J H Jowett-Daily Meditation 2

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MY DAILY MEDITATION
for the Circling Year

by John Henry Jowett

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 1

THE SOUL IN PRISON

“Bring my soul out of prison!” —Psalm 142:7

TOO, have my prison-house, and only the Lord can deliver me.

There is the prison-house of sin. It is a dark and suffocating hole, without friendly light or morning air. And it is haunted by such affrighting shapes, as though my iniquities had incarnated themselves in ugly and repulsive forms. None but the Lord can bring me out.

And there is the prison-house of sorrow. My griefs sometimes wrap me about like cold confining walls, which have neither windows nor doors. It seems as though a fluid sorrow can congeal into a cold, hard temperament, and hold me in its icy embrace. And none but the Lord can bring me out.

And there is the prison-house of death. I must perforce pass through the gate of death. Shall I find it a castle of gloom, or is there another gate through which I shall emerge into the fair, sweet paradise of God? My Master is Lord of the road! And He tells me that death shall not be a castle of captivity, but only a thoroughfare through which I shall pass into the realm of eternal day.

FEBRUARY 2

HOW TO APPROACH A CRISIS

“It shall be given you in that same hour.”—Matthew 10:16-28.

"AND so I am not to worry about the coming crisis! “God never is before His time, and never is behind!” When the hour is come, I shall find that the great Host hath made “all things ready.”

When the crisis comes He will tell me how to rest. It is a great matter to know just how to rest—how to be quiet when “all without tumultuous seems.” We irritate and excite our souls about the coming emergency, and we approach it with worn and feverish spirits, and so mar our Master’s purpose and work.

When the crisis comes He will tell me what to do. The orders are not given until the appointed day. Why should I fume and fret and worry as to what the sealed envelope contains? “It is enough that He knows all,” and when the hour strikes the secrets shall be revealed.

And when the crisis comes He will tell me what to say. I need not begin to prepare my retorts and my responses. What shall I say when death comes, to me or to my loved one? Never mind, He will tell thee. And what when sorrow or persecution comes? Never mind, He will tell thee.

FEBRUARY 3

TRANSFORMING THE HARD HEART

The Lord “turned the flint into a fountain of waters.” Ps 114:8

WHAT a violent conjunction, the flint becoming the birthplace of a spring! And yet this is happening every day. Men who are as “hard as flint,” whose hearts are “like the nether millstone,” become springs of gentleness and fountains of exquisite compassion. Beautiful graces, like lovely ferns, grow in the home of severities, and transform the grim, stern soul into a garden of fragrant friendships. This is what Zacchaeus was like when his flint became a fountain. It is what Matthew the publican was like when the Lord changed his hard heart into a land of springs.

No one is “too far gone.” No hardness is beyond the love and pity of God. The well of eternal life can gush forth even in a desert waste, and “where sin abounds grace doth much more abound.” Let us bring our hardness to the Lord. Let us see what He can make of our flint. When we are dry and “feelingless,” and desire is dead, let us bring this Sahara to the great Restorer, and “the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the rose.”

FEBRUARY 4

SPIRITUAL BUOYANCY

“When thou passeth through the waters they shall not overflow thee.”—Is 43:2

Isaiah 43:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

WHEN Mrs. Booth, the mother of the Salvation Army, was dying, she quietly said, “The waters are rising but I am not sinking.” But then she had been saying that all through her life. Other floods besides the waters of death had gathered about her soul. Often had the floods been out and the roads were deep in affliction. But she had never sunk! The good Lord made her buoyant, and she rode upon the storm! This, then, is the promise of the Lord, not that the waters of trouble shall never gather about the believer, but that he shall never be overwhelmed. He shall “keep his head above them.” Yes, to him shall be given the grace of “aboveness.” He shall never be under, always above! It is the precious gift of spiritual buoyancy, sanctified good spirits, the power of the Christian hope. When we are in Christ Jesus circumstances shall never be our master. One is our Master, and “we are more than conquerors in Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

FEBRUARY 5

EVERYWHERE THE GATE OF HEAVEN

“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.” Ge 28:16

—Genesis 28:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

THAT is the first time for many a day that Jacob had named the name of God. In all the dark story of his wicked intrigue the name of God is never mentioned. Jacob wanted to forget God! God would be a disturbing presence! But here he encounters Him in a dream, and in the most unlikely place. “And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place!”

Jacob had yet to learn that there is everywhere “a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reaches to heaven.” There was a ladder from the very tent in which he wore his deceptive skin. There was a ladder from the secret place where he and his mother wove their mischievous plot. There is no corner of earth which is cut away from the Divine vigilance. God gets at us everywhere.

But there is a merciful side to all this. If the ladder be everywhere, and God can get at us, then also everywhere we can get at God. There are “ascending angels” who will carry our confessions, our prayers, our sighs and mournings, to the very heart of the eternally gracious God.

FEBRUARY 6

THE HOME-BIRD

Psalm 91:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

I READ a sentence the other day in which a very powerful modern writer describes a certain woman as “having God on her visiting list.” We may recoil from the phrase, but it very vitally describes a very awful commonplace. Countless thousands have God on their visiting lists. They pay Him courtesy-calls, and between the calls He is forgotten. Perhaps the call is paid once a week in the social function of worship. Perhaps it is paid more rarely, like calls between comparative strangers. How great the contrast between

a caller and one who dwells in the secret place! It is the difference between a flirt and a “home-bird,” between one who flits about on a score of fancies, and one who settles down in the solid satisfaction of a supreme affection.

“Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Such is the reward of the “home-bird,” the settled friend of the Lord. The shadow of the Lord shall rest upon him continually. I sometimes read of our monarchs being “shadowed” by protective police. In an infinitely more real and intimate sense the soul that dwells in “the secret place” is shadowed by the sleepless grace and love of God.

FEBRUARY 7

LEAVING ITS MARK

“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will make thee a threshing instrument with teeth.”

— Isaiah 41:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

COULD any two things be in greater contrast than a worm and an instrument with teeth? The worm is delicate, bruised by a stone, crushed beneath a passing wheel; an instrument with teeth can break and not be broken, it can grave its mark upon the rock. And the mighty God can convert the one into the other. He can take a man or a nation, who has all the impotence of the worm, and by the invigoration of His own Spirit He can endow them with strength by which they will leave a noble mark upon the history of their time.

And so the “worm” may take heart. The mighty God can make us stronger than our circumstances. We can bend them all to our good. In God’s strength we can make them all pay tribute to our souls. We can even take hold of a black disappointment, break it open, and extract some jewel of grace. When God gives us wills like iron we can drive through difficulties as the iron share cuts through the toughest soil. “I will make thee,” saith the Lord, “and shall He not do it?”

FEBRUARY 8

REVISITING OLD ALTARS

“I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress.” Ge 35:3

—Genesis 35:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

IT is a blessed thing to revisit our early altars. It is good to return to the haunts of early vision. Places and things have their sanctifying influences, and can recall us to lost experiences. I know a man to whom the scent of a white, wild rose is always a call to prayer. I know another to whom Grasmere is always the window of holy vision. Sometimes a particular pew in a particular church can throw the heavens open, and we see the Son of God. The old Sunday-school has sometimes taken an old man back to his childhood and back to his God. So I do not wonder that God led Jacob back to Bethel, and that in the old place of blessing he re-consecrated himself to the Lord.

It is a revelation of the loving-kindness of God that we have all these helps to the recovery of past experiences. Let us use them with reverence. And in our early days let us make them. Let us build altars of communion which in later life we shall love to revisit. Let us make our early home “the house of God and the gate of heaven.” Let us multiply deeds of service which will make countless places fragrant for all our after years.

FEBRUARY 9

THE ROCK AND THE BOWING WALL

Psalm 62:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

THERE are two symbols by which the psalmist describes the confidence of the righteous. “He only is my rock.” Only yesterday I had the shelter of a great rock on a storm-swept mountain side. The wind tore along the heights, driving the rain like hail, but in the opening of the rock our shelter was complete.

And the second symbol is this: “He is my high place.” The high place is the home of the chamois, out of reach of the arrow. “Flee as a bird to your mountain!” Get beyond the hunter’s range! Our security is found in loftiness. It is our unutterable privilege to live in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Such is the confidence of the righteous.

In this psalm there is also another pair of symbols describing the futility of the wicked. The wicked is “as a bowing wall.” The wall is out of perpendicular, out of conformity with the truth of the plumb-line, and it will assuredly topple into ruin. So is it with the wicked: he is building awry, and he will fall into moral disaster. He is also “as a tottering fence.” The wind and the rain dislodge the fence, it rots at its foundations, and one day it lies prone upon the ground.

FEBRUARY 10

REGISTERING A VERDICT

"The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey."

—Joshua 24:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

HERE was a definite decision. Our peril is that we spend our life in wavering and we never decide. We are like a jury which is always hearing evidence and never gives a verdict. We do much thinking, but we never make up our minds. We let our eyes wander over many things, but we make no choice. Life has no crisis, no culmination.

Now people who never decide spend their days in hoping to do so. But this kind of life becomes a vagrancy and not a noble and illumined crusade. We drift through our days, we do not steer, and we never arrive at any rich and stately haven.

It is therefore vitally wise to "make a vow unto the Lord." It is good to pull our loose thinkings together and to "gird up the loins of the mind." Let a man, at some definite place, and at some definite moment, make the supreme choice of his life.

FEBRUARY 11

THE HILL COUNTRY OF THE SOUL

Psalm 121:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

THERE should be a hill country in every life, some great up-towering peaks which dominate the common plain. There should be an upland district, where springs are born, and where rivers of inspiration have their birth. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."

The soul that knows no hills is sure to be oppressed with the monotony of the road. The inspiration to do little things comes from the presence of big things. It is amazing what dull trifles we can get through when a radiant love is near. A noble companionship glorifies the dingiest road. And what if that Companion be God? Then, surely, "the common round and daily task" have a light thrown upon them from "the beauty of His countenance."

The "heavenlies" are our salvation and our defence. "His righteousness is like the great mountains." (Ps 36:6) "The mountains bring forth peace unto His people."

FEBRUARY 12

THE BULB AND THE SOIL

"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them,he it is that loveth Me."

—John 14:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

YES, but how can I keep them? Some one sent me a bulb which requires a certain kind of soil, but he also sent me the soil in which to grow it. He sent instructions, but he also sent power. And when I am bidden to keep a commandment I feel as though I have received the bulb but not the soil! But is this God's way of dealing with His people? I will read on if perchance I may find the gift of the soil.

"He that abideth in Me … the same bringeth forth much fruit." That is the gift I seek. For the keeping of His commandments the Lord provides Himself. I am not called upon to raise fruits out of the soil of my own will, out of my own infirmity of aspiration or desire. I can rest everything in God! I can "abide in Him," and I may have the holy energies of the Godhead to produce in me the fruits of a holy and obedient life. The good Lord provides both the bulb and the soil.

It is the tragedy of life that we forget this, and seek to make a soil-bed of our own. And thus do we suffer the calamity of fruitless labour, the heavy drudgery of tasks beyond our strength. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

FEBRUARY 13

GRUDGES

"Thou shalt not bear any grudge (cherish anger)." Lv 19:18

—Leviticus 19:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

HOW searching is that demand upon the soul! My forgiveness of my brother is to be complete. No sullenness is to remain, no sulky

temper which so easily gives birth to thunder and lightning. There is to be no painful aloofness, no assumption of a superiority which rains contempt upon the offender. When I forgive, I am not to carry any powder forward on the journey. I am to empty out all my explosives, all my ammunition of anger and revenge. I am not to "bear any grudge."

I cannot meet this demand. It is altogether beyond me. I might utter words of forgiveness, but I cannot reveal a clear, bright, blue sky without a touch of storm brewing anywhere. But the Lord of grace can do it for me. He can change my weather. He can create a new climate. He can "renew a right spirit within me," and in that holy atmosphere nothing shall live which seeks to poison and destroy. Grudges shall die "like cloud-spots in the dawn." Revenge, that awful creation of the unclean, feverish soul, shall give place to goodwill, the strong genial presence which makes its home in the new heart.

FEBRUARY 14

IMPERFECT CONSECRATION

Matthew 19:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

THE rich young ruler consecrated a part, but was unwilling to consecrate the whole. He hallowed the inch but not the mile. He would go part of the way, but not to the end. And the peril is upon us all. We give ourselves to the Lord, but we reserve some liberties. We offer Him our house, but we mark some rooms "Private." And that word "Private," denying the Lord admission, crucifies Him afresh. He has no joy in the house so long as any rooms are withheld.

Dr. F. B. Meyer has told us how his early Christian life was marred and his ministry paralyzed just because he had kept back one key from the bunch of keys he had given to the Lord. Every key save one! The key of one room kept for personal use, and the Lord shut out. And the effects of the incomplete consecration were found in lack of power, lack of assurance, lack of joy and peace.

The "joy of the Lord" begins when we hand over the last key. We sit with Christ on His throne as soon as we have surrendered all our crowns, and made Him sole and only ruler of our life and its possessions.

FEBRUARY 15

THE WITNESS OF YESTERDAY

Psalm 128:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

OUR yesterdays are to be the teachers of our children. We are to take them over our road, and show them the pitfalls where we stumbled and the snares that lured us away. And we are to show them how we found the springs of grace, and how the Lord made Himself known to us in daily providence and care. We are to relate His exploits, "His wonderful dealings with the children of men." We must make our life witness of God to our children, and when their minds roam over our road they must see it radiant with the grace and mercy of the Lord.

The best inheritance I can give my child is a steadfast witness of my knowledge of God. The testimony of a light that never failed may give him the needful wisdom when his own way becomes troubled with clouds and darkness. And what a story it is, this story of the deeds of our gracious God. It is full of quickening for weary and desponding souls. It is a perfect reservoir of inspiration for those whose desire has failed, and in whose lives the wells of impulse have become dry. Let us bring forward yesterday's wealth to enrich the life of to-day. "Do ye not remember the miracle of the loaves?"

FEBRUARY 16

CROWDING OUT GOD

"Lest thou forget."—Dt 4:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

THAT is surely the worst affront we can put upon anybody. We may oppose a man and hinder him in his work, or we may directly injure him, or we may ignore him, and treat him as nothing. Or we may forget him! Opposition, injury, contempt, neglect, forgetfulness! Surely this is a descending scale, and the last is the worst. And yet we can forget the Lord God. We can forget all His benefits. We can easily put Him out of mind. We can live as though He were dead. "My children have forgotten Me."

What shall we do to escape this great disaster? "Take heed to thyself!" To take heed is to be at the helm and not asleep in the cabin. It is to steer and not to drift. It is to keep our eyes on the compass and our hands on the wheel. It is to know where we are going. We never deliberately forget our Lord; we carelessly drift into it. "Take heed."

"And keep thy soul diligently." Gardens run to seed, and ill weeds grow apace. The fair things are crowded out, and the weed reigns everywhere. It is ever so with my soul. If I neglect it, the flowers of holy desire and devotion will be choked by weeds of worldliness. God will be crowded out, and the garden of the soul will become a wilderness of neglect and sin.

FEBRUARY 17

BLESSINGS AND CURSINGS

“He read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings.”

—Joshua 8:30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.

WE are inclined to read only what pleases us, to hug the blessings and to ignore the warnings. We bask in the light, we close our eyes to the lightning. We recount the promises, we shut our ears to the rebukes. We love the passages which speak of our Master’s gentleness, we turn away from those which reveal His severity. And all this is unwise, and therefore unhealthy. We become spiritually soft and anemic. We lack moral stamina. We are incapable of noble hatred and of holy scorn. We are invertebrate, and on the evil day we are not able to stand.

We must read “all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings.” We must let the Lord brace us with His severities. We must gaze steadily upon the appalling fearfulness of sin, and upon its terrific issues. At all costs we must get rid of the spurious gentleness that holds compromise with uncleanness, that effeminate affection which is destitute of holy fire. We must seek the love which burns everlastingly against all sin; we must seek the gentleness which can fiercely grip a poisonous growth and tear it out to its last hidden root. We must seek that holy love which is as a “consuming fire.”

FEBRUARY 18

THE SUBTLETY OF TEMPTATION

James 1:12-note, Jas 1:13, 14, 15-note, Jas 1:16, 17, 18-note, Jas 1:19, 20-note.

EVIL enticements always come to us in borrowed attire. In the Boer War ammunition was carried out in piano cases, and military advices were transmitted in the skins of melons. And that is the way of the enemy of our souls. He makes us think we are receiving music when he is sending explosives; he promises life, but his gift is laden with the seeds of death. He offers us liberty, and he hides his chains in dazzling flowers. “Things are not what they seem.”

And so our enemy uses mirages, and will-o’-the-wisps and tinselled crowns. He lights friendly fires on perilous coasts to snare us to our ruin. And therefore we need clear, sure eyes. We need a refined moral sense which can discriminate between the true and the false, and which can discern the enemy even when he comes as “an angel of light.” And we may have this wisdom from “the God of all wisdom.” By His grace we may be kept morally sensitive, and we shall know our foe even when he is a long way off.

FEBRUARY 19

THE THOUGHT AFAR OFF

Psalm 139:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

"THOU knowest my thought afar off.” That fills me with awe. I cannot find a hiding-place where I can sin in secrecy. I cannot build an apparent sanctuary and conceal evil within its walls. I cannot with a sheep’s skin hide the wolf. I cannot wrap my jealousy up in flattery and keep it unknown. “Thou God seest me.” He knows the bottom thought that creeps in the basement of my being. Nothing surprises God! He sees all my sin. So am I filled with awe.

“Thou knowest my thought afar off.” This fills me also with hope and joy. He sees the faintest, weakest desire, aspiring after goodness. He sees the smallest fire of affection burning uncertainly in my soul. He sees every movement of penitence which looks toward home. He sees every little triumph, and every altar I build along life’s way. Nothing is overlooked. My God is not like a policeman, only looking for crimes; He is the God of grace, looking for graces, searching for jewels to adorn His crown. So am I filled with hope and joy.

FEBRUARY 20

TAMPERING WITH THE LABEL

1John 3:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

SIN is transgression. It is the deliberate climbing of the fence. We see the trespass-board, and in spite of the warning we stride into the forbidden field. Sin is not ignorance, it is intention. We sin when we are wide-awake! There are teachers abroad who would soften words like these. They offer us terms which appear to lessen the harshness of our actions; they give our sin an aspect of innocence. But to alter the label on the bottle does not change the character of the contents. Poison is poison give it what name we

please. “Sin is the transgression of the law.”

Let us be on our guard against the men whose pockets are filled with deceptive labels. Let us vigilantly resist all teachings which would chloroform the conscience. Let us prefer true terms to merely nice ones. Let us call sin by its right name, and let us tolerate no moral conjuring either with ourselves or with others. The first essential in all moral reformation is to call sin “sin.” “If we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin.”

FEBRUARY 21

GRACE REIGNS!

Romans 5:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

WHEN old Mr. Honest came to the river, and he entered the cold waters of death, the last words he was heard to utter by those who stood on the shore were these:—“Grace reigns!” (Ro 5:21) All through his pilgrimage old Mr. Honest had been in Emmanuel’s land where grace reigned night and day. It was through grace that he had found the way of life. It was through grace that he had been delivered from the beasts and pitfalls of the road. It was grace that had given him lilies of peace, and springs of refreshment, and the fine air that inspired him in difficult tasks. And in death he still found “grace abounding,” and the Lord of the changing road was also Lord of the dark waters through which he passed into the radiant glories of the cloudless day.

In every yard of a faithful pilgrimage we shall find the decrees of sovereign love. We are never in alien country. “Grace reigns” in every hill and valley, through every green pasture and over every rugged road, in every moment of “the day of life,” and in the last sharp passage through the transient night of death.

FEBRUARY 22

THE THREE GARDENS

Revelation 22:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

THE Bible opens with a garden. It closes with a garden. The first is the Paradise that was lost. The last is Paradise regained. And between the two there is a third garden, the garden of Gethsemane. And it is through the unspeakable bitterness and desolation of Gethsemane that we find again the glorious garden through which flows “the river of water of life.” Without Gethsemane no New Jerusalem! Without its mysterious and unfathomable night no blessed sunrise of eternal hope! “We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”

We are always in dire peril of regarding our redemption lightly. We hold it cheaply. Privileges easily come to be esteemed as rights. And even grace itself can lose the strength of heavenly favour and can be received and used as our due. “Gethsemane can I forget?” Yes, I can; and in the forgetfulness I lose the sacred awe of my redemption, and I miss the real glory of “Paradise regained.” “Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price.” That is the remembrance that keeps the spirit lowly, and that fills the heart with love for Him “whose I am,” and whom I ought to serve.

FEBRUARY 23

THE PROCESS AND THE END

“Ye have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”

—James 5:7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

AND so we are bidden to be patient. “We must wait to the end of the Lord.” The Lord’s ends are attained through very mysterious means. Sometimes the means are in contrast to the ends. He works toward the harvest through winter’s frost and snow. The maker of chaste and delicate porcelain reaches his lovely ends through an awful mortar, where the raw material of bone and clay is pounded into a cream. In that mortar-chamber we have no hint of the finished ware. But be patient, even in this chamber of affliction the ware is on the way to glory!

And so it is with the ministries of our Lord. He leads us through discords into harmonies, through opposition into union, through adversities into peace. His means of grace are processes, sometimes gentle, sometimes severe; and our folly is to assume that we have reached His ends when we are only on the way to them. “The end of the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” “Be patient, therefore,” until it shall be spoken of thee and me, “And God saw that it was good.”

FEBRUARY 24

MOVING TOWARDS DAYBREAK

“He hath brought me into darkness, but not into light.”

—Lamentations 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

BUT a man may be in darkness, and yet in motion toward the light. I was in the darkness of the subway, and it was close and oppressive, but I was moving toward the light and fragrance of the open country. I entered into a tunnel in the Black Country in England, but the motion was continued, and we emerged amid fields of loveliness. And therefore the great thing to remember is that God’s darknesses are not His goals; His tunnels are means to get somewhere else. Yes, His darknesses are appointed ways to His light. In God’s keeping we are always moving, and we are moving towards Emmanuel’s land, where the sun shines, and the birds sing night and day.

There is no stagnancy for the God-directed soul. He is ever guiding us, sometimes with the delicacy of a glance, sometimes with the firmer ministry of a grip, and He moves with us always, even through “the valley of the shadow of death.” Therefore, be patient, my soul! The darkness is not thy bourn, the tunnel is not thy abiding home! He will bring thee out into a large place where thou shalt know “the liberty of the glory of the children of God.”

FEBRUARY 25

THE FRESH EYE

“His compassions fail not: they are new every morning.”

—Lamentations 3:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

WE have not to live on yesterday’s manna; we can gather it fresh to-day. Compassion becomes stale when it becomes thoughtless. It is new thought that keeps our pity strong. If our perception of need can remain vivid, as vivid as though we had never seen it before, our sympathies will never fail. The fresh eye insures the sensitive heart. And our God’s compassions are so new because He never becomes accustomed to our need. He always sees it with an eye that is never dulled by the commonplace; He never becomes blind with much seeing! We can look at a thing so often that we cease to see it. God always sees a thing as though He were seeing it for the first time. “Thou, God, seest me,” and “His compassions fail not.”

And if my compassions are to be like a river that never knows drought, I must cultivate a freshness of sight. The horrible can lose its horrors. The daily tragedy can become the daily commonplace. My neighbor’s needs can become as familiar as my furniture, and I may never see either the one or the other. And therefore must I ask the Lord for the daily gift of discerning eyes. “Lord, that I may receive my sight.” And with an always newly-awakened interest may I reveal “the compassions of the Lord!”

FEBRUARY 26

THE CELLARS OF AFFLICTION

Psalm 34:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD used to say that whenever he found himself in the cellars of afflictions he used to look about for the King’s wine. He would look for the wine-bottles of the promises and drink rich draughts of vitalizing grace. And surely that is the best deliverance in all affliction, to be made so spiritually exhilarant that we can rise above it. I might be taken out of affliction, and emerge a poor slave and weakling. I might remain in affliction, and yet be king in the seeming servitude, “more than conqueror” in Christ Jesus. It is a great thing to be led through green pastures and by still waters; I think it is a greater thing to have a “table prepared before me in the presence of mine enemies.” It is good to be able to sing in the sunny noon; it is better still to be able to sing “songs in the night.”

And this deliverance may always be ours in Christ Jesus. The Lord may not smooth out our circumstances, but we may have the regal right of peace. He may not save us from the sorrows of a newly-cut grave, but we may have the glorious strength of the immortal hope. God will enable us to be masters of all our circumstances, and none shall have a deadly hold upon us.

FEBRUARY 27

THE MIGHT OF FRAILTY

Psalm 105:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36.

THAT is the wonder of wonders, that the Almighty God will use frail humanity as the vehicles of His power, and will make Moses and Aaron shine with reflected glory. Man can send an electric current into a fragile carbon film and make it incandescent. He can send his voice across a continent, and make it speak on a distant shore. And the Lord God can do wonders compared with which these

are only as the dimmest dreams. He can send His holy power into human speech, and the words can wake the dead. He can send His virtue into the human will, and its strength can shake the thrones of iniquity. He can send His love into the human heart, and the power of its affection can capture the bitterest foe.

And so the word “impossible” becomes itself impossible when the soul of man is in fellowship with the Lord of Hosts. The pliant will becomes an iron pillar. The weak heart becomes “as a defended city” when it is the home of God. Dumb lips become the thrones of mysterious eloquence when touched with divine inspiration.

FEBRUARY 28

THE TEST OF FULNESS

Deuteronomy 8:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

"AND thou shalt eat and be full, and thou shalt bless the Lord thy God.” Fulness is surely a more searching test than want. Fulness induces sleep and forgetfulness. Many a man fights a good fight with Apollyon in the narrow way, who lapses into sleepy indifference on the Enchanted Ground. Men often sit down to a full table without “grace.” Pain cries out to God, while boisterous health strides along in heedlessness. Yes, it is our fulness that constitutes our direst peril. “This was the iniquity of Sodom, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness.”

And so our tests may come on the sunny day. A nation’s supreme tests may come in its prosperity. The sunshine may do more damage than the lightning. The soul may falter even in Beulah land, where “the sun shines night and day.”

Prayer must not, therefore, tarry until sickness and adversity come. We must “pray without ceasing” in the cloudless noon, lest we are stricken with “the arrow that flieth by day.” We must seek the eternal strength when no apparent enemy crouches at our gate, and when our easy road is lined with luxuriant flowers and fruit.

FEBRUARY 29

INVINCIBLE RELIANCE

Hebrews 11:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

"ACCOUNTING that God was able.” That is the faith that makes moral heroes. That is the faith that prompts mighty ventures and crusades. It is faith in God’s willingness and ability to redeem His promises. It is faith that if I do my part He will most assuredly do His. It is faith that He cannot possibly fail. It is faith that when He makes a promise the money is already in the bank. It is faith that when He sends me into the wilderness the secret harvest is already ripe from which He will give me “daily bread.” It is faith that “all things are now ready,” and in that faith I will face the apparently impossible task.

And thus the “impossible” leads me to the “prepared.” The desert leads me to “fields white already.” The hard call to sacrifice leads me to the “lamb in the thicket.” “God is able,” and He is never behind the time. The critical need unveils His grace.

Faith goes out on this invincible reliance. It is “the assurance of things hoped for.” And by faith it inherits these things and is rich and strong in their possession.