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DEVOTIONALS ON PSALMS

by C H Spurgeon

Morning and Evening

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Evening, August 1

“Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.” — Psalm 65:11

All the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us; both when we sleep and when we wake his mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave us a legacy of darkness, but our God never ceases to shine upon his children with beams of love. Like a river, his lovingkindness is always flowing, with a fulness inexhaustible as his own nature. Like the atmosphere which constantly surrounds the earth, and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all his creatures; in it, as in their element, they live, and move, and have their being. Yet as the sun on summer days gladdens us with beams more warm and bright than at other times, and as rivers are at certain seasons swollen by the rain, and as the atmosphere itself is sometimes fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than heretofore, so is it with the mercy of God; it hath its golden hours; its days of overflow, when the Lord magnifieth his grace before the sons of men. Amongst the blessings of the nether springs, the joyous days of harvest are a special season of excessive favour. It is the glory of autumn that the ripe gifts of providence are then abundantly bestowed; it is the mellow season of realization, whereas all before was but hope and expectation. Great is the joy of harvest. Happy are the reapers who fill their arms with the liberality of heaven. The Psalmist tells us that the harvest is the crowning of the year. Surely these crowning mercies call for crowning thanksgiving! Let us render it by the inward emotions of gratitude. Let our hearts be warmed; let our spirits remember, meditate, and think upon this goodness of the Lord. Then let us praise him with our lips, and laud and magnify his name from whose bounty all this goodness flows. Let us glorify God by yielding our gifts to his cause. A practical proof of our gratitude is a special thank-offering to the Lord of the harvest.

Morning, October 18

"Thy paths drop fatness." — Psalm 65:11

Many are "the paths of the Lord" which "drop fatness," but an especial one is the path of prayer. No believer, who is much in the closet, will have need to cry, "My leanness, my leanness; woe unto me." Starving souls live at a distance from the mercy-seat, and become like the parched fields in times of drought. Prevalence with God in wrestling prayer is sure to make the believer strong—if not happy. The nearest place to the gate of heaven is the throne of the heavenly grace. Much alone, and you will have much assurance; little alone with Jesus, your religion will be shallow, polluted with many doubts and fears, and not sparkling with the joy of the Lord. Since the soul-enriching path of prayer is open to the very weakest saint; since no high attainments are required; since you are not bidden to come because you are an advanced saint, but freely invited if you be a saint at all; see to it, dear reader, that you are often in the way of private devotion. Be much on your knees, for so Elijah drew the rain upon famished Israel's fields.

There is another especial path dropping with fatness to those who walk therein, it is the secret walk of communion. Oh! the delights of fellowship with Jesus! Earth hath no words which can set forth the holy calm of a soul leaning on Jesus' bosom. Few Christians understand it, they live in the lowlands and seldom climb to the top of Nebo: they live in the outer court, they enter not the holy place, they take not up the privilege of priesthood. At a distance they see the sacrifice, but they sit not down with the priest to eat thereof, and to enjoy the fat of the burnt offering. But, reader, sit thou ever under the shadow of Jesus; come up to that palm tree, and take hold of the branches thereof; let thy beloved be unto thee as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, and thou shalt be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. O Jesus, visit us with thy salvation!

Morning, September 30

"Sing forth the honour of his name, make his praise glorious." — Psalm 66:2

It is not left to our own option whether we shall praise God or not. Praise is God's most righteous due, and every Christian, as the recipient of his grace, is bound to praise God from day to day. It is true we have no authoritative rubric for daily praise; we have no commandment prescribing certain hours of song and thanksgiving: but the law written upon the heart teaches us that it is right to praise God; and the unwritten mandate comes to us with as much force as if it had been recorded on the tables of stone, or handed to us from the top of thundering Sinai. Yes, it is the Christian's duty to praise God. It is not only a pleasurable exercise, but it is the absolute obligation of his life. Think not ye who are always mourning, that ye are guiltless in this respect, or imagine that ye can discharge your duty to your God without songs of praise. You are bound by the bonds of his love to bless his name so long as you live, and his praise should continually be in your mouth, for you are blessed, in order that you may bless him; "this people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise"; and if you do not praise God, you are not bringing forth the fruit which he, as the Divine Husbandman, has a right to expect at your hands. Let not your harp then hang upon the willows, but take it down, and strive, with a grateful heart, to bring forth its loudest music. Arise and chant his praise. With every morning's dawn, lift up your notes of thanksgiving, and let every setting sun be followed with your song. Girdle the earth with your praises; surround it with an atmosphere of melody, and God himself will hearken from heaven and accept your music.

"E'en so I love thee, and will love,
And in thy praise will sing,
Because thou art my loving God,
And my redeeming King."

Morning, May 24

“Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer.” — Psalm 66:20

In looking back upon the character of our prayers, if we do it honestly, we shall be filled with wonder that God has ever answered them. There may be some who think their prayers worthy of acceptance—as the Pharisee did; but the true Christian, in a more enlightened retrospect, weeps over his prayers, and if he could retrace his steps he would desire to pray more earnestly. Remember, Christian, how cold thy prayers have been. When in thy closet thou shouldst have wrestled as Jacob did; but instead thereof, thy petitions have been faint and few—far removed from that humble, believing, persevering faith, which cries, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Yet, wonderful to say, God has heard these cold prayers of thine, and not only heard, but answered them. Reflect also, how infrequent have been thy prayers, unless thou hast been in trouble, and then thou hast gone often to the mercy-seat: but when deliverance has come, where has been thy constant supplication? Yet, notwithstanding thou hast ceased to pray as once thou didst, God has not ceased to bless. When thou hast neglected the mercy-seat, God has not deserted it, but the bright light of the Shekinah has always been visible between the wings of the cherubim. Oh! it is marvellous that the Lord should regard those intermittent spasms of importunity which come and go with our necessities. What a God is he thus to hear the prayers of those who come to him when they have pressing wants, but neglect him when they have received a mercy; who approach him when they are forced to come, but who almost forget to address him when mercies are plentiful and sorrows are few. Let his gracious kindness in hearing such prayers touch our hearts, so that we may henceforth be found “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”

Morning, April 27

“God, even our own God.” — Psalm 67:6

It is strange how little use we make of the spiritual blessings which God gives us, but it is stranger still how little use we make of God himself. Though he is “our own God,” we apply ourselves but little to him, and ask but little of him. How seldom do we ask counsel at the hands of the Lord! How often do we go about our business, without seeking his guidance! In our troubles how constantly do we strive to bear our burdens ourselves, instead of casting them upon the Lord, that he may sustain us! This is not because we may not, for the Lord seems to say, “I am thine, soul, come and make use of me as thou wilt; thou mayst freely come to my store, and the oftener the more welcome.” It is our own fault if we make not free with the riches of our God. Then, since thou hast such a friend, and he invites thee, draw from him daily. Never want whilst thou hast a God to go to; never fear or faint whilst thou hast God to help thee; go to thy treasure and take whatever thou needest—there is all that thou canst want. Learn the divine skill of making God all things to thee. He can supply thee with all, or, better still, he can be to thee instead of all. Let me urge thee, then, to make use of thy God. Make use of him in prayer. Go to him often, because he is thy God. O, wilt thou fail to use so great a privilege? Fly to him, tell him all thy wants. Use him constantly by faith at all times. If some dark providence has beclouded thee, use thy God as a “sun;” if some strong enemy has beset thee, find in Jehovah a “shield,” for he is a sun and shield to his people. If thou hast lost thy way in the mazes of life, use him as a “guide,” for he will direct thee. Whatever thou art, and wherever thou art, remember God is just what thou wantest, and just where thou wantest, and that he can do all thou wantest.

Evening, December 8

“Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.” — Psalm 68:10

All God's gifts are prepared gifts laid up in store for wants foreseen. He anticipates our needs; and out of the fulness which he has treasured up in Christ Jesus, he provides of his goodness for the poor. You may trust him for all the necessities that can occur, for he has infallibly foreknown every one of them. He can say of us in all conditions, “I knew that thou wouldst be this and that.” A man goes a journey across the desert, and when he has made a day's advance, and pitched his tent, he discovers that he wants many comforts and necessities which he has not brought in his baggage. “Ah!” says he, “I did not foresee this: if I had this journey to go again, I should bring these things with me, so necessary to my comfort.” But God has marked with prescient eye all the requirements of his poor wandering children, and when those needs occur, supplies are ready. It is goodness which he has prepared for the poor in heart, goodness and goodness only. “My grace is sufficient for thee.” “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

Reader, is your heart heavy this evening? God knew it would be; the comfort which your heart wants is treasured in the sweet assurance of the text. You are poor and needy, but he has thought upon you, and has the exact blessing which you require in store for you. Plead the promise, believe it and obtain its fulfilment. Do you feel that you never were so consciously vile as you are now? Behold, the crimson fountain is open still, with all its former efficacy, to wash your sin away. Never shall you come into such a position that Christ cannot aid you. No pinch shall ever arrive in your spiritual affairs in which Jesus Christ shall not be equal to the emergency, for your history has all been foreknown and provided for in Jesus.

Evening, November 15

“Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.” — Psalm 68:28

It is our wisdom, as well as our necessity, to beseech God continually to strengthen that which he has wrought in us. It is because of their neglect in this, that many Christians may blame themselves for those trials and afflictions of spirit which arise from unbelief. It is true that Satan seeks to flood the fair garden of the heart and make it a scene of desolation, but it is also true that many Christians leave open the sluice-gates themselves, and let in the dreadful deluge through carelessness and want of prayer to their strong Helper. We often forget that the Author of our faith must be the Preserver of it also. The lamp which was burning in the temple was never allowed to go out, but it had to be daily replenished with fresh oil; in like manner, our faith can only live by being sustained with the oil of grace, and we can only obtain this from God himself. Foolish virgins we shall prove, if we do not secure the needed sustenance for our lamps. He who built the world upholds it, or it would fall in one tremendous crash; he who made us Christians must maintain us by his Spirit, or our ruin will be speedy and final. Let us, then, evening by evening, go to our Lord for the grace and strength we need. We have a strong argument to plead, for it is his own work of grace which we ask him to strengthen—“that which thou hast wrought for us.” Think you he will fail to protect and sustain that? Only let your faith take hold of his strength, and all the powers of darkness, led on by the master fiend of hell, cannot cast a cloud or shadow over your joy and peace. Why faint when you may be strong? Why suffer defeat when you may conquer? Oh! take your wavering faith and drooping graces to him who can revive and replenish them, and earnestly pray, “Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.”

Evening, August 6

“Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.” — Psalm 72:19

This is a large petition. To intercede for a whole city needs a stretch of faith, and there are times when a prayer for one man is enough to stagger us. But how far-reaching was the psalmist's dying intercession! How comprehensive! How sublime! “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.” It doth not exempt a single country however crushed by the foot of superstition; it doth not exclude a single nation however barbarous. For the cannibal as well as for the civilized, for all climes and races this prayer is uttered: the whole circle of the earth it encompasses, and omits no son of Adam. We must be up and doing for our Master, or we cannot honestly offer such a prayer. The petition is not asked with a sincere heart unless we endeavour, as God shall help us, to extend the kingdom of our Master. Are there not some who neglect both to plead and to labour? Reader, is it your prayer? Turn your eyes to Calvary. Behold the Lord of Life nailed to a cross, with the thorn-crown about his brow, with bleeding head, and hands, and feet. What! can you look upon this miracle of miracles, the death of the Son of God, without feeling within your bosom a marvellous adoration that language never can express? And when you feel the blood applied to your conscience, and know that he has blotted out your sins, you are not a man unless you start from your knees and cry, “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.” Can you bow before the Crucified in loving homage, and not wish to see your Monarch master of the world? Out on you if you can pretend to love your Prince, and desire not to see him the universal ruler. Your piety is worthless unless it leads you to wish that the same mercy which has been extended to you may bless the whole world. Lord, it is harvest-time, put in thy sickle and reap.

Morning, July 28

“So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.” — Psalm 73:22

Remember this is the confession of the man after God's own heart; and in telling us his inner life, he writes, “So foolish was I, and ignorant.” The word “foolish,” here, means more than it signifies in ordinary language. David, in a former verse of the Psalm, writes, “I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked,” which shows that the folly he intended had sin in it. He puts himself down as being thus “foolish,” and adds a word which is to give intensity to it; “so foolish was I.” How foolish he could not tell. It was a sinful folly, a folly which was not to be excused by frailty, but to be condemned because of its perverseness and wilful ignorance, for he had been envious of the present prosperity of the ungodly, forgetful of the dreadful end awaiting all such. And are we better than David that we should call ourselves wise! Do we profess that we have attained perfection, or to have been so chastened that the rod has taken all our wilfulness out of us? Ah, this were pride indeed! If David was foolish, how foolish should we be in our own esteem if we could but see ourselves! Look back, believer: think of your doubting God when he has been so faithful to you—think of your foolish outcry of “Not so, my Father,” when he crossed his hands in affliction to give you the larger blessing; think of the many times when you have read his providences in the dark, misinterpreted his dispensations, and groaned out, “All these things are against me,” when they are all working together for your good! Think how often you have chosen sin because of its pleasure, when indeed, that pleasure was a root of bitterness to you! Surely if we know our own heart we must plead guilty to the indictment of a sinful folly; and conscious of this “foolishness,” we must make David's consequent resolve our own —“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel.”

Morning, July 29

“Nevertheless I am continually with thee.” — Psalm 73:23

“Nevertheless,”—As if, notwithstanding all the foolishness and ignorance which David had just been confessing to God, not one atom the less was it true and certain that David was saved and accepted, and that the blessing of being constantly in God's presence was undoubtedly his. Fully conscious of his own lost estate, and of the deceitfulness and vileness of his nature, yet, by a glorious outburst of faith, he sings “nevertheless I am continually with thee.” Believer, you are forced to enter into Asaph's confession and acknowledgment, endeavour in like spirit to say “nevertheless, since I belong to Christ I am continually with God!” By this is meant continually upon his mind, he is always thinking of me for my good. Continually before his eye;—the eye of the Lord never sleepeth, but is perpetually watching over my welfare. Continually in his hand, so that none shall be able to pluck me thence. Continually on his heart, worn there as a memorial, even as the high priest bore the names of the twelve tribes upon his heart for ever. Thou always thinkest of me, O God. The bowels of thy love continually yearn towards me. Thou art always making providence work for my good. Thou hast set me as a signet upon thine arm; thy love is strong as death, many waters cannot quench it; neither can the floods drown it. Surprising grace! Thou seest me in Christ, and though in myself abhorred, thou beholdest me as wearing Christ's garments, and washed in his blood, and thus I stand accepted in thy presence. I am thus continually in thy favour—“continually with thee.” Here is comfort for the tried and afflicted soul; vexed with the tempest within—look at the calm without. “Nevertheless”—O say it in thy heart, and take the peace it gives. “Nevertheless I am continually with thee.”

Morning, September 1

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." — Psalm 73:24

The Psalmist felt his need of divine guidance. He had just been discovering the foolishness of his own heart, and lest he should be constantly led astray by it, he resolved that God's counsel should henceforth guide him. A sense of our own folly is a great step towards being wise, when it leads us to rely on the wisdom of the Lord. The blind man leans on his friend's arm and reaches home in safety, and so would we give ourselves up implicitly to divine guidance, nothing doubting; assured that though we cannot see, it is always safe to trust the all-seeing God. "Thou shalt," is a blessed expression of confidence. He was sure that the Lord would not decline the condescending task. There is a word for thee, O believer; rest thou in it. Be assured that thy God will be thy counsellor and friend; he shall guide thee; he will direct all thy ways. In his written Word thou hast this assurance in part fulfilled, for holy Scripture is his counsel to thee. Happy are we to have God's Word always to guide us! What were the mariner without his compass? And what were the Christian without the Bible? This is the unerring chart, the map in which every shoal is described, and all the channels from the quicksands of destruction to the haven of salvation mapped and marked by one who knows all the way. Blessed be thou, O God, that we may trust thee to guide us now, and guide us even to the end! After this guidance through life, the Psalmist anticipates a divine reception at last—"and afterward receive me to glory." What a thought for thee, believer! God himself will receive thee to glory—thee! Wandering, erring, straying, yet he will bring thee safe at last to glory! This is thy portion; live on it this day, and if perplexities should surround thee, go in the strength of this text straight to the throne.

Evening, December 23

"The night also is thine." — Psalm 74:16

Yes, Lord, thou dost not abdicate thy throne when the sun goeth down, nor dost thou leave the world all through these long wintry nights to be the prey of evil; thine eyes watch us as the stars, and thine arms surround us as the zodiac belts the sky. The dews of kindly sleep and all the influences of the moon are in thy hand, and the alarms and solemnities of night are equally with thee. This is very sweet to me when watching through the midnight hours, or tossing to and fro in anguish. There are precious fruits put forth by the moon as well as by the sun: may my Lord make me to be a favoured partaker in them.

The night of affliction is as much under the arrangement and control of the Lord of Love as the bright summer days when all is bliss. Jesus is in the tempest. His love wraps the night about itself as a mantle, but to the eye of faith the sable robe is scarce a disguise. From the first watch of the night even unto the break of day the eternal Watcher observes his saints, and overrules the shades and dews of midnight for his people's highest good. We believe in no rival deities of good and evil contending for the mastery, but we hear the voice of Jehovah saying, "I create light and I create darkness; I, the Lord, do all these things."

Gloomy seasons of religious indifference and social sin are not exempted from the divine purpose. When the altars of truth are defiled, and the ways of God forsaken, the Lord's servants weep with bitter sorrow, but they may not despair, for the darkest eras are governed by the Lord, and shall come to their end at his bidding. What may seem defeat to us may be victory to him.

"Though enwrapt in gloomy night,
We perceive no ray of light;
Since the Lord himself is here,
'Tis not meet that we should fear."

Morning, December 1

“Thou hast made summer and winter.” — Psalm 74:17

My soul begin this wintry month with thy God. The cold snows and the piercing winds all remind thee that he keeps his covenant with day and night, and tend to assure thee that he will also keep that glorious covenant which he has made with thee in the person of Christ Jesus. He who is true to his Word in the revolutions of the seasons of this poor sin-polluted world, will not prove unfaithful in his dealings with his own well-beloved Son.

Winter in the soul is by no means a comfortable season, and if it be upon thee just now it will be very painful to thee: but there is this comfort, namely, that the Lord makes it. He sends the sharp blasts of adversity to nip the buds of expectation: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes over the once verdant meadows of our joy: he casteth forth his ice like morsels freezing the streams of our delight. He does it all, he is the great Winter King, and rules in the realms of frost, and therefore thou canst not murmur. Losses, crosses, heaviness, sickness, poverty, and a thousand other ills, are of the Lord's sending, and come to us with wise design. Frosts kill noxious insects, and put a bound to raging diseases; they break up the clods, and sweeten the soul. O that such good results would always follow our winters of affliction!

How we prize the fire just now! how pleasant is its cheerful glow! Let us in the same manner prize our Lord, who is the constant source of warmth and comfort in every time of trouble. Let us draw nigh to him, and in him find joy and peace in believing. Let us wrap ourselves in the warm garments of his promises, and go forth to labours which befit the season, for it were ill to be as the sluggard who will not plough by reason of the cold; for he shall beg in summer and have nothing.

Evening, June 11

“There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” — Psalm 76:3

Our Redeemer's glorious cry of “It is finished,” was the death-knell of all the adversaries of his people, the breaking of “the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” Behold the hero of Golgotha using his cross as an anvil, and his woes as a hammer, dashing to shivers bundle after bundle of our sins, those poisoned “arrows of the bow;” trampling on every indictment, and destroying every accusation. What glorious blows the mighty Breaker gives with a hammer far more ponderous than the fabled weapon of Thor! How the diabolical darts fly to fragments, and the infernal bucklers are broken like potters' vessels! Behold, he draws from its sheath of hellish workmanship the dread sword of Satanic power! He snaps it across his knee, as a man breaks the dry wood of a fagot, and casts it into the fire. Beloved, no sin of a believer can now be an arrow mortally to wound him, no condemnation can now be a sword to kill him, for the punishment of our sin was borne by Christ, a full atonement was made for all our iniquities by our blessed Substitute and Surety. Who now accuseth? Who now condemneth? Christ hath died, yea rather, hath risen again. Jesus has emptied the quivers of hell, has quenched every fiery dart, and broken off the head of every arrow of wrath; the ground is strewn with the splinters and relics of the weapons of hell's warfare, which are only visible to us to remind us of our former danger, and of our great deliverance. Sin hath no more dominion over us. Jesus has made an end of it, and put it away for ever. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end. Talk ye of all the wondrous works of the Lord, ye who make mention of his name, keep not silence, neither by day, nor when the sun goeth to his rest. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Morning, September 13

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools." — Psalm 84:6

This teaches us that the comfort obtained by a one may often prove serviceable to another; just as wells would be used by the company who came after. We read some book full of consolation, which is like Jonathan's rod, dropping with honey. Ah! we think our brother has been here before us, and digged this well for us as well as for himself. Many a "Night of Weeping," "Midnight Harmonies," an "Eternal Day," "A Crook in the Lot," a "Comfort for Mourners," has been a well digged by a pilgrim for himself, but has proved quite as useful to others. Specially we notice this in the Psalms, such as that beginning, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Travellers have been delighted to see the footprint of man on a barren shore, and we love to see the waymarks of pilgrims while passing through the vale of tears.

The pilgrims dig the well, but, strange enough, it fills from the top instead of the bottom. We use the means, but the blessing does not spring from the means. We dig a well, but heaven fills it with rain. The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord. The means are connected with the end, but they do not of themselves produce it. See here the rain fills the pools, so that the wells become useful as reservoirs for the water; labour is not lost, but yet it does not supersede divine help.

Grace may well be compared to rain for its purity, for its refreshing and vivifying influence, for its coming alone from above, and for the sovereignty with which it is given or withheld. May our readers have showers of blessing, and may the wells they have digged be filled with water! Oh, what are means and ordinances without the smile of heaven! They are as clouds without rain, and pools without water. O God of love, open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing!

Morning, December 14

"They go from strength to strength." — Psalm 84:7

They go from strength to strength. There are various renderings of these words, but all of them contain the idea of progress.

Our own good translation of the authorized version is enough for us this morning. "They go from strength to strength." That is, they grow stronger and stronger. Usually, if we are walking, we go from strength to weakness; we start fresh and in good order for our journey, but by-and-by the road is rough, and the sun is hot, we sit down by the wayside, and then again painfully pursue our weary way. But the Christian pilgrim having obtained fresh supplies of grace, is as vigorous after years of toilsome travel and struggle as when he first set out. He may not be quite so elate and buoyant, nor perhaps quite so hot and hasty in his zeal as he once was, but he is much stronger in all that constitutes real power, and travels, if more slowly, far more surely. Some gray-haired veterans have been as firm in their grasp of truth, and as zealous in diffusing it, as they were in their younger days; but, alas, it must be confessed it is often otherwise, for the love of many waxes cold and iniquity abounds, but this is their own sin and not the fault of the promise which still holds good: "The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Fretful spirits sit down and trouble themselves about the future. "Alas!" say they, "we go from affliction to affliction." Very true, O thou of little faith, but then thou goest from strength to strength also. Thou shalt never find a bundle of affliction which has not bound up in the midst of it sufficient grace. God will give the strength of ripe manhood with the burden allotted to full-grown shoulders.

Evening, October 1

"He will give grace and glory." — Psalm 84:11

Bounteous is Jehovah in his nature; to give is his delight. His gifts are beyond measure precious, and are as freely given as the light of the sun. He gives grace to his elect because he wills it, to his redeemed because of his covenant, to the called because of his promise, to believers because they seek it, to sinners because they need it. He gives grace abundantly, seasonably, constantly, readily, sovereignly; doubly enhancing the value of the boon by the manner of its bestowal. Grace in all its forms he freely renders to his people: comforting, preserving, sanctifying, directing, instructing, assisting grace, he generously pours into their souls without ceasing, and he always will do so, whatever may occur. Sickness may befall, but the Lord will give grace; poverty may happen to us, but grace will surely be afforded; death must come but grace will light a candle at the darkest hour. Reader, how blessed it is as years roll round, and the leaves begin again to fall, to enjoy such an unfading promise as this, "The Lord will give grace."

The little conjunction "and" in this verse is a diamond rivet binding the present with the future: grace and glory always go together. God has married them, and none can divorce them. The Lord will never deny a soul glory to whom he has freely given to live upon his grace; indeed, glory is nothing more than grace in its Sabbath dress, grace in full bloom, grace like autumn fruit, mellow and perfected. How soon we may have glory none can tell! It may be before this month of October has run out we shall see the Holy City; but be the interval longer or shorter, we shall be glorified ere long. Glory, the glory of heaven, the glory of eternity, the glory of Jesus, the glory of the Father, the Lord will surely give to his chosen. Oh, rare promise of a faithful God!

Two golden links of one celestial chain:
Who owneth grace shall surely glory gain.

Morning, January 23

"I have exalted one chosen out of the people." — Psalm 89:19

Why was Christ chosen out of the people? Speak, my heart, for heart-thoughts are best. Was it not that he might be able to be our brother, in the blest tie of kindred blood? Oh, what relationship there is between Christ and the believer! The believer can say, "I have a Brother in heaven; I may be poor, but I have a Brother who is rich, and is a King, and will he suffer me to wait while he is on his throne? Oh, no! He loves me; he is my Brother." Believer, wear this blessed thought, like a necklace of diamonds, around the neck of thy memory; put it, as a golden ring, on the finger of recollection, and use it as the King's own seal, stamping the petitions of thy faith with confidence of success. He is a brother born for adversity, treat him as such.

Christ was also chosen out of the people that he might know our wants and sympathize with us. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." In all our sorrows we have his sympathy. Temptation, pain, disappointment, weakness, weariness, poverty—he knows them all, for he has felt all. Remember this, Christian, and let it comfort thee. However difficult and painful thy road, it is marked by the footsteps of thy Saviour; and even when thou reachest the dark valley of the shadow of death, and the deep waters of the swelling Jordan, thou wilt find his footprints there. In all places whithersoever we go, he has been our forerunner; each burden we have to carry, has once been laid on the shoulders of Immanuel.

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"

Morning, January 24

“Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.” — Psalm 91:3

God delivers his people from the snare of the fowler in two senses. From, and out of. First, he delivers them from the snare—does not let them enter it; and secondly, if they should be caught therein, he delivers them out of it. The first promise is the most precious to some; the second is the best to others.

“He shall deliver thee from the snare.” How? Trouble is often the means whereby God delivers us. God knows that our backsliding will soon end in our destruction, and he in mercy sends the rod. We say, “Lord, why is this?” not knowing that our trouble has been the means of delivering us from far greater evil. Many have been thus saved from ruin by their sorrows and their crosses; these have frightened the birds from the net. At other times, God keeps his people from the snare of the fowler by giving them great spiritual strength, so that when they are tempted to do evil they say, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” But what a blessed thing it is that if the believer shall, in an evil hour, come into the net, yet God will bring him out of it! O backslider, be cast down, but do not despair. Wanderer though thou hast been, hear what thy Redeemer saith—“Return, O backsliding children; I will have mercy upon you.” But you say you cannot return, for you are a captive. Then listen to the promise—“Surely he shall deliver thee out of the snare of the fowler.” Thou shalt yet be brought out of all evil into which thou hast fallen, and though thou shalt never cease to repent of thy ways, yet he that hath loved thee will not cast thee away; he will receive thee, and give thee joy and gladness, that the bones which he has broken may rejoice. No bird of paradise shall die in the fowler’s net.

Evening, April 22

“Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.” — Psalm 91:5

What is this terror? It may be the cry of fire, or the noise of thieves, or fancied appearances, or the shriek of sudden sickness or death. We live in the world of death and sorrow, we may therefore look for ills as well in the night-watches as beneath the glare of the broiling sun. Nor should this alarm us, for be the terror what it may, the promise is that the believer shall not be afraid. Why should he? Let us put it more closely, why should we? God our Father is here, and will be here all through the lonely hours; he is an almighty Watcher, a sleepless Guardian, a faithful Friend. Nothing can happen without his direction, for even hell itself is under his control. Darkness is not dark to him. He has promised to be a wall of fire around his people—and who can break through such a barrier? Worldlings may well be afraid, for they have an angry God above them, a guilty conscience within them, and a yawning hell beneath them; but we who rest in Jesus are saved from all these through rich mercy. If we give way to foolish fear we shall dishonour our profession, and lead others to doubt the reality of godliness. We ought to be afraid of being afraid, lest we should vex the Holy Spirit by foolish distrust. Down, then, ye dismal forebodings and groundless apprehensions, God has not forgotten to be gracious, nor shut up his tender mercies; it may be night in the soul, but there need be no terror, for the God of love changes not. Children of light may walk in darkness, but they are not therefore cast away, nay, they are now enabled to prove their adoption by trusting in their heavenly Father as hypocrites cannot do.

“Though the night be dark and dreary,
Darkness cannot hide from thee;
Thou art he, who, never weary,
Watchest where thy people be.”

Morning, February 27

"Thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation." — Psalm 91:9

The Israelites in the wilderness were continually exposed to change. Whenever the pillar stayed its motion, the tents were pitched; but tomorrow, ere the morning sun had risen, the trumpet sounded, the ark was in motion, and the fiery, cloudy pillar was leading the way through the narrow defiles of the mountain, up the hill side, or along the arid waste of the wilderness. They had scarcely time to rest a little before they heard the sound of "Away! this is not your rest; you must still be onward journeying towards Canaan!" They were never long in one place. Even wells and palm trees could not detain them. Yet they had an abiding home in their God, his cloudy pillar was their roof-tree, and its flame by night their household fire. They must go onward from place to place, continually changing, never having time to settle, and to say, "Now we are secure; in this place we shall dwell." "Yet," says Moses, "though we are always changing, Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place throughout all generations." The Christian knows no change with regard to God. He may be rich to-day and poor to-morrow; he may be sickly to-day and well to-morrow; he may be in happiness to-day, to-morrow he may be distressed—but there is no change with regard to his relationship to God. If he loved me yesterday, he loves me to-day. My unmoving mansion of rest is my blessed Lord. Let prospects be blighted; let hopes be blasted; let joy be withered; let mildews destroy everything; I have lost nothing of what I have in God. He is "my strong habitation whereunto I can continually resort." I am a pilgrim in the world, but at home in my God. In the earth I wander, but in God I dwell in a quiet habitation.

Morning, August 14

"Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work." — Psalm 92:4

Do you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them? Then what a joyful Christian you ought to be! How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, can it matter what happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven; if thou hast but forgiven me, smite as hard as thou wilt"; and in a similar spirit you may say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, persecution, what thou wilt, thou hast forgiven me, and my soul is glad." Christian, if thou art thus saved, whilst thou art glad, be grateful and loving. Cling to that cross which took thy sin away; serve thou him who served thee. "I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let not your zeal evaporate in some little ebullition of song. Show your love in expressive tokens. Love the brethren of him who loved you. If there be a Mephibosheth anywhere who is lame or halt, help him for Jonathan's sake. If there be a poor tried believer, weep with him, and bear his cross for the sake of him who wept for thee and carried thy sins. Since thou art thus forgiven freely for Christ's sake, go and tell to others the joyful news of pardoning mercy. Be not contented with this unspeakable blessing for thyself alone, but publish abroad the story of the cross. Holy gladness and holy boldness will make you a good preacher, and all the world will be a pulpit for you to preach in. Cheerful holiness is the most forcible of sermons, but the Lord must give it you. Seek it this morning before you go into the world. When it is the Lord's work in which we rejoice, we need not be afraid of being too glad.

Evening, November 18

"Thou art from everlasting." — Psalm 93:2

Christ is Everlasting. Of him we may sing with David, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Rejoice, believer, in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Jesus always was. The Babe born in Bethlehem was united to the Word, which was in the beginning, by whom all things were made. The title by which Christ revealed himself to John in Patmos was, "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come." If he were not God from everlasting, we could not so devoutly love him; we could not feel that he had any share in the eternal love which is the fountain of all covenant blessings; but since he was from all eternity with the Father, we trace the stream of divine love to himself equally with his Father and the blessed Spirit. As our Lord always was, so also he is for evermore. Jesus is not dead; "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Resort to him in all your times of need, for he is waiting to bless you still. Moreover, Jesus our Lord ever shall be. If God should spare your life to fulfil your full day of threescore years and ten, you will find that his cleansing fountain is still opened, and his precious blood has not lost its power; you shall find that the Priest who filled the healing fount with his own blood, lives to purge you from all iniquity. When only your last battle remains to be fought, you shall find that the hand of your conquering Captain has not grown feeble—the living Saviour shall cheer the dying saint. When you enter heaven you shall find him there bearing the dew of his youth; and through eternity the Lord Jesus shall still remain the perennial spring of joy, and life, and glory to his people. Living waters may you draw from this sacred well! Jesus always was, he always is, he always shall be. He is eternal in all his attributes, in all his offices, in all his might, and willingness to bless, comfort, guard, and crown his chosen people.

Morning, August 12

"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." — Psalm 97:1

Causes for disquietude there are none so long as this blessed sentence is true. On earth the Lord's power as readily controls the rage of the wicked as the rage of the sea; his love as easily refreshes the poor with mercy as the earth with showers. Majesty gleams in flashes of fire amid the tempest's horrors, and the glory of the Lord is seen in its grandeur in the fall of empires, and the crash of thrones. In all our conflicts and tribulations, we may behold the hand of the divine King.

"God is God; he sees and hears
All our troubles, all our tears.
Soul, forget not, 'mid thy pains,
God o'er all for ever reigns."

In hell, evil spirits own, with misery, his undoubted supremacy. When permitted to roam abroad, it is with a chain at their heel; the bit is in the mouth of behemoth, and the hook in the jaws of leviathan. Death's darts are under the Lord's lock, and the grave's prisons have divine power as their warder. The terrible vengeance of the Judge of all the earth makes fiends cower down and tremble, even as dogs in the kennel fear the hunter's whip.

"Fear not death, nor Satan's thrusts,

God defends who in him trusts;

Soul, remember, in thy pains,

God o'er all for ever reigns."

In heaven none doubt the sovereignty of the King Eternal, but all fall on their faces to do him homage. Angels are his courtiers, the redeemed his favourites, and all delight to serve him day and night. May we soon reach the city of the great King!

"For this life's long night of sadness

He will give us peace and gladness.

Soul, remember, in thy pains

Morning, June 7

"Ye that love the Lord hate evil." — Psalm 97:10

Thou hast good reason to "hate evil," for only consider what harm it has already wrought thee. Oh, what a world of mischief sin has brought into thy heart! Sin blinded thee so that thou couldst not see the beauty of the Saviour; it made thee deaf so that thou couldst not hear the Redeemer's tender invitations. Sin turned thy feet into the way of death, and poured poison into the very fountain of thy being; it tainted thy heart, and made it "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Oh, what a creature thou wast when evil had done its utmost with thee, before divine grace interposed! Thou wast an heir of wrath even as others; thou didst "run with the multitude to do evil." Such were all of us; but Paul reminds us, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." We have good reason, indeed, for hating evil when we look back and trace its deadly workings. Such mischief did evil do us, that our souls would have been lost had not omnipotent love interfered to redeem us. Even now it is an active enemy, ever watching to do us hurt, and to drag us to perdition. Therefore "hate evil," O Christians, unless you desire trouble. If you would strew your path with thorns, and plant nettles in your death-pillow, then neglect to "hate evil;" but if you would live a happy life, and die a peaceful death, then walk in all the ways of holiness, hating evil, even unto the end. If you truly love your Saviour, and would honour him, then "hate evil." We know of no cure for the love of evil in a Christian like abundant intercourse with the Lord Jesus. Dwell much with him, and it is impossible for you to be at peace with sin.

"Order my footsteps by thy Word,
And make my heart sincere;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
But keep my conscience clear."

Evening, January 9

“Serve the Lord with gladness.” — Psalm 100:2

Delight in divine service is a token of acceptance. Those who serve God with a sad countenance, because they do what is unpleasant to them, are not serving him at all; they bring the form of homage, but the life is absent. Our God requires no slaves to grace his throne; he is the Lord of the empire of love, and would have his servants dressed in the livery of joy. The angels of God serve him with songs, not with groans; a murmur or a sigh would be a mutiny in their ranks. That obedience which is not voluntary is disobedience, for the Lord looketh at the heart, and if he seeth that we serve him from force, and not because we love him, he will reject our offering. Service coupled with cheerfulness is heart-service, and therefore true. Take away joyful willingness from the Christian, and you have removed the test of his sincerity. If a man be driven to battle, he is no patriot; but he who marches into the fray with flashing eye and beaming face, singing, “It is sweet for one’s country to die,” proves himself to be sincere in his patriotism. Cheerfulness is the support of our strength; in the joy of the Lord are we strong. It acts as the remover of difficulties. It is to our service what oil is to the wheels of a railway carriage. Without oil the axle soon grows hot, and accidents occur; and if there be not a holy cheerfulness to oil our wheels, our spirits will be clogged with weariness. The man who is cheerful in his service of God, proves that obedience is his element; he can sing,

“Make me to walk in thy commands,
'Tis a delightful road.”

Reader, let us put this question—do you serve the Lord with gladness? Let us show to the people of the world, who think our religion to be slavery, that it is to us a delight and a joy! Let our gladness proclaim that we serve a good Master.

Evening, November 5

“Be thankful unto him, and bless his name.” — Psalm 100:4

Our Lord would have all his people rich in high and happy thoughts concerning his blessed person. Jesus is not content that his brethren should think meanly of him; it is his pleasure that his espoused ones should be delighted with his beauty. We are not to regard him as a bare necessary, like to bread and water, but as a luxurious delicacy, as a rare and ravishing delight. To this end he has revealed himself as the “pearl of great price” in its peerless beauty, as the “bundle of myrrh” in its refreshing fragrance, as the “rose of Sharon” in its lasting perfume, as the “lily” in its spotless purity.

As a help to high thoughts of Christ, remember the estimation that Christ is had in beyond the skies, where things are measured by the right standard. Think how God esteems the Only Begotten, his unspeakable gift to us. Consider what the angels think of him, as they count it their highest honour to veil their faces at his feet. Consider what the blood-washed think of him, as day without night they sing his well deserved praises. High thoughts of Christ will enable us to act consistently with our relations towards him. The more loftily we see Christ enthroned, and the more lowly we are when bowing before the foot of the throne, the more truly shall we be prepared to act our part towards him. Our Lord Jesus desires us to think well of him, that we may submit cheerfully to his authority. High thoughts of him increase our love. Love and esteem go together. Therefore, believer, think much of your Master’s excellencies. Study him in his primeval glory, before he took upon himself your nature! Think of the mighty love which drew him from his throne to die upon the cross! Admire him as he conquers all the powers of hell! See him risen, crowned, glorified! Bow before him as the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, for only thus will your love to him be what it should.

Evening, September 12

"I will sing of mercy and judgment." — Psalm 101:1

Faith triumphs in trial. When reason is thrust into the inner prison, with her feet made fast in the stocks, faith makes the dungeon walls ring with her merry notes as she cries, "I will sing of mercy and of judgment. Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." Faith pulls the black mask from the face of trouble, and discovers the angel beneath. Faith looks up at the cloud, and sees that

"'Tis big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on her head."

There is a subject for song even in the judgments of God towards us. For, first, the trial is not so heavy as it might have been; next, the trouble is not so severe as we deserved to have borne; and our affliction is not so crushing as the burden which others have to carry. Faith sees that in her worst sorrow there is nothing penal; there is not a drop of God's wrath in it; it is all sent in love. Faith discerns love gleaming like a jewel on the breast of an angry God. Faith says of her grief, "This is a badge of honour, for the child must feel the rod"; and then she sings of the sweet result of her sorrows, because they work her spiritual good. Nay, more, says Faith, "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." So Faith rides forth on the black horse, conquering and to conquer, trampling down carnal reason and fleshly sense, and chanting notes of victory amid the thickest of the fray.

"All I meet I find assists me

In my path to heavenly joy:

Where, though trials now attend me,

Trials never more annoy.

"Blest there with a weight of glory,

Still the path I'll ne'er forget,

But, exulting, cry, it led me

To my blessed Saviour's seat."

Evening, July 16

"Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants rake pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." — Psalm 102:13, 14

A selfish man in trouble is exceedingly hard to comfort, because the springs of his comfort lie entirely within himself, and when he is sad all his springs are dry. But a large-hearted man full of Christian philanthropy, has other springs from which to supply himself with comfort beside those which lie within. He can go to his God first of all, and there find abundant help; and he can discover arguments for consolation in things relating to the world at large, to his country, and, above all, to the church. David in this Psalm was exceedingly sorrowful; he wrote, "I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top." The only way in which he could comfort himself, was in the reflection that God would arise, and have mercy upon Zion: though he was sad, yet Zion should prosper; however low his own estate, yet Zion should arise. Christian man! learn to comfort thyself in God's gracious dealing towards the church. That which is so dear to thy Master, should it not be dear above all else to thee? What though thy way be dark, canst thou not gladden thine heart with the triumphs of his cross and the spread of his truth? Our own personal troubles are forgotten while we look, not only upon what God has done, and is doing for Zion, but on the glorious things he will yet do for his church. Try this receipt, O believer, whenever thou art sad of heart and in heaviness of spirit: forget thyself and thy little concerns, and seek the welfare and prosperity of Zion. When thou bendest thy knee in prayer to God, limit not thy petition to the narrow circle of thine own life, tried though it be, but send out thy longing prayers for the church's prosperity, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and thine own soul shall be refreshed.

Morning, July 9

“Forget not all His benefits.” — Psalm 103:2

It is a delightful and profitable occupation to mark the hand of God in the lives of ancient saints, and to observe his goodness in delivering them, his mercy in pardoning them, and his faithfulness in keeping his covenant with them. But would it not be even more interesting and profitable for us to remark the hand of God in our own lives? Ought we not to look upon our own history as being at least as full of God, as full of his goodness and of his truth, as much a proof of his faithfulness and veracity, as the lives of any of the saints who have gone before? We do our Lord an injustice when we suppose that he wrought all his mighty acts, and showed himself strong for those in the early time, but doth not perform wonders or lay bare his arm for the saints who are now upon the earth. Let us review our own lives. Surely in these we may discover some happy incidents, refreshing to ourselves and glorifying to our God. Have you had no deliverances? Have you passed through no rivers, supported by the divine presence? Have you walked through no fires unharmed? Have you had no manifestations? Have you had no choice favours? The God who gave Solomon the desire of his heart, hath he never listened to you and answered your requests? That God of lavish bounty of whom David sang, “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things,” hath he never satiated you with fatness? Have you never been made to lie down in green pastures? Have you never been led by the still waters? Surely the goodness of God has been the same to us as to the saints of old. Let us, then, weave his mercies into a song. Let us take the pure gold of thankfulness, and the jewels of praise and make them into another crown for the head of Jesus. Let our souls give forth music as sweet and as exhilarating as came from David’s harp, while we praise the Lord whose mercy endureth for ever.

Evening, May 31

“Who healeth all thy diseases.” — Psalm 103:3

Humbling as is the statement, yet the fact is certain, that we are all more or less suffering under the disease of sin. What a comfort to know that we have a great Physician who is both able and willing to heal us! Let us think of him awhile to-night. His cures are very speedy—there is life in a look at him; his cures are radical—he strikes at the centre of the disease; and hence, his cures are sure and certain. He never fails, and the disease never returns. There is no relapse where Christ heals; no fear that his patients should be merely patched up for a season, he makes new men of them: a new heart also does he give them, and a right spirit does he put with them. He is well skilled in all diseases. Physicians generally have some speciality. Although they may know a little about almost all our pains and ills, there is usually one disease which they have studied above all others; but Jesus Christ is thoroughly acquainted with the whole of human nature. He is as much at home with one sinner as with another, and never yet did he meet with an out-of-the-way case that was difficult to him. He has had extraordinary complications of strange diseases to deal with, but he has known exactly with one glance of his eye how to treat the patient. He is the only universal doctor; and the medicine he gives is the only true catholicon, healing in every instance. Whatever our spiritual malady may be, we should apply at once to this Divine Physician. There is no brokenness of heart which Jesus cannot bind up. “His blood cleanseth from all sin.” We have but to think of the myriads who have been delivered from all sorts of diseases through the power and virtue of his touch, and we shall joyfully put ourselves in his hands. We trust him, and sin dies; we love him, and grace lives; we wait for him and grace is strengthened; we see him as he is, and grace is perfected for ever.

Morning, August 13

"The cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted." — Psalm 104:16

Lebanon's cedars are emblematic of the Christian, in that they owe their planting entirely to the Lord. This is quite true of every child of God. He is not man-planted, nor self-planted, but God-planted. The mysterious hand of the divine Spirit dropped the living seed into a heart which he had himself prepared for its reception. Every true heir of heaven owns the great Husbandman as his planter. Moreover, the cedars of Lebanon are not dependent upon man for their watering; they stand on the lofty rock, unmoistened by human irrigation; and yet our heavenly Father supplieth them. Thus it is with the Christian who has learned to live by faith. He is independent of man, even in temporal things; for his continued maintenance he looks to the Lord his God, and to him alone. The dew of heaven is his portion, and the God of heaven is his fountain. Again, the cedars of Lebanon are not protected by any mortal power. They owe nothing to man for their preservation from stormy wind and tempest. They are God's trees, kept and preserved by him, and by him alone. It is precisely the same with the Christian. He is not a hot-house plant, sheltered from temptation; he stands in the most exposed position; he has no shelter, no protection, except this, that the broad wings of the eternal God always cover the cedars which he himself has planted. Like cedars, believers are full of sap, having vitality enough to be ever green, even amid winter's snows. Lastly, the flourishing and majestic condition of the cedar is to the praise of God only. The Lord, even the Lord alone hath been everything unto the cedars, and, therefore David very sweetly puts it in one of the psalms, "Praise ye the Lord, fruitful trees and all cedars." In the believer there is nothing that can magnify man; he is planted, nourished, and protected by the Lord's own hand, and to him let all the glory be ascribed.

Morning, October 24

"The trees of the Lord are full of sap." — Psalm 104:16

Without sap the tree cannot flourish or even exist. Vitality is essential to a Christian. There must be life—a vital principle infused into us by God the Holy Ghost, or we cannot be trees of the Lord. The mere name of being a Christian is but a dead thing, we must be filled with the spirit of divine life. This life is mysterious. We do not understand the circulation of the sap, by what force it rises, and by what power it descends again. So the life within us is a sacred mystery. Regeneration is wrought by the Holy Ghost entering into man and becoming man's life; and this divine life in a believer afterwards feeds upon the flesh and blood of Christ and is thus sustained by divine food, but whence it cometh and whither it goeth who shall explain to us? What a secret thing the sap is! The roots go searching through the soil with their little spongioles, but we cannot see them suck out the various gases, or transmute the mineral into the vegetable; this work is done down in the dark. Our root is Christ Jesus, and our life is hid in him; this is the secret of the Lord. The radix of the Christian life is as secret as the life itself. How permanently active is the sap in the cedar! In the Christian the divine life is always full of energy—not always in fruit-bearing, but in inward operations. The believer's graces, are not every one of them in constant motion? but his life never ceases to palpitate within. He is not always working for God, but his heart is always living upon him. As the sap manifests itself in producing the foliage and fruit of the tree, so with a truly healthy Christian, his grace is externally manifested in his walk and conversation. If you talk with him, he cannot help speaking about Jesus. If you notice his actions you will see that he has been with Jesus. He has so much sap within, that it must fill his conduct and conversation with life.

Morning, May 22

“He led them forth by the right way.” — Psalm 107:7

Changeful experience often leads the anxious believer to enquire “Why is it thus with me?” I looked for light, but lo, darkness came; for peace, but behold trouble. I said in my heart, my mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved. Lord, thou dost hide thy face, and I am troubled. It was but yesterday that I could read my title clear; to-day my evidences are bedimmed, and my hopes are clouded. Yesterday I could climb to Pisgah’s top, and view the landscape o’er, and rejoice with confidence in my future inheritance; to-day, my spirit has no hopes, but many fears; no joys, but much distress. Is this part of God’s plan with me? Can this be the way in which God would bring me to heaven? Yes, it is even so. The eclipse of your faith, the darkness of your mind, the fainting of your hope, all these things are but parts of God’s method of making you ripe for the great inheritance upon which you shall soon enter. These trials are for the testing and strengthening of your faith—they are waves that wash you further upon the rock—they are winds which waft your ship the more swiftly towards the desired haven. According to David’s words, so it might be said of you, “so he bringeth them to their desired haven.” By honour and dishonour, by evil report and by good report, by plenty and by poverty, by joy and by distress, by persecution and by peace, by all these things is the life of your souls maintained, and by each of these are you helped on your way. Oh, think not, believer, that your sorrows are out of God’s plan; they are necessary parts of it. “We must, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom.” Learn, then, even to “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”

“O let my trembling soul be still,
And wait thy wise, thy holy will!
I cannot, Lord, thy purpose see,
Yet all is well since ruled by thee.”

Evening, December 1

“O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” — Psalm 107:8

If we complained less, and praised more, we should be happier, and God would be more glorified. Let us daily praise God for common mercies—common as we frequently call them, and yet so priceless, that when deprived of them we are ready to perish. Let us bless God for the eyes with which we behold the sun, for the health and strength to walk abroad, for the bread we eat, for the raiment we wear. Let us praise him that we are not cast out among the hopeless, or confined amongst the guilty; let us thank him for liberty, for friends, for family associations and comforts; let us praise him, in fact, for everything which we receive from his bounteous hand, for we deserve little, and yet are most plenteously endowed. But, beloved, the sweetest and the loudest note in our songs of praise should be of redeeming love. God’s redeeming acts towards his chosen are for ever the favourite themes of their praise. If we know what redemption means, let us not withhold our sonnets of thanksgiving. We have been redeemed from the power of our corruptions, uplifted from the depth of sin in which we were naturally plunged. We have been led to the cross of Christ—our shackles of guilt have been broken off; we are no longer slaves, but children of the living God, and can antedate the period when we shall be presented before the throne without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Even now by faith we wave the palm-branch and wrap ourselves about with the fair linen which is to be our everlasting array, and shall we not unceasingly give thanks to the Lord our Redeemer? Child of God, canst thou be silent? Awake, awake, ye inheritors of glory, and lead your captivity captive, as ye cry with David, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” Let the new month begin with new songs.

Evening, January 15

“But I give myself unto prayer.” — Psalm 109:4

Lying tongues were busy against the reputation of David, but he did not defend himself; he moved the case into a higher court, and pleaded before the great King himself. Prayer is the safest method of replying to words of hatred. The Psalmist prayed in no cold-hearted manner, he gave himself to the exercise—threw his whole soul and heart into it—straining every sinew and muscle, as Jacob did when wrestling with the angel. Thus, and thus only, shall any of us speed at the throne of grace. As a shadow has no power because there is no substance in it, even so that supplication, in which a man’s proper self is not thoroughly present in agonizing earnestness and vehement desire, is utterly ineffectual, for it lacks that which would give it force. “Fervent prayer,” says an old divine, “like a cannon planted at the gates of heaven, makes them fly open.” The common fault with the most of us is our readiness to yield to distractions. Our thoughts go roving hither and thither, and we make little progress towards our desired end. Like quicksilver our mind will not hold together, but rolls off this way and that. How great an evil this is! It injures us, and what is worse, it insults our God. What should we think of a petitioner, if, while having an audience with a prince, he should be playing with a feather or catching a fly?

Continuance and perseverance are intended in the expression of our text. David did not cry once, and then relapse into silence; his holy clamour was continued till it brought down the blessing. Prayer must not be our chance work, but our daily business, our habit and vocation. As artists give themselves to their models, and poets to their classical pursuits, so must we addict ourselves to prayer. We must be immersed in prayer as in our element, and so pray without ceasing. Lord, teach us so to pray that we may be more and more prevalent in supplication.

Morning, August 26

“He hath commanded his covenant for ever.” — Psalms 111:9

The Lord’s people delight in the covenant itself. It is an unfailing source of consolation to them so often as the Holy Spirit leads them into its banqueting house and waves its banner of love. They delight to contemplate the antiquity of that covenant, remembering that before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round, the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus. It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember the sureness of the covenant, while meditating upon “the sure mercies of David.” They delight to celebrate it as “signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well.” It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its immutability, as a covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, shall ever be able to violate—a covenant as old as eternity and as everlasting as the Rock of ages. They rejoice also to feast upon the fulness of this covenant, for they see in it all things provided for them. God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their Comforter, earth their lodge, and heaven their home. They see in it an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul possessing an interest in its ancient and eternal deed of gift. Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a treasure-trove in the Bible; but oh! how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their divine kinsman, that it was bequeathed to them! More especially it is the pleasure of God’s people to contemplate the graciousness of this covenant. They see that the law was made void because it was a covenant of works and depended upon merit, but this they perceive to be enduring because grace is the basis, grace the condition, grace the strain, grace the bulwark, grace the foundation, grace the topstone. The covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a store-house of salvation, a charter of peace, and a haven of joy

Morning, September 15

“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.” — Psalm 112:7

Christian, you ought not to dread the arrival of evil tidings; because if you are distressed by them, what do you more than other men? Other men have not your God to fly to; they have never proved his faithfulness as you have done, and it is no wonder if they are bowed down with alarm and cowed with fear: but you profess to be of another spirit; you have been begotten again unto a lively hope, and your heart lives in heaven and not on earthly things; now, if you are seen to be distracted as other men, what is the value of that grace which you profess to have received? Where is the dignity of that new nature which you claim to possess?

Again, if you should be filled with alarm, as others are, you would, doubtless, be led into the sins so common to others under trying circumstances. The ungodly, when they are overtaken by evil tidings, rebel against God; they murmur, and think that God deals hardly with them. Will you fall into that same sin? Will you provoke the Lord as they do?

Moreover, unconverted men often run to wrong means in order to escape from difficulties, and you will be sure to do the same if your mind yields to the present pressure. Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Your wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea, “Stand still and see the salvation of God.” For if you give way to fear when you hear of evil tidings, you will be unable to meet the trouble with that calm composure which nerves for duty, and sustains under adversity. How can you glorify God if you play the coward? Saints have often sung God’s high praises in the fires, but will your doubting and desponding, as if you had none to help you, magnify the Most High? Then take courage, and relying in sure confidence upon the faithfulness of your covenant God, “let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Evening, July 26

“That he may set him with princes.” — Psalm 113:8

Our spiritual privileges are of the highest order. “Among princes” is the place of select society. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Speak of select society, there is none like this! “We are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood.” “We are come unto the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” The saints have courtly audience: princes have admittance to royalty when common people must stand afar off. The child of God has free access to the inner courts of heaven. “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” “Let us come boldly,” says the apostle, “to the throne of the heavenly grace.” Among princes there is abundant wealth, but what is the abundance of princes compared with the riches of believers? for “all things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Princes have peculiar power. A prince of heaven’s empire has great influence: he wields a sceptre in his own domain; he sits upon Jesus’ throne, for “He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever.” We reign over the united kingdom of time and eternity. Princes, again, have special honour. We may look down upon all earth-born dignity from the eminence upon which grace has placed us. For what is human grandeur to this, “He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”? We share the honour of Christ, and compared with this, earthly splendours are not worth a thought. Communion with Jesus is a richer gem than ever glittered in imperial diadem. Union with the Lord is a coronet of beauty outshining all the blaze of imperial pomp.

Evening, March 7

"It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man." — Psalm 118:8

Doubtless the reader has been tried with the temptation to rely upon the things which are seen, instead of resting alone upon the invisible God. Christians often look to man for help and counsel, and mar the noble simplicity of their reliance upon their God. Does this evening's portion meet the eye of a child of God anxious about temporals, then would we reason with him awhile. You trust in Jesus, and only in Jesus, for your salvation, then why are you troubled? "Because of my great care." Is it not written, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord"? "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make known your wants unto God." Cannot you trust God for temporals? "Ah! I wish I could." If you cannot trust God for temporals, how dare you trust him for spirituals? Can you trust him for your soul's redemption, and not rely upon him for a few lesser mercies? Is not God enough for thy need, or is his all-sufficiency too narrow for thy wants? Dost thou want another eye beside that of him who sees every secret thing? Is his heart faint? Is his arm weary? If so, seek another God; but if he be infinite, omnipotent, faithful, true, and all-wise, why gaddest thou abroad so much to seek another confidence? Why dost thou rake the earth to find another foundation, when this is strong enough to bear all the weight which thou canst ever build thereon? Christian, mix not only thy wine with water, do not alloy thy gold of faith with the dross of human confidence. Wait thou only upon God, and let thine expectation be from him. Covet not Jonah's gourd, but rest in Jonah's God. Let the sandy foundations of terrestrial trust be the choice of fools, but do thou, like one who foresees the storm, build for thyself an abiding place upon the Rock of Ages.

Evening, April 6

"In the name of the Lord I will destroy them." — Psalm 118:12

Our Lord Jesus, by his death, did not purchase a right to a part of us only, but to the entire man. He contemplated in his passion the sanctification of us wholly, spirit, soul, and body; that in this triple kingdom he himself might reign supreme without a rival. It is the business of the newborn nature which God has given to the regenerate to assert the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ. My soul, so far as thou art a child of God, thou must conquer all the rest of thyself which yet remains unblest; thou must subdue all thy powers and passions to the silver sceptre of Jesus' gracious reign, and thou must never be satisfied till he who is King by purchase becomes also King by gracious coronation, and reigns in thee supreme. Seeing, then, that sin has no right to any part of us, we go about a good and lawful warfare when we seek, in the name of God, to drive it out. O my body, thou art a member of Christ: shall I tolerate thy subjection to the prince of darkness? O my soul, Christ has suffered for thy sins, and redeemed thee with his most precious blood: shall I suffer thy memory to become a storehouse of evil, or thy passions to be firebrands of iniquity? Shall I surrender my judgment to be perverted by error, or my will to be led in fetters of iniquity? No, my soul, thou art Christ's, and sin hath no right to thee.

Be courageous concerning this, O Christian! be not dispirited, as though your spiritual enemies could never be destroyed. You are able to overcome them—not in your own strength—the weakest of them would be too much for you in that; but you can and shall overcome them through the blood of the Lamb. Do not ask, "How shall I dispossess them, for they are greater and mightier than I?" but go to the strong for strength, wait humbly upon God, and the mighty God of Jacob will surely come to the rescue, and you shall sing of victory through his grace.

Morning, October 12

"I will meditate in thy precepts." — Psalm 119:15

There are times when solitude is better than society, and silence is wiser than speech. We should be better Christians if we were more alone, waiting upon God, and gathering through meditation on his Word spiritual strength for labour in his service. We ought to muse upon the things of God, because we thus get the real nutriment out of them. Truth is something like the cluster of the vine: if we would have wine from it, we must bruise it; we must press and squeeze it many times. The bruiser's feet must come down joyfully upon the bunches, or else the juice will not flow; and they must well tread the grapes, or else much of the precious liquid will be wasted. So we must, by meditation, tread the clusters of truth, if we would get the wine of consolation therefrom. Our bodies are not supported by merely taking food into the mouth, but the process which really supplies the muscle, and the nerve, and the sinew, and the bone, is the process of digestion. It is by digestion that the outward food becomes assimilated with the inner life. Our souls are not nourished merely by listening awhile to this, and then to that, and then to the other part of divine truth. Hearing, reading, marking, and learning, all require inwardly digesting to complete their usefulness, and the inward digesting of the truth lies for the most part in meditating upon it. Why is it that some Christians, although they hear many sermons, make but slow advances in the divine life? Because they neglect their closets, and do not thoughtfully meditate on God's Word. They love the wheat, but they do not grind it; they would have the corn, but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it; the fruit hangs upon the tree, but they will not pluck it; the water flows at their feet, but they will not stoop to drink it. From such folly deliver us, O Lord, and be this our resolve this morning, "I will meditate in thy precepts."

Evening, January 20

"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way." — Psalm 119:37

There are divers kinds of vanity. The cap and bells of the fool, the mirth of the world, the dance, the lyre, and the cup of the dissolute, all these men know to be vanities; they wear upon their forefront their proper name and title. Far more treacherous are those equally vain things, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. A man may follow vanity as truly in the counting-house as in the theatre. If he be spending his life in amassing wealth, he passes his days in a vain show. Unless we follow Christ, and make our God the great object of life, we only differ in appearance from the most frivolous. It is clear that there is much need of the first prayer of our text. "Quicken thou me in thy way." The Psalmist confesses that he is dull, heavy, lumpy, all but dead. Perhaps, dear reader, you feel the same. We are so sluggish that the best motives cannot quicken us, apart from the Lord himself. What! will not hell quicken me? Shall I think of sinners perishing, and yet not be awakened? Will not heaven quicken me? Can I think of the reward that awaiteth the righteous, and yet be cold? Will not death quicken me? Can I think of dying, and standing before my God, and yet be slothful in my Master's service? Will not Christ's love constrain me? Can I think of his dear wounds, can I sit at the foot of his cross, and not be stirred with fervency and zeal? It seems so! No mere consideration can quicken us to zeal, but God himself must do it, hence the cry, "Quicken thou me." The Psalmist breathes out his whole soul in vehement pleadings: his body and his soul unite in prayer. "Turn away mine eyes," says the body: "Quicken thou me," cries the soul. This is a fit prayer for every day. O Lord, hear it in my case this night.

Morning, April 28 Go To Evening Reading

"Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." — Psalm 119:49

Whatever your especial need may be, you may readily find some promise in the Bible suited to it. Are you faint and feeble because your way is rough and you are weary? Here is the promise—"He giveth power to the faint." When you read such a promise, take it back to the great Promiser, and ask him to fulfil his own word. Are you seeking after Christ, and thirsting for closer communion with him? This promise shines like a star upon you—"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Take that promise to the throne continually; do not plead anything else, but go to God over and over again with this—"Lord, thou hast said it, do as thou hast said." Are you distressed because of sin, and burdened with the heavy load of your iniquities? Listen to these words—"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will no more remember thy sins." You have no merit of your own to plead why he should pardon you, but plead his written engagements and he will perform them. Are you afraid lest you should not be able to hold on to the end, lest, after having thought yourself a child of God, you should prove a castaway? If that is your state, take this word of grace to the throne and plead it: "The mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed, but the covenant of my love shall not depart from thee." If you have lost the sweet sense of the Saviour's presence, and are seeking him with a sorrowful heart, remember the promises: "Return unto me, and I will return unto you;" "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." Banquet your faith upon God's own word, and whatever your fears or wants, repair to the Bank of Faith with your Father's note of hand, saying, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

Evening, November 2

“Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.” — Psalm 119:53

My soul, feelest thou this holy shuddering at the sins of others? for otherwise thou lackest inward holiness. David's cheeks were wet with rivers of waters because of prevailing unholiness; Jeremiah desired eyes like fountains that he might lament the iniquities of Israel, and Lot was vexed with the conversation of the men of Sodom. Those upon whom the mark was set in Ezekiel's vision, were those who sighed and cried for the abominations of Jerusalem. It cannot but grieve gracious souls to see what pains men take to go to hell. They know the evil of sin experimentally, and they are alarmed to see others flying like moths into its blaze. Sin makes the righteous shudder, because it violates a holy law, which it is to every man's highest interest to keep; it pulls down the pillars of the commonwealth. Sin in others horrifies a believer, because it puts him in mind of the baseness of his own heart: when he sees a transgressor he cries with the saint mentioned by Bernard, “He fell to-day, and I may fall to-morrow.” Sin to a believer is horrible, because it crucified the Saviour; he sees in every iniquity the nails and spear. How can a saved soul behold that cursed kill-Christ sin without abhorrence? Say, my heart, dost thou sensibly join in all this? It is an awful thing to insult God to his face. The good God deserves better treatment, the great God claims it, the just God will have it, or repay his adversary to his face. An awakened heart trembles at the audacity of sin, and stands alarmed at the contemplation of its punishment. How monstrous a thing is rebellion! How direful a doom is prepared for the ungodly! My soul, never laugh at sin's fooleries, lest thou come to smile at sin itself. It is thine enemy, and thy Lord's enemy—view it with detestation, for so only canst thou evidence the possession of holiness, without which no man can see the Lord

Evening, May 13

“Thou art my portion, O Lord.” — Psalm 119:57

Look at thy possessions, O believer, and compare thy portion with the lot of thy fellowmen. Some of them have their portion in the field; they are rich, and their harvests yield them a golden increase; but what are harvests compared with thy God, who is the God of harvests? What are bursting granaries compared with him, who is the Husbandman, and feeds thee with the bread of heaven? Some have their portion in the city; their wealth is abundant, and flows to them in constant streams, until they become a very reservoir of gold; but what is gold compared with thy God? Thou couldst not live on it; thy spiritual life could not be sustained by it. Put it on a troubled conscience, and could it allay its pangs? Apply it to a desponding heart, and see if it could stay a solitary groan, or give one grief the less? But thou hast God, and in him thou hast more than gold or riches ever could buy. Some have their portion in that which most men love—applause and fame; but ask thyself, is not thy God more to thee than that? What if a myriad clarions should be loud in thine applause, would this prepare thee to pass the Jordan, or cheer thee in prospect of judgment? No, there are griefs in life which wealth cannot alleviate; and there is the deep need of a dying hour, for which no riches can provide. But when thou hast God for thy portion, thou hast more than all else put together. In him every want is met, whether in life or in death. With God for thy portion thou art rich indeed, for he will supply thy need, comfort thy heart, assuage thy grief, guide thy steps, be with thee in the dark valley, and then take thee home, to enjoy him as thy portion for ever. “I have enough,” said Esau; this is the best thing a worldly man can say, but Jacob replies, “I have all things,” which is a note too high for carnal minds.

Morning, September 5

“Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar.” — Psalm 120:5

As a Christian you have to live in the midst of an ungodly world, and it is of little use for you to cry “Woe is me.” Jesus did not pray that you should be taken out of the world, and what he did not pray for, you need not desire. Better far in the Lord's strength to meet the difficulty, and glorify him in it. The enemy is ever on the watch to detect inconsistency in your conduct; be therefore very holy. Remember that the eyes of all are upon you, and that more is expected from you than from other men. Strive to give no occasion for blame. Let your goodness be the only fault they can discover in you. Like Daniel, compel them to say of you, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” Seek to be useful as well as consistent. Perhaps you think, “If I were in a more favourable position I might serve the Lord's cause, but I cannot do any good where I am”; but the worse the people are among whom you live, the more need have they of your exertions; if they be crooked, the more necessity that you should set them straight; and if they be perverse, the more need have you to turn their proud hearts to the truth. Where should the physician be but where there are many sick? Where is honour to be won by the soldier but in the hottest fire of the battle? And when weary of the strife and sin that meets you on every hand, consider that all the saints have endured the same trial. They were not carried on beds of down to heaven, and you must not expect to travel more easily than they. They had to hazard their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, and you will not be crowned till you also have endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Therefore, “stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

Morning, June 9

“The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.” — Psalm 126:3

Some Christians are sadly prone to look on the dark side of everything, and to dwell more upon what they have gone through than upon what God has done for them. Ask for their impression of the Christian life, and they will describe their continual conflicts, their deep afflictions, their sad adversities, and the sinfulness of their hearts, yet with scarcely any allusion to the mercy and help which God has vouchsafed them. But a Christian whose soul is in a healthy state, will come forward joyously, and say, “I will speak, not about myself, but to the honour of my God. He hath brought me up out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings: and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. The Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad.” Such an abstract of experience as this is the very best that any child of God can present. It is true that we endure trials, but it is just as true that we are delivered out of them. It is true that we have our corruptions, and mournfully do we know this, but it is quite as true that we have an all-sufficient Saviour, who overcomes these corruptions, and delivers us from their dominion. In looking back, it would be wrong to deny that we have been in the Slough of Despond, and have crept along the Valley of Humiliation, but it would be equally wicked to forget that we have been through them safely and profitably; we have not remained in them, thanks to our Almighty Helper and Leader, who has brought us “out into a wealthy place.” The deeper our troubles, the louder our thanks to God, who has led us through all, and preserved us until now. Our griefs cannot mar the melody of our praise, we reckon them to be the bass part of our life’s song, “He hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

Morning, February 1

“They shall sing in the ways of the Lord.” — Psalm 138:5

The time when Christians begin to sing in the ways of the Lord is when they first lose their burden at the foot of the Cross. Not even the songs of the angels seem so sweet as the first song of rapture which gushes from the inmost soul of the forgiven child of God. You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Pilgrim lost his burden at the Cross, he gave three great leaps, and went on his way singing—

“Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me!”

Believer, do you recollect the day when your fetters fell off? Do you remember the place when Jesus met you, and said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love; I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud thy sins; they shall not be mentioned against thee any more for ever.” Oh! what a sweet season is that when Jesus takes away the pain of sin. When the Lord first pardoned my sin, I was so joyous that I could scarce refrain from dancing. I thought on my road home from the house where I had been set at liberty, that I must tell the stones in the street the story of my deliverance. So full was my soul of joy, that I wanted to tell every snow-flake that was falling from heaven of the wondrous love of Jesus, who had blotted out the sins of one of the chief of rebels. But it is not only at the commencement of the Christian life that believers have reason for song; as long as they live they discover cause to sing in the ways of the Lord, and their experience of his constant lovingkindness leads them to say, “I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” See to it, brother, that thou magnifiest the Lord this day.

“Long as we tread this desert land,

New mercies shall new songs demand.”

Morning, May 23

“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.” — Psalm 138:8

Most manifestly the confidence which the Psalmist here expressed was a divine confidence. He did not say, “I have grace enough to perfect that which concerneth me—my faith is so steady that it will not stagger—my love is so warm that it will never grow cold—my resolution is so firm that nothing can move it; no, his dependence was on the Lord alone. If we indulge in any confidence which is not grounded on the Rock of ages, our confidence is worse than a dream, it will fall upon us, and cover us with its ruins, to our sorrow and confusion. All that Nature spins time will unravel, to the eternal confusion of all who are clothed therein. The Psalmist was wise, he rested upon nothing short of the Lord’s work. It is the Lord who has begun the good work within us; it is he who has carried it on; and if he does not finish it, it never will be complete. If there be one stitch in the celestial garment of our righteousness which we are to insert ourselves, then we are lost; but this is our confidence, the Lord who began will perfect. He has done it all, must do it all, and will do it all. Our confidence must not be in what we have done, nor in what we have resolved to do, but entirely in what the Lord will do. Unbelief insinuates— “You will never be able to stand. Look at the evil of your heart, you can never conquer sin; remember the sinful pleasures and temptations of the world that beset you, you will be certainly allured by them and led astray.” Ah! yes, we should indeed perish if left to our own strength. If we had alone to navigate our frail vessels over so rough a sea, we might well give up the voyage in despair; but, thanks be to God, he will perfect that which concerneth us, and bring us to the desired haven. We can never be too confident when we confide in him alone, and never too much concerned to have such a trust.

Evening, April 30

“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God.” — Psalm 139:17

Divine omniscience affords no comfort to the ungodly mind, but to the child of God it overflows with consolation. God is always thinking upon us, never turns aside his mind from us, has us always before his eyes; and this is precisely as we would have it, for it would be dreadful to exist for a moment beyond the observation of our heavenly Father. His thoughts are always tender, loving, wise, prudent, far-reaching, and they bring to us countless benefits: hence it is a choice delight to remember them. The Lord always did think upon his people: hence their election and the covenant of grace by which their salvation is secured; he always will think upon them: hence their final perseverance by which they shall be brought safely to their final rest. In all our wanderings the watchful glance of the Eternal Watcher is evermore fixed upon us—we never roam beyond the Shepherd’s eye. In our sorrows he observes us incessantly, and not a pang escapes him; in our toils he marks all our weariness, and writes in his book all the struggles of his faithful ones. These thoughts of the Lord encompass us in all our paths, and penetrate the innermost region of our being. Not a nerve or tissue, valve or vessel, of our bodily organization is uncared for; all the little of our little world are thought upon by the great God.

Dear reader, is this precious to you? then hold to it. Never be led astray by those philosophic fools who preach up an impersonal God, and talk of self-existent, self-governing matter. The Lord liveth and thinketh upon us, this is a truth far too precious for us to be lightly robbed of it. The notice of a nobleman is valued so highly that he who has it counts his fortune made; but what is it to be thought of by the King of kings! If the Lord thinketh upon us, all is well, and we may rejoice evermore.

Evening, September 15

"A people near unto him." — Psalm 148:14

The dispensation of the old covenant was that of distance. When God appeared even to his servant Moses, he said, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet"; and when he manifested himself upon Mount Sinai, to his own chosen and separated people, one of the first commands was, "Thou shalt set bounds about the mount." Both in the sacred worship of the tabernacle and the temple, the thought of distance was always prominent. The mass of the people did not even enter the outer court. Into the inner court none but the priests might dare to intrude; while into the innermost place, or the holy of holies, the high priest entered but once in the year. It was as if the Lord in those early ages would teach man that sin was so utterly loathsome to him, that he must treat men as lepers put without the camp; and when he came nearest to them, he yet made them feel the width of the separation between a holy God and an impure sinner. When the gospel came, we were placed on quite another footing. The word "Go" was exchanged for "Come"; distance was made to give place to nearness, and we who aforetime were afar off, were made nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ. Incarnate Deity has no wall of fire about it. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is the joyful proclamation of God as he appears in human flesh. Not now does he teach the leper his leprosy by setting him at a distance, but by himself suffering the penalty of his defilement. What a state of safety and privilege is this nearness to God through Jesus! Do you know it by experience? If you know it, are you living in the power of it? Marvellous is this nearness, yet it is to be followed by a dispensation of greater nearness still, when it shall be said, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he doth dwell among them." Hasten it, O Lord.

Morning, September 22

"Let Israel rejoice in him." — Psalm 149:2

Be glad of heart, O believer, but take care that thy gladness has its spring in the Lord. Thou hast much cause for gladness in thy God, for thou canst sing with David, "God, my exceeding joy." Be glad that the Lord reigneth, that Jehovah is King! Rejoice that he sits upon the throne, and ruleth all things! Every attribute of God should become a fresh ray in the sunlight of our gladness. That he is wise should make us glad, knowing as we do our own foolishness. That he is mighty, should cause us to rejoice who tremble at our weakness. That he is everlasting, should always be a theme of joy when we know that we wither as the grass. That he is unchanging, should perpetually yield us a song, since we change every hour. That he is full of grace, that he is overflowing with it, and that this grace in covenant he has given to us; that it is ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to glory—all this should tend to make us glad in him. This gladness in God is as a deep river; we have only as yet touched its brink, we know a little of its clear sweet, heavenly streams, but onward the depth is greater, and the current more impetuous in its joy. The Christian feels that he may delight himself not only in what God is, but also in all that God has done in the past. The Psalms show us that God's people in olden times were wont to think much of God's actions, and to have a song concerning each of them. So let God's people now rehearse the deeds of the Lord! Let them tell of his mighty acts, and "sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." Nor let them ever cease to sing, for as new mercies flow to them day by day, so should their gladness in the Lord's loving acts in providence and in grace show itself in continued thanksgiving. Be glad ye children of Zion and rejoice in the Lord your God

Evening, April 29

“The Lord taketh pleasure in his people.” — Psalm 149:4

How comprehensive is the love of Jesus! There is no part of his people's interests which he does not consider, and there is nothing which concerns their welfare which is not important to him. Not merely does he think of you, believer, as an immortal being, but as a mortal being too. Do not deny it or doubt it: “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.” It were a sad thing for us if this mantle of love did not cover all our concerns, for what mischief might be wrought to us in that part of our business which did not come under our gracious Lord's inspection! Believer, rest assured that the heart of Jesus cares about your meaner affairs. The breadth of his tender love is such that you may resort to him in all matters; for in all your afflictions he is afflicted, and like as a father pitieth his children, so doth he pity you. The meanest interests of all his saints are all borne upon the broad bosom of the Son of God. Oh, what a heart is his, that doth not merely comprehend the persons of his people, but comprehends also the diverse and innumerable concerns of all those persons! Dost thou think, O Christian, that thou canst measure the love of Christ? Think of what his love has brought thee—justification, adoption, sanctification, eternal life! The riches of his goodness are unsearchable; thou shalt never be able to tell them out or even conceive them. Oh, the breadth of the love of Christ! Shall such a love as this have half our hearts? Shall it have a cold love in return? Shall Jesus' marvellous lovingkindness and tender care meet with but faint response and tardy acknowledgment? O my soul, tune thy harp to a glad song of thanksgiving! Go to thy rest rejoicing, for thou art no desolate wanderer, but a beloved child, watched over, cared for, supplied, and defended by thy Lord.

DEVOTIONALS ON PSALMS

by C H Spurgeon

from "Morning and Evening"

Part 1