

Our Daily Walk by F B Meyer - Feb

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February 1

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."-- Jn 18:37.

THIS WAS our Lord's answer to Pilate's inquiry, and to a certain extent each of us may appropriate His words. Wordsworth's immortal lines suggest that we stood before God to receive our commission, ere we became clothed with this body of humiliation. Whether or not the poet is right in his surmise, that "not in utter nakedness or forgetfulness do we come from God, who is our Home," we need not argue. It is enough that God, who hates nothing that He has made, sent us forth to realise an ideal, to fulfil a purpose, to bear witness to some phase of Truth! Shall we not ask ourselves, as in His Presence, whether we are fulfilling the Divine purpose of what the Apostle calls "our high calling"? (Phi 3:14).

God created each soul with a purpose. The potter takes in hand a lump of clay with a distinct design. He means, when he places it on the horizontal wheel, to make of it a vessel to adorn a temple or palace, or he has in mind to serve some household use. The revolving wheel on the one hand, and his skilful manipulation on the other, will evolve and complete his purpose. "Cannot I do with you, as this potter? saith the Lord."

"Thou hast made me and fashioned me. Thou didst choose the time and circumstances of my birth, my parentage and heredity, my mental equipment and my physical frame. From the first Thou didst know the constitution of my body, which Thou didst fashion in secret, and curiously work in the lowest places of the earth."

To our humble challenge: "Why hast Thou made me thus?" God does not always give an audible reply. His answer is often voiceless, it steals in upon the soul insensibly, and we know that we are fulfilling His purpose. If you are engaged in some unwelcome task, which evidently is your duty; if you are shut up as companion with some uncongenial charge; if you are called to minister to people who seem unresponsive or unsympathising, ask that the Saviour and you may be yoked together, that His Will may be done through you, that His love and kindness may bear and forbear in you, and that you may witness to the truth, as it is in Jesus.

PRAYER

O God, some of us shrink from our life-work, from those with whom we have to associate, from unwelcome toil and irksome tasks. Enable us to see Thy plan, and to trust Thee who art working out Thy plan in our lives. May the love of Christ constrain us no longer to live unto ourselves, but to Him. AMEN

February 2

THE MYSTERY OF REGENERATION

"Jesus said unto him, Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus said: How can a man be born when he is old?"-- Jn 3:3-4.

MARVEL NOT! said Jesus to Nicodemus--but notwithstanding, it is difficult not to marvel at the wonder and mystery of the New Birth.

Birth, as in the case of the little chick, is emergence. It is the emergence of a tiny creature from darkness and confinement into the great world, with its over-arching blue, its mantle of green, and its abundant wealth. So the mineral may be born into the vegetable, the vegetable into the animal, the animal into the human, the human into the divine. But in each case the process is the same. We are born from above. (See marginal reading of A.V. and R.V. in Jn 3:3-7.) In other words, the kingdom above us must stoop down and take us into union with itself.

This new birth from above is the heavenward side of Faith. Just as the outstretched hand has two sides to it, the palm and the back, so the act by which we are incorporated into Life Eternal has two sides to it--the angels speak of it as being born into the Life of God; we describe it as trusting Jesus Christ for salvation. If we are believing--trusting in Him--we are born from above. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." To them that receive Him, Jesus gives the right to become the sons and daughters of God. "Now are we the sons of God."

This is the mystery of the New Birth. "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in Thy Book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain to it." It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He, the First-Born from among the dead, shall appear, we shall be like Him!

It is a marvel, that in some mysterious manner we awake to find ourselves attached by the ties of birth and nature to this wonderful world. What are we? Whence came we! What is the true significance of this discipline of pain and weariness intersected with joy and gladness--we cannot tell! But is it not more marvellous that we should find ourselves belonging to that Eternal World through Jesus Christ our Lord; that He is the Ladder linking this world to His own, and that where He is, we shall be also?

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O Saviour, that Thou hast taught us to know Thee, and to love Thee; but we thank Thee most of all for adopting us into Thy family, and making us the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. May we walk as children of Light, and go through the world fulfilling the ministries of Heaven. AMEN.

February 3

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life."-- Jn 4:14.

ONE MORNING, when the land was carpeted with flowers of spring, a woman awoke in the little town of Sychar that lay in the lap of the twin mountains, Ebal and Gerizim. She little realised that that day would revolutionise, not her own life only, but that of untold thousands. Throughout its happenings her story would be embalmed in the history of the race, and she would take the first step which, as tradition says, ended in martyrdom.

Her nature was passionate and intense. The well was deep! She had sought to satisfy her heart with human love, but in vain, and she had ceased to believe in love. Her character was gone, and her neighbours would not tolerate her presence at the ancient well, so that she had no alternative but to carry her pitcher hither in the sultry noon, instead of in the cool of the late afternoon, when the women came to draw their water.

She was not destitute of religion. There was the ancient tradition of Jacob's faith, for he had lived within sight of these hills and had drunk of that well. She believed in this ancestral religion, which had existed in its sublime simplicity before the division arose between Jew and Samaritan, and had listened to many discussions as to the rival claims of the temples at Jerusalem and Gerizim. She also believed that some day the long-looked for Messiah would appear, and explain all things. In the meanwhile, however, she was sick and weary at heart. Her daily lonely visit to the well seemed to epitomise her inner experience. "Give me, Stranger," she seemed to say, "anything that will appease this soul-thirst, and restore to me the years that the locust and cankerworm have eaten. Then I shall cease to thirst and come all the way hither to draw!"

Is she not the type of myriads? Some among my readers have drunk of all the wells sunk by human hands, and have found them brackish or empty. They have turned from them all with the ancient verdict: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Is it thus with you, my friend? Then, it may be, that He who came far out of His usual way to find and help this distraught soul, is near to you also, waiting to open those hidden springs of which, if a man drink, he shall never thirst again.

PRAYER

O Christ, Who didst sit at Jacob's well, give me to drink of the water of life, and to hear Thy voice, which is as music; let that spring, of which Thou didst speak to the woman, rise up within my heart unto eternal life. AMEN.

February 4

SPRING UP, O WELL!

"He that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely."-- Rev 22:17.

TRUE RELIGION is the union of the Spirit of God with the human spirit and this is effected in and, through Jesus Christ. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Jesus is the Mediator between God and man. He reveals the Father, unites us with the Father, and comes with the Father to make His home with us (Jn 14:21-23).

Continuing our thought in yesterday's reading, it is thus that our religious life becomes a springing-fountain. The woman spoke of "the well," our Lord of "the spring in the well." She spoke of the fatigue of drawing-up, He of the rising-up. With too many, religion is not spontaneous, but derived. They must have religious services, or a rousing preacher, or books of religious stimulants. We all profit by outside helps, but we must not depend upon them. Learn the habit of being still before God, till His love rises yearningly and earnestly within you.

Whatever impedes the uprising of the Fountain must be abandoned. A curious thing once happened at a training college. The house was full of students, when suddenly the entire water-supply failed. After every effort had been made to trace the failure, a plumber was sent for, who went at once to the junction between the main supply and the house-pipe. On opening this a big toad was discovered, which had filled the orifice and made it impossible for the water to pass through. It had come in as a tiny tadpole, had lodged in the joint, living on the water, until, full-grown, it sealed the passage.

Something like this may happen in our lives. Hidden sin may grow within, unchecked, until it chokes the incoming love of God. Jesus knew that in the woman's heart there was unconfessed sin, which blocked her reception of the Living Water. In mercy, He uncovered the evil thing, the obstacle was removed, and the Fountain of Life immediately arose. She ceased her arguments, and became a disciple. She forgot her prejudices, and leaving behind the water-pot, started off to the town, telling everyone she met that at last she had found the Messiah. Presently she returned with the whole town behind her, and Jesus knew that harvest-time had arrived!

PRAYER

O Saviour of men! I am nothing better than common earthenware; but may I be cleansed and purified, and then filled with Thy heavenly treasure. Dip me deep into the water of life, and give refreshment through me to many parched and weary hearts. AMEN.

February 5

GOD'S GUIDING HAND IN OUR LIVES

"The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want."-- Psa 23:1.

"When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice."-- Jn 10:4.

DO YOU need guidance as to your path? Look unto Jesus; it is always possible to discern His form, though partially veiled in mist; and when it is lost, be sure to stand still until He comes back to find and re-establish the blessed connection. Do not look to impressions which often contradict one another, which rise and fall with variable fickleness, and are like eddies upon a flowing current; do not seek for guidance from friends who will differ from each other, and no two of which will give the same advice on the same grounds, but look away to Christ; throw on Him the responsibility of making you know the way you are to take; leave it to Him to make it so abundantly clear that you cannot do other than follow; even tell Him that you will stand still until He puts His arms under you, and carries you where He would have you be. Do not get anxious or flurried. Put the government of your life upon His shoulder, and leave Him to execute His plan.

Sometimes He guides us to the rest of the green pastures, and the quiet of the still waters. In other words, we are left through happy months and years to fulfil the ordinary commonplaces of life, content to fill a little space, and receiving great increments of spiritual force for future service. At other times, we are guided from the lowland pastures up into the hills. The way is sunny, above us the precipitous cliffs, beneath the dark turbid stream; but this is well; we would not always be lying in the pastures or walking softly by the waters. It is good to climb the heights with their far view and bracing air.

In the late afternoon the Shepherd may lead his flock back into the valleys, through the dark woods, where the branches meet overhead and the wild beast lurks in ambush, but we know that in one hand He has the rod or club, with which to belabour anything that may attack; and in the other the crook to drag us out of the hole. He would not lead us into the dark valley which He had not explored, and whose perils He was not prepared to overcome. Darkness, sorrow, or death do not prove that we have missed His guidance, or have taken the wrong path, but rather that He accounts us able to bear the trial by faith in Himself.

PRAYER

Tell us, O Lord, where Thou art leading Thy flock to-day, that we may follow upon Thy track. We do not ask Thee to come our way, but to teach us Thine. AMEN.

February 6

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

"One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things Which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."-- Phi 3:13-note Php 3:14-note

AN IDEAL is a mental conception of character after which we desire to shape our lives. It is the fresco which we paint on the walls of our soul, and perpetually look at in our lonely hours; and since the heart is educated through the eye, we become more and more assimilated to that which we admire.

Our Ideal should be distinctly beyond us. We must be prepared to strain our muscles and task our strength, attempting something which those who know us best never thought us capable of achieving. Like St. Paul, we must count the ordinary ambitions of men as dung, must forget the things which are behind and press forward to those before.

We should choose as an objective some ideal which is manifestly, in our own judgment or that of others, within our scope. It is a mistake to set before our minds an ideal which is altogether out of harmony with the make-up of our nature. Therefore we should learn, to say with the Apostle: "I follow on to apprehend that for which I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." Be sure that God created and redeemed you for a definite purpose. Discover that purpose, and set yourself to make it good.

Our Ideal should give unity to life. Happy is the man who is able to prosecute his ideal through each hour of consciousness, and who can say: "This one thing I do!" Such people are the irresistible ones. Those who know one subject thoroughly, or who bend all their energies in the prosecution of one purpose, carry all before them. The quest for a holy character may be prosecuted always and everywhere. In every act and thought we may become more like Christ.

The Christ ideal is the highest ideal. "That I may gain Christ, and be found in Him." But such an ideal will only be realised at the cost of self-denial. You must put aside your own righteousness to get His; you must be willing to count all things loss; you must ignore the imperious demands of passion. So shall you be prepared for the hour when even "the body of your humiliation" shall be transformed to the likeness of the glorious body of Christ. His working is on your side; in you and for you He will subdue all things to Himself.

PRAYER

Thou, O Christ, art all I want. May Thy grace abound towards me, so that having all sufficiency in all things, I may abound unto every good work. AMEN.

February 7

VISION AND PURPOSE

"I said, What shall I do, Lord?"-- Act 22:10.

"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on toward the goal."-- Php 3:12, 13note, Php 3:14-note.

WHEN THE Apostle Paul was suddenly brought into the presence of the Eternal, the whole course of his life was changed. In that flash of Light he saw the exalted Saviour, and learnt that he was antagonising the purposes of redeeming grace, and that vision altered the whole of his purposes and actions. From that great hour he forgot the things that were behind, and endeavoured to apprehend that for which he had been apprehended by Christ Jesus. It was his ambition to build his life on the pattern shown him on the mount.

Years after, as he reviewed his life-work, the churches he had founded, the cities he had evangelised, the epistles he had written, surely he might have reckoned that he had apprehended; but ever as he climbed, he envisaged heights beckoning beyond his attainments. Is not that the case with us, as we compare the vision of God's purpose with what we have realised? Oh, give us back the years that have gone, that we may do better, be more accurate and successful in the transmission to living fact of those fair ideals, which called to us years ago! The vision in the sanctuary may never be perfectly realised by these bungling apprentice-hands. Yet God accepts and forgives the mistakes, as the mother accepts the cobbled stitches of her little girl who tries to help her with her sewing. "Not that we have already attained, or are already perfect, but we follow on," and God forgives and accepts our poor patchwork!

What must we do to achieve our ideals? We must be more often in the sanctuary, in fellowship with Christ, to whose image we are to be conformed. With the Psalmist we must say: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none on the earth that I desire beside Thee." As we look on Him, we shall be changed into His likeness. As He is, so shall we become. Martyrs on the night before their agony; reformers hesitating at their tasks; scholars wondering whether their long self-denial was worth while; fathers and mothers; teachers and workers; preachers and missionaries, all these have stood in the sanctuary of God, until they have seen the vision and ideal. Then they have reckoned that what God had taught them to long for, He was prepared to enable them to effect. "All things are possible to him that believeth."

PRAYER

Grant unto me grace, O Lord, that I may both perceive and know what things I ought to do, and may also have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same. AMEN.

February 8

FAITHFULNESS IN DAILY LIFE

"With goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men."-- Eph 6:7.

THE COMMON drudgery of daily life can be a Divine Calling. We often speak of a young man as "being called to the Ministry"; but it is as fitting to speak of a carpenter being called to the bench, the blacksmith to the forge, and the shoemaker to his last. "Brethren," said the Apostle, "let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God."

Remember that your life has been appointed by God's wise providence. God as much sent Joseph to the drudgery and discipline of the prison as to the glory and responsibility of the palace. Nothing happens to us which is not included in His plan for us; and the incidents which seem most tiresome are often contrived to give us opportunities to become nobler, stronger characters.

We are called to be faithful in performing our assigned duties. Not brilliance, not success, not notoriety which attracts the world's notice, but the regular, quiet, and careful performance of trivial and common duties; faithfulness in that which is least is as great an attainment in God's sight as in the greatest.

In every piece of honest work, however irksome, laborious, and commonplace, we are fellow-workers with God. We must help God to give men their daily bread. It is for Him to cause the growth of the corn, but man must reap and thresh, grind out the flour, make and distribute the bread. The tailor is God's fellow-workman, helping Him to clothe the bodies which He has made to need garments of various textures. The builder co-operates with God in housing His children. The merchant helps to bring the products of the East to refresh and enrich the toiling masses of the West. God uses man in a thousand ways to serve the children of men.

Take up your work, then, you who seem to be the nobodies, the drudges, the maid-of-all-work, the clerk, or shop assistant. Do it with a brave heart, looking up to Him who for many "years toiled at the carpenter's bench. Amid the many scenes and actions of life, set the Lord always before your face. Do all as in His presence, and to win His smile; and be sure to cultivate a spirit of love to God and man. Look out for opportunities of cheering your fellow-workers. Do not murmur or grumble, but let your heart rise from your toil to God your Maker, Saviour, and Friend. So the lowliest service will glisten, as grass-blades do when sun and dewdrops garnish them.

PRAYER

Be not far from me, O Lord, this day; and through all its hours may I be found doing those things which are well-pleasing in Thy sight. AMEN.

February 9

CHANGING OUR STRENGTH

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."-- Isa 40:31.

IT IS more than probable that these lines will be read by some who have lost heart. They are fainting beneath the long and arduous strain of life, and ready to give up in despair. It seems as though God had forgotten to be gracious, and in anger had shut up His tender mercies. To all such, Isaiah says: God is not tired: you think He is because you are. Wait upon the Lord, and change your strength (see margin).

The question is not as to altering your environment, but altering your courage, your power of endurance, your assurance of victory; then, notwithstanding every hindrance and difficulty, you will mount up on wings like eagles, you will run without being weary, you will walk without being faint.

The inevitable order. Mounting up--running--walking! We should have supposed that it should have been walking in the beginnings of religious experience; then the walk breaking into the run; and finally the runner leaping on wings into the azure, like the eagle a black speck against the blue! But experience confirms the prophetic order. Isaiah is right! We mount, we run, we walk!

Let us claim the promise--"They that wait on the Lord shall change their strength." Too often in the past we have depended on the stimulus of services, sermons, conventions which have made the embers glow again on the heart's altar. We have gone back to our homes, to our daily calling, with a new zeal and impulse that has lasted for weeks or months. Then we have found ourselves flagging again; we have run and got weary; we have walked and become faint.

To all such comes the word; if you would once more mount up and run and walk, you must change your strength. Time tells on us! Moods influence us! Circumstances impede us! Satan blows cold blasts on our heart-fires and cools them! Sins pile up their debris between us and God! From all these let us turn once more to Jesus and wait on Him. "My soul, wait thou only upon the Lord, for my expectation is from Him." Look not back, but forward! Not down, but up! Not in, but out! Never to your own heart, but keep looking to Jesus, made near and living by the grace of the Holy Spirit. So shall you change your strength, as you wait upon the Lord.

PRAYER

Thou knowest, Lord, how often I am sorely let and hindered in running the race which is set before me. May Thy bountiful grace and mercy come to my help, that I may finish my course with joy, and receive the crown of life. AMEN.

February 10

THE WATER OF LIFE TURNED TO WINE!

"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim."-- Jn 2:5, 6, 7.

DO NOT forget the necessity of obeying the inner voice of Christ, which may be recognised by these three signs--it never asks questions, but is decisive and imperative; it is not unreasonable nor impossible; it calls for an obedience which costs us some sacrifice of our own way and will. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it!"

Do as you are told. It was a severe test to obedient faith to fill up those big jars, which stood in the vestibule of the house. Each would contain about twenty gallons, and as they were probably nearly empty, it would be a long and tedious business to fill them, especially at a time when guests required other attention... "They filled them up to the brim!"

In your obedience, always give Christ brimful measure. It may be a very small thing He asks you to do--to teach a class of children, to pay a visit to some sick man or woman, to write a letter, to speak a word of comfort, to hold out the helping hand, to give the glass of cold water, but see to it that your response is hearty and brimful! The jar is your opportunity! A very common and ordinary one! An act that may seem needless or inconvenient; but out of it may come the greatest achievement of your life! When the Lord calls you into co-partnership, be sure not to say: "Please do not ask me!" Nay, serve Him to the brim! He never asks you to do one small act for Him, without being prepared to add His Almighty grace to your weakness, thereby perfecting the act. It is an amazing thing that He should want our help. Let us give Him to the brim, and, as we do so, we shall see a wonderful and beautiful thing, which is "hidden from wise and prudent, but revealed to babes". "The servants who drew the water knew." Many of us realise that this miracle is constantly taking place. We fill our waterpots to the brim with water; but at the end of days of careful preparation we sadly review the result, and say to ourselves: "After all, it is very poor stuff, only water at the best!" But as we pour it out in service to others, we know that the Master has been collaborating with us, and has turned the water into wine! There are secrets between the Lord and those who obey Him! It is blessed when we are workers together with Christ. He knows, and you know. A smile passes between you and Him, and it is enough! The best wine is always kept in reserve!

PRAYER

Enable me to do not only what I like to do, but what I ought. Cause me to be faithful in a little, and in common tasks to learn Thy deep lessons of obedience, patience, and conscientiousness. AMEN.

February 11

THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

"The glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams The Lord is our King; He will save us."-- Isa 33:21-22.

THE R.V. translates our text "Jehovah will be with us in Majesty."

The reference can only be to our Saviour, who is the Divine Vice-regent of the world. Through Him it was created, by Him it has been redeemed, in Him its government is vested. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. His are the Glories of the Cross, of Victory over Death and Hell, of the Ascension, of Pentecost, of the Millennial Reign, of the Judgment Seat!

And this Glorious and Transcendent Saviour is willing and eager to be the complement of our deficiencies and needs. We look around, and some of us, as we compare our lot with others, lament, even if we do not audibly complain, at our disadvantages. Others, whom we have known from childhood, seem to have all that heart could wish--a happy married life, a spacious and beautiful home, hosts of friends, buoyant health, opportunities of travel and enjoyment that are denied to us. We have been plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning. We have spent a shut-in, cloistered life. The bare necessities of life have been our only portion, and a sense of anxiety as to our future has haunted our dreams.

But we are not alone in this experience. When every one went to his own home, our Lord Jesus spent the night on the Mount of Olives. The birds had their nests, and the foxes their holes, but the Son of Man had no where to lay His head, but, like Jacob, was wont to make a stone His pillow. You are not singular, therefore, if your life is barren and lonely, for many of God's noblest saints have lived from hand to mouth, wandering in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented.

Remember that such experiences are designed to bring into prominence what the glorious Lord is prepared to be and do. In mathematics we speak of the complement of a curve--that which is needed to make a curve into a complete circle. So Jesus is willing to complete our lives, however imperfect and ineffective they may be. He is able to compensate for all deficiencies, and to become in your experience "a place of broad rivers and streams." A river to intercept dreaded evil, and a stream to refresh and fertilise the drooping thirsty heart.

PRAYER

Be to us, O Glorious Lord, a place of broad rivers and streams; our Judge, our Lawgiver, our King, our Saviour. Make the wilderness of our life a pool, and the dry land water springs. AMEN.

February 12

EVERY-DAY RELIGION

"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Having a good conscience."-- 1Peter 3:15-16

THERE IS no doubt that if every Christian person were to begin to live up to the New Testament ideal, avoiding always what Christ would not be, and seeking to be always what He would be, there would be little need for preaching, for the beauty of the Christian character would in itself be sufficiently attractive to win men for Jesus Christ.

Let us examine ourselves by the suggestions in this chapter, from which we have selected our text (1Pe 3:8-18). Have we the mind of Christ, which makes us willing to be of no reputation, and to stoop even to the death of the cross, for others? Are we compassionate, sympathising in the joys and sorrows of others? Do we love the brethren, not always liking them perhaps, but treating them kindly, and making their interests more important than our own? Are we tender-hearted and pitiful towards the afflicted and distressed? Are we courteous, with true Christian politeness which differs from the world's code of manners? How do we reply to injury? Do we bless when we are cursed, or do we retaliate with hot and indignant words? Are we willing to leave our vindication with God?

Do you want a happy life and good days. Then leave God to vindicate and deliver you. Set yourself against evil, and live at peace with all, as much as in you lies. The one thing for all of us to be really anxious about is to enshrine Jesus Christ in our hearts as Lord (R.V.). Is there a door in your heart opening on a throne room which is reserved for Jesus only? Have you written on that door such words as these: "Other lords have had dominion over me, but henceforth He only is my King."? Be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you. This is what Peter, on one memorable occasion, failed to do; and we shall fail also but for the help of the Holy Spirit, who will teach us what we ought to say (Jn 14:26). Have a good conscience--one that can look God and man in the face, and is not conscious of willful violation of what is right and good. Follow the gleam; obey the inner light; listen to the still small voice, which is ever saying: "This is the way, walk ye in it."

PRAYER

Help me, O God, so to live that those who are associated with me, directing or serving me day by day, may long to have the love and joy which they see in me. Show me how to apply to the common things of daily life the heavenly principles of the risen life. AMEN.

February 13

GOD'S PARTNERSHIP WITH MAN

"Come now, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh." And God said, "I AM THAT I AM: Thus shall thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."-- Exo 3:10-14.

NOTHING IS more needed today than God's Partnership as a realized fact in Christian experience. Many of us may assent to what is written in these lines, and then put it aside, as a dream which is too ethereal to be of practical service. But when the Apostle said that "our fellowship, i.e. our partnership, is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" it is surely meant that we should enter upon our inheritance. "I AM _____" says our great Partner; "fill in your need, and I will meet your demand, according to the riches of My glory in Christ Jesus." Let us tear out the order-forms from God's service-register, fill them up, and present them for delivery. Not one of them would be dishonored. And if it happened that we had wrongly diagnosed our need, He would erase the demand based on our imperfect knowledge, and substitute what we would ask if we knew. There is nothing more certain than that the more we ask of God, the more pleased He is to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.

Our Lord made use of this incident when He was challenged by the Sadducees to adduce proof of the future life from the Books of Moses. He answered by quoting this paragraph of the burning bush, calling special attention to the fact that Moses referred to God as the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." He said that the use of the present tense---I AM--proved that God is not the God of the dead but of the living, and that all live unto Him.

What a comfort there is in this thought, that our beloved who have passed from us are in-breathing the same atmosphere as we are. We all eat the same spiritual meat and all drink the same spiritual drink. We see in a mirror darkly, but they face to face; but this identity of fellowship, of partnership with the "I AM," the ever-present God who fills heaven and earth, is a proof and a pledge that they have not altered essentially. They are drinking of the same stream higher up and nearer its source: "One family we dwell in him."

PRAYER

Accomplish thy perfect work in our souls, O Father. As yet we are bound with many chains; we tarry among things seen and temporal," we are exposed to the storms of the outer world, and are wrestling with its ills. But we are not dismayed, for we are more than earth and dust, we are akin to Thee, O Spirit of the Lord, and can experience Thy heavenly influence. Fill us with faith and love and hope. AMEN.

February 14

GOD'S PARTNERSHIP IN OUR AFFLICTION

"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them: and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."-- Isa 63:9.

MANY ARE the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. There is the affliction of ill-health, which compels us to stand aside and leave our tasks to others. The languor of sleepless nights, the inactivity and loneliness of the long days, the fear of being burdensome to others. The anxiety as to how this or that interest may fare in inexperienced hands. The sense of helplessness and weakness. These are the ingredients of that cup which many have to drink!

There is the affliction of poverty, when every door seems closed against our appeal; when hundreds of applicants are answering the same advertisement; when the cruse of oil has been drained of its last drop, and the barrel scraped bare; when the rent is overdue, the boots are wearing out in vain journeys, and the faces and clothes of the children begin to tell the tale of privation--then the iron seems to enter our soul!

There is the affliction of uncongenial companionship. "Woe to them that sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar!" To how many the Psalmist's words would express their precise position: "My soul hath long dwelt with him who hateth peace; I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war." There is even profounder suffering, when man or woman is mated for life with one who is out of Christ, or is the one Christian disciple in an irreligious family. It was with a deep knowledge of human nature that the Apostle urged his converts not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

There is also the affliction of temptation. Jealousy, pride, discontent, self-will--these assail us from without, and too often they find a response from within, as though there were an accomplice in hiding.

Such are some of the problems and afflictions which darken our experience. The mistake is that we face our troubles without God's fellowship, consciously realised. We carry our burdens, without casting them upon the Lord, and claiming the grace which waits to help us in our hour of need. We do not realise that He has come down to deliver us, because He knows our sorrows. In all our afflictions He is afflicted.

PRAYER

O God, we have no help but Thine, nor do we need another arm save Thine to lean upon. Teach us how to gain strength from Thee hour by hour, in the glance of an eye, the breathing of a sigh, the brief ejaculation, may we take into ourselves that strength which Thou hast stored for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN.

February 15

TRANSFIGURED LIVES

"Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."-- Rom 12:2.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image."-- 2Co 3:18.

IN OUR texts the word rendered transformed, or changed, is the same as is used in Mat 17:2; and this must have been in the mind of the Apostle when he said, "Be ye transfigured," and "we are transfigured into the same image." How can this transformation be effected? First, from within, by the renewing of the mind; and second, by beholding the glory of the Lord.

The renewing of the mind. This is no matter for emotion or ecstasy, but of bringing our minds into close and constant contact with the truth as contained in the Holy Scripture. You have not to study yourself in the mirror, to see whether you are becoming transfigured; but as day by day you steep your mind in God's Word, without your realising it, you will become transfigured. Moses wist not that his face shone. It was for the crowd that waited for him at the mountain-foot to see it, not for him.

Our Lord said: "Abide in Me and I in you." This is somewhat mystical and profound; but He said again: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you"--that is surely within our reach. "It is not too high, not too deep, not too inward, not too mystical," said Dr. Whyte on one occasion; "and when the Master asks that His words shall abide in me, He can mean nothing else than that I shall often recall and recollect His words, and shall repeat them to myself at all times."

As a man thinketh in his heart so is he; and if we think those thoughts of self-giving, which characterised our Lord's forecast and determination on the Mount of Transfiguration--if we are animated by the resolve to present ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God; as we steep our minds in His mind--the transfiguring glory of that high resolve will insensibly pass into our faces, thus irradiating our meanest actions, our simplest speech.

Beholding and reflecting the Glory of the Lord. The mirror again is Holy Scripture. We find there the reflection of our Lord's highest glory, which is patent, not in His Creative but in His Redemptive work. As we gaze on Him who, for our salvation hid not His Face from shame and spitting, but became a willing Sacrifice on our behalf, we shall be changed.

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, grant me such communion with Thyself that my soul may continually be athirst for that time when I shall behold Thee in Thy glory. In the meanwhile, may I behold Thy glory in the mirror of Thy Word, and be changed into the same image. AMEN.

February 16

THE LOVE OF CHRIST FOR US!

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."-- Phi 2:5-7.

THE LORD JESUS stripped Himself of everything save Love, that He might more readily meet each human soul on its own level. Being in the form of God, and equal with God, He emptied Himself, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, for our sakes. He stripped Himself of all that He might give to us fair clothing instead of the fading fig-leaves of apologies and excuse. He descended so low as to put the Everlasting Arms beneath the most hapless and hopeless. He desired to get so low, that none could get lower. He was set on proclaiming His Gospel so that even the dying thief might enter Paradise, and that not one prodigal in all the human family should think that he had sunk too low or gone so far as to be excluded from the hope of salvation. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

Surely it is inexcusable that any soul of man should evade the love of God, when the Son of His Love has made so great an effort to acquaint us, not only with its height and breadth and length, but with its depth. Why are we so cold, so unmoved, so inert? The Apostle speaks of the love of Christ constraining him, of the love of God shed abroad within us and flooding our heart. How is it that, with God's love so near, so dose, so easily within our reach, we are so apathetic and irresponsible?

The cure is, in part, the consciousness that God's Love is all around us, which we cultivate by meditation. "Thy Omnipotence," says St. Augustine, "is not remote from us even when we are remote from Thee"; and we may say as much of His Love. Even when we feel cold and distant, we are beset by God's love behind and before, and His grace is overshadowing us with infinite tenderness. Do not try to kindle love by thinking of the Cross as far away back in the past, but by musing and meditating on Christ's love as being as tender and real as when He said to His Mother, " Behold thy son," and to John, " Behold thy Mother."

Jesus knows the need of our heart, and is even now close at hand to lead us by the Holy Spirit into the realisation of His Love. Let us open our nature to the Blessed Comforter, and He will not be slack in His response. "The fruit of the Spirit is Love."

PRAYER

May the Holy Spirit so fill my heart with the consciousness of the love of Christ my Lord, that there may be no room in my life for anything inconsistent with His love. AMEN.

February 17

SERVING THE LORD

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."-- Rom 12:1.

THE FIRST thing for all of us to do is to present ourselves to God as alive from the dead, and our bodies as living sacrifices. The path of blessedness can be entered by no other gate. It is only as we refuse to be conformed to this world, and yield ourselves to be transformed by the free entrance of the Holy Spirit into our minds, that we can learn all that God will do for us. We are nothing; He is all. And He is prepared to be and do all things in us, if only we will He open to Him as the land lies open to the summer sun.

Those who really live the yielded life, do not need to ascertain God's Will by signs. They recognise it by the whisper of His voice and the touch of His hand. It is as we refuse to be moulded by the world, and give ourselves up to the transfiguring Spirit of God, that we prove what is His good, acceptable, and perfect will. But more than that, we begin to live for others, and draw by faith from the fulness of God, that we may minister to them aright.

First, we understand what the Will of God is; then we present our bodies that it may fulfil itself through us; then we discover that it means goodwill to men, and we become the happy channels of heavenly ministry to those around us in one of the spheres enumerated in Rom 12:6-8 of this chapter. It is impossible to cherish jealousy, because the Head may use this member or that; it is equally impossible to be proud, because we have nothing that we have not received. Let us always remember that each has a special ministry to fulfil, and that we shall find in our daily lot the opportunity of fulfilling it. How many resemble the landowner of the Eastern story, who sold his property in order to go in search of diamonds, and lo! the man who purchased his property found it full of diamonds. Indeed it was the famous Golconda region. In the dally drudgery of life you will find your heavenly opportunity. How many who are pining for a great mission, will never be permitted to enter it, because they despise the low and narrow door of humble service to those in their immediate neighbourhood.

But we can never realise these divine ideals of service merely by an external obedience. We must be constrained by a holy love to our Lord and to one another. What a despair these ideals would be apart from the Holy Spirit. That holy love comes from Him.

PRAYER

O God work in me, not only to will but to do of Thy good pleasure; and may I work out in daily life what Thou dost work in. AMEN.

February 18

THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED

"O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me."-- Isa 38:14.

THIS PRAYER is so indefinite that it will suit any emergency, and yet brimful of faith that God will undertake all responsibility. Are you oppressed with the sense of failure, with temptation, with the consciousness of sin? Or oppressed with poverty, or debt, or the fear of unemployment, or with inability to find work? Or cast down with bitter persecution within or without your home? Or sorely beset and hindered by ill-health, the hopelessness of recovery? All these eases of oppression are included in this petition, and may be handed over to your faithful Creator, with the certainty that He is as willing as He is able to undertake for you. He is never weary of hearing your cry; the Everlasting Arms are never tired; and our God neither slumbers nor sleeps.

What may we expect from a prayer so simple, yet so comprehensive? We shall know God. What shall I say, He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it" (Isa 38:15). Hezekiah had been a religious man, had maintained the Temple Services, had enjoyed the close friendship of Isaiah, yet it was in none of these things that he had met God face to face. But when he turned his face to the wall, and poured out his soul-anguish, He touched God, knew Him after a fresh fashion, heard Him speak, saw Him work. Only through sickness, loneliness, and the pressure of overwhelming sorrow, do some men rightly learn to live, and discover that unseen and most real world, where the life of the spirit unfolds to God as a flower in spring.

At the pit we learn God's Love (Isa 38:17). How can we measure God's love? They say that a man's fist is the measure of his heart. Come and stand beneath the stars! There is God's hand! Now judge His heart! It is illimitable! By that love He has put our sins behind His back into the ocean depths! With that love He has drawn us out of the pit of our sins! By that love He bears with our cold response and languid petitions! Through that love He will bring us to glory! His is a love that will never let us go!

Take the hand of Jesus to steady you; look down into the hole of the pit from which you have been redeemed, and then look up to the Throne of God to which He passed at His Ascension, and recall His own words: "where I am, there shall ye be also." Trust Him to undertake for your little life!

PRAYER

I pray Thee, O my Father, to shut me up to a simpler and more confiding faith. May I trust more than I know, and believe more than I see; and when my heart is overwhelmed within me, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. AMEN.

February 19

THINGS FOR AND AGAINST

"Jacob said: All these things are against me."-- Gen 42:36.

"What shall we then say to these things: If God be for us, who can be against us? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."-- Rom 8:31-37.

THY COMPLAINT is very bitter, thou Prince of Israel! What ails thee so sorely? Is there none to comfort?

I do well to be sorrowful! The days of my years have been few and evil! Driven from my father's home; a stranger in a strange land for thirty years; in constant dread of my brother; compelled by the misdeeds of my sons to flee the country; bereaved of my beloved Rachel; lamed through my resistance to God's Angel--I had already suffered to the uttermost; but now we are straitened by famine and want; Joseph is not, Simeon is detained in prison as a hostage, and they are demanding Benjamin, the son of my old age and my right hand."

Let us beware of passing hasty judgments on God's dealings with us. He cannot work out His fair design without some cross-stitches on this side of the canvas. The black clouds are only His water-cisterns, and on the other side they are bathed in sunshine. Do not look at your sorrows from the lowlands of your pilgrimage---but from the uplands of God's purpose. No chastening for the present is joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterward..., dwell on that Afterward! If Jacob had not been led along this special path, he would never have come out on the shining tableland, where God Himself is Sun.

"In all these things we are more than conquerors! " These are brave words, thou strenuous soul, how darest thou reverse the findings of the patriarch? Hast thou sounded the depths? Hast thou been in the pit?

"Ay! I have most certainly been there! I have experienced tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword; thrice beaten with rods, once stoned. In journeyings and perils, in hunger and thirst, in cold and pain. But nothing has succeeded in separating me from the love of Christ; and I am persuaded that neither life nor death, things present nor things to come..., shall ever separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Yes! thou great Apostle and Lover of Christ, thou art right! In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him who has loved us--our Saviour, Jesus Christ!

PRAYER

Help me, O Lord, to believe that what seem to be my losses are really gains, and that each ounce of affliction is adding to the weight of glory, not hereafter only, but now! AMEN.

February 20

JOY IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL

"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience."-- Jam 1:2-3.

WE ARE bidden to count our trials as pure Joy, since our patient endurance leads ultimately to the finished product of a holy character. All the trials and afflictions that beset us are seen and shared by our Heavenly Father. God did not save Israel from the ordeal of affliction, but passed through it with them (Exo 3:7-9; Isa 63:9). Evidently there was a wise purpose to be served by those bitter Egyptian experiences. So with ourselves. There is a reason for our trials which we do not understand now, but we shall do some day, when we stand in the light with God. Afflictions are not always chastisement, though in some cases that may be so; but more often we are in grief through manifold trials, that the proof of our faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore rejoice, and magnify His lovingkindness. What a theme is here for praise! Sweet psalms and hymns have floated down the ages, bearing comfort for myriads, because those who wrote them passed through searching discipline. And it may be that we who have passed through great tribulation will be able to contribute notes in the Heavenly music that the unfallen sons of light could never sing. The Psalter of Eternity could not be complete without the reminiscences, set to music, of the grace that ministered to us in our earthly trials, and brought us up out of the furnace of pain.

Then we shall tell how God's glorious arm went also at our right hand, as at the right hand of Moses; of how the stony paths became soft as mossy grass; of how He led us out of the scorching heat into green pastures and waters of rest; and how He provided for us to make for Himself a glorious Name. Yes, we will make mention of the Lord, according to all that He shall have bestowed upon us, according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindness. We will tell the story of how the Angel of His Presence saved us; how, in His love and pity, He redeemed us; and how He bare and carried us all the days of old. We shall have a great story to tell! "My heart and my flesh fail, but Thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever! None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate."

PRAYER

Give me, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downwards; give me an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; give me an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. AMEN.

February 21

THE REFINER'S FIRE

"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver."-- Mal 3:3.

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."-- 1Pe 1:7.

NOTHING IS harder to bear than the apparent aimlessness of suffering.

They say that what breaks a convict's heart in gaol is to set him to say carry stones from one side of the prison to the other, and then back again! But we must never look upon the trials of life as punishments, because all penalty was borne by our Lord Himself. They are intended to destroy the weeds and rubbish of our natures, as the bonfires do in the gardens. Christ regards us in the light of our eternal interests, of which He alone can judge. If you and I knew what sphere we were to fulfil in the other world, we should understand the significance of His dealings with us, as now we cannot do. The Refiner has a purpose in view, of which those who stand beside Him are ignorant, and, therefore, they are unable to judge the process which He is employing.

Dare to believe that Christ is working to a plan in your life. He loves you. Be patient! He would not take so much trouble unless He knew that it was worth while. "We do not prune brambles, or cast common stones into the crucible or plough sea-sands!" You must be capable of some special service, which can only be done by a carefully-prepared instrument, and so Christ sits beside you as the Refiner, year after year, that you may miss nothing.

Whilst the Fire is hot keep conversing with the Refiner. Ponder these words: "He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver." The thought is specially suitable for those who cannot make long prayers, but they can talk to Christ as He sits beside them. Nicholas Hermann tells us that, as he could not concentrate his mind on prolonged prayer, he gave up set times of prayer and sought constant conversations with Christ. Speak to Him, then, in the midst of your daily toil. He hears the unspoken prayer, and catches your whispers. Talk to Christ about your trials, sorrows, and anxieties! Make Him your Confidant in your joy and happiness! Nothing makes Him so real as to talk to Him aloud about everything!

PRAYER

Let the Fire of Thy Love consume in me all sinful desires of the flesh and of the mind, that I may henceforth continually abide in Jesus Christ my Lord, and seek the things where He sits at Thy right hand. AMEN.

February 22

THE LADDER TO HEAVEN

"Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it."-- Gen 28:12.

"Hereafter ye shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.-- Jn 1:51.

BETHEL WAS a bleak moorland in the heart of Canaan. The hill-sides and level downs were strewn with huge boulders. As he fled north wards, Jacob suddenly found himself overtaken by the swift eastern night while he was traversing this desolate moor. There was nothing for it but to lie down on the hard ground, taking one of the big stones as a pillow for his head. As he slept, he dreamed; and in his dream his mind wove together his last waking thoughts in fantastic medley. It seemed as if the big slabs of limestone came together, and built themselves into a gigantic staircase, reaching from where he lay to the starry heights above him; and on that staircase angels came and went, peopling by their multitudes that most desolate region, and evidently interested in the sleeper who lay beneath.

Let us think of that mystic ladder which is Jesus Christ our Lord, by which He descended to our humanity and ascended to the Throne of God. He is "the Way" by which "the sons of ignorance and night" can pass upward to the eternal Light and Love. Where are you? It may be on a moorland waste, in a ship's cabin, a settler's hut, in a humble cottage, in the crowded city, lying on a bed of pain in the hospital ward! Wherever you are, Jesus finds you out and comes just where you are. The one pole of the ladder is the gold of His Deity, the other the silver of His Manhood, which is placed against your life. Transmit to Him your burdens of sin and care and fear. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." "We have a Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." None of us is outside God's loving thought and care. There is always a linking ladder between ourselves and Heaven, and God's angels still pass to and fro, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. Let us see to it that we wait at the foot of the ladder to claim our share in the blessings which they bring to earth.

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O Father, that from whatever place Thy children seek Thee, there is a ladder reaching up beyond the stars to Heaven; that Jesus is the Way to Thyself, and we may come to Thee in Him; nay, Thou dost come to us, and dost send Thine angels to minister to our need, that Heaven is near to earth, with sympathy, help, and succour. AMEN.

February 23

THE LESSON OF THE THORN-BUSH

"The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush And God called unto him, and said, Moses, Moses, and he said, Here am I."-- Exo 3:2-4.

MOSES was an old man of eighty years! For forty years--the spring-tide of his life--he had basked in Court favour. The son of the palace, though born in a slave-hut According to Stephen, renowned in deed and word, eloquent in speech, learned in the highest culture of his age, accustomed to lead victorious armies in the field, or to assist in raising pyramids or treasure-cities in peace--all that the ancient world could offer was at his feet (Act 7:22; Heb 11:24-27). But this had been followed by forty other years---of exile, poverty, and heart-break. Instead of the riches of Egypt, he was engaged in tending the sheep of another and the years slowly passed away in obscurity. He was a disappointed and perplexed man. His own record was that when a man's life reaches four-score years, it is labour and sorrow, and he welcomes the cutting, off of the web (Psa 90:10).

One afternoon suddenly a common thorn-bush seemed wrapt in flame. The blaze was pure and clear, and as he watched, "Behold! the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." Small wonder that he arose from the shelter which screened him from the sun, and drew near to "see this great sight." Then was heard that inner Voice, familiar to all pure and humble hearts, which bade him realise that the fire was no ordinary flame, but the pledge and sign of God's Presence.

We must not suppose that there was more of God in that common bush than in the surrounding landscape. It was simply the focusing of His Presence which had always been there, as it is always everywhere. God is as near to each reader of these pages as He was to Moses at that moment! Take this to heart, you most forlorn, most down-hearted, most helpless soul! Be of good cheer! God comes to you, though humbled and scorched, and at the end of yourself! He wraps you around, interpenetrates you, and concentrates Himself on your need, saying: "I AM"--leaving you to fill in His blank cheque, and to claim what you most need. "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but His kindness shall not depart from you."

PRAYER

Some of us sorely need Thee, O God; we have been disappointed many times in the things we thought would yield us profit and satisfaction. When we are most absorbed in our necessary business, may Thy Presence be manifested to us. May we realise that we are not wondering aimlessly upon the trackless desert, because Thou art leading us. May every common bush be aflame with God. AMEN.

February 24

SONGS FROM A DUST-HEAP!

"Thy dead shall live!" "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs."-- Isa 26:19.

THIS CHEERY summons to awake and sing is addressed to those who dwell in the dust! The world is filled with them--those who dwell in the dark cells of disappointed love and faith, or who have failed in their life's purpose, or who, like Bartimaeus, are blind and reduced to beggary. Hope has been painted as blind-folded, her head downcast, her lyre broken in her hand. Sitting on the axis of the earth, which is making its difficult way through the storm and cloud, she presses to her ear the one unbroken string, as though catching at the music of a better time. It is thus that in many lives string after string has become broken and failed, and they have come down to sit in the dust of death and despair.

It may be that you have lost all sense of God's nearness and love--not because of any known sin, but through physical weakness, mental exhaustion, or the loneliness of sorrow and suffering. It may be that you have been seeking an experience of God, instead of God Himself. You have been seeking Him without, whilst He is within.

It may be that you are perplexed by the mystery of unanswered prayer. "O my God, I cry in the day-time, and Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." Yet no answer comes back from the Infinite, and your prayers seem like vessels lost at sea.

It may be that your life has not realised its early ideals. As the years go forward they carry us into disillusionment and heart-break. Life has its prizes and rewards, but they are not for us!

To all such we pass on Isaiah's words: "Awake and sing, for thy dew is as the dew of light." The dew is used here of the grace and love of God. Instead of dust there will be dew, which steals so gently and silently over the earth. The more dry and sapless a patch is, the more tenderly does the dew caress it! Even to graveyards it extends its gracious operations, bidding them awake and sing with the certainty of Resurrection.

Sing! because your moods, which the Psalmist called "down-sittings," do not affect your standing in Christ. We are all subject to fits of despondency. "The Lord hath chastened me sore, but He has not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of joy, that I may enter into them, and praise the Lord!"

PRAYER

We thank Thee that many evils that we dreaded have not come to us. Storms have expended themselves outside the circle of our lives. Thy mercy has been greater than our sin, Thy supplies larger than our need, Thy grace more abundant than the pressure of temptation. AMEN.

February 25

JESUS CHRIST TRIUMPHANT

"Who is this that cometh from Edom...glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."-- Isa 63:1.

WE CAN never speak of our Lord as we would! We select the richest metaphors of Scripture, the ideals of poets, the masterpieces of the rarest art; but none of them suffice. We steep our thought with fragments from the diaries and autobiographies of the saints. We meditate on His words till our hearts begin to burn! But we come back to the light of common days, and the summons of daily tasks, knowing that we have Him, but what He is neither tongue can tell nor heart conceive. We await, therefore, with some impatience, till the veil will part asunder and we shall see Him as He is.

The wistful yearning after Christ, which has characterised every age, has broken out again and again in transcendent expression, but among all the imaginings of sanctified and glowing souls, it is hard to find one more suggestive and inspiring than this pre-vision of Isaiah. He is standing on the foothills of the Judean table-land, looking due south toward Edom, when he is startled by an unexpected and extraordinary spectacle. A mighty Conqueror is descried in the distance, of commanding appearance traversing slowly and majestically the desert-wastes, His back toward Edom, His face toward the Judean frontier. He is clearly alone. Whether He had led an army, or had completed His work without an army, is not immediately apparent; but He approaches, travelling in the greatness of His strength. It is only natural that the astonished seer should challenge Him with the cry: "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" Across the intervening space the answer comes: "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save!"

Clearly, then, He is no enemy, but an Ally, and much more! The word save suggests that there is no reason for fear, but every reason to hope. Notice the special aspect of Jesus Christ which appears in this scene. It is not Jesus on the Cross, but in His Resurrection and Ascension glory. He it is who stands Sentry between us and the power of the flesh, for which Edom stands. He is not simply the Forgiver of Sin, but the Conqueror over all Sin. He is more than a Conqueror for Himself--He is responsible for all who trust Him.

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Captain of Salvation, who discernest the malevolence and working of evil spirits against my soul, deliver me, I entreat Thee, amid the manifold temptations and trials by which I am beset, make a way for me to escape, succour me by Thy mighty power, and cause me to become more than a conqueror. AMEN.

February 26

THE EXALTED LORD

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up."-- Isa 6:1.

WE LIVE in troubled times, but always in human history, when outward events seem most distracting and distressing. God's servants are drawn in to the secret place of the Most High, and are shown the reassuring vision of God's overruling Providence, and the ordered regularity of His eternal reign. When the land was passing through dark distress, and revolution was imminent, Isaiah beheld the stability of God's Throne.

"It was high and lifted up," far above all other authority, power, or dominion in heaven, on earth, or under the earth! It was crowned with Love---"above it stood the Seraphim." Seraph is derived from fire, and the Seraphim stand for radiant love. If the Throne stands for stability, for judgment, and for power, then above all these attributes, and over-arching Him who sits there, is Love. This is the loftiest conception possible to mortals--Love supreme. The Lamb that was slain is in the midst of the Throne.

The one man who was chosen out of all Israel to see was Isaiah. In all humility he ascended the Temple-steps, hustled by the crowds that went there as a mere religious form. Any of them appeared to need a revealing vision more than he did, but it was the man who had seen, who now saw the Lord; it was the one saint in all Israel who appeared to be most in touch with God, who was brought into still closer touch. The rest saw only the Temple, the high altar, and the ritual, but he saw the "skirts of glory" filling every cranny of the holy place.

Let us not be satisfied with the outward and sensuous, with ritual however splendid, with sermons however magnificent! Those who are humble and persistent in their quest for God will hear notes which other ears cannot catch, will detect a Presence that evades ordinary sight, will enter the realm of the spirit which is closed to the outward observer.

The world may be full of tumult; the floods have lifted up their voice, but the Lord on High is mighty, and He shall overcome, for through Death, Resurrection, and Ascension He is Lord of lords and King of kings!

PRAYER

We cannot understand the meaning of the darkness and tumult around us, but we know that Thou art Love, and that Thou dost reign. May we see Thee raised above principality and power, might and dominion. Glory and blessing, honour and power be unto Thee, O Son of God, who art the Man amid the sapphire Throne, AMEN.

February 27

PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

"...the Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."-- Phi 4:5-6.

THE WORD anxiety comes from the same root as anger, and suggests the idea of choking. Worry chokes the life of faith. It does not help us to overcome our difficulties, but unfits us for dealing with them. No weapon that is formed against us shall prosper; every tongue that shall rise against us shall be condemned; our bread shall be given, and our water sure. God will perfect that which concerneth us, and His goodness and mercy shall never cease. Roll thyself and thy burden on the Lord, and leave them there. Too many take them back again!

In the darkening autumn evenings, we light our lamps earlier, or turn on the switch, and lo! there is a burst of light which had been waiting to be called upon. So let us keep a smile upon our faces. As we put off our heavy and rain-soaked clothes in the vestibule, so let us leave our anxieties with God, until we have to resume our destined path.

The Lord is at hand! Let us often repeat these words, amid the commonplaces of life, as well as when anticipating His near Advent! Say it when Euodia and Syntyche are giving you trouble! Say it when you are irritated and think that there is no reason why you should accept rebuffs and slights so meekly! Say it when you are worried and anxious! Say it, till you come again into that Presence, which is as the light of the morning when the sun riseth. Practise the Presence of God! Hold fellowship with Him! Even in business, or in the midst Of daily toil, often lift your heart for a moment into the atmosphere of His presence! There is a great difference between faith and its intellectual expression. We must rise above the intellectual into spiritual fellowship with God. It is not for us to excite a transient feeling of love towards God. This will soon evanesce. Our business is the absolute surrender of the heart to Him. Not the rapture of the mystic, but the consciousness of the spirit, which is aware of an unimpeded union with the life of the Infinite. To be ever, tranquilly, joyously, and strenuously, at one with the blessed Will of God--that is the Heavenly Paradise, and each of us, by His grace, may walk with Him in happy fellowship, as Enoch did of old, and then we can make known our requests!

PRAYER

We ask not, O Father, for health or life. We make an offering to Thee of all our days. Thou hast counted them. We would know nothing more. All we ask is to die rather than live unfaithful to Thee. Living or dying we would be Thine. AMEN.

February 28

A FAITHFUL CREATOR

"Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a Faithful Creator."-- 1Pe 4:19.

THE MORE one ponders these words, the more wonderful they appear! That God is faithful is as clear as noonday. He is faithful in the At. return of the seasons and the orbit-order of the stars; faithful in holding back the flood, that it should not overflow the world and destroy the homes of men; faithful to every living creature that He has made, providing for its exact sustenance. Even the odd sparrow, which Christ must have seen thrown in by the dealer, when His Mother bought four others, does not fall to the ground without His notice. God is the Faithful Creator in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. We are not surprised, therefore, to find His faithfulness the theme of Holy Writ; but why does Peter lay emphasis on His faithfulness as Creator, when ministering to the special circumstances of suffering believers? Is not this the reason? We are apt to concentrate our thoughts on the Birth, the Cross, the Grave, the Intercession of our Lord, and to forget that behind all these, deep in the nature of God--the Almighty Creator--there are ever-welling fountains of faithfulness, love, and tenderness. We are summoned to go back beyond the story of Redemption to the infinite silence of Eternity, when each of us was a distinct thought in the mind of God. In His book, all our members were written, when as yet there was none of them.

Whether we have realised that eternal purpose is open to serious questioning, but everyone of us has a right

to look into the face of God, and say "Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments." We may not question God's dealings with us. They are immutably wise and right. But we may claim that in some way He should make good our deficiencies, so that though sorrowful, we should be always rejoicing; though poor we should make many rich; though having nothing, we should scatter our wealth, as though possessing all things. There is no reason why our life should be a failure, no reason why we should not minister richly to others, no reason why, by His grace, we should not be more than conquerors! We may humbly make this claim on the Almighty Creator, and He will not allow His faithfulness to fail!

PRAYER

Help us to commit ourselves to Thee in well-doing, O God, our Faithful Creator. May we find a solace for our own griefs and disappointments, in sympathy and ministry to others. AMEN.

February 29

THE BANISHMENT OF PAIN

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."-- Rev 21:4.

THERE ARE few lives in the world that escape pain. Beneath the outer surface of our physical frame there is a network of nerves, every fibre of which may become the source of suffering. We hardly realise that health is due to the combined action of thousands of delicate fibres, each moving in perfect accord with all the rest; but if one of these minute chords is jarred or out of tune, there ensues the discord of pain.

Our minds and hearts are as susceptible to suffering as our bodies. Probably there is more suffering generated in the world through the derangement of the soul than of the body. A wounded spirit, who can bear? The sensitive network of our affections, of our hopes and fears, of our attitude toward God or our fellow-men, and our self-consciousness, are capable of inflicting suffering, so acute and imperious, as to be an agony which can make us almost oblivious to physical pain.

Pain has a purpose. It is a danger-signal, which compels us to refrain from the things which have caused it, or to have recourse to the physician for alleviation. In the moral world, God has made the way of transgressors hard, and sown their paths with thorns, so as to dissuade and turn evildoers from their wicked ways. In the spiritual world, the sharp sting of remorse, the scourge of conscience, the agony of conviction, when, like Peter, we have denied our Lord, are of inestimable value in reminding us that we have run off the line and are tearing up the track.

Our Lord Jesus suffered Pain. He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was moved with compassion as He beheld sorrow and suffer-hag, and was constantly relieving pain and healing disease. In this He gave an evident sign that one day He would abolish it.

Why did the Seer at Patinas affirm that Pain should be no more? Because Pain arises from dislocation, and in that fair world, every limb and joint will work without fret or friction. Because Pain is the result of sin, and sin shall be no more. Because Pain was induced by the fruit of the knowledge of evil, and we shall eat of the tree of life, whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. Then there will be Songs instead of Sighs, and Anthems instead of Heartbreak.

PRAYER

Grant, O Lord, that we, and all whom we love, and all weary and tired souls, may rest in peace, and may finally enter into the city where there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, nor sin, for the former things shall have passed away. AMEN.