature-sufficiency, and boastful self-righteousness, must be levelled, to make a highway for the King of kings. Divine fellowship is never vouchsafed to haughty, highminded sinners. The Lord hath respect unto the lowly, and visits the contrite in heart, but the lofty are an abomination unto Him. My soul, beseech the Holy Spirit to set thee right in this respect.

The crooked shall be made straight. The wavering heart must have a straight path of decision for God and holiness marked out for it. Double-minded men are strangers to the God of truth. My soul, take heed that thou be in all things honest and true, as in the sight of the heart-searching God.

The rough places shall be made smooth. Stumbling-blocks of sin must be removed, and thorns and briers of rebellion must be uprooted. So great a visitor must not find miry ways and stony places when He comes to honour His favoured ones with His company. Oh that this evening the Lord may find in my heart a highway made ready by His grace, that He may make a triumphal progress through the utmost bounds of my soul, from the beginning of this year even to the end of it.

Luke 4:18

November 25th — Morning Reading

"To preach deliverance to the captives." — Luke 4:18

None but Jesus can give deliverance to captives. Real liberty cometh from Him only. It is a liberty righteously bestowed; for the Son, who is Heir of all things, has a right to make men free. The saints honour the justice of God, which now secures their salvation. It is a liberty which has been dearly purchased. Christ speaks it by His power, but He bought it by His blood. He makes thee free, but it is by His own bonds. Thou goest clear, because He bare thy burden for thee: thou art set at liberty, because He has suffered in thy stead. But, though dearly purchased, He freely gives it. Jesus asks nothing of us as a preparation for this liberty. He finds us sitting in sackcloth and ashes, and bids us put on the beautiful array of freedom; He saves us just as we are, and all without our help or merit. When Jesus sets free, the liberty is perpetually entailed; no chains can bind again. Let the Master say to me, "Captive, I have delivered thee," and it is done for ever. Satan may plot to enslave us, but if the Lord be on our side, whom shall we fear? The world, with its temptations, may seek to ensnare us, but mightier is He who is for us than all they who be against us. The machinations of our own deceitful hearts may harass and annoy us, but He who hath begun the good work in us will carry it on and perfect it to the end. The foes of God and the enemies of man may gather their hosts together, and come with concentrated fury against us, but if God acquitteth, who is he that condemneth? Not more free is the eagle which mounts to his rocky eyrie, and afterwards outsoars the clouds, than the soul which Christ hath delivered. If we are no more under the law, but free from its curse, let our liberty be practically exhibited in our serving God with gratitude and delight. "I am Thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: Thou hast loosed my bonds." "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Luke 5:4

"Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." — Luke 5:4

We learn from this narrative, the necessity of human agency. The draught of fishes was miraculous, yet neither the fisherman nor his boat, nor his fishing tackle were ignored; but all were used to take the fishes. So in the saving of souls, God worketh by means; and while the present economy of grace shall stand, God will be pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. When God worketh without instruments, doubtless He is glorified; but He hath Himself selected the plan of instrumentality as being that by which He is most magnified in the earth. Means of themselves are utterly unavailing. "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." What was the reason of this? Were they not fishermen plying their special calling? Verily, they were no raw hands; they understood the work. Had they gone about the toil unskillfully? No. Had they lacked industry? No, they had toiled. Had they lacked perseverance? No, they had toiled all the night. Was there a deficiency of fish in the sea? Certainly not, for as soon as the Master came, they swam to the net in shoals. What, then, is the reason? Is it because there is no power in the means of themselves apart from the presence of Jesus? "Without Him we can do nothing." But with Christ we can do all things. Christ's presence confers success. Jesus sat in Peter's boat, and His will, by a mysterious influence, drew the fish to the net. When Jesus is lifted up in His Church, His presence is the Church's power—the shout of a king is in the midst of her. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Let us go out this morning on our work of soul fishing, looking up in faith, and around us in solemn anxiety. Let us toil till night comes, and we shall not labour in vain, for He who bids us let down the net, will fill it with fishes.

Luke 5:32

Christ always preached doctrine that was hopeful. While he denounced self-righteousness, he would turn round and say, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). If he ever had a frown on his brow, it was for the hypocrite and the proud man. But he had tears for sinners and loving invitations for penitent ones

Luke 6:12

"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." — Luke 6:12

If ever one of woman born might have lived without prayer, it was our spotless, perfect a Lord, and yet none was ever so much in supplication as He! Such was His love to His Father, that He loved much to be in communion with Him: such His love for His people, that He desired to be much in intercession for them. The fact of this eminent prayerfulness of Jesus is a lesson for us—He hath given us an example that we may follow in His steps. The time He chose was admirable, it was the hour of silence, when the crowd would not disturb Him; the time of inaction, when all but Himself had ceased to labour; and the season when slumber made men forget their woes, and cease their applications to Him for relief. While others found rest in sleep, He refreshed Himself with prayer. The place was also well selected. He was alone where none would intrude, where none could observe: thus was He free from Pharisaic ostentation and vulgar interruption. Those dark and silent hills were a fit oratory for the Son of God. Heaven and earth in midnight stillness heard the groans and sighs of the mysterious Being in whom both worlds were blended. The continuance of His pleadings is remarkable; the long watches were not too long; the cold wind did not chill His devotions; the grim darkness did not darken His faith, or loneliness check His importunity. We cannot watch with Him one hour, but He watched for us whole nights. The occasion for this prayer is notable; it was after His enemies had been enraged—prayer was His refuge and solace; it was before He sent forth the twelve apostles—prayer was the gate of His enterprise, the herald of His new work. Should we not learn from Jesus to resort to special prayer when we are under peculiar trial, or contemplate fresh endeavours for the Master's glory? Lord Jesus, teach us to pray.

Luke 7:38

"As she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them!" Luke 7:38

O that our eyes were as ready with tears of repentance as were hers! O that our hearts were as full of love as hers and our hands as ready to serve the forgiving Lord! If she has exceeded some of us in the heinousness of her sin—yet she has exceeded all of us in the fervency of her affection!

Luke 7:44

A poor harlot determined she would go and take her life on Blackfriars Bridge. Passing by these doors one Sunday night, she

thought she would step in, and for the last time hear something that might prepare her to stand before her Maker. The text was, "Seest thou this woman?" (Luke 7:44). I dwelt on Mary Magdalene and her sins, her washing the Savior's feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hair of her head. There stood the woman, melted away with the thought that she should thus hear herself described and her own life painted. Oh, to think of saving a poor harlot from death, and then, as God pleased, to save her soul from going down to hell!

Luke 8:12

January 11th — Morning Reading

"These have no root." — Luke 8:13

My soul, examine thyself this morning by the light of this text. Thou hast received the word with joy; thy feelings have been stirred and a lively impression has been made; but, remember, that to receive the word in the ear is one thing, and to receive Jesus into thy very soul is quite another; superficial feeling is often joined to inward hardness of heart, and a lively impression of the word is not always a lasting one. In the parable, the seed in one case fell upon ground having a rocky bottom, covered over with a thin layer of earth; when the seed began to take root, its downward growth was hindered by the hard stone and therefore it spent its strength in pushing its green shoot aloft as high as it could, but having no inward moisture derived from root nourishment, it withered away. Is this my case? Have I been making a fair show in the flesh without having a corresponding inner life? Good growth takes place upwards and downwards at the same time. Am I rooted in sincere fidelity and love to Jesus? If my heart remains unsoftened and unfertilized by grace, the good seed may germinate for a season, but it must ultimately wither, for it cannot flourish on a rocky, unbroken, unsanctified heart. Let me dread a godliness as rapid in growth and as wanting in endurance as Jonah's gourd; let me count the cost of being a follower of Jesus, above all let me feel the energy of His Holy Spirit, and then I shall possess an abiding and enduring seed in my soul. If my mind remains as obdurate as it was by nature, the sun of trial will scorch, and my hard heart will help to cast the heat the more terribly upon the ill-covered seed, and my religion will soon die, and my despair will be terrible; therefore, O heavenly Sower, plough me first, and then cast the truth into me, and let me yield Thee a bounteous harvest.

Luke 8:42

August 3rd — Evening Reading

"But as He went." — Luke 8:42

Jesus is passing through the throng to the house of Jairus, to raise the ruler's dead daughter; but He is so profuse in goodness that He works another miracle while upon the road. While yet this rod of Aaron bears the blossom of an unaccomplished wonder, it yields the ripe almonds of a perfect work of mercy. It is enough for us, if we have some one purpose, straightway to go and accomplish it; it were imprudent to expend our energies by the way. Hastening to the rescue of a drowning friend, we cannot afford to exhaust our strength upon another in like danger. It is enough for a tree to yield one sort of fruit, and for a man to fulfil his own peculiar calling. But our Master knows no limit of power or boundary of mission. He is so prolific of grace, that like the sun which shines as it rolls onward in its orbit, His path is radiant with lovingkindness. He is a swift arrow of love, which not only reaches its ordained target, but perfumes the air through which it flies. Virtue is evermore going out of Jesus, as sweet odours exhale from flowers; and it always will be emanating from Him, as water from a sparkling fountain. What delightful encouragement this truth affords us! If our Lord is so ready to heal the sick and bless the needy, then, my soul, be not thou slow to put thyself in His way, that He may smile on thee. Be not slack in asking, if He be so abundant in bestowing. Give earnest heed to His word now, and at all times, that Jesus may speak through it to thy heart. Where He is to be found there make thy resort, that thou mayst obtain His blessing. When He is present to heal, may He not heal thee? But surely He is present even now, for He always comes to hearts which need Him. And dost not thou need Him? Ah, He knows how much! Thou Son of David, turn Thine eye and look upon the distress which is now before Thee, and make Thy suppliant whole.

Luke 8:47

February 14th — Evening Reading

"She was healed immediately." — Luke 8:47

One of the most touching and teaching of the Saviour's miracles is before us to-night. The woman was very ignorant. She imagined that virtue came out of Christ by a law of necessity, without His knowledge or direct will. Moreover, she was a stranger to the generosity of Jesus' character, or she would not have gone behind to steal the cure which He was so ready to bestow. Misery should always place itself right in the face of mercy. Had she known the love of Jesus' heart, she would have said, "I have but to put myself where He can see me—His omniscience will teach Him my case, and His love at once will work my cure." We admire her faith, but we marvel at her ignorance. After she had obtained the cure, she rejoiced with trembling: glad was she that the divine virtue had wrought a marvel in her; but she feared lest Christ should retract the blessing, and put a negative upon the grant of His grace: little did she comprehend the fulness of His love! We have not so clear a view of Him as we could wish; we know not the heights and depths of His love; but we know of a surety that He is too good to withdraw from a trembling soul the gift which it has been able to obtain. But here is the marvel of it: little as was her knowledge, her faith, because it was real faith, saved her, and saved her at once. There was no tedious delay—faith's miracle was instantaneous. If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, salvation is our present and eternal possession. If in the list of the Lord's children we are written as the feeblest of the family, yet, being heirs through faith, no power, human or devilish, can eject us from salvation. If we dare not lean our heads upon His bosom with John, yet if we can venture in the press behind Him, and touch the hem of his garment, we are made whole. Courage, timid one! thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

Luke 10:21

March 24th — Evening Reading

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." — Luke 10:21

The Saviour was "a man of sorrows," but every thoughtful mind has discovered the fact that down deep in His innermost soul He carried an inexhaustible treasury of refined and heavenly joy. Of all the human race, there was never a man who had a deeper, purer, or more abiding peace than our Lord Jesus Christ. "He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." His vast benevolence must, from the very nature of things, have afforded Him the deepest possible delight, for benevolence is joy. There were a few remarkable seasons when this joy manifested itself. "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." Christ had His songs, though it was night with Him; though His face was marred, and His countenance had lost the lustre of earthly happiness, yet sometimes it was lit up with a matchless splendour of unparalleled satisfaction, as He thought upon the recompense of the reward, and in the midst of the congregation sang His praise unto God. In this, the Lord Jesus is a blessed picture of His church on earth. At this hour the church expects to walk in sympathy with her Lord along a thorny road; through much tribulation she is forcing her way to the crown. To bear the cross is her office, and to be scorned and counted an alien by her mother's children is her lot; and yet the church has a deep well of joy, of which none can drink but her own children. There are stores of wine, and oil, and corn, hidden in the midst of our Jerusalem, upon which the saints of God are evermore sustained and nurtured; and sometimes, as in our Saviour's case, we have our seasons of intense delight, for "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God." Exiles though we be, we rejoice in our King; yea, in Him we exceedingly rejoice, while in His name we set up our banners.

Luke 10:40

January 24th — Evening Reading

"Martha was cumbered about much serving." — Luke 10:40

Her fault was not that she served: the condition of a servant well becomes every Christian. "I serve," should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of heaven. Nor was it her fault that she had "much serving." We cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly can; let head, and heart, and hands, be engaged in the Master's service. It was no fault of hers that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master. Happy Martha, to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a guest; and happy, too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the engagement. Her fault was that she grew "cumbered with much serving," so that she forgot Him, and only remembered the service. She allowed service to override communion, and so presented one duty stained with the blood of another. We ought to be Martha and Mary in one: we should do much service, and have much communion at the same time. For this we need great grace. It is easier to serve than to commune. Joshua never grew weary in fighting with the Amalekites;

but Moses, on the top of the mountain in prayer, needed two helpers to sustain his hands. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner we tire in it. The choicest fruits are the hardest to rear: the most heavenly graces are the most difficult to cultivate. Beloved, while we do not neglect external things, which are good enough in themselves, we ought also to see to it that we enjoy living, personal fellowship with Jesus. See to it that sitting at the Saviour's feet is not neglected, even though it be under the specious pretext of doing Him service. The first thing for our soul's health, the first thing for His glory, and the first thing for our own usefulness, is to keep ourselves in perpetual communion with the Lord Jesus, and to see that the vital spirituality of our religion is maintained over and above everything else in the world.

Luke 11:4

February 9th — Evening Reading

"Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil [or, the evil one]." — Luke 11:4

What we are taught to seek or shun in prayer, we should equally pursue or avoid in action. Very earnestly, therefore, should we avoid temptation, seeking to walk so guardedly in the path of obedience, that we may never tempt the devil to tempt us. We are not to enter the thicket in search of the lion. Dearly might we pay for such presumption. This lion may cross our path or leap upon us from the thicket, but we have nothing to do with hunting him. He that meeteth with him, even though he winneth the day, will find it a stern struggle. Let the Christian pray that he may be spared the encounter. Our Saviour, who had experience of what temptation meant, thus earnestly admonished His disciples—"Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

But let us do as we will, we shall be tempted; hence the prayer "deliver us from evil." God had one Son without sin; but He has no son without temptation. The natural man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards, and the Christian man is born to temptation just as certainly. We must be always on our watch against Satan, because, like a thief, he gives no intimation of his approach. Believers who have had experience of the ways of Satan, know that there are certain seasons when he will most probably make an attack, just as at certain seasons bleak winds may be expected; thus the Christian is put on a double guard by fear of danger, and the danger is averted by preparing to meet it. Prevention is better than cure: it is better to be so well armed that the devil will not attack you, than to endure the perils of the fight, even though you come off a conqueror. Pray this evening first that you may not be tempted, and next that if temptation be permitted, you may be delivered from the evil one.

Luke 11:27, 28

June 24th — Morning Reading

"A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But He said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." — Luke 11:27, 28

It is fondly imagined by some that it must have involved very special privileges to have been the mother of our Lord, because they supposed that she had the benefit of looking into His very heart in a way in which we cannot hope to do. There may be an appearance of plausibility in the supposition, but not much. We do not know that Mary knew more than others; what she did know she did well to lay up in her heart; but she does not appear from anything we read in the Evangelists to have been a better-instructed believer than any other of Christ's disciples. All that she knew we also may discover. Do you wonder that we should say so? Here is a text to prove it: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." Remember the Master's words—"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." So blessedly does this Divine Revealer of secrets tell us His heart, that He keepeth back nothing which is profitable to us; His own assurance is, "If it were not so, I would have told you." Doth He not this day manifest Himself unto us as He doth not unto the world? It is even so; and therefore we will not ignorantly cry out, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee," but we will intelligently bless God that, having heard the Word and kept it, we have first of all as true a communion with the Saviour as the Virgin had, and in the second place as true an acquaintance with the secrets of His heart as she can be supposed to have obtained. Happy soul to be thus privileged!

Luke 14:10

December 23rd — Morning Reading

"Friend, go up higher." — Luke 14:10

When first the life of grace begins in the soul, we do indeed draw near to God, but it is with great fear and trembling. The soul conscious of guilt, and humbled thereby, is overawed with the solemnity of its position; it is cast to the earth by a sense of the grandeur of Jehovah, in whose presence it stands. With unfeigned bashfulness it takes the lowest room.

But, in after life, as the Christian grows in grace, although he will never forget the solemnity of his position, and will never lose that holy awe which must encompass a gracious man when he is in the presence of the God who can create or can destroy; yet his fear has all its terror taken out of it; it becomes a holy reverence, and no more an overshadowing dread. He is called up higher, to greater access to God in Christ Jesus. Then the man of God, walking amid the splendours of Deity, and veiling his face like the glorious cherubim, with those twin wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, will, reverent and bowed in spirit, approach the throne; and seeing there a God of love, of goodness, and of mercy, he will realize rather the covenant character of God than His absolute Deity. He will see in God rather His goodness than His greatness, and more of His love than of His majesty. Then will the soul, bowing still as humbly as aforetime, enjoy a more sacred liberty of intercession; for while prostrate before the glory of the Infinite God, it will be sustained by the refreshing consciousness of being in the presence of boundless mercy and infinite love, and by the realization of acceptance "in the Beloved." Thus the believer is bidden to come up higher, and is enabled to exercise the privilege of rejoicing in God, and drawing near to Him in holy confidence, saying, "Abba, Father."

"So may we go from strength to strength,
And daily grow in grace,
Till in Thine image raised at length,
We see Thee face to face."

Luke 15:2

September 13th — Evening Reading

"This man receiveth sinners." — Luke 15:2

Observe the condescension of this fact. This Man, who towers above all other men, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners-this Man receiveth sinners. This Man, who is no other than the eternal God, before whom angels veil their faces-this Man receiveth sinners. It needs an angel's tongue to describe such a mighty stoop of love. That any of us should be willing to seek after the lost is nothing wonderful- they are of our own race; but that He, the offended God, against whom the transgression has been committed, should take upon Himself the form of a servant, and bear the sin of many, and should then be willing to receive the vilest of the vile, this is marvellous.

"This Man receiveth sinners"; not, however, that they may remain sinners, but He receives them that He may pardon their sins, justify their persons, cleanse their hearts by His purifying word, preserve their souls by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and enable them to serve Him, to show forth His praise, and to have communion with Him. Into His heart's love He receives sinners, takes them from the dunghill, and wears them as jewels in His crown; plucks them as brands from the burning, and preserves them as costly monuments of His mercy. None are so precious in Jesus' sight as the sinners for whom He died. When Jesus receives sinners, He has not some out-of-doors reception place, no casual ward where He charitably entertains them as men do passing beggars, but He opens the golden gates of His royal heart, and receives the sinner right into Himself-yea, He admits the humble penitent into personal union and makes Him a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. There was never such a reception as this! This fact is still most sure this evening, He is still receiving sinners: would to God sinners would receive Him.

Luke 15:18

February 18th — Evening Reading

"Father, I have sinned." — Luke 15:18

It is quite certain that those whom Christ has washed in His precious blood need not make a confession of sin, as culprits or criminals, before God the Judge, for Christ has for ever taken away all their sins in a legal sense, so that they no longer stand where

they can be condemned, but are once for all accepted in the Beloved; but having become children, and offending as children, ought they not every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess their sin, and acknowledge their iniquity in that character? Nature teaches that it is the duty of erring children to make a confession to their earthly father, and the grace of God in the heart teaches us that we, as Christians, owe the same duty to our heavenly father. We daily offend, and ought not to rest without daily pardon. For, supposing that my trespasses against my Father are not at once taken to Him to be washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus, what will be the consequence? If I have not sought forgiveness and been washed from these offences against my Father, I shall feel at a distance from Him; I shall doubt His love to me; I shall tremble at Him; I shall be afraid to pray to Him: I shall grow like the prodigal, who, although still a child, was yet far off from his father. But if, with a child's sorrow at offending so gracious and loving a Parent, I go to Him and tell Him all, and rest not till I realize that I am forgiven, then I shall feel a holy love to my Father, and shall go through my Christian career, not only as saved, but as one enjoying present peace in God through Jesus Christ my Lord. There is a wide distinction between confessing sin as a culprit, and confessing sin as a child. The Father's bosom is the place for penitent confessions. We have been cleansed once for all, but our feet still need to be washed from the defilement of our daily walk as children of God.

Luke 18:1

November 13th — Evening Reading

"Men ought always to pray." — Luke 18:1

If men ought always to pray and not to faint, much more Christian men. Jesus has sent His church into the world on the same errand upon which He Himself came, and this mission includes intercession. What if I say that the church is the world's priest? Creation is dumb, but the church is to find a mouth for it. It is the church's high privilege to pray with acceptance. The door of grace is always open for her petitions, and they never return empty-handed. The veil was rent for her, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar for her, God constantly invites her to ask what she wills. Will she refuse the privilege which angels might envy her? Is she not the bride of Christ? May she not go in unto her King at every hour? Shall she allow the precious privilege to be unused? The church always has need for prayer. There are always some in her midst who are declining, or falling into open sin. There are lambs to be prayed for, that they may be carried in Christ's bosom? the strong, lest they grow presumptuous; and the weak, lest they become despairing. If we kept up prayer-meetings four-and-twenty hours in the day, all the days in the year, we might never be without a special subject for supplication. Are we ever without the sick and the poor, the afflicted and the wavering? Are we ever without those who seek the conversion of relatives, the reclaiming of back-sliders, or the salvation of the depraved? Nay, with congregations constantly gathering, with ministers always preaching, with millions of sinners lying dead in trespasses and sins; in a country over which the darkness of Romanism is certainly descending; in a world full of idols, cruelties, devilries, if the church doth not pray, how shall she excuse her base neglect of the commission of her loving Lord? Let the church be constant in supplication, let every private believer cast his mite of prayer into the treasury.

Luke 18:13

What if I say that repentance is like the cry of a newborn babe, which indicates that the child is alive? That cry of "God be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13) is as sure a sign of life as the song of cherubim before the throne

Luke 18:14

True Humility Rewarded - Faith's Checkbook

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—Luke 18:14

IT ought not to be difficult for us to humble ourselves, for what have we to be proud of? We ought to take the lowest place without being told to do so. If we are sensible and honest we shall be little in our own eyes. Especially before the Lord in prayer, we shall shrink to nothing. There we cannot speak of merit, for we have none. Our one and only appeal must be to mercy: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Here is a cheering word from the throne. We shall be exalted by the Lord if we humble ourselves. For us the way upward is downhill. When we are stripped of self, we are clothed with humility, and this is the best of wear. The Lord will exalt us in peace and happiness of mind; He will exalt us into knowledge of His Word and fellowship with Himself; He will exalt us in the enjoyment of sure pardon and justification. The Lord puts His honors upon those who can wear them to the honor of the Giver. He gives usefulness,

acceptance, and influence to those who will not be puffed up by them, but will be abased by a sense of greater responsibility. Neither God nor man will care to lift up a man who lifts up himself; but both God and good men unite to honor modest worth.

O Lord, sink me in self that I may rise in thee.

Luke 19:10

One said to me lately, "Oh, sir, I am the biggest sinner that ever lived!"

I replied, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15).

"But I have not any strength."

"While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died" (Rom. 5:6).

"Oh, but," he said, "I have been utterly ungodly."

"Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6).

"But I am lost."

"Yes," I said, "The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). I said to this man, "You have the brush in your hand, and at every stroke it looks as if you were quoting Scripture. "

Luke 19:40

March 23rd — Evening Reading

"I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." — Luke 19:40

But could the stones cry out? Assuredly they could if He who opens the mouth of the dumb should bid them lift up their voice. Certainly if they were to speak, they would have much to testify in praise of Him who created them by the word of His power; they could extol the wisdom and power of their Maker who called them into being. Shall not we speak well of Him who made us anew, and out of stones raised up children unto Abraham? The old rocks could tell of chaos and order, and the handiwork of God in successive stages of creation's drama; and cannot we talk of God's decrees, of God's great work in ancient times, in all that He did for His church in the days of old? If the stones were to speak, they could tell of their breaker, how he took them from the quarry, and made them fit for the temple, and cannot we tell of our glorious Breaker, who broke our hearts with the hammer of His word, that He might build us into His temple? If the stones should cry out they would magnify their builder, who polished them and fashioned them after the similitude of a palace; and shall not we talk of our Architect and Builder, who has put us in our place in the temple of the living God? If the stones could cry out, they might have a long, long story to tell by way of memorial, for many a time hath a great stone been rolled as a memorial before the Lord; and we too can testify of Ebenezers, stones of help, pillars of remembrance. The broken stones of the law cry out against us, but Christ Himself, who has rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, speaks for us. Stones might well cry out, but we will not let them: we will hush their noise with ours; we will break forth into sacred song, and bless the majesty of the Most High, all our days glorifying Him who is called by Jacob the Shepherd and Stone of Israel.

Luke 22:32

January 11th — Evening Reading

"I have prayed for thee." — Luke 22:32

How encouraging is the thought of the Redeemer's never-ceasing intercession for us. When we pray, He pleads for us; and when we are not praying, He is advocating our cause, and by His supplications shielding us from unseen dangers. Notice the word of comfort addressed to Peter—"Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but"—what? "But go and pray for yourself." That would be good advice, but it is not so written. Neither does he say, "But I will keep you watchful, and so you shall be preserved." That were a great blessing. No, it is, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." We little know what we owe to our Saviour's prayers. When we reach the hill-tops of heaven, and look back upon all the way whereby the Lord our God hath led us, how we shall praise Him who, before the eternal throne, undid the mischief which Satan was doing upon earth. How shall we thank Him because He never held His peace, but day and night pointed to the wounds upon His hands, and carried our names upon His breastplate! Even before Satan had begun to tempt, Jesus had forestalled him and entered a plea in heaven. Mercy outruns malice. Mark, He does not say, "Satan hath desired to have you." He checks Satan even in his very desire, and nips it in the bud. He does not say, "But I have desired to pray for you." No, but "I have prayed for you: I have done it already; I have gone to court and entered a counterplea even before an accusation is made." O Jesus, what a comfort it is that Thou hast pleaded our cause against our

unseen enemies; countermined their mines, and unmasked their ambushes. Here is a matter for joy, gratitude, hope, and confidence.

Luke 22:44

"Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Luke 22:42

Beloved, let us view with holy wonder the strictness of the Savior's obedience to His Father's will! And let us endeavor to follow in His steps in all things, seeking to be obedient to the Lord's Word in the little matters as well as in the great ones.

Luke 22:44

March 23rd — Morning Reading

"His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." — Luke 22:44

The mental pressure arising from our Lord's struggle with temptation, so forced his frame to an unnatural excitement, that his pores sent forth great drops of blood which fell down to the ground. This proves how tremendous must have been the weight of sin when it was able to crush the Saviour so that he distilled great drops of blood! This demonstrates the mighty power of his love. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphire-tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the cross; but see, it giveth forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound. This sets forth the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, since without a lance the blood flowed freely. No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife; it flows spontaneously. No need for the rulers to cry, "Spring up, O well;" of itself it flows in crimson torrents. If men suffer great pain of mind apparently the blood rushes to the heart. The cheeks are pale; a fainting fit comes on; the blood has gone inward as if to nourish the inner man while passing through its trial. But see our Saviour in His agony; he is so utterly oblivious of self, that instead of his agony driving his blood to the heart to nourish himself, it drives it outward to bedew the earth. The agony of Christ, inasmuch as it pours him out upon the ground, pictures the fulness of the offering which he made for men.

Do we not perceive how intense must have been the wrestling through which he passed, and will we not hear its voice to us? "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Behold the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, and sweat even to blood rather than yield to the great tempter of your souls.

Luke 22:46

October 23rd — Evening Reading

"Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." — Luke 22:46

When is the Christian most liable to sleep? Is it not when his temporal circumstances are prosperous? Have you not found it so? When you had daily troubles to take to the throne of grace, were you not more wakeful than you are now? Easy roads make sleepy travellers. Another dangerous time is when all goes pleasantly in spiritual matters. Christian went not to sleep when lions were in the way, or when he was wading through the river, or when fighting with Apollyon, but when he had climbed half way up the Hill Difficulty, and came to a delightful harbour, he sat down, and forthwith fell asleep, to his great sorrow and loss. The enchanted ground is a place of balmy breezes, laden with fragrant odours and soft influences, all tending to lull pilgrims to sleep. Remember Bunyan's description: "Then they came to an harbour, warm, and promising much refreshing to the weary pilgrims; for it was finely wrought above head, beautified with greens, and furnished with benches and settles. It had also in it a soft couch, where the weary might lean." "The harbour was called the Slothful's Friend, and was made on purpose to allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims to take up their rest there when weary." Depend upon it, it is in easy places that men shut their eyes and wander into the dreamy land of forgetfulness. Old Erskine wisely remarked, "I like a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil." There is no temptation half so dangerous as not being tempted. The distressed soul does not sleep; it is after we enter into peaceful confidence and full assurance that we are in danger of slumbering. The disciples fell asleep after they had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountain top. Take heed, joyous Christian, good frames are near neighbours to temptations: be as happy as you will, only be watchful.

Luke 22:48

March 25th — Morning Reading

"Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" — Luke 22:48

"The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Let me be on my guard when the world puts on a loving face, for it will, if possible, betray me as it did my Master, with a kiss. Whenever a man is about to stab religion, he usually professes very great reverence for it. Let me beware of the sleek-faced hypocrisy which is armour-bearer to heresy and infidelity. Knowing the deceivableness of unrighteousness, let me be wise as a serpent to detect and avoid the designs of the enemy. The young man, void of understanding, was led astray by the kiss of the strange woman: may my soul be so graciously instructed all this day, that "the much fair speech" of the world may have no effect upon me. Holy Spirit, let me not, a poor frail son of man, be betrayed with a kiss!

But what if I should be guilty of the same accursed sin as Judas, that son of perdition? I have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus; I am a member of His visible Church; I sit at the communion table: all these are so many kisses of my lips. Am I sincere in them? If not, I am a base traitor. Do I live in the world as carelessly as others do, and yet make a profession of being a follower of Jesus? Then I must expose religion to ridicule, and lead men to speak evil of the holy name by which I am called. Surely if I act thus inconsistently I am a Judas, and it were better for me that I had never been born. Dare I hope that I am clear in this matter? Then, O Lord, keep me so. O Lord, make me sincere and true. Preserve me from every false way. Never let me betray my Saviour. I do love Thee, Jesus, and though I often grieve Thee, yet I would desire to abide faithful even unto death. O God, forbid that I should be a high-soaring professor, and then fall at last into the lake of fire, because I betrayed my Master with a kiss.

Luke 23:26

April 5th — Morning Reading

"On him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus." — Luke 23:26

We see in Simon's carrying the cross a picture of the work of the Church throughout all generations; she is the cross-bearer after Jesus. Mark then, Christian, Jesus does not suffer so as to exclude your suffering. He bears a cross, not that you may escape it, but that you may endure it. Christ exempts you from sin, but not from sorrow. Remember that, and expect to suffer.

But let us comfort ourselves with this thought, that in our case, as in Simon's, it is not our cross, but Christ's cross which we carry. When you are molested for your piety; when your religion brings the trial of cruel mockings upon you, then remember it is not your cross, it is Christ's cross; and how delightful is it to carry the cross of our Lord Jesus!

You carry the cross after Him. You have blessed company; your path is marked with the footprints of your Lord. The mark of His blood-red shoulder is upon that heavy burden. 'Tis His cross, and He goes before you as a shepherd goes before his sheep. Take up your cross daily, and follow Him.

Do not forget, also, that you bear this cross in partnership. It is the opinion of some that Simon only carried one end of the cross, and not the whole of it. That is very possible; Christ may have carried the heavier part, against the transverse beam, and Simon may have borne the lighter end. Certainly it is so with you; you do but carry the light end of the cross, Christ bore the heavier end.

And remember, though Simon had to bear the cross for a very little while, it gave him lasting honour. Even so the cross we carry is only for a little while at most, and then we shall receive the crown, the glory. Surely we should love the cross, and, instead of shrinking from it, count it very dear, when it works out for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Luke 23:27

April 9th — Morning Reading

"And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him." — Luke 23:27

Amid the rabble rout which hounded the Redeemer to His doom, there were some gracious souls whose bitter anguish sought vent in wailing and lamentations—fit music to accompany that march of woe. When my soul can, in imagination, see the Saviour bearing

His cross to Calvary, she joins the godly women and weeps with them; for, indeed, there is true cause for grief—cause lying deeper than those mourning women thought. They bewailed innocence maltreated, goodness persecuted, love bleeding, meekness about to die; but my heart has a deeper and more bitter cause to mourn. My sins were the scourges which lacerated those blessed shoulders, and crowned with thorn those bleeding brows: my sins cried "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" and laid the cross upon His gracious shoulders. His being led forth to die is sorrow enough for one eternity: but my having been His murderer, is more, infinitely more, grief than one poor fountain of tears can express.

Why those women loved and wept it were not hard to guess: but they could not have had greater reasons for love and grief than my heart has. Nain's widow saw her son restored—but I myself have been raised to newness of life. Peter's wife's mother was cured of the fever—but I of the greater plague of sin. Out of Magdalene seven devils were cast—but a whole legion out of me. Mary and Martha were favoured with visits—but He dwells with me. His mother bare His body—but He is formed in me the hope of glory. In nothing behind the holy women in debt, let me not be behind them in gratitude or sorrow.

"Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears His feet I'll lave—
Constant still in heart abiding,
Weep for Him who died to save."

Luke 23:31

April 8th — Morning Reading

"If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" — Luke 23:31

Among other interpretations of this suggestive question, the following is full of teaching: "If the innocent substitute for sinners, suffer thus, what will be done when the sinner himself -the dry tree-shall fall into the hands of an angry God?" When God saw Jesus in the sinner's place, He did not spare Him; and when He finds the unregenerate without Christ, He will not spare them. O sinner, Jesus was led away by His enemies: so shall you be dragged away by fiends to the place appointed for you. Jesus was deserted of God; and if He, who was only imputedly a sinner, was deserted, how much more shall you be? "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" what an awful shriek! But what shall be your cry when you shall say, "O God! O God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" and the answer shall come back, "Because ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." If God spared not His own Son, how much less will He spare you! What whips of burning wire will be yours when conscience shall smite you with all its terrors. Ye richest, ye merriest, ye most self-righteous sinners-who would stand in your place when God shall say, "Awake, O sword, against the man that rejected Me; smite him, and let him feel the smart for ever"? Jesus was spit upon: sinner, what shame will be yours! We cannot sum up in one word all the mass of sorrows which met upon the head of Jesus who died for us, therefore it is impossible for us to tell you what streams, what oceans of grief must roll over your spirit if you die as you now are. You may die so, you may die now. By the agonies of Christ, by His wounds and by His blood, do not bring upon yourselves the wrath to come! Trust in the Son of God, and you shall never die.

Luke 23:33

April 10th — Morning Reading

"The place which is called Calvary." — Luke 23:33

The hill of comfort is the hill of Calvary; the house of consolation is built with the wood of the cross; the temple of heavenly blessing is founded upon the riven rock-riven by the spear which pierced His side. No scene in sacred history ever gladdens the soul like Calvary's tragedy.

"Is it not strange, the darkest hour
That ever dawned on sinful earth,
Should touch the heart with softer power,
For comfort, than an angel's mirth?
That to the Cross the mourner's eye should turn,
Sooner than where the stars of Bethlehem burn?"

Light springs from the midday-midnight of Golgotha, and every herb of the field blooms sweetly beneath the shadow of the once accursed tree. In that place of thirst, grace hath dug a fountain which ever gusheth with waters pure as crystal, each drop capable of alleviating the woes of mankind. You who have had your seasons of conflict, will confess that it was not at Olivet that you ever found comfort, not on the hill of Sinai, nor on Tabor; but Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha have been a means of comfort to you. The bitter herbs of Gethsemane have often taken away the bitters of your life; the scourge of Gabbatha has often scourged away your cares, and the groans of Calvary yields us comfort rare and rich. We never should have known Christ's love in all its heights and depths if He had not died; nor could we guess the Father's deep affection if He had not given His Son to die. The common mercies we enjoy all sing of love, just as the sea-shell, when we put it to our ears, whispers of the deep sea whence it came; but if we desire to hear the ocean itself, we must not look at every-day blessings, but at the transactions of the crucifixion. He who would know love, let him retire to Calvary and see the Man of sorrows die.

Luke 23:43

When the thief died on the cross, he had but just believed, and had never done a single good work. But where did he go? He ought to have gone to purgatory by rights if ever anybody did. But instead of that the Savior said to him, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Why? Because the ground of the man's admission into Paradise was perfect.

Luke 24:16

October 29th — Evening Reading

"But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." — Luke 24:16

The disciples ought to have known Jesus, they had heard His voice so often, and gazed upon that marred face so frequently, that it is wonderful they did not discover Him. Yet is it not so with you also? You have not seen Jesus lately. You have been to His table, and you have not met Him there. You are in a dark trouble this evening, and though He plainly says, "It is I, be not afraid," yet you cannot discern Him. Alas! our eyes are holden. We know His voice; we have looked into His face; we have leaned our head upon His bosom, and yet, though Christ is very near us, we are saying "O that I knew where I might find Him!" We should know Jesus, for we have the Scriptures to reflect His image, and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious book and have no glimpse of the Wellbeloved! Dear child of God, are you in that state? Jesus feedeth among the lilies of the word, and you walk among those lilies, and yet you behold Him not. He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture, and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the garden of Scripture, but cannot see Him, though He is always there. And why do we not see Him? It must be ascribed in our case, as in the disciples', to unbelief. They evidently did not expect to see Jesus, and therefore they did not know Him. To a great extent in spiritual things we get what we expect of the Lord. Faith alone can bring us to see Jesus. Make it your prayer, "Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may see my Saviour present with me." It is a blessed thing to want to see Him; but oh! it is better far to gaze upon Him. To those who seek Him He is kind; but to those who find Him, beyond expression is He dear!

Luke 24:27

January 18th — Evening Reading

"He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." — Luke 24:27

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus had a most profitable journey. Their companion and teacher was the best of tutors; the interpreter one of a thousand, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Lord Jesus condescended to become a preacher of the gospel, and He was not ashamed to exercise His calling before an audience of two persons, neither does He now refuse to become the teacher of even one. Let us court the company of so excellent an Instructor, for till He is made unto us wisdom we shall never be wise unto salvation.

This unrivalled tutor used as His class-book the best of books. Although able to reveal fresh truth, He preferred to expound the old. He knew by His omniscience what was the most instructive way of teaching, and by turning at once to Moses and the prophets, He showed us that the surest road to wisdom is not speculation, reasoning, or reading human books, but meditation upon the Word of God. The readiest way to be spiritually rich in heavenly knowledge is to dig in this mine of diamonds, to gather pearls from this heavenly sea. When Jesus Himself sought to enrich others, He wrought in the quarry of Holy Scripture.

The favoured pair were led to consider the best of subjects, for Jesus spake of Jesus, and expounded the things concerning Himself. Here the diamond cut the diamond, and what could be more admirable? The Master of the House unlocked His own doors, conducted the guests to His table, and placed His own dainties upon it. He who hid the treasure in the field Himself guided the searchers to it. Our Lord would naturally discourse upon the sweetest of topics, and He could find none sweeter than His own person and work: with an eye to these we should always search the Word. O for grace to study the Bible with Jesus as both our teacher and our lesson!

Luke 24:33,35

May 25th — Evening Reading

"And they rose up the same hour, and returned Jerusalem . . . and they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them." — Luke 24:33,35

When the two disciples had reached Emmaus, and were refreshing themselves at the evening meal, the mysterious stranger who had so enchanted them upon the road, took bread and brake it, made Himself known to them, and then vanished out of their sight. They had constrained Him to abide with them, because the day was far spent; but now, although it was much later, their love was a lamp to their feet, yea, wings also; they forgot the darkness, their weariness was all gone, and forthwith they journeyed back the threescore furlongs to tell the gladsome news of a risen Lord, who had appeared to them by the way. They reached the Christians in Jerusalem, and were received by a burst of joyful news before they could tell their own tale. These early Christians were all on fire to speak of Christ's resurrection, and to proclaim what they knew of the Lord; they made common property of their experiences. This evening let their example impress us deeply. We too must bear our witness concerning Jesus. John's account of the sepulchre needed to be supplemented by Peter; and Mary could speak of something further still; combined, we have a full testimony from which nothing can be spared. We have each of us peculiar gifts and special manifestations; but the one object God has in view is the perfecting of the whole body of Christ. We must, therefore, bring our spiritual possessions and lay them at the apostle's feet, and make distribution unto all of what God has given to us. Keep back no part of the precious truth, but speak what you know, and testify what you have seen. Let not the toil or darkness, or possible unbelief of your friends, weigh one moment in the scale. Up, and be marching to the place of duty, and there tell what great things God has shown to your soul.

Luke 24:38

October 21st — Evening Reading

"Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" — Luke 24:38

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" The Lord cares for all things, and the meanest creatures share in His universal providence, but His particular providence is over His saints. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." "Precious shall their blood be in His sight." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." Let the fact that, while He is the Saviour of all men, He is specially the Saviour of them that believe, cheer and comfort you. You are His peculiar care; His regal treasure which He guards as the apple of His eye; His vineyard over which He watches day and night. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Let the thought of His special love to you be a spiritual pain-killer, a dear quietus to your woe: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." God says that as much to you as to any saint of old. "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." We lose much consolation by the habit of reading His promises for the whole church, instead of taking them directly home to ourselves. Believer, grasp the divine word with a personal, appropriating faith. Think that you hear Jesus say, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Think you see Him walking on the waters of thy trouble, for He is there, and He is saying, "Fear not, it is I; be not afraid." Oh, those sweet words of Christ! May the Holy Ghost make you feel them as spoken to you; forget others for awhile-accept the voice of Jesus as addressed to you, and say, "Jesus whispers consolation; I cannot refuse it; I will sit under His shadow with great delight."

Luke 24:45

"Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." — Luke 24:45

He whom we viewed last evening as opening Scripture, we here perceive opening the understanding. In the first work He has many fellow-labourers, but in the second He stands alone; many can bring the Scriptures to the mind, but the Lord alone can prepare the mind to receive the Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus differs from all other teachers; they reach the ear, but He instructs the heart; they deal with the outward letter, but He imparts an inward taste for the truth, by which we perceive its savour and spirit. The most unlearned of men become ripe scholars in the school of grace when the Lord Jesus by His Holy Spirit unfolds the mysteries of the kingdom to them, and grants the divine anointing by which they are enabled to behold the invisible. Happy are we if we have had our understandings cleared and strengthened by the Master! How many men of profound learning are ignorant of eternal things! They know the killing letter of revelation, but its killing spirit they cannot discern; they have a veil upon their hearts which the eyes of carnal reason cannot penetrate. Such was our case a little time ago; we who now see were once utterly blind; truth was to us as beauty in the dark, a thing unnoticed and neglected. Had it not been for the love of Jesus we should have remained to this moment in utter ignorance, for without His gracious opening of our understanding, we could no more have attained to spiritual knowledge than an infant can climb the Pyramids, or an ostrich fly up to the stars. Jesus' College is the only one in which God's truth can be really learned; other schools may teach us what is to be believed, but Christ's alone can show us how to believe it. Let us sit at the feet of Jesus, and by earnest prayer call in His blessed aid that our dull wits may grow brighter, and our feeble understandings may receive heavenly things.