

Genesis Devotionals-C H Spurgeon

GENESIS DEVOTIONALS C H SPURGEON

Genesis 1:4

A believer has two principles at work within him. In his natural estate he was subject to one principle only, which was darkness; now light has entered, and the two principles disagree. Mark the apostle Paul's words in the seventh chapter of Romans: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." How is this state of things occasioned? "The Lord divided the light from the darkness." Darkness, by itself, is quiet and undisturbed, but when the Lord sends in light, there is a conflict, for the one is in opposition to the other: a conflict which will never cease till the believer is altogether light in the Lord. If there be a division within the individual Christian, there is certain to be a division without. So soon as the Lord gives to any man light, he proceeds to separate himself from the darkness around; he secedes from a merely worldly religion of outward ceremonial, for nothing short of the gospel of Christ will now satisfy him, and he withdraws himself from worldly society and frivolous amusements, and seeks the company of the saints, for "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The light gathers to itself, and the darkness to itself. What God has divided, let us never try to unite, but as Christ went without the camp, bearing his reproach, so let us come out from the ungodly, and be a peculiar people. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; and, as he was, so we are to be nonconformists to the world, dissenting from all sin, and distinguished from the rest of mankind by our likeness to our Master.

Genesis 1:4

Light might well be good since it sprang from that fiat of goodness, "Let there be light." We who enjoy it should be more grateful for it than we are, and see more of God in it and by it. Light physical is said by Solomon to be sweet, but gospel light is infinitely more precious, for it reveals eternal things, and ministers to our immortal natures. When the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual light, and opens our eyes to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we behold sin in its true colours, and ourselves in our real position; we see the Most Holy God as he reveals himself, the plan of mercy as he propounds it, and the world to come as the Word describes it. Spiritual light has many beams and prismatic colours, but whether they be knowledge, joy, holiness, or life, all are divinely good. If the light received be thus good, what must the essential light be, and how glorious must be the place where he reveals himself. O Lord, since light is so good, give us more of it, and more of thyself, the true light.

No sooner is there a good thing in the world, than a division is necessary. Light and darkness have no communion; God has divided them, let us not confound them. Sons of light must not have fellowship with deeds, doctrines, or deceits of darkness. The children of the day must be sober, honest, and bold in their Lord's work, leaving the works of darkness to those who shall dwell in it for ever. Our Churches should by discipline divide the light from the darkness, and we should by our distinct separation from the world do the same. In judgment, in action, in hearing, in teaching, in association, we must discern between the precious and the vile, and maintain the great distinction which the Lord made upon the world's first day. O Lord Jesus, be thou our light throughout the whole of this day, for thy light is the light of men.

Genesis 1:4

This morning we noticed the goodness of the light, and the Lord's dividing it from the darkness, we now note the special eye which the Lord had for the light. "God saw the light"—he looked at it with complacency, gazed upon it with pleasure, saw that it "was good." If the Lord has given you light, dear reader, he looks on that light with peculiar interest; for not only is it dear to him as his own handiwork, but because it is like himself, for "He is light." Pleasant it is to the believer to know that God's eye is thus tenderly observant of that work of grace which he has begun. He never loses sight of the treasure which he has placed in our earthen vessels. Sometimes we cannot see the light, but God always sees the light, and that is much better than our seeing it. Better for the judge to see my innocence than for me to think I see it. It is very comfortable for me to know that I am one of God's people—but whether I know it or not, if the Lord knows it, I am still safe. This is the foundation, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." You may be sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, and mourning over your darkness, yet the Lord sees "light" in your heart, for he has put it there, and all the cloudiness and gloom of your soul cannot conceal your light from his gracious eye. You may have sunk low in despondency, and even despair; but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are seeking to rest in his finished work, God sees the "light." He not only sees it, but he also preserves it in you. "I, the Lord, do keep it." This is a precious thought to those who, after anxious watching and guarding of themselves, feel their own powerlessness to do so. The light thus preserved by his

grace, he will one day develop into the splendour of noonday, and the fulness of glory. The light within is the dawn of the eternal day.

Genesis 1:5

The evening was "darkness" and the morning was "light," and yet the two together are called by the name that is given to the light alone! This is somewhat remarkable, but it has an exact analogy in spiritual experience. In every believer there is darkness and light, and yet he is not to be named a sinner because there is sin in him, but he is to be named a saint because he possesses some degree of holiness. This will be a most comforting thought to those who are mourning their infirmities, and who ask, "Can I be a child of God while there is so much darkness in me?" Yes; for you, like the day, take not your name from the evening, but from the morning; and you are spoken of in the word of God as if you were even now perfectly holy as you will be soon. You are called the child of light, though there is darkness in you still. You are named after what is the predominating quality in the sight of God, which will one day be the only principle remaining. Observe that the evening comes first. Naturally we are darkness first in order of time, and the gloom is often first in our mournful apprehension, driving us to cry out in deep humiliation, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The place of the morning is second, it dawns when grace overcomes nature. It is a blessed aphorism of John Bunyan, "That which is last, lasts for ever." That which is first, yields in due season to the last; but nothing comes after the last. So that though you are naturally darkness, when once you become light in the Lord, there is no evening to follow; "thy sun shall no more go down." The first day in this life is an evening and a morning; but the second day, when we shall be with God, for ever, shall be a day with no evening, but one, sacred, high, eternal noon.

Genesis 1:5

Was it so even in the beginning? Did light and darkness divide the realm of time in the first day? Then little wonder is it if I have also changes in my circumstances from the sunshine of prosperity to the midnight of adversity. It will not always be the blaze of noon even in my soul concerns, I must expect at seasons to mourn the absence of my former joys, and seek my Beloved in the night. Nor am I alone in this, for all the Lord's beloved ones have had to sing the mingled song of judgment and of mercy, of trial and deliverance, of mourning and of delight. It is one of the arrangements of Divine providence that day and night shall not cease either in the spiritual or natural creation till we reach the land of which it is written, "there is no night there." What our heavenly Father ordains is wise and good.

What, then, my soul, is it best for thee to do? Learn first to be content with this divine order, and be willing, with Job, to receive evil from the hand of the Lord as well as good. Study next, to make the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice. Praise the Lord for the sun of joy when it rises, and for the gloom of evening as it falls. There is beauty both in sunrise and sunset, sing of it, and glorify the Lord. Like the nightingale, pour forth thy notes at all hours. Believe that the night is as useful as the day. The dews of grace fall heavily in the night of sorrow. The stars of promise shine forth gloriously amid the darkness of grief. Continue thy service under all changes. If in the day thy watchword be labour, at night exchange it for watch. Every hour has its duty, do thou continue in thy calling as the Lord's servant until he shall suddenly appear in his glory. My soul, thine evening of old age and death is drawing near, dread it not, for it is part of the day; and the Lord has said, "I will cover him all the day long."

Genesis 3:8

My soul, now that the cool of the day has come, retire awhile and hearken to the voice of thy God. He is always ready to speak with thee when thou art prepared to hear. If there be any slowness to commune it is not on his part, but altogether on thine own, for he stands at the door and knocks, and if his people will but open he rejoices to enter. But in what state is my heart, which is my Lord's garden? May I venture to hope that it is well trimmed and watered, and is bringing forth fruit fit for him? If not, he will have much to reprove, but still I pray him to come unto me, for nothing can so certainly bring my heart into a right condition as the presence of the Sun of Righteousness, who brings healing in his wings. Come, therefore, O Lord, my God, my soul invites thee earnestly, and waits for thee eagerly. Come to me, O Jesus, my well-beloved, and plant fresh flowers in my garden, such as I see blooming in such perfection in thy matchless character! Come, O my Father, who art the Husbandman, and deal with me in thy tenderness and prudence! Come, O Holy Spirit, and bedew my whole nature, as the herbs are now moistened with the evening dews. O that God would speak to me. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth! O that he would walk with me; I am ready to give up my whole heart and mind to him, and every other thought is hushed. I am only asking what he delights to give. I am sure that he will condescend to have fellowship with me, for he has given me his Holy Spirit to abide with me for ever. Sweet is the cool twilight, when every star seems like the eye of heaven, and the cool wind is as the breath of celestial love. My Father, my elder Brother, my sweet Comforter, speak now in lovingkindness, for thou hast opened mine ear and I am not rebellious.

Genesis 3:15 The Bible's First Promise

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

This is the first promise to fallen man. It contains the whole gospel and the essence of the covenant of grace. It has been in great

measure fulfilled. The seed of the woman, even our LORD Jesus, was bruised in His heel, and a terrible bruising it was. How terrible will be the final bruising of the serpent's head! This was virtually done when Jesus took away sin, vanquished death, and broke the power of Satan; but it awaits a still fuller accomplishment at our LORD's second advent and in the Day of Judgment. To us the promise stands as a prophecy that we shall be afflicted by the powers of evil in our lower nature, and thus bruised in our heel; but we shall triumph in Christ, who sets His foot on the old serpent's head. Throughout this year we may have to learn the first part of this promise by experience, through the temptations of the devil and the unkindness of the ungodly, who are his seed. They may so bruise us that we may limp with our sore heel; but let us grasp the second part of the text, and we shall not be dismayed. By faith let us rejoice that we shall still reign in Christ Jesus, the woman's seed.

Genesis 4:2

As a shepherd Abel sanctified his work to the glory of God, and offered a sacrifice of blood upon his altar, and the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. This early type of our Lord is exceedingly clear and distinct. Like the first streak of light which tinges the east at sunrise, it does not reveal everything, but it clearly manifests the great fact that the sun is coming. As we see Abel, a shepherd and yet a priest, offering a sacrifice of sweet smell unto God, we discern our Lord, who brings before his Father a sacrifice to which Jehovah ever hath respect. Abel was hated by his brother—hated without a cause; and even so was the Saviour: the natural and carnal man hated the accepted man in whom the Spirit of grace was found, and rested not until his blood had been shed. Abel fell, and sprinkled his altar and sacrifice with his own blood, and therein sets forth the Lord Jesus slain by the enmity of man while serving as a priest before the Lord. "The good Shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." Let us weep over him as we view him slain by the hatred of mankind, staining the horns of his altar with his own blood. Abel's blood speaketh. "The Lord said unto Cain, 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.' " The blood of Jesus hath a mighty tongue, and the import of its prevailing cry is not vengeance but mercy. It is precious beyond all preciousness to stand at the altar of our good Shepherd! to see him bleeding there as the slaughtered priest, and then to hear his blood speaking peace to all his flock, peace in our conscience, peace between Jew and Gentile, peace between man and his offended Maker, peace all down the ages of eternity for blood-washed men. Abel is the first shepherd in order of time, but our hearts shall ever place Jesus first in order of excellence. Thou great Keeper of the sheep, we the people of thy pasture bless thee with our whole hearts when we see thee slain for us.

Genesis 8:9

Wearied out with her wanderings, the dove returns at length to the ark as her only resting place. How heavily she flies—she will drop—she will never reach the ark! But she struggles on. Noah has been looking out for his dove all day long, and is ready to receive her. She has just strength to reach the edge of the ark, she can hardly alight upon it, and is ready to drop, when Noah puts forth his hand and pulls her in unto him. Mark that: "pulled her in unto him." She did not fly right in herself, but was too fearful, or too weary to do so. She flew as far as she could, and then he put forth his hand and pulled her in unto him. This act of mercy was shown to the wandering dove, and she was not chidden for her wanderings. Just as she was she was pulled into the ark. So you, seeking sinner, with all your sin, will be received. "Only return"—those are God's two gracious words—"only return." What! nothing else? No, "only return." She had no olive branch in her mouth this time, nothing at all but just herself and her wanderings; but it is "only return," and she does return, and Noah pulls her in. Fly, thou wanderer; fly thou fainting one, dove as thou art, though thou thinkest thyself to be black as the raven with the mire of sin, back, back to the Saviour. Every moment thou waitest does but increase thy misery; thine attempts to plume thyself and make thyself fit for Jesus are all vanity. Come thou to him just as thou art. "Return, thou backsliding Israel." He does not say, "Return, thou repenting Israel" (there is such an invitation doubtless), but "thou backsliding one," as a backslider with all thy backslidings about thee, Return, return, return! Jesus is waiting for thee! He will stretch forth his hand and "pull thee in"—in to himself, thy heart's true home.

Genesis 8:9

Reader, can you find rest apart from the ark, Christ Jesus? Then be assured that your religion is vain. Are you satisfied with anything short of a conscious knowledge of your union and interest in Christ? Then woe unto you. If you profess to be a Christian, yet find full satisfaction in worldly pleasures and pursuits, your profession is false. If your soul can stretch herself at rest, and find the bed long enough, and the coverlet broad enough to cover her in the chambers of sin, then you are a hypocrite, and far enough from any right thoughts of Christ or perception of his preciousness. But if, on the other hand, you feel that if you could indulge in sin without punishment, yet it would be a punishment of itself; and that if you could have the whole world, and abide in it for ever, it would be quite enough misery not to be parted from it; for your God—your God—is what your soul craves after; then be of good courage, thou art a child of God. With all thy sins and imperfections, take this to thy comfort: if thy soul has no rest in sin, thou art not as the sinner is! If thou art still crying after and craving after something better, Christ has not forgotten thee, for thou hast not quite forgotten him. The believer cannot do without his Lord; words are inadequate to express his thoughts of him. We cannot live on the sands of the wilderness, we want the manna which drops from on high; our skin bottles of creature confidence cannot yield us a drop of moisture, but we drink of the rock which follows us, and that rock is Christ. When you feed on him your soul can sing, "He hath satisfied my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's," but if you have him not, your bursting wine vat and well-filled

barn can give you no sort of satisfaction: rather lament over them in the words of wisdom, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

Genesis 8:11

Blessed be the Lord for another day of mercy, even though I am now weary with its toils. Unto the preserver of men lift I my song of gratitude. The dove found no rest out of the ark, and therefore returned to it; and my soul has learned yet more fully than ever, this day, that there is no satisfaction to be found in earthly things—God alone can give rest to my spirit. As to my business, my possessions, my family, my attainments, these are all well enough in their way, but they cannot fulfil the desires of my immortal nature. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." It was at the still hour, when the gates of the day were closing, that with weary wing the dove came back to the master: O Lord, enable me this evening thus to return to Jesus. She could not endure to spend a night hovering over the restless waste, not can I bear to be even for another hour away from Jesus, the rest of my heart, the home of my spirit. She did not merely alight upon the roof of the ark, she "came in to him;" even so would my longing spirit look into the secret of the Lord, pierce to the interior of truth, enter into that which is within the veil, and reach to my Beloved in very deed. To Jesus must I come: short of the nearest and dearest intercourse with him my panting spirit cannot stay. Blessed Lord Jesus, be with me, reveal thyself, and abide with me all night, so that when I awake I may be still with thee. I note that the dove brought in her mouth an olive branch plucked off, the memorial of the past day, and a prophecy of the future. Have I no pleasing record to bring home? No pledge and earnest of lovingkindness yet to come? Yes, my Lord, I present thee my grateful acknowledgments for tender mercies which have been new every morning and fresh every evening; and now, I pray thee, put forth thy hand and take thy dove into thy bosom.

Genesis 9:14

The rainbow, the symbol of the covenant with Noah, is typical of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord's witness to the people. When may we expect to see the token of the covenant? The rainbow is only to be seen painted upon a cloud. When the sinner's conscience is dark with clouds, when he remembers his past sin, and mourneth and lamenteth before God, Jesus Christ is revealed to him as the covenant Rainbow, displaying all the glorious hues of the divine character and betokening peace. To the believer, when his trials and temptations surround him, it is sweet to behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ—to see him bleeding, living, rising, and pleading for us. God's rainbow is hung over the cloud of our sins, our sorrows, and our woes, to prophesy deliverance. Nor does a cloud alone give a rainbow, there must be the crystal drops to reflect the light of the sun. So, our sorrows must not only threaten, but they must really fall upon us. There had been no Christ for us if the vengeance of God had been merely a threatening cloud: punishment must fall in terrible drops upon the Surety. Until there is a real anguish in the sinner's conscience, there is no Christ for him; until the chastisement which he feels becomes grievous, he cannot see Jesus. But there must also be a sun; for clouds and drops of rain make not rainbows unless the sun shineth. Beloved, our God, who is as the sun to us, always shines, but we do not always see him—clouds hide his face; but no matter what drops may be falling, or what clouds may be threatening, if he does but shine there will be a rainbow at once. It is said that when we see the rainbow the shower is over. Certain it is, that when Christ comes, our troubles remove; when we behold Jesus, our sins vanish, and our doubts and fears subside. When Jesus walks the waters of the sea, how profound the calm!

Genesis 9:15

Mark the form of the promise. God does not say, "And when ye shall look upon the bow, and ye shall remember my covenant, then I will not destroy the earth," but it is gloriously put, not upon our memory, which is fickle and frail, but upon God's memory, which is infinite and immutable. "The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant." Oh! it is not my remembering God, it is God's remembering me which is the ground of my safety; it is not my laying hold of his covenant, but his covenant's laying hold on me. Glory be to God! the whole of the bulwarks of salvation are secured by divine power, and even the minor towers, which we may imagine might have been left to man, are guarded by almighty strength. Even the remembrance of the covenant is not left to our memories, for we might forget, but our Lord cannot forget the saints whom he has graven on the palms of his hands. It is with us as with Israel in Egypt; the blood was upon the lintel and the two side-posts, but the Lord did not say, "When you see the blood I will pass over you," but "When I see the blood I will pass over you." My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God's looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all his elect, since it is impossible for our God to look at Christ, our bleeding Surety, and then to be angry with us for sins already punished in him. No, it is not left with us even to be saved by remembering the covenant. There is no linsey-wolsey here—not a single thread of the creature mars the fabric. It is not of man, neither by man, but of the Lord alone. We should remember the covenant, and we shall do it, through divine grace; but the hinge of our safety does not hang there—it is God's remembering us, not our remembering him; and hence the covenant is an everlasting covenant.

Genesis 9:14 Faith Sets the Bow

"And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud" (Genesis 9:14).

Just now clouds are plentiful enough, but we are not afraid that the world will be destroyed by a deluge. We see the rainbow often enough to prevent our having any such fears. The covenant which the LORD made with Noah stands fast, and we have no doubts about it. Why, then, should we think that the clouds of trouble, which now darken our sky, will end in our destruction? Let us dismiss such groundless and dishonoring fears. Faith always sees the bow of covenant promise whenever sense sees the cloud of affliction. God has a bow with which He might shoot out His arrows of destruction. But see, it is turned upward! It is a bow without an arrow or a string; it is a bow hung out for show, no longer used for war. It is a bow of many colors, expressing joy and delight, and not a bow blood-red with slaughter or black with anger. Let us be of good courage. Never does God so darken our sky as to leave His covenant without a witness, and even if He did, we would trust Him since He cannot change or lie or in any other way fail to keep His covenant of peace. Until the waters go over the earth again, we shall have no reason for doubting our God.

Genesis 13:14-15 God Delights to Give

"And the LORD said unto Abraham, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Genesis 13:14-15).

A special blessing for a memorable occasion. Abram had settled a family dispute. He had said, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, for we be brethren"; and hence he received the blessing which belongs to peacemakers. The LORD and giver of peace delights to manifest His grace to those who seek peace and pursue it. If we desire closer communion with God, we must keep closer to the ways of peace. Abram had behaved very generously to his kinsman, giving him his choice of the land. If we deny ourselves for peace's sake, the LORD will more than make it up to us. As far as the patriarch can see, he can claim, and we may do the like by faith. Abram had to wait for the actual possession, but the LORD entailed the land upon him and his posterity. Boundless blessings belong to us by covenant gift. All things are ours. When we please the LORD, He makes us to look everywhere and see all things our own, whether things present or things to come, all are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Genesis 21:6

It was far above the power of nature, and even contrary to its laws, that the aged Sarah should be honoured with a son; and even so it is beyond all ordinary rules that I, a poor, helpless, undone sinner, should find grace to bear about in my soul the indwelling Spirit of the Lord Jesus. I, who once despaired, as well I might, for my nature was as dry, and withered, and barren, and accursed as a howling wilderness, even I have been made to bring forth fruit unto holiness. Well may my mouth be filled with joyous laughter, because of the singular, surprising grace which I have received of the Lord, for I have found Jesus, the promised seed, and he is mine for ever. This day will I lift up psalms of triumph unto the Lord who has remembered my low estate, for "my heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation."

I would have all those that hear of my great deliverance from hell, and my most blessed visitation from on high, laugh for joy with me. I would surprise my family with my abundant peace; I would delight my friends with my ever-increasing happiness; I would edify the Church with my grateful confessions; and even impress the world with the cheerfulness of my daily conversation. Bunyan tells us that Mercy laughed in her sleep, and no wonder when she dreamed of Jesus; my joy shall not stop short of hers while my Beloved is the theme of my daily thoughts. The Lord Jesus is a deep sea of joy: my soul shall dive therein, shall be swallowed up in the delights of his society. Sarah looked on her Isaac, and laughed with excess of rapture, and all her friends laughed with her; and thou, my soul, look on thy Jesus, and bid heaven and earth unite in thy joy unspeakable.

Genesis 24:63

Very admirable was his occupation. If those who spend so many hours in idle company, light reading, and useless pastimes, could learn wisdom, they would find more profitable society and more interesting engagements in meditation than in the vanities which now have such charms for them. We should all know more, live nearer to God, and grow in grace, if we were more alone. Meditation chews the cud and extracts the real nutriment from the mental food gathered elsewhere. When Jesus is the theme, meditation is sweet indeed. Isaac found Rebecca while engaged in private musings; many others have found their best beloved there.

Very admirable was the choice of place. In the field we have a study hung round with texts for thought. From the cedar to the hyssop, from the soaring eagle down to the chirping grasshopper, from the blue expanse of heaven to a drop of dew, all things are full of teaching, and when the eye is divinely opened, that teaching flashes upon the mind far more vividly than from written books. Our little rooms are neither so healthy, so suggestive, so agreeable, or so inspiring as the fields. Let us count nothing common or unclean, but feel that all created things point to their Maker, and the field will at once be hallowed.

Very admirable was the season. The season of sunset as it draws a veil over the day, befits that repose of the soul when earthborn cares yield to the joys of heavenly communion. The glory of the setting sun excites our wonder, and the solemnity of approaching night awakens our awe. If the business of this day will permit it, it will be well, dear reader, if you can spare an hour to walk in the

field at eventide, but if not, the Lord is in the town too, and will meet with thee in thy chamber or in the crowded street. Let thy heart go forth to meet him.

Genesis 25:11

Hagar had once found deliverance there and Ishmael had drank from the water so graciously revealed by the God who liveth and seeth the sons of men; but this was a merely casual visit, such as worldlings pay to the Lord in times of need, when it serves their turn. They cry to him in trouble, but forsake him in prosperity. Isaac dwelt there, and made the well of the living and all-seeing God his constant source of supply. The usual tenor of a man's life, the dwelling of his soul, is the true test of his state. Perhaps the providential visitation experienced by Hagar struck Isaac's mind, and led him to revere the place; its mystical name endeared it to him; his frequent musings by its brim at eventide made him familiar with the well; his meeting Rebecca there had made his spirit feel at home near the spot; but best of all, the fact that he there enjoyed fellowship with the living God, had made him select that hallowed ground for his dwelling. Let us learn to live in the presence of the living God; let us pray the Holy Spirit that this day, and every other day, we may feel, "Thou God seest me." May the Lord Jehovah be as a well to us, delightful, comforting, unfailing, springing up unto eternal life. The bottle of the creature cracks and dries up, but the well of the Creator never fails; happy is he who dwells at the well, and so has abundant and constant supplies near at hand. The Lord has been a sure helper to others: his name is Shaddai, God All-sufficient; our hearts have often had most delightful intercourse with him; through him our soul has found her glorious Husband, the Lord Jesus; and in him this day we live, and move, and have our being; let us, then, dwell in closest fellowship with him. Glorious Lord, constrain us that we may never leave thee, but dwell by the well of the living God.

Genesis 28:13 Rest on a Promise

"The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it" (Genesis 28:13).

No promise is of private interpretation: it belongs not to one saint but to all believers. If, my brother, thou canst in faith lie down upon a promise and take thy rest thereon, it is thine. Where Jacob "lighted" and tarried and rested, there he took possession. Stretching his weary length upon the ground, with the stones of that place for his pillows, he little fancied that he was thus entering into ownership of the land; yet so it was. He saw in his dream that wondrous ladder which for all true believers unites earth and heaven, and surely where the foot of the ladder stood he must have a right to the soil, for other wise he could not reach the divine stair- way. All the promises of God are "Yea" and "Amen" in Christ Jesus, and as He is ours, every promise is ours if we will but lie down upon it in restful faith. Come, weary one, use thy LORD's words as thy pillows, Lie down in peace. Dream only of Him. Jesus is thy ladder of light. See the angels coming and going upon Him between thy soul and thy God, and be sure that the promise is thine own God-given portion and that it will not be robbery for thee to take it to thyself, as spoken specially to thee.

Genesis 28:15 A Heavenly Escort

"And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest" (Genesis 28:15).

Do we need journeying mercies? Here are choice ones -- God's presence and preservation, In all places we need both of these, and in all places we shall have them if we go at the call of duty, and not merely according to our own fancy. Why should we look upon removal to another country as a sorrowful necessity when it is laid upon us by the divine will? In all lands the believer is equally a pilgrim and a stranger; and yet in every region the LORD is His dwelling place, even as He has been to His saints in all generations. We may miss the protection of an earthly monarch, but when God says, "I will keep thee," we are in no real danger. This is a blessed passport for a traveler and a heavenly escort for an emigrant. Jacob had never left his father's room before; he had been a mother's boy and not an adventurer like his brother. Yet he went abroad, and God went with him. He had little luggage and no attendants; yet no prince ever journeyed with a nobler bodyguard. Even while he slept in the open field, angels watched over him, and the LORD God spoke to him. If the LORD bids us go, let us say with our LORD Jesus, "Arise, let us go hence."

Genesis 29:26

We do not excuse Laban for his dishonesty, but we scruple not to learn from the custom which he quoted as his excuse. There are some things which must be taken in order, and if we would win the second we must secure the first. The second may be the more lovely in our eyes, but the rule of the heavenly country must stand, and the elder must be married first. For instance, many men desire the beautiful and well-favoured Rachel of joy and peace in believing, but they must first be wedded to the tender-eyed Leah of repentance. Every one falls in love with happiness, and many would cheerfully serve twice seven years to enjoy it, but according to the rule of the Lord's kingdom, the Leah of real holiness must be beloved of our soul before the Rachel of true happiness can be attained. Heaven stands not first but second, and only by persevering to the end can we win a portion in it. The cross must be carried before the crown can be worn. We must follow our Lord in his humiliation, or we shall never rest with him in glory.

My soul, what sayest thou, art thou so vain as to hope to break through the heavenly rule? Dost thou hope for reward without labour, or honour without toil? Dismiss the idle expectation, and be content to take the ill-favoured things for the sake of the sweet love of

Jesus, which will recompense thee for all. In such a spirit, labouring and suffering, thou wilt find bitters grow sweet, and hard things easy. Like Jacob, thy years of service will seem unto thee but a few days for the love thou hast to Jesus; and when the dear hour of the wedding feast shall come, all thy toils shall be as though they had never been—an hour with Jesus will make up for ages of pain and labour.

Jesus, to win thyself so fair,
Thy cross I will with gladness bear:
Since so the rules of heaven ordain,
The first I'll wed the next to gain.

Genesis 32:12

When Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok, and Esau was coming with armed men, he earnestly sought God's protection, and as a master reason he pleaded, "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." Oh, the force of that plea! He was holding God to his word—"Thou saidst." The attribute of God's faithfulness is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon; but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is a yet mightier holdfast—"Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." And has he said, and shall he not do it? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Shall not he be true? Shall he not keep his word? Shall not every word that cometh out of his lips stand fast and be fulfilled? Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleaded with God to remember the word which he had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note, his honour is engaged; he signs his hand, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonours his bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment: he never is before his time, but he never is behind it. Search God's word through, and compare it with the experience of God's people, and you shall find the two tally from the first to the last. Many a hoary patriarch has said with Joshua, "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass." If you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an "if," you may urge it with certainty. The Lord meant to fulfil the promise, or he would not have given it. God does not give his words merely to quiet us, and to keep us hopeful for awhile with the intention of putting us off at last; but when he speaks, it is because he means to do as he has said.

Genesis 35:18

To every matter there is a bright as well as a dark side. Rachel was overwhelmed with the sorrow of her own travail and death; Jacob, though weeping the mother's loss, could see the mercy of the child's birth. It is well for us if, while the flesh mourns over trials, our faith triumphs in divine faithfulness. Samson's lion yielded honey, and so will our adversities, if rightly considered. The stormy sea feeds multitudes with its fishes; the wild wood blooms with beauteous florets; the stormy wind sweeps away the pestilence, and the biting frost loosens the soil. Dark clouds distil bright drops, and black earth grows gay flowers. A vein of good is to be found in every mine of evil. Sad hearts have peculiar skill in discovering the most disadvantageous point of view from which to gaze upon a trial; if there were only one slough in the world, they would soon be up to their necks in it, and if there were only one lion in the desert they would hear it roar. About us all there is a tinge of this wretched folly, and we are apt, at times, like Jacob, to cry, "All these things are against me." Faith's way of walking is to cast all care upon the Lord, and then to anticipate good results from the worst calamities. Like Gideon's men, she does not fret over the broken pitcher, but rejoices that the lamp blazes forth the more. Out of the rough oyster-shell of difficulty she extracts the rare pearl of honour, and from the deep ocean-caves of distress she uplifts the priceless coral of experience. When her flood of prosperity ebbs, she finds treasures hid in the sands; and when her sun of delight goes down, she turns her telescope of hope to the starry promises of heaven. When death itself appears, faith points to the light of resurrection beyond the grave, thus making our dying Benoni to be our living Benjamin.

Genesis 39:12

In contending with certain sins there remains no mode of victory but by flight. The ancient naturalists wrote much of basilisks, whose eyes fascinated their victims and rendered them easy victims; so the mere gaze of wickedness puts us in solemn danger. He who would be safe from acts of evil must haste away from occasions of it. A covenant must be made with our eyes not even to look upon the cause of temptation, for such sins only need a spark to begin with and a blaze follows in an instant. Who would wantonly enter the leper's prison and sleep amid its horrible corruption? He only who desires to be leprous himself would thus court contagion. If the mariner knew how to avoid a storm, he would do anything rather than run the risk of weathering it. Cautious pilots have no desire to try how near the quicksand they can sail, or how often they may touch a rock without springing a leak; their aim is to keep as nearly as possible in the midst of a safe channel.

This day I may be exposed to great peril, let me have the serpent's wisdom to keep out of it and avoid it. The wings of a dove may be of more use to me to-day than the jaws of a lion. It is true I may be an apparent loser by declining evil company, but I had better leave my cloak than lose my character; it is not needful that I should be rich, but it is imperative upon me to be pure. No ties of friendship, no chains of beauty, no flashings of talent, no shafts of ridicule must turn me from the wise resolve to flee from sin. The

devil I am to resist and he will flee from me, but the lusts of the flesh, I must flee, or they will surely overcome me. O God of holiness preserve thy Josephs, that Madam Bubble bewitch them not with her vile suggestions. May the horrible trinity of the world, the flesh, and the devil, never overcome us!

Genesis 41:4

Pharaoh's dream has too often been my waking experience. My days of sloth have ruinously destroyed all that I had achieved in times of zealous industry; my seasons of coldness have frozen all the genial glow of my periods of fervency and enthusiasm; and my fits of worldliness have thrown me back from my advances in the divine life. I had need to beware of lean prayers, lean praises, lean duties, and lean experiences, for these will eat up the fat of my comfort and peace. If I neglect prayer for never so short a time, I lose all the spirituality to which I had attained; if I draw no fresh supplies from heaven, the old corn in my granary is soon consumed by the famine which rages in my soul. When the caterpillars of indifference, the cankerworms of worldliness, and the palmerworms of self-indulgence, lay my heart completely desolate, and make my soul to languish, all my former fruitfulness and growth in grace avails me nothing whatever. How anxious should I be to have no lean-fleshed days, no ill-favoured hours! If every day I journeyed towards the goal of my desires I should soon reach it, but backsliding leaves me still far off from the prize of my high calling, and robs me of the advances which I had so laboriously made. The only way in which all my days can be as the "fat kine," is to feed them in the right meadow, to spend them with the Lord, in His service, in His company, in His fear, and in His way. Why should not every year be richer than the past, in love, and usefulness, and joy?—I am nearer the celestial hills, I have had more experience of my Lord, and should be more like Him. O Lord, keep far from me the curse of leanness of soul; let me not have to cry, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" but may I be well-fed and nourished in thy house, that I may praise thy name.

Genesis 42:2

Famine pinched all the nations, and it seemed inevitable that Jacob and his family should suffer great want; but the God of providence, who never forgets the objects of electing love, had stored a granary for his people by giving the Egyptians warning of the scarcity, and leading them to treasure up the grain of the years of plenty. Little did Jacob expect deliverance from Egypt, but there was the corn in store for him. Believer, though all things are apparently against thee, rest assured that God has made a reservation on thy behalf; in the roll of thy griefs there is a saving clause. Somehow he will deliver thee, and somewhere he will provide for thee. The quarter from which thy rescue shall arise may be a very unexpected one, but help will assuredly come in thine extremity, and thou shalt magnify the name of the Lord. If men do not feed thee, ravens shall; and if earth yield not wheat, heaven shall drop with manna. Therefore be of good courage, and rest quietly in the Lord. God can make the sun rise in the west if he pleases, and make the source of distress the channel of delight. The corn in Egypt was all in the hands of the beloved Joseph; he opened or closed the granaries at will. And so the riches of providence are all in the absolute power of our Lord Jesus, who will dispense them liberally to his people. Joseph was abundantly ready to succour his own family; and Jesus is unceasing in his faithful care for his brethren. Our business is to go after the help which is provided for us: we must not sit still in despondency, but bestir ourselves. Prayer will bear us soon into the presence of our royal Brother: once before his throne we have only to ask and have: his stores are not exhausted; there is corn still: his heart is not hard, he will give the corn to us. Lord, forgive our unbelief, and this evening constrain us to draw largely from thy fulness and receive grace for grace.

Genesis 42:8

This morning our desires went forth for growth in our acquaintance with the Lord Jesus; it may be well to-night to consider a kindred topic, namely, our heavenly Joseph's knowledge of us. This was most blessedly perfect long before we had the slightest knowledge of him. "His eyes beheld our substance, yet being imperfect, and in his book all our members were written, when as yet there was none of them." Before we had a being in the world we had a being in his heart. When we were enemies to him, he knew us, our misery, our madness, and our wickedness. When we wept bitterly in despairing repentance, and viewed him only as a judge and a ruler, he viewed us as his brethren well beloved, and his bowels yearned towards us. He never mistook his chosen, but always beheld them as objects of his infinite affection. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," is as true of the prodigals who are feeding swine as of the children who sit at the table.

But, alas! we knew not our royal Brother, and out of this ignorance grew a host of sins. We withheld our hearts from him, and allowed him no entrance to our love. We mistrusted him, and gave no credit to his words. We rebelled against him, and paid him no loving homage. The Sun of Righteousness shone forth, and we could not see him. Heaven came down to earth, and earth perceived it not. Let God be praised, those days are over with us; yet even now it is but little that we know of Jesus compared with what he knows of us. We have but begun to study him, but he knoweth us altogether. It is a blessed circumstance that the ignorance is not on his side, for then it would be a hopeless case for us. He will not say to us, "I never knew you," but he will confess our names in the day of his appearing, and meanwhile will manifest himself to us as he doth not unto the world.

Genesis 46:3,4

Jacob must have shuddered at the thought of leaving the land of his father's sojourning, and dwelling among heathen strangers. It was a new scene, and likely to be a trying one: who shall venture among couriers of a foreign monarch without anxiety? Yet the way was evidently appointed for him, and therefore he resolved to go. This is frequently the position of believers now—they are called to perils and temptations altogether untried: at such seasons let them imitate Jacob's example by offering sacrifices of prayer unto God, and seeking his direction; let them not take a step until they have waited upon the Lord for his blessing: then they will have Jacob's companion to be their friend and helper. How blessed to feel assured that the Lord is with us in all our ways, and condescends to go down into our humiliations and banishments with us! Even beyond the ocean our Father's love beams like the sun in its strength. We cannot hesitate to go where Jehovah promises his presence; even the valley of deathshade grows bright with the radiance of this assurance. Marching onwards with faith in their God, believers shall have Jacob's promise. They shall be brought up again, whether it be from the troubles of life or the chambers of death. Jacob's seed came out of Egypt in due time, and so shall all the faithful pass unscathed through the tribulation of life, and the terror of death. Let us exercise Jacob's confidence. "Fear not," is the Lord's command and his divine encouragement to those who at his bidding are launching upon new seas; the divine presence and preservation forbid so much as one unbelieving fear. Without our God we should fear to move; but when he bids us to, it would be dangerous to tarry. Reader, go forward, and fear not.

Genesis 48:21 God With Us

"God shall be with you."—Genesis 48:21

GOOD old Jacob could no more be with Joseph for his hour had come to die; but he left his son without anxiety, for he said with confidence, "God shall be with you." When our dearest relations or our most helpful friends are called home by death, we must console ourselves with the reflection that the Lord is not departed from us, but lives for us and abides with us forever.

If God be with us, we are in ennobling company, even though we are poor and despised. If God be with us, we have all-sufficient strength, for nothing can be too hard for the Lord. If God be with us, we are always safe, for none can harm those who walk under His shadow. Oh, what a joy we have here! Not only is God with us, but He will be with us— with us as individuals, with us as families, with us as churches. Is not the very name of Jesus, Immanuel—God with us? Is not this the best of all, that God is with us? Let us be bravely diligent and joyously hopeful. Our cause must prosper, the truth must win, for the Lord is with those who are with Him.

All this day, may this sweet word be enjoyed by every believer who turns to Faith's Check Book. No greater happiness is possible.

Genesis 49:19 Wait for the Finals

"Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last."—Genesis 49:19

SOME of us have been like the tribe of Gad. Our adversaries for a while were too many for us; they came upon us like a troop. Yes, and for the moment they overcame us, and they exulted greatly because of their temporary victory. Thus they only proved the first part of the family heritage to be really ours; for Christ's people, like Dan, shall have a troop overcoming them. This being overcome is very painful, and we should have despaired if we had not by faith believed the second line of our father's benediction, "He shall overcome at the last." "All's well that ends well," said the world's poet; and he spoke the truth. A war is to be judged, not by first successes or defeats, but by that which happens "at the last." The Lord will give to truth and righteousness, victory "at the last"; and, as Mr. Bunyan says, that means forever, for nothing can come after the last.

What we need is patient perseverance in well-doing, calm confidence in our glorious Captain. Christ, our Lord Jesus, would teach us His holy art of setting the face like a flint to go through with work or suffering till we can say, "It is finished." Hallelujah! Victory! Victory! We believe the promise. "He shall overcome at the last."

Genesis 49:24

That strength which God gives to his Josephs is real strength; it is not a boasted valour, a fiction, a thing of which men talk, but which ends in smoke; it is true—divine strength. Why does Joseph stand against temptation? Because God gives him aid. There is nought that we can do without the power of God. All true strength comes from "the mighty God of Jacob." Notice in what a blessedly familiar way God gives this strength to Joseph—"The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Thus God is represented as putting his hands on Joseph's hands, placing his arms on Joseph's arms. Like as a father teaches his children, so the Lord teaches them that fear him. He puts his arms upon them. Marvellous condescension! God Almighty, Eternal, Omnipotent, stoops from his throne and lays his hand upon the child's hand, stretching his arm upon the arm of Joseph, that he may be made strong! This strength was also covenant strength, for it is ascribed to "the mighty God of Jacob." Now, wherever you read of the God of Jacob in the Bible, you should remember the covenant with Jacob. Christians love to think of God's covenant. All the power, all the grace, all the blessings, all the mercies, all the comforts, all the things we have, flow to us from the well-head, through the covenant. If there were no covenant, then we should fail indeed; for all grace proceeds from it, as light and

heat from the sun. No angels ascend or descend, save upon that ladder which Jacob saw, at the top of which stood a covenant God. Christian, it may be that the archers have sorely grieved you, and shot at you, and wounded you, but still your bow abides in strength; be sure, then, to ascribe all the glory to Jacob's God.

Genesis 50:24 Comfort En Route Home

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."—Genesis 50:24

JOSEPH had been an incarnate providence to his brethren. All our Josephs die, and a thousand comforts die with them. Egypt was never the same to Israel after Joseph was dead, nor can the world again be to some of us what it was when our beloved ones were alive.

But see how the pain of that sad death was alleviated! They had a promise that the living God would visit them. A visit from Jehovah! What a favor! What a consolation! What a heaven below! O Lord, visit us this day; though indeed we are not worthy that thou shouldst come under our roof.

But more was promised: the Lord would bring them out. They would find in Egypt a cold welcome when Joseph was dead; nay, it would become to them a house of bondage. But it was not to be so forever; they would come out of it by a divine deliverance and march to the land of promise. We shall not weep here forever. We shall be called home to the glory land to join our dear ones. Wherefore, "comfort one another with these words."