

Our Daily Walk by F B Meyer - Jan

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January 1

MAKING A FRESH START

"Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."-- Eph 4:22-24a

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."-- Ro 13:14.

WE CAN all start afresh! However far we have ascended, there is something higher; and however far we have fallen, it is always possible to make a fresh start. We need to take our place in the School of Christ and be taught by Him (Eph 4:20-21).

"The old man" which we must "put off" is clearly our former manner of life. If we have not put it entirely away, let us do so now by an immediate act of faith in the living Spirit. It does not take long for a beggar to put off his rags and take instead a new suit of clothes, and it need not take a moment longer to put away habits and thoughts, ways of speech and life which are unworthy of the children of God. Do it now, and look up to the Holy Spirit to keep renewing you in the spirit of your mind.

But more than this, let us "put on the new man," which is the life of Jesus Christ, that ideal which is in the likeness of God, and which the Lord created for us by His blessed life and death and resurrection. But to enable us to live this life we need the daily help of the Holy Spirit. He entered our hearts at the moment of regeneration, and has been with us ever since. We may not have realised His entry, but we believe it because of the assurance of 1Co 6:19; Rom 8:9; Eph 3:16. For my part, I like to begin every day, before lifting my head from the pillow, by saying, "Thou art within, O Spirit of Christ, though I feel Thee not."

If the Holy Spirit be ungrieved He will witness to our sonship; He will enthrone Christ as King of our life; will keep the self-life in the place of death; will give us a hunger for the things of God; He will give power in witness-bearing. In order to have a strong and blessed Christian experience, the one thing is to see that we do not grieve the Spirit. I do not think that we can grieve Him away, but we may greatly limit and restrain His gracious work by insincerity of speech, the nursing of an unforgiving spirit, any kind of over-reaching or fraudulent dealing, impurity of speech, or failure in love. We may be bound, so as not to be able to move our arms, by a number of cotton threads, quite as tightly as by a strong rope-thong. Let us take care not to grieve Him by such inconsistencies.

PRAYER

Fulfil in me, O God, those desires of goodness which Thou hast created in my heart, and perfect the work of faith, that Jesus Christ may be glorified in me. AMEN.

January 2

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."-- Php 2:5.

IN the paragraph from which these words are taken, the wonderful description of our Lord's descent to share our shame and sorrow is cited by the Apostle, that it might become a living impulse and inspiration to ourselves, not to look upon our own things, not to hold them with a tight grasp, but to be willing to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ, who became the instrument through which God wrought out His redeeming purpose.

Guided by the Spirit of God, the Apostle opens the compasses of his imagination and faith, and places the one point upon the throne of the Eternal God, and the other upon the Cross of shame where Jesus died, and shows us the steps by which He approached nearer and nearer to human need and sin; that, having embraced us in our low estate, He might carry us back with Himself to the throne of God; and that by identifying Himself with our sin and sorrow, He might ultimately identify us with the glory that He had with the Father before the world was.

"Let this mind be in you." Kepler, the great astronomer, said, when turning his telescope to the stars: "I am thinking over again the first thoughts of God." But we can think earlier thoughts than have been written by the finger of God on the heavens and earth. We are able to think some of the thoughts that filled the heart of Jesus, when, before the foundation of the world, He stood forth as the Lamb to be slain.

The Apostle bids us think as Jesus thought; do not look exclusively upon your own interests; do not count anything of your own worthy to stand in the way, but always be prepared to deny yourself that through you God's redeeming love may pass to those that need His help. We must be willing to lay aside ambition and glory that we may be the better able to succour others. There is no other way to sit with Jesus on His throne; no other method of assisting Him in His great mission. Many who would sit on the right and left of His throne will never reach it, because they refuse to bear His cross, to submit to shame and spitting, to misunderstanding and hatred. We must take the low seat, do the unnoticed tasks, refuse the honour which comes from human lips, or we can never be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.

PRAYER

We ask, O Lord, that we may be so filled with these thoughts throughout the day, that our earthly life may be inspired with the spirit of Heaven. May we go to and fro about our business as those who have seen the face of God, and with the light of the other world upon our faces. AMEN.

January 3

CHRIST OUR FRIEND

"I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known unto you."-- Jn 15:15.

I HAVE READ somewhere that when Michael Angelo was in the height of his fame, a boy named Raphael, destined to be his worthy successor --was introduced to him as a promising-pupil. At first the lad was employed in the simplest duties of the studio, cleaning brushes and mixing paints, but as he developed the qualities of exactness, punctuality, and sympathy, he became entrusted with increasing responsibility, until the master made him his friend and confidant. So we come to Christ, first, as redeemed from the slavery of Satan, to be His Servants, and He calls us His friends.

A friend will reveal himself. All the world may suppose that it knows a famous man, but after all, if he calls me his friend, I expect to get closer to him and hear from his own lips items of confidential information. Thus it is with the Lord Jesus. He manifests Himself to those who love Him, and keep His word, as He does not to the world.

A friend will interest his friends in his undertakings. It is a joy to Christ when those whom He loves are able to take a share in His world-wide redemptive schemes. For us, of course, it is a high honour, but it is as great a pleasure and delight to Him as it is for some loving soul to have the pleasure of working with that other twin-soul, to which it is attached. It is wonderful that Jesus is glad to have us as His fellow-workers.

A friend will be interested in our failures and successes. Not otherwise is it with our Lord. When He sees some peril menacing us, does He not make the trial-hour one of special intercession? If we fail, He meets us with the same tender affection, not alienated from us, but only intensely sorry, ready to point out the cause of our failure and to encourage us to try again. If we stand our ground, He meets us as we come forth from the fight, glad for us, eager to refresh us in our weariness, careful to heal any wound that we may have received.

Such is the Friendship of Jesus. He is always the same, His love never wanes, its manifestations are never remiss. Is it not worth while to make every effort so to keep His commandments that our entire abandonment to Him may induce His entire abandonment to us?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we pray that Jesus Christ may become dearer to us. May we love Him as a personal Friend, and hide ourselves in the hourly consciousness of His presence. May we have no taste or desire for things which He would disapprove. Let His love constrain us not to live unto ourselves, but to His glory. AMEN.

January 4

OUR CAPTAIN

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many souls unto glory, to make the author (or Captain) of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."-- Heb 2:10, 11.

THE WORD translated in this passage "Author" or "Captain" might be rendered File-leader. It was thus used by Peter when he said, "Ye killed the Prince, i.e. the File-leader of life." Our Lord is beheld stepping up from the grave in Joseph's garden, to which, apparently, the hatred of His foes had brought Him; and as He passes forth, He is discovered to be the First, or Leader, of an endless procession, which, in single file, is ever ascending from the grave to stand with Him, and to follow Him through all the subsequent ages.

In the earlier part of that great procession, we can see the glorious company of the Apostles, behind them the goodly fellowship of prophets and the noble army of martyrs. Polycarp and Ignatius are there, Chrysostom and Augustine, Luther and Calvin, Wesley and Spurgeon. Our ancestors follow, and our parents. We are there, and our children will follow. We follow Christ our Captain through Gethsemane to Calvary, through death to life, through the grave to the Ascension mount.

When Isaiah anticipated Christ's advent, he said that God had given Him to be a Leader and Commander to the people (Isa 55:4). He has the pre-eminence, not only because of His original glory, as Son of God, but since He has won it in His obedience as Man. Never has the will of God been wrought out so perfectly as by our Lord; and in this we are called upon to obey and follow Him. He was made perfect through sufferings, so shall we be; and as He is now crowned with glory and honour, so shall we be.

The only way in which Christ could bring us to share in His glory was to submit to suffering and death. In no other way could He act as the Mediator of the Divine life to us who are His brethren. Similarly, if we would become the mediators of help and blessing to others, we also must be prepared to suffer. We must learn to do despite to our own will and way. The way of the Cross is the only path to the Throne. We can only reach our highest by the constant saying No to self-life. This will involve suffering and pain; but only so can we follow our Captain.

PRAYER

Teach us, O Lord, not only to bear, but to love Thy Cross. As we take and carry it, may we find that it is carrying us. AMEN.

January 5

CHRIST OUR LIGHT

"I am the Light of the World: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."-- Jn 8:12.

IT WAS the Feast of Tabernacles when our Lord uttered the words of our text, and it is supposed they were lighting the two great candelabra, which commemorated the fire-cloud that led the desert march. It was in direct allusion to the fiery pillar that our Lord used this metaphor. What that was to Israel, He is to His Church.

The wilderness was a trackless waste to Israel. The people absolutely depended on the cloud to show their path, and to find a resting-place at night. When it gathered itself up from the Tabernacle on which it brooded, the people must strike their tents and follow. However desirable the site of their camp, they must leave it; however difficult the desert paths, they must traverse them; however uninviting the spot where it stopped, they must halt there, and remain as long as it tarried. To linger was to run the risk of wandering aimlessly in the desert till death supervened. Only where the cloud rested did the manna fall, the water flow, or the Divine protection avail.

There are resting-times in our lives. God graciously arranges green pastures and quiet waters, and makes us to lie down. His voice sounds amid the turmoil of our existence, and bids us come aside and rest awhile. But often we fret against enforced rest, we persist in hurrying to and fro, and give way to bitter repining. When the cloud stays, remain where you are. When you do not know what to do, stop still until some indication points your path.

There are times for action. The trumpet is heard with its summons, to which we must give immediate attention. When the sleeper refuses to arise instantly at the whirl of the alarm, he soon becomes so accustomed to it that it does not disturb him. So we shall

gain keenness of hearing when we accustom ourselves to instant obedience. The peace and usefulness of our earthly life will be in direct proportion to our appropriation of the Lord Jesus for all the demands of our pilgrim condition. Nay, more, for as in the train, the electric light comes on before the dark tunnel is entered, and lingers after it is passed, so the presence of Christ will precede and follow times of special need. "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight" (Isa42:16).

PRAYER

O send out Thy light and Thy truth, and let them lead me and bring me at last to my Father's house in peace. AMEN

January 6

CHRIST OUR TEACHER

"We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him."-- Jn 3:2.

THERE WAS NO doubt that Christ was a Teacher come from God!

Some teachers come evidently enough from man; they speak only of earthly things; their speeches are full of quotations; they imitate, in voice, manner, and method of stating truth, some commanding human teacher at whose feet they have sat. But there was a freshness, a self-witnessing truthfulness, a depth, an authority in the words of the Master, which bore the mint-mark of Deity. Our Lord addressed Nicodemus as "the teacher of Israel" (Jn 3:10 R.V.).

Jesus taught with authority (Mt 7:29). This was the verdict of the people. He needed not to quote Gamaliel or Hillel, because the conscience of His hearers said, He speaks the truth. He taught with tenderness and sweetness (Lk 4:22). To those who resisted His words, as the Pharisees did, His tongue was a sharp two-edged sword; but for the sinful, weary, and heavy-laden, grace was poured on His lips. He taught with plenty of illustrations (Mk 4:34). From all quarters He gathered them, from the sky and the earth, from the vulture and the sparrow, from the lightning-flash and the sunrise, from the household candle and the temple lamp, from the woman's dough and the ripened corn, from the children's games and the housewife's jewellery, from the feasts of the rich and the bare larder of the poor. How picturesque and beautiful His talk was! The apples of gold were in pictures of silver. His speech was full of windows through which the light poured. What wonder that the people thronged around Him, and hung with absorbing interest on His words.

But we must come to Him as Saviour. Before we can understand His teaching, we must be converted, and become as little children. To us, He says, as to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." To reverence Him as "Teacher" will not avail, until the soul has east itself in the dust before Him, crying, "Have mercy upon me"; for "I am a sinful man, O Lord."

There is a marked gradation in the Teaching of Jesus. He began by speaking about earthly things, and led His disciples on to understand heavenly things. He gave milk to babes, but to those of understanding, hard and deep things, as strong meat. How differently He taught the woman at Sychar's well, and the disciples in the upper room.

PRAYER

Give us grace to perceive Thee, blessed Lord, to hear Thy voice, and to receive the gracious teaching which comes from Thine heart. AMEN.

January 7

CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT BLESSEDNESS

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of the Lord."-- Psa 1:1-2.

OUR LORD lived inside the City of Blessedness, and in Mt 5:1-12 He reveals to all men the eight gates by which that City may be entered. For myself, I cannot go in by the Gate of Poverty of spirit, for I am not humble enough; nor by the Gate of the Mourners, for I am not grieved enough for my own sins or the sins of others; nor by the Gate of the Meek, for I often resent injury; nor by the Gates of Mercy, or Purity, or Peace. But I may claim to enter by the fourth Gate, for I Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness. And as I go in, I find myself inside the City, and in the company of all holy souls that have entered by the other gates. For in the Heavenly City, to enter by any gate is equivalent to having entered by all; and one grace which is inwrought by the Holy Spirit will ultimately lead on to all the rest.

What is Blessedness? According to our Lord's teaching, it is a condition or state of heart. Outward circumstances are not mentioned, unless it be reproach and persecution, as though they were matters of indifference. Blessedness is altogether independent of our outward lot, whether prosperous or perplexed, rich or poor. Blessedness begins and ends with a contented recognition of the Royalty

of Christ's Kingdom; in the power of seeing the good in everything, and so inheriting the earth; in being satisfied, in obtaining mercy, in seeing God and being called His sons and daughters. Is it not worth while to strive to enter in at these wide-open doors? And if you can say that you really do yearn after better things, hungering and thirsting for more likeness to Christ, and more fitness for His Kingdom; if that desire really represents the purpose of your life, you may account yourself as being already admitted within the Gates of the Blessed Life.

We must not suppose that Our Lord allocated the award of Blessedness to the possessors of certain attributes with an arbitrary and royal prerogative. He simply declared what was true in the very nature of things. To be true, pure, merciful, and meek, is to have in your possession the seed-germs of the harvest of Blessedness. If you turn from this wonderful enumeration of Christian qualities to Gal 5:22, you will find all of them set forth in the list of the fruit of the Spirit. May He work in us and through us a well-balanced and full-orbed Christian character.

PRAYER

Lord, take my lips, and speak through them; take my mind, and think through it; take my heart, and set it on fire. AMEN.

January 8

CHRIST, THE TEACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."-- Mt 5:19.

OUR LORD Jesus does not destroy, but fulfils, as the summer fulfils the promise of spring. Do not be afraid of Him, as though He takes pleasure in dashing the cup from thirsty lips, and disappointing innocent and natural desires. He will certainly show Himself hostile to every wrong means of gratification, but He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him in the best way, so that they will be satisfied for ever.

This is true religion. Christ constructs. He is more positive than negative; more Yea and Amen than Nay! He sends the pulse of the new sap into the trees, and as it passes to the tip of every branch, the old dead leaves flutter silently to the ground. Give yourself to Him, and ask Him to fulfil in you the principles of righteousness. Christ fulfils the Law and the Prophets, which evidently stand for the authority and principles of the Old Testament (Mt 5:17-18). The jot was the smallest Hebrew letter; the tittle was a small part of a letter. What a contrast there is between the teaching of Christ and the attitude of some modern critics. They appear to take pleasure in destruction, in pulling down and overthrowing the foundations of faith, giving nothing in their place.

The righteousness which our Lord teaches is altogether different from that of the Pharisees, which was outward and formal, and essentially selfish, since by it they desired to earn admittance to God's favour. Christ, on the other hand, demands a righteousness which is inward, vital, and spiritual. We stand before God in the imputed righteousness of His finished work, and then He imparts to us an inner righteousness through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Notice how the Lord distinguishes between "those of old time" (Mt 5:21) and Himself: "I say unto you." What majesty is in those words. He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, yet He was meek and lowly in heart. How can we reconcile these statements except by the belief that He was Emmanuel--God with us?

PRAYER

O Captain and Leader of the Holy War, may I have truth as the girdle of my loins, righteousness as my breastplate, salvation as my helmet, peace for my feet, and faith for my shield. May I have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but reprove them by my consistent life and faithful words. AMEN.

January 9

CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT TRUST

"Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?... Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."-- Mt 6:31-32.

LET US trust God to care for us! This was the life that Jesus lived.

He would not even make stones into bread; nor eat until His Father bade Him and sent the angels to minister to Him. He speaks out of His heart when He bids us trust our Father's care.

It is better to trust in God than to accumulate riches. The moth and rust destroy, thieves steal, all earthly goods are perishable and precarious. How many have placed their savings in stocks and shares, in banks and companies, and have lost every penny! Whilst

others who have been unable to save and have lived to help their fellow-men, have found that God has made provision for them and carried them "even to hoar hairs."

Trust in God gives clearness of vision. When we are thinking partly of doing God's work in the world, and partly of lining our own nest, we are in the condition of the man whose eyes do not look in the same direction. There is a squint in our inner vision. We are endeavouring to serve two masters, and our judgment is therefore distorted. Who has not often experienced this? You have tried to ascertain God's will, or to form a right judgment about your life, but constantly your perception of duty has been obscured by the thought that, if you decided in a certain direction, you would interfere with your interests in another. Your eye has not been single, and you have walked in darkness. When, however, you feel so absorbed in God's interests that you are indifferent to your own, all becomes clear, and you leave Him to care for all results. "Mind my business," said Queen Elizabeth to one of her ambassadors, "and I will look after yours."

Let us not think that God is niggardly and stinting in His gifts. He gives fish as well as bread when He feeds the crowds; colours as well as leaves when He clothes the flowers. You have been adopted into His Family, and may call Him "Abba, Father." Surely this act of grace shows a special love on His part. Would He have taken such care of the spiritual, and have none for the physical? The ungodly may worry about their maintenance; but a child of God may be sure that His needs will be supplied.

PRAYER

Thou art our portion, our God, our Father. Thou art more than father and mother to those who trust Thee. Thou lovest us with a tender pity that never fails or wearies. Encompass us with Thy guardian care, and realise in us Thy highest purposes. AMEN.

January 10

CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT JUDGING OTHERS

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged."-- Mt 7:1-2.

OUR LORD evidently does not, in these words, condemn that honest judgment which, for our own safety and for the good of society, we are compelled to form of men and women with whom we come in contact. Such judgments are inevitable. But He condemns that censorious and uncharitable judgment which is always finding fault, always neglecting the good and dwelling on the bad, always spreading unfavourable and inaccurate reports, which are often founded on very superficial and insufficient grounds.

How true it is that we are measured by the measure we use for others. There is a remarkable Nemesis in life, which is the judgment-seat of God. The evils we inflict on others, like the Australian boomerang, which becomes almost a speck in the sky, come back to ourselves. If you are generous in your estimate of others, you will be estimated generously. If you are mean and stingy, others will treat you in the same spirit.

We are all would-be oculists! Nothing pleases us better than to try our hand at recovering motes of sawdust, as well as splints, from the eyes of others, while we are indifferent to the beams of timber which obstruct our own vision. Christ is always saying to us, "Cast out the filthiness from the holy place"; and as His light falls deeper and deeper into our nature, it must reveal hidden evils which need to be put away. "Let us be true to the inner light, and then with tender and chastened spirits, from which all consciousness of superiority has departed, we shall help others to be rid of their own obstructions."

In Mt 7:15-20, Christ gives us the infallible test. He suggests that in every age there will be those who care for the fleece more than for the flock, and who come into the fold under a most winsome and bewitching guise. Beware of such people, and judge them, not by their doctrine, but by their fruits. The Devil is the most orthodox theologian in the world: "I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

"By their fruits ye shall know them." You cannot judge what a man is by hearing him repeat a creed; but as you observe his character, his disposition, his behaviour; not in public, but in private; not for a day, but for a year, you can come to an almost certain judgment as to whether God or self be the ruling consideration of the inner being.

PRAYER

Make us merciful, O Christ, in our judgments of others. May we think no evil. May we forbear and forgive one another as Thou dost forgive us. AMEN.

January 11

CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT BENEFICENCE

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,..., and thy neighbour as thyself... But he said, And who is my

neighbour?"-- Lk 10:27-29.

WE CANNOT live alone. No one of us can be entirely independent of others. I am not only a centre, but I am part of another man's circumference; and every other man, woman or child I know is part of my circumference. We are members one of another. In other words, we all have neighbours; and a complete human life, which has windows opening to the Infinite Creator, must have doors opening on the street towards our finite fellow-creatures.

When we talk about neighbours, we naturally think of those who live next door, and we are apt to reduce the divine command to those who reside in the same street. If these are very comfortable and well-to-do, it seems as though there is not much scope for helping them. This definition of neighbours, however, is altogether too narrow and contracted, as our Lord shows in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The lawyer asked who was his neighbour, and Jesus said, "Be a neighbour to someone else." And if it be asked what kind of people I am to neighbour, the answer comes: "Make no distinction of race or creed; but wherever you come across a man who has been stripped, beaten, robbed, and is half-dead, don't wait for other men to succour him. but bind up his wounds; minister to him, and treat him as though you loved him with the natural love of brotherhood."

A rich man might have paid an agent to patrol that dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and to look after those in distress, but it would not be so blessed in its effect on his own character, or on the men who were helped, as personal ministry would be. We ought to combine the two, because our personal experience of such cases will enable us to direct our agents, and live in their efforts, so that they may become our own. Perhaps the better policy is to get elected on the Council, or Magistrates' bench, so that we may put down the gangs of thieves which infest life's highways.

Remember that a gift of money is by no means the only way of helping your neighbours. What men and women need most is compassion, sympathy, your hand and heart-help. "Silver and gold have I none" has been the confession of some of the greatest benefactors of our race. Above all, it was true of our Lord Himself, who became poor that He might really help us, as He never could have done had He remained rich. Let Him be our Example, Who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

PRAYER

Show me, to-day, O Lord, that one of Thy little ones to whom I am to give a cup of water in Thy Name. AMEN.

January 12

CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT RESURRECTION

"Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord!"-- Jn 11:25-27.

THIS CROWNING miracle of our Lord's life is generally described as the Raising of Lazarus. I am not sure that it might not with equal truth be called the Awakening of Martha, for it is certain that the Lord lifted this soul, whom we have been wont to count prosaic and matter-of-fact, to a most remarkable elevation of faith and hope, as they stood together in the shadow of a great sorrow.

In common with the majority of religious people, Martha believed in a general resurrection at some still future date, but she had not realised that God lives in the present tense, that the Eternal is here and now, and that faith must learn to reckon on God's I AM. We are always putting the manifestation of the Divine in the far past, or the far future. The heaven is high above the earth on which we stand; only at the horizon, behind us and before us, do heaven and earth touch. We all need to learn the lesson that here, in the prosaic commonplaces of life, Jesus Christ is the present and immediate answer to every need.

Christ's teaching about Resurrection differs widely from immortality. Plato believed in the immortality of the soul, but had no conception of resurrection. Resurrection is the reunion of the soul with the body, when it shall be raised in a form identical with, though different from, the body laid in the grave, as the sheaf of corn is identical with, though different from, the seed-corn cast into the soil amid the tears of autumn.

Martha could hardly understand all these marvellous disclosures, but she answered Yea to them, on the ground of what she knew Christ to be. He at least was the Messiah, and whatsoever He said, it must be so. So it is that we may still accept much, that we cannot understand, on the bare word of Jesus.

Christ always needed faith in some one, as the fulcrum on which to rest the lever of His mighty power, and He found it in Martha. What can He not do, even here and now, in the hearts of those who are slow to believe, and those who are dead in trespasses and sins? Believest thou this?

PRAYER

O God of Life and Love, Thou hast filled our hearts with joy unspeakable. We thank Thee that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life,

and that those who believe in Him shall never die. He lives, and they live, and we live! We thank Thee, we praise Thee, we bless Thee. AMEN.

January 13

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

"In that same hour He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father; for so it was well pleasing in Thy sight."-- Lk 10:21.

IN THAT same hour. It was an hour of great congratulation for the little band of disciples. The seventy had returned with joy. They had tried the talisman of His Name with demons and disease, and it had triumphed. Our Lord yielded to the gladness of His followers, and gave Himself up to an unusual burst of happiness.

Notice His habitual mode of address to God. Twice He speaks to Him as Father. Thus in joy, equally as in the sorrow of Gethsemane and the anguish of death, the Fatherhood of God was the Rock of Ages to the Man Christ Jesus, in the cleft of which He hid Himself. Only Jesus knew what God was and could be to the lonely soul. As the mountain is reflected in the lake at its foot, so the Father saw Himself perfectly reflected in Jesus.....

When our Saviour died, the veil of the Temple was rent from the top to the bottom (Mt 27:51, Heb 10:19-20,21,22+). Before that hour the knowledge of God had been confined to the few elect souls, and to these it came as through a glass darkly (1Co 13:12KJV+); but from that hour the innermost secret of God's love has been disclosed. And that unveiling of the Father's heart is typical of the work of our Lord for us all.

We must be child-like. The ways of God are revealed unto babes (Mt 11:25+, Lk 10:21+). The child is pure; is humble. It is to the transparent and simple heart that Jesus waits to give Himself.

We must be prepared to say "Yes" to God. Our Lord was face to face with one of the great mysteries of Providence; why certain things are hidden from some and revealed to others; but He rolled the whole perplexity back on the Father, and was at rest. When in a deaf and dumb school, a visitor wrote on the blackboard: "Why did God make you deaf and dumb, and me able to speak and hear?" One of the children took the chalk and wrote beneath: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." (Mt 11:26KJV+)

We must pass on to others what we know. He will not teach us merely for our own gratification, but that we may benefit others thereby.

January 14

POWER AND PRAYER

"If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."-- Mk 9:22, 23.

IN OUR Lord's life there was no divorce between the life hidden in God and a ready response to the call of human need. As in Raphael's great picture of the Transfiguration, which combines the scenes of the mountain and the valley on the one canvas, so must it always be in true life. There must be the systole and the diastole--the heart must drive the blood to be aerated in Heaven's ozone, and then pulsate to the extremities of hand and foot.

How many there are who seem to be possessed with evil spirits which are wrecking health and peace, and how many make the mistake of this man in bringing their relatives or friends to disciples who as yet have not been baptized with the power of the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:13), and have not entered into the secret place of power. Of course it is not possible for such to afford any real help, and the demon laughs them to scorn! (Acts 19:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16). We must learn our own inability to deal with the forces of evil that are sweeping through the world, unless we have received power from on high (Lk 10:17, Lk 10:20; Act 1:8).

Notice the way in which our Lord casts back the responsibility on the father. He said: "If Thou canst do anything"; but Jesus answered: "the if is not with Me, but with you. It is not a question of My power but of your faith. Can you believe?" Then the father threw back the responsibility on the Master, saying in effect: "I fear that I have not faith enough, but I trust Thee to create it in me. Help Thou mine unbelief."

You and I often fail in our faith because of ignorance and besetting sin (Heb 12:1KJV-note). There is the mighty ocean of power all around us, but for some reason we cannot tap it. It is like the electric current, which refuses to help us unless we have instruments precisely adapted to transmit the driving-power. Faith is absolutely necessary for the conveyance of God's power to meet the need and sin and sorrow of the world (He 11:6-note). But when we find it deficient, when our heart believes not, when we find ourselves

face to face with Jerichos that are closely shut, and with mountains that seem to mock the tiny levers with which we propose to move them, then we must turn to Christ and say: "I trust Thee for faith, I trust Thee to keep me trusting: I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." (Mk 9:24)

PRAYER

We open our nature to let in Thy blessed fullness, and if our capacity be small, we pray, O Lord, that it may be enlarged, that we may miss nothing that is possible to man. We are sure that we are never straitened in Thee, but in ourselves. AMEN.

January 15

THINGS TO BE LEFT BEHIND

"Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus."-- Heb 12:1-note , Heb 12:2-note.

LEAVE BEHIND your past sins (Php 3:13-note). They have been many and great, more than you can count. But if you have confessed and forsaken them, they have been put away, "as far as the east is from the west." Nothing could be more explicit than 1Jn 1:9. It is useless to brood over the past. God has buried it in the grave of Christ. Go and sin no more!

Leave behind your bad habits that encumber you (R.V. marg.). You know what they are, and how they cling--ill-temper, jealousy, pride, evil-speaking, and many another! You have fallen again and again, overtaken by them, tripped up, your robes stained and torn. There should be some finality in your life, a mark on the grass from which you start to run the race. The command to put off the old man is in the definite tense (Col 3:8-note, Col 3:9-note). It be-speaks one sudden strong act of the will, God-nerved and God-empowered. This, then, is the hour when you must strike for liberty "Ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col 3:3-note)

Leave behind your accomplished ideals. They were once far in front and above you. As you climbed they seemed almost inaccessible, and mocking voices rang out their defiance of your attempt. But by the grace of God things that once you dreamt of are now realised, and you are sitting on the peak that once seemed to laugh you to scorn. But you must leave it behind! Look up! look forward! (Col 3:1-note, Col 3:2-note) Are there not fresh ideals calling to you? Leave behind your attainments and strike your tents. One battle is fought, but a yet stronger foe bars the way immediately in front. It is suicidal to rest on your oars; to do so will expose you to the inevitable backward drift. (See **Backsliding or Drifting**)

The best way to leave behind is to press forward (Php 3:14-note) The Spirit of God bids us "run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus." He is our Forerunner, always before us, always leading us on. His crest, like the plume of Henry of Navarre, is always in the very thick of the fight. Let the soul follow hard after Him, and it will become almost oblivious to what it leaves behind. The boy who is running for the goal, in his eagerness to win the prize, strips himself of one and another article of clothing. He will not count their worth, so long as he may win the prize. So run that ye may attain! Apprehend that for which you were apprehended! Lay hold on the outstretched crown of life! (Php 3:12-note)

PRAYER

Most gracious God, quicken me by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may run in the way Thou hast marked out for me. May I ever be kept looking off unto Jesus (Is 45:22KJV). AMEN.

January 16

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."-- Mt 1:21.

JESUS WAS "born a Saviour." Being what He is, the King of Love, it is not wonderful that He entered into so close an identification with our human race that needed Him so sorely. Could Infinite Love have stood idly by? Every soul which enters into the human family helps to quicken or depress its vitality. How much our race owes to the great souls that have been born into it, but how much more to Him who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God! He laid aside the use of the mighty power, which as Creator He might have employed, and stooped to be born in a stable, that He might share the life of the humblest and poorest.

What love for men must have burned in the heart of Jesus! His zeal for mankind ate Him up. There was a true enthusiasm for humanity in His heart. Why should there not be the same with us? Let us ask that the "love of Christ--i.e. the very love which burnt within Him--may also constrain us." Let us be willing to subject ourselves to inconvenience, to limitations, to the wrapping of swaddling clothes, if only we may get near to others, removing all sense of distance and aloofness.

"Glory to God in the Highest" (Lk 2:14). Nothing has so augmented the glory of the Father as this stooping to death, even the death of the Cross. (Php 2:6-11). Men have turned to God with adoring reverence, as they could not have done if they had known Him only in Nature. Whenever we seek the glory of God as our main end and purpose, it will always result in peace on earth. Live for the glory of God, and you will have peace in your heart, and your life will flow forth in goodwill and blessing for others.

The outburst of song from the shepherds, "glorifying and praising God," as they wended their way back to their flocks, must have amazed all whom they met, and it bespoke the wonder that had transformed their lives. We are so ordinary and commonplace, so unemotional and impassive, we cannot forget ourselves, and are never carried beyond ourselves. David said that while he mused the fire burned! Let us muse on the love of God in descending to our world, in living our life, and dying for us on the Cross. Then we shall burst out into songs, and shall come back to our ordinary life with the flow of a new spirit (Lk 2:20).

PRAYER

My Father God! Let the motto of my life henceforth be, "Glory to God in the Highest," for only so can there be peace in my heart and goodwill towards men. May my heart be kept in unison with the Angel's song. AMEN.

January 17

WALKING NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. That the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."-- Rom 8:1-4 (R.V.).

THE APOSTLE here is dealing with the conditions of a holy life; and the condemnation to which he refers is that caused by the constant failure so graphically described in the previous chapter. From my own experience, I think that the introspection which is often induced by ill-health and weakness makes us very sensitive to the failure and shortcoming of the inner life. We know that we are accepted in Christ, and that our sins are forgiven us for His sake; but we are deeply conscious that in us (i.e. in our flesh) dwelleth no good thing from. Rom 7:18).

The Reservoir of Eternal Life.--"the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus." We perceive what physical life is when a child comes bounding into our room in a very ecstasy of health and joy. We know what intellectual life is as we see the mind developing under the process of education. We know what the moral life of a stoic is, repelling by force of will the appeal of the senses. But above all these, there is Life which is resident in Jesus Christ, stored in Him, abounding in Him, which He longs to communicate to every soul that trusts in Him. This was the witness of those who knew Jesus most intimately in His brief human life--that "God hath given unto us Eternal Life, and this Life is in His Son." "He that hath the Son hath the Life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not the Life." This more than outweighs the down-pull of the serf-life. The aw of that life makes us free from the law of sin and death, for it has mastered death and the grave.

This Life is communicated and sustained by the Holy Spirit. We must be one with Christ; we must be in Him, as the sponge is in the ocean. We must be in Him, not only in our standing, but also in our daily walk. We must be in Him as the branch is in the vine, and the vine-sap in the branch. And this must not only be a theory, but an hourly experience. We must abide in Him and He in us. But how can this become our daily experience? There is but one way. Through the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, as we walk in Him (Gal 5:16). He is the essence of the Life which is in Christ Jesus. "The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

PRAYER

Almighty God, I beseech Thee to raise me from the death of sin to the life of righteousness by that same power that brought the Lord Jesus from the dead, that I may walk in newness of life through the aid of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

January 18

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

"For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."-- Rom 8:2.

THE SIMPLEST child knows something of the law of gravitation. The word is from the Latin *gravitas*, which is the attraction of weight by weight. What gravitation is to matter, the down-pull of the flesh is to the spirit. There is not a single one of us, who is seeking to live the better life, that is not conscious of this down-pull. Indeed the laws of gravitation in the natural world have their counterpart in our inward experience. There is always a down-pull to the centre of gravity, i.e. to self--what I like, what I choose, what I prefer! The fall of the soul toward the flesh--or self-life--becomes increasingly rapid, so that every time we yield it becomes easier to yield, and the velocity becomes headlong. The child of God would fall with velocity equal to that of the depraved sinner if it were not for the law

of the Spirit of Life which is in Christ Jesus which makes him free from the law of sin and death.

Overcoming the Earth-pull. You may see it in the soaring of the lark, singing as it rises, until you think it will split its tiny throat with song. One of the delights of an ocean voyage is to watch the gulls, as regularly, evenly, and easily they keep level with the progress of the boat. The bird does not float in the air; it balances itself; it measures its wings against its weight, and defies the earth-pull. But if the means of flight are maimed, it drops helplessly on land or water. Alas for the bird, though it be an albatross, that happens to alight on water covered by the oil discharged from an oil-driven vessel. When once its wings have become glued to its body, by immersion in that oil-bath, there is nothing for it but a miserable end!

The Spirit works according to Law,--"the law of the Spirit of Life." Do not grieve Him by any act of insincerity or hatred. If you are aware of the subsidence of His energy, go back till you have discovered where you dropped the thread of obedience to His gentle promptings. Pick it up by confession and restitution, and again you will become conscious of His mediation to you of a Law of Life that laughs at sin and death! Yours will be the wings of an eagle's flight, the soaring of a lark, sunward, heavenward, Godward! But you must take time to be holy--in meditation, in prayer, and especially in the use of the Bible.

PRAYER

Help me, O Lord, to find my life according to Thy promise. I thank Thee that Thou hast implanted the germ of Thine own nature. Leave me not, neither forsake me in the upward climb. Teach me to change my strength and mount up with the wings of eagles. AMEN.

January 19

ABIDING IN CHRIST

"I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from Me ye can do nothing."-- Jn 15:5.

OUR SAVOUR'S perennial joy was due to His unceasing endeavour to minister help and blessing to others. He saved others; He could not save Himself. He said: "I am the true Vine," i.e., the vine was made by Him in creation to represent a certain phase or characteristic of Himself. It is the reflection in the waters of materialism of eternal principles deep-seated in His own divine nature. The study of the vine is, therefore, specially precious in its teaching.

Behind the vine, as we know it, there is an immense pressure of energy. In the spring-tide, it seems as though the love of God were pressing for expression in the corn that supports life, in the oil that makes the face to shine, and in the grape that cheers. The vine cannot bear fruit, of itself; it is only the channel along which the energy of God flows in its endeavour to gladden the heart and life of man. So Jesus is the channel through which the life and love of God reach us, that we may pass them on in loving ministry, and in so doing we are creating and storing up for ourselves infinite joy.

Let each of us learn to abide in Christ with the heart open to Him on the one hand, and open to men, women and children on the other. Then let us trust Christ to pour His love and grace into our hearts, that the pressure within may lead us to perform acts of tender sympathy and helpfulness of which we would not otherwise have been capable. Let us resolve to let no day pass without doing something at cost to ourselves, to make the burden lighter and the path easier for someone else. Our willingness for Christ to do these things through us will always meet a response from Him; and His Spirit being in us will show us exactly what to say or do. It may be only a smile, a touch of the hand, or a word! Thus life will be filled with joy, and this will be perpetuated surely in that other life, when we shall awake and be satisfied. As we mingle with the throngs of happy spirits who have come out of great tribulation--the martyrs, prophets, apostles, and saints of every age--the greatest wonder of all will be that we are there. "Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and feed Thee? or thirsty, and give Thee a drink? And He will say, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these..., ye did it unto Me."

PRAYER

May I never forget, O Lord, that the best and happiest life must be lived in communion with the needs, sorrows, and trials of others. Give me closer sympathy with Thyself, who didst not please Thyself, but whose blessed life was perpetually laid down for others. AMEN.

January 20

THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

**"I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, He which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty."--
[Revelation 1:8 \(see note\)](#)**

IT IS hardly needful to explain that these are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. They represent all the intervening letters which they enclose as in a golden clasp. This majestic announcement refers to the Eternal God. His Nature underlies the whole created Universe, all races of being, the entire work of redemption, the destiny of His children, and the ultimate victory of righteousness and peace. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to Whom be glory for ever and ever." Let us, for a moment, join with the ceaseless chant of Heaven, saying: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which is and which was and which is to come." We must never rush into His presence without due preparation and reverence of heart.

Jesus Christ is the Complement of our Need. From the alphabet of His Being we may obtain all the letters and words which will make good our own deficiencies. It is a question whether some of us would ever have learnt the fullness of Jesus, if we had not been brought face to face with the infinite needs of our own nature and condition. You may engage your guide in an Alpine village, but you only realise all the qualities that lie hidden within him when you have crossed the glaciers, bridged the yawning chasms, and escaped the descending avalanche through his knowledge and care. So as we walk with Jesus we find in Him the complement of our need.

Loneliness is an opportunity for Jesus to make Himself known as the Living One (Rev 1:17). When, like the beloved Apostle on the Lord's Day in his lonely isle, you seem to hear songs and prayers on which you can only join in spirit, turn to the Lord Himself, and reckon on Him to bear you company. That loneliness constitutes a claim on Him! Call upon His Name out of the lowest dungeon. He will not hide His ear at thy breathing or thy cry. He will draw near in the day when thou callest upon Him, and will say, Fear not! He will plead the causes of thy soul; He will redeem thy life. The site of Polycarp's death is still visible above the Smyrna coast-line and harbour; but Jesus stood there with him, enabling him to be faithful unto death, and encircling his brow with the Crown of Life. Be thou faithful unto death; the First and the Last is with thee! "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me!"

PRAYER

Be Thou, O Lord, the Alpha and the Omega of every year, month, day, hour, and act of my life. Let all things be begun, continued and ended in Thee. AMEN.

January 21

REIGNING IN LIFE

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ."-- Romans 5:17 (see note)

IT WOULD take a lifetime--nay, it will demand eternity--to explore the treasures of this paragraph from which our text is taken. Let us not, however, stand gazing into heaven, but avail ourselves of the privilege offered us during our earthly life of reigning through the One, even Jesus Christ. Do not postpone the fulfilment of this promise! We may have to wait for the future life to unfold depths of meaning which now transcend our thought; but any fair reading of this radiant verse compels us to appropriate it for here and now.

But, "how can these things be?" He, a master in Israel asked that question of Christ! This blessed life of victory is only possible to those who have been born from above. By nature we were born from below into the first Adam, who was "a living soul." We must be born from above, into the second Adam, who becomes to all who trust in Him a Life-giving spirit (1Co 15:45). That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and cannot of itself rise into the Spirit; the Holy Spirit must stoop to lift it into union with Himself. But He will do this for you, if only you will lift your heart to Christ in simple faith and surrender.

The difference it will make! Each life has been planned by God with the intention of training it for high service here and beyond; and whatever happens in life, there is always an abundance of grace awaiting our use. But how often we are as blind to it as Balaam was to the Angel that stood on the wayside! We make our plans! We lie awake half the night in a fever of anxiety! We go to this friend or that! But we do not claim that abundance of grace which is intended to meet the need of the hour. It is only as we receive it by a childlike faith that we can reign in life. That word "abundance" in its Latin original speaks of ocean-waves. Stand on the shore and look out on that infinite expanse, and do not be content with Scooping up enough to fill an oyster-shell!

What will result? A royal life! If a throne means power--we are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. If it means victory--we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. If it means largess--we have always all sufficiency in all things, and abound to every good work.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the trials and pains that are ever working for my good, and making me a partaker of Thy holiness. May I receive the abundance of Thy grace, and reign in life here and hereafter. AMEN.

January 22

DISLOCATED LIMBS

"Now the God of Peace, make you perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ."-- (Heb 13:20, 21- notes)

THE GREEK word here rendered **perfect (katartizo [word study])** really means "to put in joint, to complete." In his original creation man's will was intended to register the Will of God, to say Yes to it, and to pass the divine impulses and commandments to the rest of our being. Sometimes on board ship, before the phone made it possible for the captain to speak to every part of the ocean-liner, I have heard Him quietly utter his orders to a subordinate officer beside him, who in turn repeated them in a loud voice through a speaking-trumpet or tube. That intermediary may represent the will which was intended to receive its directions from the Will of God, and pass them throughout the economy of our being. Such was our Lord's attitude throughout His earthly life. He said: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (Jn 4:34 cp Jn 17:4); "I seek not My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (cp Jn 6:38, Ps 40:8); "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Mt 26:39, Lk 22:42)

But in the Fall, the dominance of God's will and the loyal response of man's will has become disorganized; and the human will instead of functioning in harmony with the Will of God, began to obey the will of the flesh in its grosser or more refined forms. Not what God wills, but what 'I' will, has become the working principle of the great majority. Thus it has come about that the will, by constant misuse, has become dislocated, warped, "out of joint." Tennyson says:

"Our wills are ours to make them Thine!"

Just so, but they are too stubborn for some of us to manage. Hence the suggestion that we should pass the matter over to the

"God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus."

Sometimes at football, or on the ice, a player may lose his balance, or be tripped up, and in the fall his shoulder may become dislocated. His arm is still in the body, but out of joint, so that it hangs useless by his side, until the surgeon by one strong wrench forces the bone back into its proper place. Is not that true of us? We are in the Body of Christ by redeeming grace, but we need to be set, i.e., to be brought into articulated union with the Will of God in Christ Jesus. Let us humbly ask the great Surgeon of souls, by the pressure of His strong and gentle hands, here and now, to joint our wayward wills with the Will of God, and then to work in us and through us that which is well-pleasing in His sight!

PRAYER

Gracious Father! I yield to Thee my will and desires, my members and faculties, the life of my body, the thoughts of my heart, and the aspirations of my spirit--perfect, I pray Thee, that which concerns me. AMEN.

January 23

THE GARDEN OF THE CROSS

"In the place where He was crucified, there was a Garden." -- John 19:41.

IT WAS in a Garden that Paradise was lost, and in a Garden it was regained! The sweet flowers of spring waved their incense-cups around the Cross, on which their Creator, to whose thought they owed their beauty, was dying for man's redemption.

Amid all the anguish of this human world, nature pursues her unbroken routine. Spring with its green, summer with its glory, autumn with its gold--these in perennial beauty carry on their unbroken succession through all the days of human sorrow. Sometimes her unchanging order almost drives men to madness. It seems as though she has no sympathy with man in his stern battle for existence! Yet surely it is better so! Our tears and strife and storm are transient, whilst the order of creation will be the basis of that "new heaven and earth" for which we wait. Yes, there were flowers at the foot of the Saviour's Cross, and they have blossomed at the foot of every cross since His!

Where there is a Cross, there will be a garden. Of course, the cross must be properly borne. We must suffer for others, not careful about ourselves. We must take the cup from the hands of the Father, even though it is presented by the hands of a Judas! We must suffer silently. No man or woman, who really suffers deeply for another's salvation, talks about it, save to God. Suffer for others in your Gethsemane-garden, and when you have been crucified after that fashion, then look for a garden in bloom. Set up a Calvary in your own heart! Let the cross there be a splint from the Cross of your Saviour! Bring thither your self-love, your ambitions, your moods and vagrant, selfish thoughts. Fasten your self-life, vain and proud as it is, to the Cross of Jesus, and let it remain there. Then in the garden of your character will arise a profusion of the rarest and sweetest flowers. If the world shuns your company, if you go lonely and unappreciated through life, yet you may find that the Lord Jesus will walk in the glades of your garden in the cool of the

day, as He did in Paradise.

PRAYER

Your heart's a garden God has sown
To give your life the work it needed.
Some day He'll come to pluck His flowers,
So mind you keep your garden weeded.

January 24

UTTERMOST SALVATION

"He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."-- Heb 7:25.

THE ATTRACTION of the Divine Nature. We draw near because we are drawn. As the sun is ever exerting a drawing power on each planet and each particle of stardust in the solar system, so God is ever attracting us to Himself. To all eternity we shall be ever drawing nearer to Him, though there will be ever an infinite distance to traverse. When Jesus was lifted up on the Cross He began to draw all men unto Himself, and that magnetic attraction has continued through the centuries.

There is no reason for us to be afraid of God. He is Love! He is a consuming fire to our sin, but His Nature is essentially lovely. Moses exceedingly feared when he ascended Sinai, amid the trembling of the mountain and the heavy clouds that enclosed the Divine Light. But, as we learn from the 12th chapter of this Epistle, when we approximate to God, we encounter three circles. The innumerable Hosts of Angels, including the Cherubim and Seraphim, with their burning love and purity! The Church of the First-born, the purest and noblest of elect spirits! The Spirits of the Just made perfect, inclusive of our own beloved ones that have passed over. Surely where these are, we may venture without fear. The God in whom they live and move and have their being cannot be other than infinitely beautiful to know and love. Lord, Thou hast been the dwelling-place of all generations, and Thy secret place shall be our home for ever. "Draw us, and we will run after Thee!"

Our fears are met by the Risen and Living Saviour. First, He will ever live to make intercession for us; but next He will go on sanctifying us lower down, even to the uttermost. To the depths of our nature, He will carry His gracious work. Salvation has three stages. It begins with deliverance from the penalty of the past. Our sins are blotted out. The penalty is remitted or turned to benediction. Then we are saved lower down. The process of purification goes deeper and deeper into our nature. Finally, our body is renewed through the resurrection-grace of Christ. And surely there is a sense in which the grace of Christ will ever sink deeper, giving us a profounder realisation and participation in the things that will open before us in the eternal progress. Here we see in a glass darkly, there face to face. Here we know in part, there we shall develop in the knowledge and love of God. Salvation to the uttermost!

PRAYER

I draw near to Thee, Almighty and Ever-living God, in the Name of Jesus Christ, my High Priest and Mediator, who hath passed into the heavens, where He ever liveth to make intercession for sinners. Forgive and accept me for His sake. AMEN.

January 25

GRACE ABOUNDING!

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."-- 2Co 9:8.

ABUNDANCE IS characteristic of God! Go forth on a spring morning, and look on the flowers with which He has carpeted the woodlands.

Daisies and buttercups, primroses and cowslips in myriads, bear witness to the prodigality of His thought and power--His thought to fashion, His power to produce. But this profuse carpeting of the earth's nakedness is equalled in the heavens! There, depth opens beyond depth, lighted and inlaid with constellations, and the wonders of the sky answer to those of the earth. How multitudinous is God's creation!

But what shall we say of His Grace? His Joy is unspeakable, His Peace passeth understanding, His Love is beyond knowledge! Get great thoughts of God, who holds the ocean depths as a drop in the hollow of his hand, and weighs the mountains as grains of dust in His scales. Lie upon that bank of flowers, and consider their multitude; sweep the skies with a telescope and see if you can tell the stars; number the sand-grains upon the shore, and count the shells strewn along the strand; and when you have considered the gifts

of His hand, ascend to the wealth of His heart. Study the infinite map of God's nature; compare it with the need of your little life, and then remember that the Father loves you infinitely, so much so that for your salvation and mine He gave His Only-Begotten Son. He has set His love upon you, and will certainly deliver you! He will set you on high because you have known His Name. All the resources of eternity and infinity are at His disposal, and He can make all grace abound toward you, that always having all sufficiency in all things, you may abound to every good work.

Iris a very wonderful text! Count the number of universals in it. All Grace Always! All Sufficiency! All things! God abounding to us that we may abound. The word translated abound might be rendered literally "to flow or pour over." "My cup runneth over." Our Lord said: "I am come that they might have life, and have it overflowing"; "Where sin overflows, grace much more overflows" (Jn 10:10; Rom 5:20).

Let us remember that God does not pour in unless we pour out. If we are filled with the Presence and Grace of Christ in our hearts, we must give ourselves out to others.

PRAYER

Give me grace, O Lord, to see the beauty lying at my feet in the commonplaces of life; and to feel that Thou art as near, and that life is as wonderful today, as when men beheld Thee in the days of Thy flesh. AMEN.

January 26

KNOCKING AT THE DOOR!

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: Be zealous therefore and repent. Behold I stand at the door, and knock."-- Rev 3:19-20.

CHRIST KNOCKS at the door when His Judgments are in the earth. That God has arisen to shake mightily the earth is hardly doubtful. This is a day of the Lord of Hosts, when judgments are abroad upon all that is proud and haughty, upon the cedars and the oaks, upon the high mountains and the uplifted hills. But it is at such a time that He draws near to reassure us (Isa 2:11-21; Joe 3:16).

On the eve of the overthrow of the Cities of the Plain, He came to the door of Abraham's tent, partook of his fare, and gave promises of assurance to himself and Sarah which unfolded the Divine Purpose. Standing before the Lord, Abraham was prepared for the tragedy of the morrow, and was permitted an intimacy in which he seemed possessed by a passion for God's rectitude and righteous dealing.

Do not fear the things that are coming, but open to Him who knocks for admission. He has come to spend the dark hours in your fellowship, as a mother runs to her child's cot, when a sudden thunderstorm sweeps the sky.

Christ knocks when we are preparing for some great task. You are going forth on one of His errands, and expect misunderstanding or opposition, or you are uncertain as to your reception. Like Moses, you say: "Send by whom Thou wilt send, but let it not be by me." With Jeremiah, you plead: "I am a child, I cannot speak." Like the Apostles, you have to face a world in arms. At such a time, He waits at the door to encourage and inspire. On the night following the upheaval in the Sanhedrin, where Paul was nearly torn to pieces, the Lord stood by him, and said: "Be of good cheer!"

Christ knocks when bereavement enters our homes. We all know what it is to be full of longing "for the beloved ones, whom we cannot reach by deed or token, gesture or kind speech." The ship's masts have sunk below the rim of the horizon, in the sunset, and we turn back to homes out of which all light has gone. It is then that you may surely expect a gentle knock at the door, and He who came to Bethany when Lazarus died, that He might mingle His tears with those of the sisters, will certainly come to the door of your heart, and knock for admission that He may help to fill the gap.

PRAYER

Come nearer to us than the nearest. Enter our hearts, saying, Fear not, I am with thee, I will help thee. Give us all that we need to enable us to fight the good fight, add finish our course with joy. AMEN.

January 27

CHRIST PLEADING FOR ADMISSION

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."-- Rev 3:20.

DO NOT forget the majesty and glory of Him who asks for admission!

In the following verse, He declares that He is able to give the right of sitting with Himself on His Throne. He stands, that some day we may sit! O child of two worlds, shut your ear to the chatterings and noise of this passing age, and listen to Him who stands at the door of your life and knocks!

Of course, we know that the Saviour never withdraws Himself from hearts that are really His own. He abides in them, as they abide in Him. But with us there may be ebbs as well as flows. The current may drop from feet to inches. The light may linger in the sky, while clouds obscure the face of the sun. The heat of the body may remain, but the extremities may become chilled. It is under these circumstances that the Lord of all worlds comes to the door of our poor tenement, and stands, and knocks, and asks for admission!

We may expect His knock when our love is cooling. Once our hearts beat quickly when we heard His approaching step; now, when He is at hand, we keep Him waiting on the doorstep till His head is filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of night. Do we not all know what it is to be "neither hot nor cold"? Somehow our heart has gone dead! It is then that we may expect to hear the knock of Christ. He only asks us to admit Him and He will restore the soul to love, and love to the soul.

We may expect His knock when we must go forth from this world. The moment comes when the post will present us with a letter like that received by Christiana: "The Master expecteth thee to stand in His Presence, in clothes of immortality, within ten days." The same summons will come to Mr. Honest and Mr. Ready-to-halt; to Mr. Despondency and to Miss Much-afraid; to Mr. Stand-fast and Mr. Valiant-for-truth. But in each case there will be the accompanying knock of Jesus, saying: "Fear not, I will be with you. I have called you by your name, you are Mine." (Isa 43:1).

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O God, that Thy love has come to us in a human Form, that it shines from the Face of the Man Christ Jesus, and speaks to us in gentle tones we can understand. We thank Thee that He stands at the low doorway of our hearts, and knocks, and waits to come in and dwell with us for ever. We humbly ask that the Holy Spirit may open our eyes more fully to behold Him, and our hearts more ardently to love and welcome Him. AMEN.

January 28

DAY-BREAK ON THE BEACH

"When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus."-- Jn 21:4.

THE PREVIOUS evening had been full of interest and hope. Those seven fishermen had long been separated from their craft, and thinking probably that they were not to see their Master again, they betook themselves, with considerable zest, to the shore of the Lake. They entered the old familiar boat, and that night they caught nothing! It was the last fishing expedition they were to have. They were to navigate other waters, use other nets, and sail under other skies. The greatness of their disappointment was to block the door in that direction and open it in another. No longer fishermen on the shores of Galilee, but shepherds, pasturing their flocks on the celestial mountains, whence views are to be obtained, in fair weather, of the Eternal City. Has your life been a disappointment? Did you start out, years ago, with good heart and hope? Perhaps the winds were soft, the starlight brilliant, and there was a chance of the moon breaking through. But the sky soon clouded over, and the years have gone wearily! It isn't that you have been idle, but for some reason everything has miscarried; and now there seems nothing for it but to land on the shore of Eternity, as Paul did on the shore at Malta. But do not be too sure of this! When the morning breaks on that coastline, it is more than likely that you will see Jesus standing on the beach. He will know the time of your arrival, and will come down to meet you, as He did for the first martyr, Stephen, and has done for a multitude beside. It is very pleasant, as in the big ship, you emerge from the night, to see familiar faces greeting you, or even one dear face with a smile of welcome awaiting your coming! It may happen to be the landing-stage at New York, Bombay, Melbourne, or Liverpool, but what a difference it makes! And when the Day of days shall break, and the shadows flee away, and the little boat of our life grates on the shore, it will be good indeed to see Christ standing there, with His outstretched hand to welcome, to help us disembark, to lead us to the prepared place on which He has expended thought and care. "I go to prepare a place for you I will come again to receive you unto Myself."

PRAYER

Suffice it if--my good and ill unreckoned,

And both forgiv'n through His abounding grace--

I find myself by hands familiar beckoned

Unto my fitting place.

January 29

LOVE'S REVELATIONS!

"That disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter: It is the Lord."-- Jn 21:7.

LOVE WILL See most quickly. James was there, full of practical commonsense; Thomas also, who doubted, but afterwards believed; Peter, who wanted to die with Him, but afterwards denied Him; and the rest of them; but it was John whom Jesus loved, and who afterwards became the Apostle of Love, that first recognised the Master, whether by the intonation of His Voice, or the thoughtfulness of His inquiry, or the readiness of His help, does not appear. The intuitions of love are as sure as they are swift. Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish. None of these things will help as much when we come to that last hour. But Love will never fail, and those who have loved will see most quickly, most certainly, most satisfyingly.

It is Love that unites us, and we believe that Jesus is as eager for the hour to come when we shall be with Him where He is, as we are to get there. Do you not believe that the friend who has come to the landing-stage to greet you, after a long voyage, is even more eager than you are to see that breadth of water dwindle from miles to furlongs and furlongs to yards? Do you think that Peter thought the water cold, when he plunged in, or that he would spoil his fisher's coat? Will not the chill of the river be forgotten when at last we see Jesus just beyond?

In that fair morning we shall recognise and help each other. The disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, "It is the Lord," and gave him the preference! Surely John would have been excused by all the rest, if he had immediately cast himself into the sea and had met Jesus first! But no! He knew how Peter had suffered, how he longed for the chance to do something to obliterate the past, how he would prize the few extra moments of private fellowship; and so he said, "It is the Lord," knowing full well what an effect would be produced on his impulsive friend.

That probably is the etiquette of Heaven! We sometimes suppose that there will be such a throng there, that we shall not be able to get near the Lord. But the greatest saints will always be the humblest and the kindest. They will come to the outer ranks, where some of us may have to stand, and say, "Come, take my place!" John will say to Peter, "It is the Lord."

PRAYER

Impart unto me, O God, I pray Thee, the spirit of Thy Love, that I may be more anxious to give than to receive, more eager to understand than to be understood, more thoughtful for others, more forgetful of myself. AMEN.

January 30

DESCENDING AND ASCENDING

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."-- Eph 4:10.

THIS IS an amazing verse! Why did our Lord descend? In the Council-Chamber of Eternity, when the creation and fall of man were foreseen, it was agreed that He should deliver man; but how could this be effected, unless He had experienced conditions of human life? Mere power, though it were that of Omnipotence, would not have availed. Even perfect love might have failed in absolute sympathy, for lack of actual experience. "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part in the same, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest" (Heb 2:14-17).

How low did He descend? He bowed the heavens, and came down, and darkness was under his feet. Down to the Virgin Mother and the Manger-bed; down to Joseph's home in despised Nazareth, and the carpenter's shop; down to hunger and thirst, to agony and bloody sweat, to the Cross and Passion; down to Death and burial even in a borrowed tomb; down to the dim shadow-world of Hades, to the spirits in prison, and if there be any lower depth, thither!

But He ascended from these low depths, with the keys of Death and Hades at His girdle. He ascended on high, leading captivity captive; and as He passed upward, He annexed each province as He went. This same Jesus who descended is now ascended, with no change in His nature, that He may fill all hearts, all lives, all homes, with the grace and love and help that He exhibited during His earthly ministry. When I saw that, only the other day, I said to myself: "Jesus Christ is literally in this room. It is true that He is at the right hand of God, but this is only to allow Him the more easily to fill my heart, my need, my life. He is the very same as when Martha and Mary welcomed Him to their home in Bethany. I will read the Gospels again, not so much as a record of the past, but as a mirror of the living present" (Heb 13:8).

Is there one person who reads this page, in loneliness, poverty, sickness, sorrow, and pain, that can fail to get this comfort? Read the Gospels again as the Diary and Day-Book of the Living Saviour! He that descended is the same also that ascended; and He

ascended that He might fill the lowest depths of human need. Though ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, He is the same loving, tender Saviour as when the children flocked around His knees, and His tears brimmed over at the grave of His friend.

PRAYER

I bless thee, O Son of God, that there is no need for me to go up to Heaven to bring Thee down, or into Thy grave to bring Thee up. Thou art here, in this hour, and at this place. AMEN.

January 31

TURNING THINGS UPSIDE DOWN

"Ye turn things upside down! Shall the Potter be counted as clay; that the thing made should say of Him that made it, He made me not, He hath no understanding."-- Isa 29:16 (R.V. marg.).

WILL YOU let your Saviour frame your life and make it what He will? All power is His in heaven and on earth. Do not resist His moulding touch, or say that He has no understanding of your peculiar difficulties or temperament. Let Him appoint your place in life, and endow you with the wisdom and strength needed for the right discharge of its responsibilities.

By the Holy Spirit He forms in us His own life, leading us to walk in the way that pleases Him best, not following our own desires and wishes, but His; yielding to Him our will and obeying His instruction.

PRAYER

Great Potter, fashion us! Wise Artificer, frame us! Pierced Hands, guide us where we should go. We will not be perverse children, but submit to Thy wise understanding and trust where we cannot see, committing the keeping of our souls to Thee in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. AMEN.