

January to March 2011

Spurgeon's “Morning & Evening”

Transcribed by
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About the Transcriber



Rev Dr Tow Siang Hwa, who started the RPG (Read, Pray and Grow) Daily Bible Reading Guide in 1982, is the Senior Pastor of Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church. Saved at the age of ten in 1935 during the revival meetings of Dr John Sung, Dr Tow (a gynaecologist by training) has founded more than twenty churches and related institutions in over ten countries. He is author of several books including “Beyond Versions: A Biblical Perspective of Modern English Bibles” and “Footprints in the Sands of Time.”

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1

JOSHUA 5:1-12

HEBREWS 3:12-19

*Jesus says, "Come...
I will give you rest."*

REST AWAITING WEARY WANDERERS

Israel's weary wanderings were over: no more moving tents, fiery serpents, howling wilderness and enemies along the way. After forty long years they had entered the Land of milk and honey, the promised rest. Perhaps this year some beloved RPG reader will be admitted into His rest. This is every believer's joyful prospect, by faith in our almighty Saviour. To be with the Lord in the rest reserved for God's people is surely our lively and blessed hope.

However, between us and the Land of Bliss lies the Jordan, the final hurdle to be cleared. Does that worry you, my friend? Why, has not our Lord helped us conquer more ills than death? Let us banish every faithless thought and rejoice with exceeding great joy at the prospect that once across the Jordan, like the vale of shadow, we shall be forever with the Lord. Then, we may gladly say goodbye to the woes and weariness of earth.

For most readers, our lot is to tarry on earth to do service for the Lord. But even as we serve, we are given a foretaste of the heavenly rest. "*We which have believed do enter into rest*" (Heb 4:3). Here we have a "first instalment," as it were, of our rest to come: the Holy Spirit Himself is the earnest of our inheritance. He gives us "glory begun below." Even now we have a savour of Heaven's blessings.

In Heaven, the departed saints are forever secure: so are we in Christ; there they enjoy eternal victory with Christ: on earth we have victory always in the Lord; there they commune in person with Him: here the Lord walks with us from day to day. He is ever true to His promise (Matt 28:20). "*The fellowship of kindred minds, is like to that above.*" In Heaven, they are forever praising the Saviour. Should we on earth do less? It will make our wilderness wanderings less wearisome!

THOUGHT: Man did eat angels' food of old, and why not now?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me grace to feed daily on Jesus, the bread of life.

REJOICING IN THE LORD

We will be glad and rejoice in Thee. Let all of God's people say Amen! Let us echo the Psalmist's happy song: "*O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation*" (Ps 95:1). We, the people of God, the faithful and chosen, will not give place to our griefs, but will set up our banners of confidence in the name of our God. Others without hope lament over their troubles, but we will magnify the Lord, even the God of all comfort.

Eternal Spirit, our effectual Comforter, we are the temples in which Thou art pleased to dwell. We will never cease from adoring and blessing the name of our Saviour. Jesus our Lord must have the crown of our heart's delight. We will not dishonour Him by mourning in His presence. Did He not promise: "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (Matt 28:20)? We the redeemed of the Lord are commanded to "*rejoice always.*" The day of everlasting songs of praise will not be long to await. But let us rehearse now, before we sing in the New Jerusalem.

"*We will be glad and rejoice in Thee.*" Need there be any limit to our rejoicing in the Lord while here on earth? Do you, a child of His grace, not find the Lord more precious than camphire and spikenard, calamus and cinnamon (Song of Sol 4:13-14) even now, and ever worthy of your unceasing praise and rejoicing? In Jesus our Lord we find our all in all, all that is ever worth having and keeping. He is the source of all goodness, the fountain of every blessing. He is our portion for ever and ever. Let us be glad and rejoice in Him every day of the year.

THOUGHT: "*Rejoice evermore*" (1 Thess 5:16).

PRAYER: Lord, favour me with a sense of Thy preciousness that I will never cease from rejoicing in Thee.

MONDAY, JANUARY 3

PSALM 55:1-17

COLOSSIANS 4:2

*“The spirit is willing...
the flesh is weak.”*

CONTINUE IN PRAYER

How large a portion of the Bible is on the subject of prayer—furnishing examples, enforcing precepts, or elaborating on God’s promises. Open your Bible and you will read, *“Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD”* (Gen 4:26). Everywhere we encounter men of prayer: Jacob wrestling in prayer (Gen 32:24-30) at the ford Jabbok; Daniel praying three times a day with window open (Dan 6:10-11); David the sweet Psalmist of Israel who with all his heart called upon the Lord. Then see Elijah on mountain top, or Paul and Silas in lowly dungeon cell—all calling on the name of the Lord.

God has given us multitudes of commands and myriads of promises. What does this teach us, but the sacred importance and necessity of prayer? Be certain of this: whatever God has made prominent in His Word, He intended to be conspicuous in our lives. If He has said much about prayer, it is because we have much need of it. So great is our present need of divine help, that we must not cease to pray until we arrive in Heaven. Have you nothing to pray for? Then, I fear you do not know your own poverty. Have you no mercy to ask of God? May God show you your misery.

A prayerless soul is a Christless soul! Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the Christian soldier, the cry of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honour of every true believer. If you are a child of God, you will seek the Father’s face often in prayer. Pray that you may be holy, humble, zealous and patient, as you commune with Him at the throne of grace.

THOUGHT: Pray without ceasing. God blesses without ceasing.

PRAYER: Reveal my poverty and misery to me, Father, that I may seek Thee without ceasing.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 4

ISAIAH 40:26-41:4

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10

*“His grace is
sufficient for me.”*

THE SECRET OF STRENGTH

All things on earth need to be renewed. No created thing continues by itself. Even trees which wear not themselves with care, nor shorten their lives with labour, need constantly to be renewed by the rain of heaven and to draw from the hidden nutrients of the soil. But long though trees may flourish, yet their lifespan must come some day to an end.

Man's life cannot be sustained without renewal from God. While the body one day will perish, the soul – that unseen inner man – can only be sustained by feeding upon the Word of God, by listening to the Word preached, and by constantly meditating therein. These are God-given means of grace. How impoverished must our souls be when these means are neglected! No wonder the Church has so many spiritual dwarfs and weaklings, crawling around despite their years.

Awake, ye saints of God! You cannot be renewed and strong without the diligent use of the Word, and daily secret prayer. Your feeble fumbling spiritual life is not of divine workmanship. It is your own neglect and carelessness. Without constant renewal by the blessed Spirit, you cannot face the assaults of hell, the unsettling inner strifes, and at times the afflictions of the Heavenly Father.

Little tree, are your roots firmly stayed on the Rock, that you will be able to withstand the coming whirlwind? Little ship, is your anchor fastened to the Rock which alone can hold you, fast and secure, against the tempests of life? Our strength comes not of ourselves, or from any human source, but the Lord. He alone is our strength and our life. Only He can renew us from day to day.

THOUGHT: *“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength”*
(Isa 13:41).

PRAYER: Daily, O Lord, may I come to Thee for my daily bread.

JESUS CHRIST OUR ALL IN ALL

Jesus Christ is God's best gift to us, given to every believer. Reader, can you estimate what you have gotten in Christ our Lord? "*In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*" (Col 2:9). Pause a while and ponder: there are inestimable, unspeakable blessings procured by Jesus for you and me who believe. All that Christ, our Emmanuel, has is yours. Out of pure unmerited favour, God has assigned to you, to be your possession for ever, all that belongs to Christ our Lord.

Let us enumerate what it all means. Think of His great power. "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matt 28:18), says the Lord. That power is yours to strengthen and enable you to cope with difficulties, to overcome temptations, and to persevere in your walk with God, till you arrive Home.

Think of His love. Out of His inexhaustible ocean of love He fills our prepared hearts and you may say, "It is mine." Then His love will flow from you to others around you.

Think of His justice. Can such a high and noble attribute be yours? It may seem impossible, but even this is yours, by His grace, for He will by His justice ensure that all the covenant promises shall most certainly be secured to you. All that Jesus has as the Perfect Man is yours. As your representative, He stood accepted by the Father. Dear reader, when God accepts Christ, He accepts you! The love which the Father set on His beloved Son, He sets on you now! All that Christ did, He did for you, and me. His perfect righteousness is yours, imputed to you "*by grace, through faith.*" He is our ALL in ALL.

THOUGHT: "My God, I am Thine - what a comfort divine! What a blessing to know that the Saviour is mine!"

PRAYER: Thank You, Father, for the much that Thou hast promised me.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 6

PSALM 42

2 PETER 3:10-18

*Not to grow up
is to go down!*

GROW IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE

“*Grow in grace*”—not in one grace only, but in all grace. Grow in that most important of graces, faith. Believe God’s promises more firmly than you have ever done. Let faith increase in steadfastness, in constancy, in simplicity.

Grow also in love. Pray the Lord that your love be extended, more intense, more practical, beautifying your every thought, word and deed. Likewise, grow in humility. Seek the lowest place; recognize more of your own nothingness. As you grow downward in humility, seek also to grow upward, approaching nearer to God in prayer and communion.

Let not your spiritual growth stop there, but grow in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He who grows not in the knowledge of his Saviour, loses out on great blessings. To know Him is “life eternal,” and to increase in the knowledge of Him is to increase in true happiness. He who does not long to know more of Christ impoverishes himself. The Apostle Paul counted “*all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus...*” (Phil 3:8).

Dear reader, how do you love the Lord Jesus? If you truly love Him, you will be as the hart panting for the water brooks. And one sip of that soul-satisfying knowledge makes you thirst for more. You will pant after deeper draughts of His love. True love always cries, “Nearer, nearer my Lord to Thee!” The more you drink of Him, the more you want to drink. The very knowledge of His presence is Heaven. Are you growing or going? Pray the Lord to keep you ever near the cross and let the precious flow of love melt your heart. Then see how He helps you grow!

THOUGHT: We either grow or wither. There is no stagnation.

PRAYER: Lord of my life, may Thy Holy Spirit empower me to grow.

O LORD, THOU KNOWEST ME ALTOGETHER

While we strive to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, pause and consider that He knew us long before we had the slightest knowledge of Him. His *“eyes did see (our) substance, yet being unperfect; and in (His) book all (our) members were written, ... when as yet there was none of them”* (Ps 139:16). Before we ever had a place in this world, we had a place in His heart. When we were enemies, He saw our misery, and our wickedness. Such was our hopeless lost estate before He came to our aid.

In this we see the mystery of divine love: the Lord knew our need long before we thought to seek Him. He comes to us as our “Heavenly Joseph,” ever so gracious and forgiving, viewing us as His brethren well beloved, with tenderest affection towards us. Like the wicked sons of Jacob, we bore Joseph no love, only hatred and malice. Yet He sees us as objects of His infinite affection. *“The Lord knoweth them that are his”* (2 Tim 2:19) is true of prodigals in far off exile feeding swine as well as of the children seated at the table. Our Lord pitieth us like as a father pitieth his children (Ps 103:13).

God’s redemption is made more marvellous when we realize the great and grievous sins we have committed against Him times without number. In our rebellion we shut Him out of our hearts and mistrusted His gracious words. We rebelled against Him and spurned His loving call. Yet He never gave us up, but came to us ever so patiently and gently. God be praised, He saved us from our desperate lost condition, and adopted us into His family. Now we begin to study Him, but He has known us all along. And God be praised again, and again, for had our Lord not known us, where would we be today? One day, at His appearing, He will confess our names. Thank God, our Lord knows all about us! And He never forgets!

THOUGHT: To those who refuse to know Him now, the Lord will say, *“I never knew you”* when He comes.

PRAYER: I praise and thank Thee, O Lord, for all that Thou hast done for me.

WHAT COMMUNION HATH LIGHT WITH DARKNESS?

The wise king said, *“Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun”* (Eccles 11:7). But Gospel light is infinitely more precious. It alone reveals eternal things, and ministers to our souls’ need. When the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual light, we behold the glory of God in Jesus Christ His Son. We also see ourselves, marred and stained by sin, in our true condition—hopeless, lost and helpless. Then we see the Saviour, God’s appointed One, *“full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14), offering us *“life for a look”* (John 3:14-16). Thank God for the Gospel light drawing us to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, the Light of the world.

With light comes also a division. Light and darkness can have no communion: God the Creator ruled from the beginning that they remain separate. Therefore, let us not confound them. Sons of light must have no fellowship with the children of darkness. Neither must we have anything to do with their deeds, doctrines and deceptions. The children of the day must be sober, honest and vigilant. We must be faithful and courageous in the Lord’s work. No matter how unpopular it may be, we must have no dealings with the works of darkness.

A true church of Jesus Christ would exercise the discipline of keeping clear and separate from all doctrinal darkness and error, and from those “Christians” and “churches” which preach or participate in them. In judgment, in action, in hearing, in teaching, in association, we must exercise spiritual discernment between truth and error, between light and darkness. At the beginning of the world, the Lord laid down the principle. Now at the end of the age, should not we His servants do likewise?

THOUGHT: True and loyal believers will never approve of or be involved in the ecumenical movement and its darkness.

PRAYER: Lord, keep me ever walking in Thy light.

GOD SEES YOUR LIGHT

The Lord has a special eye for light. At the creation "*God saw the light, that it was good.*" At our conversion He gives us His light (2 Cor 4:6). Therefore He looks on that light with peculiar interest. Not only is it dear to Him as His own handiwork, but because it is like Himself, for God is light. It is blessed to know that God's eye is tenderly watching over that work of grace which He has begun in us. He never loses sight of the treasure which He has placed in our earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7).

Sometimes we cannot see the light which God hath shined in our hearts, but God always can, and that is much better than our seeing it. I am comforted to know that I am one of God's people, but more important is the fact that the Lord knows, so I am safe. "*The Lord knoweth them that are his*" (2 Tim 2:19). Dear child of God, you may be sighing and groaning because of some inbred sin, and mourning over your darkness. Yet the Lord sees the 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. Rise above your feelings and take heart, looking only unto Jesus (Heb 12:2).

Perhaps you have sunk low in despondency, and even despair; but if your soul longs for the Lord, and if you are resting in His finished work, God sees the light in you. He not only sees it, but He also preserves it in you. This is a precious thought to those who, after anxious watching and guarding of themselves, feel their own powerlessness to do so. At such a time, look to the Saviour. The light preserved by His grace will one day develop into the splendour of noonday, and the fulness of glory. His light within you is the dawn of the eternal day. He who began the good work in you will perfect it on that day (Phil 1:6).

THOUGHT: Our Lord says: "*Let your light so shine before men ... and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*"

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Thy light in me. Let me shine for Thee.

MONDAY, JANUARY 10

PSALM 27

1 PETER 5:6-11

*"In every thing by
prayer and supplication."*

“HE CARETH FOR ME!”

It is a happy way of soothing sorrow when you can say, “He careth for me!” Christian! Do not dishonour your religion by always wearing a brow of care; come, cast your burden upon your Lord. You may be staggering beneath some crushing weight. To Him it is but as the small dust of the balance. Why struggle in your own little strength? Nothing is so sweet as to

*“Lie passive in God’s hands,
And know no will but His.”*

O child of suffering, be patient! God has not passed over you in His providence. He who feeds the sparrow will also supply your need. Do not give up in despair. In Him there is hope! Sail the sea of trouble in His ship of faith. “With Christ in the vessel you can smile at the storm.” Hear Him command the wind and wave, “*Peace! Be still!*” Cast all your care upon Him for He careth for you.

Remember, you are one of His family. He will bind up your wounds, and heal your broken heart. Never doubt His grace because of your tribulation. Believe that He loves you as much in trouble as in happiness: He changes not. Why then struggle with your load of care? Leave the providing to the God of providence, and see if He will not grant you a serene and quiet life.

God cares for you! Why then are you full of cares? Can you trust Him for your soul, and not for your body? He never refuses to bear your burdens; He never faints under their weight. Come, dear reader, away with anxious cares! Leave all your worries and concerns in the hands of our gracious God.

THOUGHT: He who cares for the sparrow will surely care for me.

PRAYER: Forgive me, Father, for not trusting in Thee. Thank You for Thy love and care.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 11

EZEKIEL 33:21-22

HEBREWS 12:5-11

*“The LORD’s hand is not
shortened, that it cannot save.”*

THE HAND OF THE LORD

The hand of the Lord is good, be it the hand of chastening or strengthening. His is always the hand of blessing, although at times He visits with the rod in the night season. Let us not be discouraged or rebellious, but let us cheerfully submit, and endeavour to be profited thereby, knowing that *“afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness”* (Heb 12:11).

The hand of the Lord often comes to strengthen the soul and lift up the spirit towards eternal things. May we feel His gracious hand dealing with us! His divine presence and indwelling Spirit bear the soul heavenwards as upon eagle wings, filling us with heavenly joy and erasing the sorrows of earth. In the Spirit, the invisible appears, and the visible loses its power over us. How good is the Shepherd’s hand to all His needy sheep.

O that our Quiet Time may always be a hallowed season of sweet communion with the Lord! Even at this moment I feel a deep sense of need: my graces languish, my corruptions rage, my faith is weak, my devotion is cold. I need His healing hand upon me. That glorious hand which created the world can re-create my mind. The almighty hand which upholds the earth can sustain my flagging spirit. My Saviour’s hand will do this, and more!

Why should I not feel His loving hand leading me moment by moment? Come, my soul, look to Him alone and cease from all thy anxious fears. Behold Him, the Risen Lord! He is alive for evermore! May I put my hand in His nail-scarred hand. Hear Him say, *“Peace! I give (you) eternal life; (you will) never perish, neither shall any man pluck (you) out of my hand”* (John 14:27; 10:28).

THOUGHT: My times are in Thy hand, O Lord.

PRAYER: Father, may I submit to all that Thy hand giveth to me.

TO LIVE IS CHRIST

The believer did not always live to Christ. He began to do so only after God the Holy Spirit convinced him of sin, and brought him to trust in the Saviour's atoning blood, and to receive His new life. From that moment of the new birth the man begins to live to Christ. This is the witness and experience of every true child of God. Is this your experience?

To the believer, Jesus is precious above all else: He is the Pearl of great price (Matt 13:46), the Chiefest among ten thousand (Song of Sol 5:10), the Lover of the soul, our Redeemer God. Our new life came from Him, belongs to Him, and must be lived to His glory: nothing else is worthy of His unspeakable love for us. The Apostle Paul was fully convinced of it and so should we: "*For to me to live is Christ.*"

Paul's words mean more than most men think. They imply that the aim and end of his life was Christ—nay, his very life was Jesus! He is *the* life, the living and true God, life eternal (John 14:6; 1 John 5:20). In the words of an ancient saint, he did eat, and drink, and sleep eternal life! Jesus was his very breath, soul of his soul, heart of his heart, life of his life. This is the normal, fully converted Christian's life.

Dear reader, can you honestly say that for you to live is Christ? In your business or profession, are you doing it for Him? There are many Christians who obey this principle in some measure. But God looks for those who would live *wholly* for Christ, like Paul. This alone is the full and true Christian life. Away with feeble, lukewarm, half-hearted "Christian living."

THOUGHT: Am I really, fully, living for Christ?

PRAYER: Lord, here I give myself to Thee, promising to live only in Thee, and to Thee. Make me ready and willing to go for Thee, even to die for Thee. All glory be unto Thee. Amen.

CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH

In the language of Heaven, the Church is called the wife of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 19:7, 9). Observe the intense affection with which Christ, the heavenly Solomon, addresses His bride the Church:

- a. **“My sister”**: one near to me by ties of nature, partaker of the same sympathies; by my Incarnation which makes me bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh; one whom I knew of old, and over whom I watched from her earliest infancy.
- b. **“My spouse”**: one nearest and dearest, united to me by the tenderest bands of love; my sweet companion, part of my own self by heavenly betrothal, in which I have espoused thee unto myself in righteousness; one taken from among the daughters, embraced by arms of love, mine for ever.

See! Our royal Kinsman is not ashamed of us in our lowly defiled estate. He does not conceal His delights in us; He speaks with rapture of His possession, the Church. He delights in the sons of men, His own chosen ones. He, the Great Shepherd, sought us because we are His sheep. He came *“to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10) because that which was lost was His from long ages before.

The Church is the exclusive portion of her Lord. None else may claim that partnership, or pretend to share her love. Lord Jesus, thy Church delights to have it so! We thank Thee for being our heavenly Bridegroom, our beloved Spouse, our everlasting Head. We thank Thee for calling us to be *“sister”* and *“spouse.”* By these two sacred holdfasts, our Lord assures us of our eternal security. He neither can nor will ever let us go. O beloved, hasten to return the hallowed flame of His love.

THOUGHT: “O love that wilt not let me go.” (George Matheson)

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for Thy great love for me. Make me to be grateful in both word and deed.

“WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH”

Today let us begin with a solemn prayer: Lord, open Thou mine eyes to see the *“iniquity of holy things.”* It is humbling and profitable for us to take a close look at this strange and sad sight. The iniquities of our public worship, its hypocrisy, dead formality, lukewarmness, irreverence, wandering of heart and disrespect of God—these make a whole catalogue of the *“iniquity of holy things”!*

But that’s not all. Consider further our work for the Lord, its pretense, selfishness, carelessness, sloppiness, slackness, unbelief—what a mass of defilement it adds to our first account. Our private devotions, their half-heartedness, coldness, neglect, sleepiness, and vanity—these mount up into a nauseating heap of revolting refuse. For some church-goers, perhaps some congregations, perhaps myself (!), they add up to the total experience of *“holy things.”*

With some Christians, the heart of devotion very much resembles the garden of the sluggard. Look! It is a sorry sight to see noxious weeds creeping and overspreading my garden. (Yes, care not to look into your neighbour’s. Like charity, let’s begin at home.) With holy motives and God-given desires, let us, with the Holy Spirit’s help, come before the Lord and plead for mercy. Every noxious weed of iniquity must go as we confess them to the Lord.

We are comforted with the fact that when the High Priest bore the iniquity of holy things, he wore upon his brow the words, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” Even so, while our Lord Jesus bears our sins, He presents before His Father’s face, not our unholiness, but His HOLINESS. O for grace to view our great High Priest with the eye of faith!

THOUGHT: God is a Spirit. He cannot be deceived or mocked by man.
PRAYER: Lord, open Thou mine eyes to see my own *“iniquities of holy things.”* Help me to come to Thee confessing them one by one.

“THY LOVE IS BETTER”

Nothing gives the believer so much joy as fellowship with the Lord. He has enjoyment in Him, more than others have in the common mercies of life. He can be glad both in God’s gifts and God’s works; but separately or added together, their delight does not compare with that in the matchless Person of his Lord. From Him he receives heavenly wine which no earthly vineyard can ever yield, and heavenly bread which no earthly bakery can ever produce.

Have you tasted the sweetness of communion with our Beloved? O Christian reader, turn from the joys of earth to Jesus; forsake the husks of earthly things for the pure delights of the heavenly manna. What is the chaff to the wheat? The crystal chip to the true diamond? The transient dream to the glorious reality? The merriment of society at its best cannot compare with our Lord Jesus in His lowly estate!

Earthly joys fade even before you have found any satisfaction in them. Our highest, purest, and most enduring joys must come from the Lord Creator. One day He will re-instate the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God. And from a pure river of the water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev 22:1) we shall drink its crystal clear water. These, and more, much more, are promised to us who love the Lord.

All this will be the portion of God’s people, the people of His love. Friend, how well do you love the Lord Jesus? Love Him now with heart and soul and mind and strength. Then pause and thank Him again and again. Why? We love Him, because He first loved us. And His love is far better!

THOUGHT: Why do I spend more time on my earthly hobbies than with my Saviour?

PRAYER: Lord, increase my love for Thee.

“I WILL BE YOUR GOD!”

Christian! Here is something that satisfies, more than all that you can ever wish for. Ponder again what the Lord Almighty is saying: *“I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”* This is God’s promise to His people, far exceeding wish or thought. The Psalmist David would say to such an offer, *“My cup runneth over...I have more than heart can ask.”*

In Christ we possess all things. All our fondest wishes and highest desires will be met by the Lord. Our cup runneth over because the immeasurable wealth of God will more than fill and overflow it. And He says, *“I will be your God!”* Ask yourself: *“Am I not complete when the Lord is mine? Do I want anything else besides God? Is not His all-sufficiency enough to satisfy me, if all else should fail?”*

Come, my friend, here is music fit for heaven in God’s promise, for He is the Maker of Heaven. No other music can compare with His promise: *“I will be your God!”* Call it what you will: a sea of bliss, a shoreless ocean of pure delight. You can never exhaust God’s blessings even after ten thousand years. In that eternal day, you will behold the beauty of the Lord, and through endless ages you will *“enquire in his temple”* (Ps 27:4).

Of God’s promises, *“I will be your God”* is the masterpiece. Its enjoyment brings Heaven to earth, and will make Heaven Heaven. Daily live and walk in the light of God’s promise. No more should we plan and plot our own future on earth. Live as citizens of Heaven, children of the King.

THOUGHT: Do I want God to be my God?

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee that as the Maker of Heaven, Thou condescend to be my God.

MONDAY, JANUARY 17

PSALM 100

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

*The good Master
looks for good servants.*

SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS

Delight in divine service is a token of divine acceptance. Those who serve God with a sad countenance are not serving Him rightly. They make a show of homage but the life is absent. Our God requires no slaves to grace His throne. He is the Lord of love, and would have all His servants appear before Him dressed in garments of joy. His angels serve Him with songs, not with groans.

How are you serving Him? That service which is not spontaneous and joyous is disservice. The Lord looks at the heart, and if we serve by compulsion or some other persuasion, and not out of love, He will reject our offering. Service with cheerfulness is heart-service, pleasing to the Lord. He knows those who are sincere and serve with joyful willingness.

The Lord has battles to be fought. If a man be driven to the battle-front, he is no patriot. But he who marches into the fray with keen eye and beaming face, singing the battle-song more than proves his patriotism. Cheerfulness doubles one's strength: "*the joy of the Lord is my strength*" (Neh 8:10). Cheerfulness is the remover of many difficulties. It is oil to the wheel, balm to the weary and worn. "*In every thing, by prayer and supplication*" (Phil 4:6), with cheerfulness, our heavy tasks become light.

The man who is cheerful in his service of God proves his inner obedience. As he serves, he sings,

*"Make me to walk in Thy commands,
'Tis a delightful heavenly road."*

Reader, how do you serve the Lord? Is it with sadness or with gladness? Remember, the joy of the Lord is your strength. We serve a good Master.

THOUGHT: The time to serve is NOW!

PRAYER: May I serve Thee, my good Master, willingly and cheerfully.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 18

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-8

PSALM 23

"My reward is with me."

A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Some believers live in doubt and needless fears. They may say: "I fear I shall never enter Heaven." Is this what you are thinking? Fear not! All the people of God shall enter there. A dying saint said, "I have no fear of going Home, I have sent all before me. God's finger is on the latch of my door, and I am ready to enter." Praise God for such simple steadfast faith in His promises.

"But," said his friend, "are you not afraid lest you should miss your inheritance?" "Nay," said the dying man. "Nay, there is a crown in Heaven which the angel Gabriel could not wear. It will fit no head but mine. There is one throne which the Apostle Paul could not fill. It was made for me, and I shall have it."

O Christian, your inheritance is secure, reserved for you (1 Pet 1:4). What a joyous thought! "But might I forfeit it?" No, not at all! The child of God cannot lose it. We are "*kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*" (1 Pet 1:5). God's Word cannot fail. We can rely on it. Therefore "*rejoice, though now for a season, ... ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations*" (1 Pet 1:6).

Dear reader, if you are a child of the Father, doubt not! If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and none other, and have repented of your sins, you are of the family of God's people. A place in Heaven is yours, reserved; a crown of righteousness is laid up for you. No one can take your inheritance away from you. Every blood-bought believer will have his portion. The Lord will see to it.

THOUGHT: There shall be no vacant thrones in Heaven when God's elect are all gathered in.

PRAYER: Forgive my unbelief, Heavenly Father.

“IN MY FLESH SHALL I SEE GOD”

Job was given a foresight of the believer’s resurrection some 2,000 years before Christ. The Holy Spirit enabled him to utter prophetic words of faith and comfort while his own confidence in God was severely tested through many trying days. With perfect assurance he said, *“I shall see God.”* This is the sum and substance of Heaven, the joy and hope of all believers.

But now they see Him in the ordinances, by faith. They behold Him in communion and in prayer. But there in Heaven they shall see Him as He is, face to face. Then their joy will be complete, for they shall be made completely like their Redeemer. This is the promise: *“we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him...”* (1 John 3:2). *“We shall be changed”* (1 Cor 15:52). Can we wish for more?

And we shall also see Him. What more can we desire? This is the believers’ blessed hope, especially we believers living in these “last days.” For us may well befall the most stupendous and glorious experience—that of being changed and caught up without having to go through death (1 Thess 4:16-17). With such a prospect we can say with the Apostle Paul: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Rom 8:18). By faith Job saw it. David also, *“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness”* (Ps 17:15). For God’s people there is glory ahead: we shall see God. Until then, let us serve Him.

THOUGHT: In my glorious body, I shall see God!

PRAYER: Increase my faith in Thy wonderful promises, O Lord.

OF SEED AND SOIL

My soul, examine thyself this morning by the light of God's Word. Thou has received the Word with joy; thy feelings have been stirred and a lively impression has been made. But remember: to receive the Word in the ear is one thing; to receive Jesus into thy very soul is quite another. Superficial feeling often goes with inward hardness of heart. A lively impression of the Word is not always a lasting one.

The seed which falls on stony ground with scanty soil takes root but its downward growth is impossible. The plant itself pushes upward for a time, but without inward moisture to support the roots, it withers away. Is this my case? Am I making a fair show in the flesh without an inner life? Strong growth is both upwards and downwards. Outward piety must be rooted in inner fidelity and love to the Lord.

A "Christian exterior" must be the reflection of a heart softened by God's grace and made fertile for spiritual growth. A hard, stony, unbroken, unsanctified heart will not allow the seed of God's Word to flourish. An external "godliness" that grows rapidly must raise concern and serious question: is there a corresponding internal and deep work of the Holy Spirit?

The good seed of God's Word can only flourish and endure, and eventually bear fruit, if it is adequately supported by the energy of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Only God's blessed Spirit can make the "soil of the heart" receptive, moist and nourishing for growth. Only His continual watering and fertilizing can sustain the plant so as to withstand the scorching heat of trial and temptation, the storms of ridicule and persecution. Good seed needs the support of good soil!

THOUGHT: Is my heart good soil for the good seed of God's Word?
PRAYER: O heavenly Sower, plough me, then implant the truth into me, and let me yield Thee a bounteous harvest.

OUR GREAT INTERCESSOR

How encouraging is the thought of the Redeemer's never-ceasing intercession for us. When we pray He pleads for us. When we are not praying He does not forget us, but continues to advocate our cause. Our ultimate security is His continual concern, for "*he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*" (Heb 7:25).

This is one aspect of our Lord's ministry which needs to be preached on more frequently for the help and comfort of some suffering or struggling saints who may feel isolated, neglected or greatly discouraged. Consider how Jesus addressed Peter: "*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.*" Herein is a warning of some impending assault by the evil one. "*But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not...*"

Hallelujah! What a Saviour who, by His supplications, shields us from unseen dangers and assailants. Now seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, our Lord intercedes without ceasing to plead our cause and uphold us so that our faith fail not. How shall we thank Him because He never holds His peace, but day and night points to the nail prints He bears for our sakes, and pleads our cause before the Father's presence. From Peter's case we see that our Saviour "preempts" Satan: He checks the wily foe even in his very desire, to nip it in the bud. Did you not wonder how your faith has been preserved these years? He is our Great Intercessor who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

THOUGHT: Jesus is praying for me.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I thank Thee for pleading my case against unseen enemies, frustrating their evil plans, and rendering their snares ineffective.

“YE ARE CHRIST’S”

Today we are reminded by the Apostle Paul: “*Ye are Christ’s.*” We are not our own, but we belong to our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We are His by donation: the Father gave us to His Son. We are His by the purchase of blood paid on Calvary’s cross for our redemption. We are His by dedication, for we have consecrated ourselves to Him. We are His by relation, for we bear His name and have been made His brethren and joint-heirs.

Dear reader, labour to show the world that you belong to Christ the Lord. When tempted to sin, reply: “I cannot do this great wickedness, for I am Christ’s.” When wealth is before you to be won by sin, touch it not! Are you exposed to difficulties and dangers? Stand fast! You are Christ’s! All around you may be idleness, but say to yourself: “No, I must be about my Master’s business, for I am Christ’s!” Keep busy for Him.

When the siren songs of worldly pleasure are calling, reply, “Your pop and rock, your discos and karaokes, they cannot charm me. I belong to Christ.” There is much to be done for the Lord. When the cause of Christ calls, give yourself without reserve. The Lord has prospered you; give to those in need, for you are Christ’s. Be true to your Lord in speech, conduct, conversation, lifestyle. You belong to Him!

Let everything about you be so redolent of Heaven, that all who see you may know that you are no worldling, but are Christ’s. May we by daily deeds of kindness and acts of selfless love, and bearing His countenance of holiness, be clearly seen by all that we are Christ’s.

THOUGHT: “In the world but not of the world.”

PRAYER: Lord, keep me faithful always.

A CITY SET ON A HILL

Christians ought not to court publicity for their own virtue or attract notice for their zeal. At the same time, it is a sin to hide what God has given us for the good of others. Be a “*city...set on a hill,*” a “*candle...on a candlestick.*” Let our light be seen near and far.

There is a place for retirement and modest obscurity, but let not any believer use these excuses to hide Christ. Hiding the precious truths within us is a sin against others and an offence against God. Let not a “nervous temperament” or a “retiring disposition” dim your light and render you useless to the church.

Our Lord was not “shy” or ashamed of you. Why then should your shyness seal your lips of witness? If you do not have a trumpet mouth, yet use the still small voice. You may not be cut for the pulpit, or to face a crowd. Yet say with Peter and John, “*Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee*” (Acts 3:6).

You cannot climb the mountain top or ascend some great pulpit to preach a sermon, but there are needy people like the woman of Samaria by Sychar's well (John 4:4-14). Opportunities abound for you to speak a word for your Saviour, in your own place of abode, your place of work. Has not the Lord given you to drink of the water of life? Give others to drink!

Think, pray for someone in need, whom you may help. Hide not your talent. Trade wisely, diligently, and bring in good interest to your Lord and Master. In speaking for God you refresh yourselves, cheer the saints, bless sinners, and honour the Saviour. You are a city of God set on a hill.

THOUGHT: Dumb children are a sorrow to their parents.

PRAYER: Lord, loosen my tongue, for Thy glory.

THE LORD HATH BROKEN THY WORKS

Solomon's ships had returned in safety, but Jehoshaphat's never reached the land of gold. Providence favours one, and frustrates another, in the same business and at the same spot. Yet, the Great Ruler remains ever good and wise: He is just and fair to all. May we therefore bless the Lord for broken ships as well as prosperous ones. It is not for us to envy others' success, or murmur at our own loss. Whatever our lot, we are precious in the Lord's sight, even though our schemes have ended in disappointment.

Now you may wonder: why did Jehoshaphat fail? The answer to this question holds the secret of much of the suffering of God's people. Jehoshaphat had joined in alliance with a sinful family. The Lord sent a prophet to warn him, "*Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works.*" Jehoshaphat appears to have heeded the Lord's chastisement, for 1 Kings 22:49 tells us that Jehoshaphat refused to allow his servants to sail in the same vessels with the wicked king.

What lesson has the Lord for us today? Jehoshaphat's disobedience is a solemn warning to God's people, to avoid being unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-18). A life of misery is usually the lot of those who join with unbelievers in marriage, business partnership, or in any other way of their own devising. May our love and loyalty for the Lord Jesus be such that we may follow Him wholly, and be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from unbelievers. Do you think this is a hard thing? Think! To do otherwise is to go the way of Jehoshaphat: in the end, sadly you will be told, "*The LORD hath broken thy works.*"

THOUGHT: It is less costly and painful to learn from others' mistakes.
PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to learn from Jehoshaphat's mistake.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25

2 KINGS 6:1-7

MATTHEW 17:24-27

Have faith in the Lord.

OUR WONDER-WORKING GOD

The axe-head seemed hopelessly lost, forever buried in the depths of the Jordan. And it was borrowed! The honour of Elisha's prophetic band was imperilled, the name of the Lord was at stake. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." Our God is the Lord of all creation, the Master over the physical world. He, and He alone, could make the iron swim upwards against the law of gravity. Remember our Lord's words? "*With God all things are possible*" (Mark 10:27).

A Christian man was faced with a task far exceeding his strength: even the idea of attempting it seemed absurd. Yet he was called to it, and by faith in the Lord, he rose to the occasion. God honoured his faith, sent unlooked-for help, and "*the iron did swim.*" Another was in grievous financial straits. Friends let him down, but faith led him to the unfailing Helper, and the trouble was averted, his footsteps were enlarged, and "*the iron did swim.*"

A third example: it was a sorrowful case of depravity. He had taught, reproved, warned, invited, and interceded, but in vain. Old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon. The stubborn spirit would not relent. It was only by earnest supplication and the agony of prayer that a blessed answer was sent from heaven. The hard heart was finally softened, "*the iron did swim.*"

Dear reader, what heavy matter is weighing you down? Bring it to the God of the prophets. Do not hold back. Our God lives to help His saints. Believe in the Lord of hosts! Call on the blessed name of Jesus, and you will see God manifest His wonder-working power. Come to Him in faith, see how the iron can swim, to His great glory. Ours is a wonder-working God!

THOUGHT: With God nothing is impossible.

PRAYER: Forgive me, Father, for doubting Thy power. May I always come to Thee believing and trusting in Thee.

“MIGHTY TO SAVE”

By the words “*to save*” we understand the whole of the great work of salvation, from the first holy desire to complete sanctification. Christ the Lord is not only “*mighty to save*” those who repent, but He is able to make men repent. He will carry those to Heaven who believe. But He is mighty to give men new hearts and to work faith in them; to make the man who hates holiness love it, and the despiser bend the knee before Him. Our Lord is mighty to save, to quicken and sanctify. And he who is sanctified will be satisfied!

We see His power in the after-work. The life of a believer is a series of miracles wrought by the mighty God. He is mighty to make His people holy, and then to keep them holy, and He continues to preserve them until He consummates their eternal salvation in Heaven. Christ’s mighty power does not lie in making a believer and then leaving him to fend for himself. But He who begins a good work will perfect it at the last (Phil 1:6). Our Saviour is mighty to save!

Consider this: He implants life in a dead soul, sustains its divine existence, continues to strengthen it against every debilitating sin, causes it to grow in grace and sanctification, until finally it is released from earth and perfected in glory. Our Lord has power to do all this, and more. Are you praying for someone? Do not be discouraged because nothing seems to happen. Never give up! Our Lord is able and mighty to save. Lay hold on His mighty arm. Does your own problem trouble you? Fear not, for His grace is sufficient for you. Whether to begin, or to carry on, or to bring to final perfection, our Lord is “*mighty to save.*” The best proof of His power is the fact that He saved you! And He has power to save many more!

THOUGHT: Is anything too hard for the Lord?

PRAYER: Lord, give me more faith to trust and not to faint.

“I CRIED UNTO THE LORD”

Sinking times are praying times with the Lord’s servants. Peter neglected prayer embarking upon his venturesome journey, but when he began to sink, his danger made him cry out to the Lord. In times of bodily pain and mental anguish, we are naturally driven to prayer. The hunted fox for shelter flees to its hole, the bird to the wood; so the tried believer hastens to the mercy seat, even Heaven’s great harbour of refuge. Every weather-beaten, storm-tossed vessel has a safe haven there.

Short prayers are long enough. Peter’s prayer had only three words, but they were sufficient for his purpose. Not length but strength is the secret of effective prayer. An acute sense of need is a mighty teacher of brevity. Our prayers would be all the better with less of the tail feathers of pride and more wing. In prayer verbiage is chaff. Precious things lie in small compass. Many a long address called prayer could have been uttered in three words, like Peter’s. Beware vain repetitions, as the heathens do: they will not be heard for their much speaking (Matt 6:7).

Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. Immediately the cry of help goes out, the ear of Jesus hears, and with Him ear and heart go together, and His hand does not linger. “*The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth...he also will hear their cry, and will save them*” (Ps 145:18-19). Are you almost sinking into the waters of affliction? Are the storms of working life buffeting you? Take your eyes off the raging of wind and wave, fix your eyes on the Lord. He is only a look away. All is not lost when He is near. Cry unto Him and He will speedily answer. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord!

THOUGHT: Pray without ceasing.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be instant in prayer, in season and out of season.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28

2 SAMUEL 7:18-29

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20-22

*“Lord, do
as Thou hast said.”*

GOD’S PROMISES ARE YEA AND AMEN

God’s promises were never meant to be thrown into the waste paper basket. He made them for our blessing. Gold is minted to be used as currency. Nothing pleases our Lord better than to see His promises put in circulation, appreciated and trusted. He loves to see His children say, *“Lord,...do as Thou hast said.”* We glorify God when we plead His promises.

Do you think that God will be any the poorer for giving you the riches He has promised? Or any the less holy for imparting His holiness to you? Or any the less pure for washing you from your sins? Can any of these things be possible? He says to us, *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”* (Isa 1:18). Dear reader, take the Lord at His Word: He is faithful and true.

By faith lay hold of God’s promise of pardon. Do not delay, saying, *“This is an incredible promise. I wonder if it is true?”* Rather go straight to the throne of grace with it, and plead, *“Lord, here is Thy promise. Do as Thou has said,”* and the Lord is pleased. If we doubt or neglect God’s promise, we dishonour Him. But when we hasten to the throne of grace and cry, *“Lord, I am unworthy of Thy promise, but Thou hast said it,”* our desire shall be granted.

Our God is like a banker. He delights to cash His own notes. Present our petitions to Him, as cheques to be cashed. Our heavenly Banker will gladly pay us in full. Do you know this? Our God is never impatient by our reminding Him of His promises. On the contrary, He delights to hear our cries of need. He is more ready to answer than we are to ask. God is never tired of keeping His promises: in Christ they are yea and amen.

THOUGHT: The sun is not weary of shining.

PRAYER: To Thy promise I cling, Thy Word I believe.

“I GIVE MYSELF UNTO PRAYER”

Lying tongues were busy trying to destroy the reputation of David, but he did not defend himself. He committed the matter to the Lord. Prayer is the best reply to lying words of men’s hatred. The Psalmist “gave (himself) unto prayer,” throwing his heart and soul, mind and strength, into the holy exercise. Like the returning Jacob, he wrestled in prayer. Thus, and thus only, should be our attitude before the throne of grace.

Here is an important lesson in prayer. Many of our prayers are quite ineffective. Why is this so? One reason is this: our “proper self” is absent. As a shadow has no power because it has no substance, even so our prayer from which our proper self is absent, is utterly ineffective. Let us examine our attitude in prayer. Is there a soul-deep agonizing earnestness, a consuming desire, and a burning affectionate love toward the Lord in our prayer?

“Fervent prayer, like a cannon fired at the gates of Heaven, makes them fly open.” Too often we yield to distractions in prayer. Our thoughts go roving, and we make little impact in the desired direction. Like quicksilver our minds flow rapidly this way and that. There is no proper focus or concentration or power, unlike the cannon aimed at Heaven’s gates. Ineffectual prayer injures us and insults God.

To give myself unto prayer means to continue and persevere. David did not cry once and give up. His holy clamour continued till it brought down Heaven’s blessing. Prayer must not be casual or occasional, but our daily urgent and serious business. Be immersed in the holy atmosphere of the throne, and pray without ceasing. Lord, teach us to pray!

THOUGHT: Inattention in prayer is like a petitioner before the King playing with a toy in his hand.

PRAYER: Teach me, Lord, to give myself fully unto prayer.

THE LORD IS MY HELPER

Today the Lord has gracious words of assurance for you and me. He says, *"I will help thee."* What is your problem? Is anything too hard for the Lord? When we consider what He has done already, we have the answer from the Lord Himself: "Why, I bought thee with My blood. I died for thee, and if I have done the greater, will I not do the lesser?" The Apostle Paul's words say the same: *"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"* (Rom 8:32). How shall He not readily come to our aid?

God's help comes to us from His great loving heart. He chose us before the world began. He included us in His covenant. His own Son laid aside His glory and became a man for our sakes. At Calvary He gave His life for us. If He did all this, He will surely help us now. If we have a need of a thousand times as much help, He will still not deny us. Our present need is little compared with what He is ready to give. Nothing is too hard for the Lord! Fear not O ye of little faith! Whenever in doubt remember His loving words: *"I will help thee."* His promise will never go to waste.

Consider, finally, who our Helper is. *"There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms"* (Deut 33:26-27). O my soul, is not this enough? Do you need more strength than the omnipotence of the eternal God, the One who rules supreme in the heavens? He is the Creator, who is from everlasting to everlasting, who *"fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding"* (Isa 40:28). It is He who says, *"I will help thee."* Respond, then, believing, *"The Lord is my helper."*

THOUGHT: Is anything too hard for my Lord?

PRAYER: Thou art my great Helper. May I run to Thee with all my needs, whether big or small.

MONDAY, JANUARY 31

DANIEL 9:25-27

ROMANS 5:8-12, 19-21

"Salvation is of the Lord."

ONLY CHRIST DIED FOR US

Blessed be His name, the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). In Him was no sin: neither original nor actual sin had defiled Him. Therefore death had no claim on Him. No man could have taken His life from Him justly, and none could have slain Him by force. *"I lay it down of myself"* (John 10:18), said our Good Shepherd. *"Greater love hath no man than this..."* (John 15:13).

Herein is the love of God revealed, the mystery of the atonement: God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). Man sins and his Maker suffers. Justice was offended by us, but found its satisfaction in Christ. Nothing that we could have done could have availed for the removal of sin: not rivers of tears, mountains of offerings, lifetimes of service—nothing but the blood of Jesus.

At Calvary He was cut off for us, and the cause of wrath was cut off at once, for sin was put away for ever. Herein is God's wisdom: by substitution—God dying for man—full atonement was made, once and for all. No more is there any need for penance, self-mortification, pilgrimages, or any other man-made ways of gaining merit with God. The Lamb of God has paid our debt in full. Jesus paid it all. On the cross He cried, *"It is finished!"*

Dear reader, do you see the Saviour bleeding for you, in your stead? Look to Him, God's own Son, your representative, bearing away your sins, every one of them. Look only to Him, not to any other person, not to any priest or pastor, not to Mary or any beautiful image. Only Jesus! No one else died for you, only He, our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: *"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."*

PRAYER: Thank You, Father, for sending the very Son of God to die for me. He alone can save me.

“I LOOKED, AND, LO, A LAMB!”

The Apostle John was privileged to look within the gates of Heaven, and the first object that caught his gaze was a Lamb. *“I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!”* In Heaven, the chief object of contemplation is our Lord Jesus, *“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* Nothing else attracted the Apostle’s attention as the presence of the One who hath redeemed us by His blood.

The Lamb is the theme of the songs of angels and saints in Heaven. On earth, dear reader, He is your daily joy—joy even in the midst of adversity and death. Within the sacred pages of the Book, through your tear-dimmed eyes, see the Lamb of God taking away your sins, healing your soul’s diseases. Your sorrow turns to joy at the sight of the Lamb! Before too long God will wipe away all tears, and you will see the Lamb exalted on His throne, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But you need not wait till then. Today you may hold fellowship with Jesus the Lord and enjoy a foretaste of Heaven. *“Where Jesus is, ’tis Heaven there!”* wrote Charles J. Butler. In an earlier day, Samuel Rutherford wrote, *“Heaven and Christ are the same thing.”* To be with Christ is to be in Heaven. For what is Heaven without the Lamb of God? And what earthly abode is not transformed by His divine presence? To you He says, *“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* With Him, Heaven comes down and glory fills the soul!

“O Hallelujah, yes, ’tis Heav’n
'Tis Heav’n to know my sins forgiv’n;
On land or sea, what matters where?
Where Jesus is, ’tis Heaven there!”

THOUGHT: God can wipe away all tears.

PRAYER: Lord, make my home “a Heaven on earth.”

THE EVER PRESENT PERIL

David saw Bathsheba and that was his undoing. Would a lesser mortal have done better? “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Cor 10:12). Temptation is never far away. Whether at home or abroad, deadly snares are laid by the Tempter for the unwary. Morning or evening, perils await us. Only those are well kept who keep close to the Lord, but woe to those who venture forth in their own strength. The highway of self-confidence is littered with ruined lives. Beware!

David should have been fighting the Lord’s battles, but he tarried behind at Jerusalem. Idleness is a dangerous luxury no soldier can afford. “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop” and “stagnant waters breed noxious weeds.” See the king of Israel taking his ease at the close of the day on the palace roof-top. In a moment, with his guard down, his roving eye led him to fall, and great was the fall thereof. Does not the Word of God warn us against “*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*” (1 John 2:16)?

Temptation knows no barriers or bounds. Not even the holy sanctuary can keep out idle thoughts from intruding into the portals of men’s hearts. Satan can climb roof-tops, enter closets, penetrate any secret or sacred place. The wiles of our adversary are without limit: he walks about “*as a roaring lion ... seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet 5:8). And even if we could shut out that foul fiend, our own inborn corruptions are enough to work our ruin. Beware, therefore, of evening temptations, as much as we must beware of daytime allurements. No place is altogether secure from sin and temptation. We need the blessed Holy Spirit to be our watchman and guardian, by night as well as by day!

THOUGHT: Keep busy for the Lord.

PRAYER: Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.

REST FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Heaven will be different, so different from even the best on earth! Here we are born to toil and drudgery. But in God's Land, prepared and reserved for those who love Him, fatigue is unknown. Here we may serve Him with zeal, but our strength is not equal to the task. "*The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.*" Our constant cry is, "Help me, O my God: consider my little strength." We tire ever so easily.

Yet much remains to be done for God: "*The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few*" (Matt 9:37). If the worker is earnest, he will have much labour, more than enough for his power. His cry is, "I am not wearied of the labour, but I am wearied in it." But, Christian reader, our weary work day lasts not for ever; our light affliction is but for a moment (2 Cor 4:17). Soon the night cometh when our toil will cease for ever.

For today's faithful labourer God's rest comes tomorrow. Here our rest is partial; in God's Land it is perfect. Here our life is always unsettled—we have not yet attained. There all are perfectly and permanently at rest. Ah, toil-worn labourer of God, be not downcast, but look up! Up there is the Land of eternal rest. Here our pleasant holidays are, at best, imperfect: every vacation is cut short by the affliction of work, and more work. On earth we have no lasting repose. Our rest is in Heaven.

In Heaven the Lord awaits His children. There everything is immortal: forever our eyes will be undimmed, the voice unfaltering, the heart unwavering, our bodies "like His" forever beyond the toll of weariness and fatigue. We shall be forever at rest, forever free from earth's toil and trouble, forever with the Lord. The Eternal Sabbath rest will have begun.

THOUGHT: Our labours on earth will soon come to an end.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to "*spend and be spent*" for Thy Kingdom.

HE EXPOUNDED THE SCRIPTURES

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus had a most profitable journey. They had the Lord as their travelling companion. He, the best of teachers, walked and talked with them: *“beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* Our Lord is the divine Teacher, the one Interpreter of a thousand, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He did not think it a mean thing to speak to a class of two persons; neither would He now refuse to be the Teacher of one, if you would only ask.

Our heavenly Instructor uses one textbook, even the Book of books, for there is no better, no other book to give us the truth. All needful truth for living this life and the life to come is contained in this Book. Do you love the Book; do you have Him as your Teacher? He knows by His omniscience the most instructive way of teaching. In Moses and the prophets, and the rest of the Book, are the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3:15). No speculation, human reasoning or philosophy, or any sort of meditation, is able to make us wise unto salvation—only God’s holy Word.

The two disciples, above all others, were blessed on that day. The Master Teacher expounded the things concerning Himself. As the saying goes, “diamond cuts diamond” and what could be more admirable? The Master of the house unlocked His own doors, conducted the guests to His table, and there He supped with them, to their eternal profit. We too may sup with Him: *“I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”* (Rev 3:20). He has delightful dainties for us!

THOUGHT: *“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”*

PRAYER: Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.

SEEK YE THE LORD WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND

Tell me where you lost the company of Christ the Lord, and I will tell you the most likely place to find Him. Have you lost Him in the closet by restraining prayer? Then it is there you must seek and find Him. Did you lose Christ by some sin? You will find Him in no other way but by giving up that sin. Seek the Holy Spirit's help to mortify the member in which the particular lust doth dwell. Did you lose Christ by neglecting the Scriptures? Find Him again by returning to the Scriptures. "Look for a thing where you dropped it, and it is there."

So look for the Lord where you last met with Him. He has not gone away, but He awaits the return of every errant child. But it is hard work to go back to Him. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan tells us the pilgrim found the piece of the road back to the Arbour of Ease, where he lost his roll, the hardest he had ever travelled. Twenty miles onward is easier than trying to retrace one lost mile. But seek the Lord we must! Without Him we are forever lost. Isaiah says, "*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*" (Isa 55:6).

When you have found the Master, take care to cling close to Him. Never part again with a Friend so precious as He. His presence is so sweet, His words are so comforting, and His company so dear! Watch, and wait upon Him every moment of everyday, for fear of losing sight of Him. Without Christ you are like a sheep without a shepherd, or like a tree without water, or a child without a father. Seek Him, then, with thy whole heart, and He will be found of thee. Only give thyself thoroughly to the search, and verily thou shalt discover Him to thy everlasting joy.

THOUGHT: None but Christ satisfies.

PRAYER: Lord, help me never to depart from Thee.

THE SCHOOL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In Luke 24:27, we read of the Lord opening the Scriptures to the two disciples. In verse 45, He opens the understanding of the assembled apostles and others that were with them. In opening the scriptures, He has many fellow-labourers. But in opening the understanding, He stands alone. Men can bring the Scriptures to mind, but the Lord alone can open the heart to receive the Word.

Other teachers reach the ear, but our Lord instructs the heart. They deal with the outward letter, but He implants an inward taste for the truth, without which we cannot perceive its savour and spirit. In the School of the Holy Spirit, the most unlearned become skilled scholars of grace and truth. To them the Lord unfolds the mysteries of the Kingdom, and grants anointing with the divine eye salve by which they are enabled to behold the invisible.

Happy is he who has his understanding opened and illumined by the Master! Men of the world with their profound learning are ignorant of eternal things. Carnal reason, like a veil over their eyes, blinds them to the truth of God. Such was our case before the blessed Holy Spirit came and lifted the veil and took away our blindness. Truth was to us a thing of beauty in the dark, unseen and unloved. But thanks be unto God who opened our understanding and delivered us from the scales of dark ignorance.

Have you been to the School of the Holy Spirit to have your understanding opened? No other school or college or university can teach you the truth of God. Only this one, the School of our Lord, can teach us what is to be believed, as well as enable us to believe it. Let us sit at Jesus' feet and by earnest prayer plead for the Spirit's help, that our dullness may be removed, and our feeble understanding enlivened.

THOUGHT: The foolishness of God is wiser than men.

PRAYER: Open mine eyes that I may see.

THE SACRIFICE OF BLOOD

Abel sanctified his work to the glory of God by offering a sacrifice of blood. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. Here we see, exceedingly clear and distinct, this early type of our Lord. Like the first rays of light at sunrise, it clearly manifests the great fact that the sun is coming. In Abel, a shepherd offering a sacrifice acceptable unto God, we see our Lord offering Himself before the Father as our sacrifice, to which Jehovah ever hath respect.

Abel was hated by his brother without a cause; even so was our Saviour: *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not”* (John 1:11). The natural man hated Him in whom the Spirit of grace was found, and rested not until His blood had been shed. Abel sprinkled his altar and offered a blood sacrifice; therein we see a picture of the Lord Jesus slain by the enmity of man. Let us weep over Him as we view Him slain by mankind’s cruel hatred.

Abel’s blood speaketh. The Lord said unto Cain, *“the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.”* So does the blood of Jesus, but its prevailing cry is not vengeance but mercy. See Him the good Shepherd bleeding for His sheep; hear His blood speaking peace to all the flock—peace between man and the Maker, peace between man and man, peace down through the ages for blood-cleansed men and women, redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Abel is the first shepherd in order of time, but our Lord Jesus stands first in order of excellence, for He is the good Shepherd and the great Shepherd of the sheep. Let all His blood-bought people, the sheep of His pasture, bless Him with heart and soul, mind and strength, for He alone was slain for us—the Lamb of God, our perfect Sacrifice.

THOUGHT: Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for Thy soul-cleansing blood.

QUICKEN THOU ME IN THY WAY

The Psalmist's prayer should be our prayer: "*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.*" There are divers kinds of vanity in the world. Apart from the Lord all our labour and accumulation under the sun, one day will come to nought. So the preacher says, "*Vanity of vanities, ... all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?*" (Eccles 1:2-3).

"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." The vain things of this life, by their power to captivate and charm us, are treacherous beyond words. Beware the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. A man may follow after vanity in the poorhouse as in the treasury. He who spends his life amassing wealth passes his days in a vain show; no less so, the man who struggles simply to make ends meet. Without Christ, both are beholding vanity.

"Quicken thou me in thy way." The Psalmist confesses his inner emptiness and deadness, his need to be quickened to new life. Dear reader, is that how you perceive your own condition, your inner feeling? Our motives may be good, but the best of motives have no power to quicken us. "Perhaps the fear of hell, or the thought of sinners perishing will quicken me?" Or the prospect of Heaven, or death approaching, will these quicken a dying soul? Of ourselves we can do nothing.

No, my friend! None of these things can quicken anyone. God Himself must do it: He is the Source of life, He is Life itself. Our cry must be directed to Him: "*Quicken thou me in thy way.*" As one struggling in the sea, our anguished cry must go out to Him, "Save me, Lord, for I perish in my vanity." Quicken Thou me now, O my God, and forsake me not!

THOUGHT: Without Christ a hopeless end; with Christ an endless hope!

PRAYER: Lord, please take my eyes off the world to fix only on Thee.

ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED

When Moses sang on the shores of the Red Sea, it was his joy to know that all Israel was safe. Not a drop of spray fell from the solid wall of water until the last of Israel had safely planted his foot on the other side of the Sea. That done, immediately, the two walls of the Sea fell into place again, but not till then. Moses' song was, "*Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou has redeemed.*" In the day to come, the elect of God shall sing to the praise of the Lamb. Our Lord Jesus shall justly declare, "*Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none*" (John 18:9). All Israel shall be saved.

*"For all the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
To bless the glory of His grace,
And make His victory known."*

Today our earthly sojourn is far from over. The dividing of the sea is yet ahead. Will it be a safe crossing? Fear not, dear reader. As many as God hath chosen, as many as truly believe in the Saviour—all these shall safely cross. We are not all safely landed yet, but the vanguard has already reached the shore. We are marching through the depths, following after our Leader into the heart of the sea.

Be of good cheer, brothers and sisters. We shall soon be where the vanguard already is. Before too long, the last of the rearguard will have crossed to the other shore. Then shall be heard the song of triumph, when everyone has safely arrived. No, not one shall be lost; not one shall be cast away. The everlasting song of the redeemed will proclaim the great fact of God's marvellous salvation. All Israel shall be saved!

THOUGHT: No man is able to pluck me out of my Father's hand.

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for keeping me.

GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

Samson was thirsty and ready to die! The pressing problem was totally different from any which he had met before. Merely to have one's thirst relieved is nothing compared to God's deliverance from a thousand hostile Philistines! But when the thirst was upon him, the physical agony was so acute that Superman Samson was rendered helpless, like a child crying for water: "*I die for thirst!*"

It is not unusual for God's people, having experienced great deliverance, to find a little trouble too much to bear. Samson slays a thousand, piles the bodies in heaps, then faints for a little water! Elijah slays the 450 prophets of Baal by the brook Kishon, then flees for his life at the threat of a woman. See him, the mighty man of God, sitting under a juniper tree crying to the Lord, "*It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life!*" (1 Kings 19:4).

God has many ways of humbling His people. The Apostle Paul, returning from his visit to "*the third heaven*" wrote (2 Cor 12:7-9):

And lest I should be exalted above measure... there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me... For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

No superman or apostle is sufficient unto himself. Small difficulties seen through mortal eyes loom large like mountains. Our eyes deceive us! Only God's grace is sufficient to deliver His people from every difficult situation. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 continue:

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

THOUGHT: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!

PRAYER: Father, may I trust in Thy grace in matters big or small.

IS THE VINE TREE MORE THAN ANY TREE?

God calls His people to humility. They are God's vine, but are they by nature better than others? It was only by God's goodness that they have become fruitful. It was the Lord who planted them in good soil, who trained them upon the walls of the sanctuary, that they bring forth fruit to His glory. What are they without their God? Or without the continual influence of the Spirit causing them to bear fruit? The lesson is plain.

O believer, learn from the vine tree. Learn to reject pride, seeing thou has no ground for it. Whatever thou art, thou hast nothing to make thee proud. Says the Apostle Paul, *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* (1 Cor 4:7). The more we have, the more we are in debt to God. And what can a debtor boast about?

Consider your origin: Look back to what you once were. Consider what you would have been but for God's grace in your life. Look upon yourself as you are now. What place is there for boasting? Does not your conscience reproach you? Do not your multitude of offences appear before you, telling you you are unworthy to be called His son? And if He has made you anything, is it not His grace which has made you different? Listen to the Apostle Paul's words: *"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain ..."* (1 Cor 15:10).

Thank God, He has made us to be different—different from the proud offensive sinner we once were; different from the rebellious unbelieving world around us. Let us be different, separated unto God, walking with the Risen Lord, living to the glory of His grace, following in His steps. He *"made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant..., he humbled himself..."* (Phil 2:7-8).

THOUGHT: *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name."*

PRAYER: Forgive me of my pride, O Lord. Make me walk humbly even as Thou has humbled Thyself for my sake.

ENDURING ADVERSITY

Scripture records that Job “*was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil*” (Job 1:1). But the accuser came before God with his charge, “*Doth Job fear God for nought?*” It was a wicked question with dark insinuations, but there are many present day Christians concerning whom it might be fairly asked, for they love God after a fashion, for their own selfish advantage.

Some love God because He prospers them, but when things do not go well they give up all their professed faith. If their world has prospered since the time of their supposed conversion, then they continue to serve God in their poor carnal way. But when adversity comes they rebel and forsake the Lord. They love the table of dainties, not the host who furnished the table.

The true Christian is not so. He expects to have his reward in the next life, and to endure hardness in this. The promise of the new covenant is adversity. Our Lord Himself gave forewarning: “*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33).

Even the fruitful Christian must endure adversity. Every branch which beareth fruit “*he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*” (John 15:2). This is God’s perfect way in dealing with children. “Purging” is the divine method which brings precious spiritual results. Fear not, therefore, dear child of the Father, when tribulation comes, but look to the Lord and rejoice, because as tribulations abound, so also do the consolations of Christ. Ours is the God of all comfort.

Some day your bar of gold must pass through the fire. “*But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*” (Job 23:10). Rejoice, for fruitful times will follow. You will be weaned from earth and made fit for Heaven. Every adversity is to turn your eyes heavenward, to set your affection on things above, and not on this earth.

THOUGHT: Why do I fear God?

PRAYER: Lord, keep me faithful to Thee till death.

CHOSEN OUT OF THE PEOPLE

Why was Christ "*exalted...chosen out of the people*"? Was it not that He might be identified with us in our fallen humanity, to take our place as "Son of man"? Was it not also that He might be able to be our Brother in the blest tie of kindred blood? He was chosen out of the people that He might be "*the firstborn among many brethren*" to the elect (Rom 8:29). It was the Father who chose Him and sent Him for us, even as a "*brother is born for adversity*" (Prov 17:17). In choosing Him out of the people, God "*spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*" (Rom 8:32).

Christ was chosen out of the people that He might be as one of us and sympathize with us. He "*was in all points tempted 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 them all. Dear Christian, are you being sorely tried? Be not dismayed or despondent. Remember, however difficult and painful your pathway, it is marked by the Saviour's footprints, and even when you reach the dark valley of the shadow of death, you will find His footprints there.

Thank God for His chosen One who became our burden-bearer, our great Physician: "*he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*" (Isa 53:5). "*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death... Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name*" (Phil 2:8-9). For our sakes He was "*exalted...chosen out of the people.*"

THOUGHT: Though He was rich, yet for my sake He became poor.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for choosing me.

WE WILL REMEMBER THY LOVE

Our Lord will not let His people forget His love. If all the love they have enjoyed should be forgotten, He will visit them with fresh love. "Have you forgotten My cross?" says He, "I will cause you to remember it; for at My table I will manifest Myself anew to you." Remembrance is the hallmark of gratitude. The Lord's holy table is where His blood-bought people gather to remember Him for His dying love at Calvary. As oft as we eat and drink at His table, we do show the Lord's death *"till he come."*

Mother, your love for your children will not let them easily forget you too. If your boy has gone abroad and does not write home, mother love will cause you to send him a gentle reminder. Then there comes back a sweet epistle, which proves that your writing was not in vain. Much more so with our Lord. He says to us, "Remember Me;" and we respond, "We will remember Thee for Thy love."

We may neglect Him and sometimes forget, but He never forgets us, for He loves us with an everlasting love. He loved us before we ever knew Him. We love Him now because He first loved us. It is amazing love, for He loved us before the world began! His love is as ancient as the glory which He had with the Father from the beginning. We remember, O Lord, Thine eternal love when Thou didst become our Surety and Substitute.

We remember Thy matchless love as it was made manifest in Thy earthly life, from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary. From cradle to grave, every word and deed of Thine was love. We rejoice in Thy love which death did not exhaust. From the tomb Thou didst rise, and in Thy resurrection that love shone forth with greater radiance. Thy parting words overflowed with abundance of love: "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*" As we walk with Thee each day, we will remember Thy love.

THOUGHT: O love that will not let me go.

PRAYER: How could Thou, Lord, lovest me, a most wretched sinner? Yet Thou lovest and I thank Thee for Thy love.

GOD SHALL DELIVER THEE

God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler in two senses: *from* and *out of*. Firstly, He delivers them *from* the snare—He does not let them enter it. Secondly, if they should be caught therein, He delivers them *out of* it. The first is most precious to some; to others it is the second.

“He shall deliver thee from the snare.” How? Trouble is often the means whereby God delivers us. He knows that our backsliding will soon end in our destruction, and in mercy He 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.

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 in an evil hour the believer should fall into the net, yet God will bring him out of it! You may be cast down, but do not despair! Hear what thy Redeemer saith, “Return, O backslider, and I will have mercy upon you.”

Perhaps you say you cannot return, for you are a captive. Then listen to the promise: *“Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”* Thou shalt yet be brought out of all the 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 even the bones which He has broken will rejoice. Then never more depart from Him, for *“he that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”*

THOUGHT: The Lord is my refuge and my fortress.

PRAYER: Save me, O Lord, from every hidden snare.

SITTING OR SERVING?

Martha's fault was not that she served. Every Christian ought to. "I serve the King" should be the motto of all members of the royal family of Heaven. Nor was it Martha's fault that she did "*much serving*." In fact we cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly can. Let head, and heart, and hands be engaged in the Master's service. It was no fault of Martha's that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master.

Happy Martha, so privileged to be entertaining so important a guest; and happy too, to have the spirit to throw herself, heart and soul, into the business. Where, then, was Martha's fault? Her fault was that she became "*cumbered about much serving*" so that she neglected the Master, and only remembered the service. She had elevated service over communion—rushing about instead of sitting quietly at the Master's feet.

What should one do in the circumstance? We ought to be Martha and Mary "rolled in one." We should learn to do both; much service as well as much communion, at the same time! Sounds impossible? No, nothing is impossible with God, the God of all grace. We need grace and more grace. It is easier to serve than to sit at the Master's feet. What we need is God's grace, great grace. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner we tire in it. The most heavenly graces are the most difficult to cultivate. Dear reader, how is your personal "secret" fellowship with the Lord? See to it that sitting at the Saviour's feet is not forgotten or neglected. Constant and consistent communion with the Lord surpasses everything else.

THOUGHT: Do not neglect the Lord of the work for the work of the Lord.

PRAYER: Lord, increase my devotion for Thee.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17

ISAIAH 63:7-19

MATTHEW 11:28-30

*“He that offereth praise
honoureth me.”*

I WILL MENTION THE PRAISES OF THE LORD

And canst thou not do this, thou who hast received mercies without number? Though thou art gloomy now, canst thou forget that blessed moment when the Lord met thee, and said, “Come unto me”? Canst thou not remember that rapturous moment when He snapped thy fetters, dashed thy chains to the ground, and said, “I have broken thy bonds and set thee free”? Or recall some precious milestone along the road of life on which thou canst read a happy memorial of His goodness towards thee?

What, didst thou not have a sickness like that which thou are suffering now, and did He not restore thee? When you were poor did He not supply your want? Were you never in some dire straits before and did He not deliver you? Arise! Go to the “memory lane” of past experiences and measure each step with care. Count your blessings, name them one by one. Forget not what thy God hast done for thee. Turn over the pages of the book of remembrance, and consider the days of old, what great things the Lord has done for you in years gone by.

It may be you are walking through the valley of shadow this very moment. Thick darkness has descended all around you. In your distress call unto the Lord, make supplication unto Him. His Spirit will bring to mind choice mercies of yesterday. With each recall light up a lamp as a memorial. One after another the lamps of praise will glitter through the darkness and soon you will chase the gloom away. So shalt thou trust our ever faithful God until the dawn of the perfect day.

THOUGHT: Remembrance is the hallmark of gratitude.

PRAYER: Lord, print Thy goodness on my heart, lest I forget.

THROUGH FAITH WE ESTABLISH THE LAW

When the believer is adopted into God’s family, his relationship to Adam and the law ceases: he immediately comes under the new covenant. He becomes a child of God, with a new duty—to obey the heavenly Father. Believer, you are not a slave with a fearful servile spirit, but a beloved child. This new and happy relationship kindles in you a filial love and desire to obey your Father’s command, even the least intimation of His will. Every true child will strive diligently to do the Father’s bidding.

No longer do you regard the law of God with terror, as a frightened schoolboy views a stern schoolmaster. But with delight you seek to obey the commandments. In the spirit of the Psalmist, we exclaim,

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies ... I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word ... How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Truly, the new covenant is a happy covenant!

See then, the Law of God in this new light: it is my supreme delight to obey my heavenly Father. Every command of His is received with joy. When my Redeemer says, *“Be ye...perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect...Be ye holy, for I am holy,”* what is my response? No more do I see the commandments as a burden, an imposition, or a threat, but indeed it is the lovely will of my loving Lord, the One who suffered death for me, to give me this new life. Thank Him for faith to receive Him, for faith to obey His commandments, and for faith to fulfil the Law. *“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”*

THOUGHT: The Ten Commandments are God’s will for my life.

PRAYER: Father, increase my faith that I may be a more filial child.

OUR WONDERFUL FATHER IN HEAVEN

God's people are doubly His children: they are His offspring by creation, and they are His sons by adoption in Christ. Hence we are privileged to call Him, "*Our Father which art in heaven.*" Father! O, what a precious word!

Father carries **authority**. If I be a Father, where is mine honour? If ye be sons, where is your obedience? Every true son looks up to the source of life and sustenance with filial love and submission—with holy fear. In "Father" is vested the highest authority over me, requiring my utmost reverence and respect.

Father implies **affection** and **love**. The true child of the Father goes about the service of God, not as a slave cringing before some cruel taskmaster, but his feet are swift in the way of His commandments, to perform His bidding. Foremost in his mind is the remembrance of Father's love from first to last, from day to day, unchanging, unwavering.

Father also implies **Kingly rule**. With eyes of faith behold the great Heavenly King on His throne of glory, surrounded by magnificence unspeakable. On His head a royal crown, and in His hand a sceptre of mercy. Mine eyes cannot bear to gaze upon such brilliance and splendour. Unworthy me! O, what condescension! O, what love that He should take me as His child!

In deepest gratitude I cry with muted voice, "Abba, Father! I thank Thee for the blessed Holy Spirit who bears witness with my spirit, that I am indeed a child of God: and if a child, then an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ my Lord" (Rom 8:15-17). It's all so amazing, yet it's true.

THOUGHT: "*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.*"

PRAYER: Lord, increase in me my "filial fear."

THEY THAT HEARD IT WONDERED

We can never cease to wonder at the mighty marvels of God. Consider His glory, and our soul is overwhelmed with its unspeakable majesty. Some express this wonderment in song, some in humble prayer, some in silent adoration, but all in holy worship. Jesus, God incarnate, our Emmanuel is to be worshipped as *“Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”*

Our wonderment staggers us when we contemplate His amazing love: He considered us sinful, rebellious creatures, and did not cast us into the pit of destruction, but became our Redeemer, paid the ransom price, and bought us back unto Himself. In wonderment we exclaim, “Lord Jesus, Thou art marvellous!” Inasmuch as his salvation is personal to each believer, to him it is most marvellous. Marvellous is God’s grace that Jesus the Son should leave His royal throne to suffer shame and painful death for hateful sinners like you and me.

But our wonder must lead us to holy worship and grateful thanksgiving. It should kindle within us a godly watchfulness, to guard against the enemy of our souls, the evil one who exerts his utmost to undo what our God has done. *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you!”* Holy worship draws us to Him who loves us with an everlasting love. Holy worship demands that we put off our shoes from off our feet in His presence, for we stand on holy ground.

Our wonder transports us to the gates of Heaven as we ponder the glorious hope of every believer. We who have been to Him for cleansing are assured of this: one day, soon, we shall see the Saviour, face to face. And the final wonder is, when we see Him, we shall be like Him, transformed, renewed, perfected!

THOUGHT: One day we shall be with Him, forever.

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for being my wonderful Saviour.

FULNESS IN CHRIST

“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” Fulness in Christ means a soul-satisfying richness and abundance of blessing that endures, surpassing anything the world can give. In Him is the fulness of Deity, for *“in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”* (Col 2:9). In Him is the fulness of perfect manhood, for in His earthly existence it was clearly revealed. In Him is the fulness of atonement in His blood, for *“the blood of Jesus Christ...cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).

There is a fulness of justification in His life, for *“there is...no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Rom 8:1). There is a fulness of redemption in Him, for *“he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”* (Heb 7:25). There is fulness of victory in His death, for *“through death (He) might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Heb 2:14).

There is a fulness of power in His resurrection from the dead, for by it we are begotten *“again unto a lively hope”* (1 Pet 1:3), a hope that triumphs over the grave. There is fulness of victory in His ascension, for *“when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men”* (Eph 4:8). In Him there is a fulness of heavenly blessings: a fulness of comfort in adversity; a fulness of contentment in every circumstance of life; a fulness of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

Look then to the Saviour; love Him and follow Him, who is the source of all goodness. Go to Him daily, seek Him often, and find in Him your all in all. *“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell”* (Col 1:19).

THOUGHT: He satisfieth the longing soul (Ps 107:9).

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I praise Thee for in Thee dwelleth all fulness.

MARY PONDERED THEM IN HER HEART

The Lord regarded the low estate of Mary, and chose her from among the thousands of Israel to be His handmaid. The breathtaking events following the birth of Jesus doubtless created an enormous impact on this God-fearing maiden. The account of the angelic visitation and the message brought by the shepherds caused all those that heard it to wonder with amazement, *“but Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”*

Notice this: Jesus was but a newborn babe, and Mary already was deeply moved by the events surrounding the Christ-child. She was profoundly exercised in heart, soul, and mind. That was why she *“pondered them in her heart.”* How about you and me who have all the evidence of the Lord Jesus’ life and acts, His redemptive work on the cross, and what He has done in our lives? He has made life worth living, given us a new and lively hope, and prepared for us a place in His home above. And, like the Good Shepherd that He is, He leads us day by day.

Do we appreciate our Lord as did Mary? Do we ponder *“these things”* in our heart, treasuring up everything about Christ which we have felt, or known, or received, or believed? Does our affection warm up to Him and hold fast to Him for evermore? Mary loved her child as any normal mother would. Should we do less, who owe Him our life, our soul, and our all? Ponder this, my friend! Love Him who first loved you, who laid down His life for you. Love Him more, and love Him now!

Let our affection stream forth as the very precious ointment from the woman’s alabaster box (Matt 26:7), flowing from our heart to anoint the Saviour’s wounded feet. Ponder—meditate on His kindness and compassion, His grace and love, given to us so freely and so abundantly. And let’s not forget who He is, even the One who *“taketh up the isles as a very little thing”* (Isa 40:15), the almighty Creator, the One who made all things—and us.

THOUGHT: How much do I love Jesus?

PRAYER: Lord, keep my heart always affectionate and loving towards Thee.

PERFECT IN CHRIST

Can it be that one day we shall attain to perfection? Today, such a prospect seems too remote to be entertained. Search your heart and does it not say that perfection is not in you? Every tear which falls from your eyes weeps “imperfection.” So does every sigh echo the same, while every harsh word which proceeds from the lips doubly confirms our fallen nature. When we see the true state of our heart, who among us would dare to even dream of perfection?

But amidst this sad consciousness of imperfection, the Word of God comes to our aid and for our comfort: “You are perfect in Christ Jesus.” Our hope is not in ourselves, but in the Lord: “*for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption*” (Ps 130:7). For the sake of His dear Son, God sees us “*complete in him*” (Col 2:10) and “*accepted in the beloved*” (Eph 1:6). In spite of our imperfections, God the Father receives us because of His Son. Such is God’s amazing salvation.

Yet ahead of us, we delight to look forward to the day when every sin stain shall be forever removed, and we shall be presented faultless before God’s throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph 5:27). Beloved, today “*it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him*” (1 John 3:2). The Church of Christ will then be holy and pure, so that not even the eye of Omniscience will detect any spot or blemish.

Joseph Hart expressed the truth in these words:

*“With my Saviour’s garments on,
Holy as the Holy One.”*

On that glad day, our Saviour will transform us so that we shall be like Him. O blessed thought, we shall be made fully and forever “*perfect in Christ.*”

THOUGHT: Our Lord will create me anew.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for the blessed hope of eternal life in perfection.

GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD

All men everywhere should be glorifying and praising God at all times; yet few do. The shepherds of Bethlehem, having seen and worshipped the newborn Saviour “*returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen.*” Let us do likewise, we who have heard of Jesus and tasted His salvation grace, let us also raise a song of thanksgiving.

The shepherds praised God for what they had seen. There is the sweetest music, to declare what we have experienced, what we have felt within, what we have made our own. It is not enough to hear about Jesus: mere hearing is like tuning the harp, but the fingers of faith must pluck the strings and bring forth sweet sounds of praise. If you have seen the Lord with God-given eyes of faith, suffer not the harpstrings to remain silent, but awaken them with joyful noise to the praise of sovereign grace.

What the shepherds saw was in complete agreement with what they had heard even “*as it was told unto them.*” We too have found the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be in ourselves just what the Bible said it would be. Jesus said He would give you rest if you come to Him. Have you not enjoyed the sweetest peace in Him? He promised you joy, comfort, and life more abundant through believing in Him. Have you not received all these? Yea, and more besides!

“*O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him*” (Ps 34:8). His ways are the ways of pleasantness, and His paths the paths of peace. The delights of His blessings can never be exhausted. Surely “*the half was not told me*” (1 Kings 10:7). The King in His beauty outshines all loveliness. Let “*glorifying and praising God*” be our chiefest delight.

THOUGHT: My beloved is...chiefest among ten thousand.

PRAYER: I give all praise to Thee, O Lord!

THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN

In our Christian pilgrimage it is well to be constantly looking upward where lies the crown, our hope and joy, and our eternal consolation. Looking upward we see sin forever shut out, death finally destroyed, the soul made perfect, to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col 1:12).

What that inheritance shall be is still hidden from sight, except for what we read from God's Word. By faith we know that those things which are not seen are no less genuine and real. We are assured that the inheritance is "*incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven*" (1 Pet 1:4) for us. Our Lord Himself has gone to prepare a place for us.

With confidence, therefore, we await the day when we shall be transported through the pearly gates to God's celestial City, there to be crowned by the Lord Himself, embraced in the arms of Jesus, to be glorified with Him, and to sit with Him on His throne. As sure as the sun shall rise in the morning to drive the gloom of night away, the things which are now invisible shall shortly burst into sight with dazzling brilliance. Then earth's dark night will be forever over.

This glorious future is more than sufficient to dispel any present gloom. Heaven's joys will more than compensate for the sorrows of earth. This world is but a narrow span, a brief interlude which will soon pass away. Ahead is Heaven and immortality in God's eternal day. Look up! Cheer up! "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*" (2 Cor 4:17). Are you suffering for your faith, my friend? It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus!

THOUGHT: I must be more heavenly-minded.

PRAYER: Lord, show me the glorious things which are not seen.

IN THE EVENING

Blessed be the Lord for another day of mercy, even though I am wearied by its toils. Unto my Provider and Preserver I lift up my song of gratitude. The dove found no rest out of the ark, and therefore returned to it. Like the dove, my soul has learnt a precious lesson that outside the Ark of my Salvation there is no lasting satisfaction. In God alone is there rest for the soul, and to Him I must return.

I thank God for His bounteous mercies: my possessions, my family, my attainments—all these have been blessed beyond measure by His good hand. But the desires of my soul remain unsatisfied. Therefore I echo the Psalmist's words: "*Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee*" (Ps 116:7). Cause me, O Lord, at the close of each day to return to Thee, for without Thee my spirit is like the dove hovering over the restless waste.

Lord Jesus, Thou art the rest of my heart, the home of my spirit. Psalm 42:1-2 says: "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*"

To Jesus I must come, in the evening when shadows of the night begin to fall, for He is my Beloved indeed.

Blessed Lord, reveal Thyself to me; abide with me this night, and when I awake I shall be still with Thee. The dove brought to Noah an olive branch. What have I to present to Thee in grateful acknowledgement of Thy tender mercies which are new every morning and fresh every evening? Accept Thou my meagre offering—even my body, a living sacrifice for Thy use.

THOUGHT: My desire must always to be with my Lord.

PRAYER: May I end each day with Thee, O Lord, remembering Thy daily blessings.

THOU SHALT BESTIR THYSELF

The members of Christ's Church should be very prayerful, always seeking the unction of the Holy Spirit to rest upon their hearts, that they may be made more effective in the advancement of God's everlasting Kingdom. How often do we pray, "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*" But there are times when God seems especially to favour His people. Such seasons are as it were "*the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.*"

If the Almighty God is moving on our behalf should not we His people bestir ourselves in response? A doubling of prayer, a doubling of zeal, a doubling of wrestling at the throne of grace is the least we should do. Action should be prompt and lively. On our knees let us plead for a fresh downpouring of the Spirit. The sound in the tops of the mulberry trees calls us to spend and be spent for Him.

As we bestir ourselves the Spirit Himself comes to our aid, giving us more joy and gladness; He opens the Scripture to us, applying its exceeding great and precious promises to our hearts; He leads us in the paths of righteousness. As we walk together with Him in the light of His countenance we have blessed freedom and liberty in devotion, and a closeness of sweetest communion unknown before. We are labourers together with God.

What honour doth our God bestow upon us and those who would bestir themselves at the sound in the tops of the mulberry trees. Our God is more ready to move on our behalf than we are to bestir ourselves. But He can change our lethargy into holy activity. Pray, therefore, and be ready to bestir thyself.

THOUGHT: With God's help, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

PRAYER: Increase, O Lord, my effectiveness for Thee.

ALL THINGS IN CHRIST

“Without me ye can **do** nothing,” says our blessed Saviour in John 15:5. How true! We echo those words: “Without Him we **have** nothing.” When Jesus gave Himself for us, He gave us all the rights and privileges which belong to Him. As our Mediator and Representative, the Head of the covenant of grace, He has no heritage apart from us. We are “*joint-heirs with Christ.*” All the glorious consequences of His obedience unto death are passed on to us, to be shared by all who are “*in Christ.*”

See, He enters into glory, but not for Himself alone: He goes as our Forerunner (Heb 6:20). He appears in the presence of God for us (Heb 9:24). We have access to Heaven because He has opened the way for us. We have no forgiveness apart from Him: we are pardoned through His blood. We are justified through His righteousness. We are sanctified because He is made of God unto us “*wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Cor 1:30). We are kept from falling only because He is able to keep us, and finally to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24).

In Christ our Lord, the best is yet to be. One day, soon, we shall be perfected and made complete in Him. We shall enter into our eternal inheritance because He hath made us “*accepted in the beloved*” (Eph 1:6). He is the source of all blessing, and each blessing is the sweeter, and even Heaven itself the brighter, because it is our beloved Lord Jesus in whom we have obtained it all. Think of Him every day, think of Him every moment of every day and give thanks. “*All things are yours ... ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s*” (1 Cor 3:21, 23).

THOUGHT: Count all things but loss for Christ our Lord.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, make me ever grateful to Thee.

TUESDAY, MARCH 1

JEREMIAH 23:1-8

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-21

*Without Christ—
no righteousness.*

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

A Christian who constantly thinks of the perfect righteousness of Christ finds greatest comfort, joy, and peace in his heart, and this will show on his face, for the face is the mirror of the heart. But sad to say, some saints of God wear a perpetual downcast look, and this ought not to be. Christians ought not to be constantly brooding over their depravity of heart and corruption of soul. Remember that wonderful verse: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Cor 5:17).

In Christ *“old things are passed away,”* meaning to say our old sinful cravings and lustful desires are things of the past, having been *“baptized into his death”* and *“our old man is crucified with him”* (Rom 6:3, 6). What profit is there to allow depressing thoughts to rob us of our inner peace and the light of our countenance? It is not honouring to our Saviour for a believer to wear a perpetual mournful downcast look.

Call to mind that *“Christ...is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”* (1 Cor 1:30). In Him I am perfect and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, *“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”* (Phil 3:9). Fill your heart and mind with thankful sanctified thoughts of *“the Lord our righteousness.”* Then go forth each day to live for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

THOUGHT: Do I have the garment of righteousness?

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for imputing to me Thy righteousness.

THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH

Perhaps, O tried soul, the Lord is developing thy graces, some of which would never be discovered if it were not for thy trials. Do you know that your faith never looks so grand in summer as it does in winter? Love is often like a glow-worm which shines best in the midst of surrounding gloom. Hope too is like a star which stands out in the dark night of adversity. Afflictions are like black foils in which God sets the jewels of our graces to make them shine better.

Did you not sometimes cry to the Lord, "I fear I have no faith. Lord, let me know that I have faith." Then did not God send forth the trials which you are now going through? For how can you know that you have faith until it has been exercised? Thanks be to our all-wise and gracious God who sends trials that our faith may be discovered, and exercised, and grow thereby. God takes away our comforts and surplus in order to make us better Christians.

Soldiers are trained, not in tents of ease, but in forced marches and fierce combat; in swimming through swift rivers and climbing mountain heights, or walking many a long mile with heavy backpacks. In this light, see your own trials as blessings in disguise sent by the Lord. Out of the rugged mountains and surging waters of affliction, by God's grace, we emerge stronger and hardier soldiers of the cross, better equipped for the Master's use.

THOUGHT: Therefore we take pleasure in trials and persecutions, for when we are tried then are we strong.

PRAYER: Lord, may I always remember that Thy grace is sufficient for me.

THURSDAY, MARCH 3

PSALM 51:1-7

LUKE 15:11-24

*Kisses await
the returning prodigal.*

“FATHER, I HAVE SINNED”

It is certain that those whom Christ has washed in His precious blood need not make confession of sin as culprits or criminals before God as Judge. They no longer stand condemned, but are accepted in the Beloved before God the Father. This amazing change of status has come about because our Lord Jesus has for ever taken away all our sins “*in his own body on the tree*” (1 Pet 2:24).

But what if a Christian should sin? Is he not condemned again? Not at all, but as an offending child, let him go before the Father and with broken, contrite heart confess his sin, and it shall be forgiven him (1 John 1:9; 2:1). We offend daily, and ought not to rest without daily confession, repentance and pardon. For if I do not, and my trespasses are not washed away by the cleansing blood, then I shall feel at a distance from my Father; I shall doubt His love; I shall be afraid to approach Him in prayer; I shall be separated from the Father.

On the other hand, if with child-like sorrow at having offended so gracious a Father, I go to Him and confess all my offences, then I shall be instantly restored to His loving fellowship. I shall once again enjoy the peace of God through Christ Jesus my Lord. Dear reader, note carefully: There is a wide distinction between a culprit and a child. We who have been cleansed once for all, need only to have our feet washed daily from the defilement of our daily walk as God’s dear blood-bought children (John 13:10).

THOUGHT: Am I a culprit or a child?

PRAYER: Lord, make me to be an obedient child always.

IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER

Prayer is the forerunner of mercy. Turn to sacred history, and you will find that scarcely ever did great mercy come to this world without prayer. You have found this true in your personal experience. God has given you many an unsolicited favour, but still great prayer has always preceded great mercy.

When you first found peace through the blood of the cross, you had been praying earnestly that God would save you and deliver you from all your distresses. Assurance of forgiveness of sins followed your fervent prayer. At times God sends you high and rapturous joys in answer to your prayers.

Our Father in Heaven is ever longing to receive our heart-prayers. In times of sore troubles, cry to Him, and He sends swift deliverance. In great dangers, call upon Him and He sends mighty helps. Then we can say with the Psalmist, "*I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*" Prayer is the prelude to blessing. It goes before the blessing as a shadow with God's sun of promise shining from behind.

Prayer and God's blessing are intimately linked. From it we see clearly the value of prayer. If we had the blessings without our asking, we should think them common and casual things. But prayer makes our mercies more precious than diamonds. God has rare blessings of inestimable worth, waiting for His children to ask. "*Ask, and it shall be given!*" Let our prayers be more earnest, fervent and consistent. But ask in faith!

THOUGHT: We receive not because we ask not.

PRAYER: Lord, evermore teach me to persevere in prayer.

SATURDAY, MARCH 5

PSALM 26:1-7

JOHN 1:35-42

*Are you
a fisher of men?*

FINDING MEN FOR CHRIST OUR LORD

As soon as a man has truly found Christ, he begins to find others. If you have tasted the sweetness of the Gospel you cannot but share it with others. Having found the Lord, Andrew sought out his own brother Simon. Relationship has a strong demand upon our first efforts. Andrew did well to bring his own brother.

Charity begins at home. Some Christians seem to have forgotten this first principle. They give tracts to other people's houses, neglecting their own. Others go abroad as foreign missionaries, forgetting their special sphere of usefulness at home. You may or may not be called to evangelise overseas, but certainly you have a duty to your own household, kinsfolk and friends.

Let our religion begin to shine at home. Tradesmen of the market place export their best commodities for better profit. The Christian has higher principles. He should have all his conversation everywhere of the best savour. But let him share the sweetest fruit of his spiritual life as a testimony to his own family. Do as Andrew did, and you never know what results will follow.

Andrew little imagined how eminent his brother would be. As far as we can tell, Simon Peter was worth ten Andrews. You may be of few talents like Andrew, but the Lord can use you to draw someone to Christ who will become eminent in grace and service some day. Your word to some child today may set him on the road to great service for God in years to come. But you must be as Andrew: Go and bring your brother to the Master.

THOUGHT: "Go, and do thou likewise."

PRAYER: Lord, take my feet and make me go for Thee.

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

And who comforteth like Him? Can you? Some poor child of God is in deepest distress, “drinking gall and wormwood,” in the bitterest sorrow. Should you go and speak the sweet promises of God, or whisper in his ear comfortable words? He hardly would take it in. He listens not to the voice of the charmer. He may respond with a note of mournful resignation, but there will be no joyful songs of praise, no hallelujahs.

But let God come to His child, let Him lift up his countenance, and the mourner's eyes brighten with hope. Suddenly he is uplifted and breaks into song. The Lord has done what you could not. He is the God of all comfort. He heals with the balm of Gilead. He is the great Physician. Just one sweet word of healing makes whole songs for sorrowing Christians. His word is like gold, ever precious and brilliant with hope.

So then poor Christian, do not sit down in despair. Go to the Comforter and ask Him to give thee consolation. You are like a dry well. You have heard it said that when a pump is dry, you must pour water down the well first. So, Christian, when you feel so dry and parched, go to God. Ask Him to fill your heart with His joy. Then your joy will be full.

Go not to earthly acquaintances. You will find them like “Job's comforters”—worse than useless. But go first and foremost to thy God who comforteth those that are cast down. Soon you will be able to say, “*In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul*” (Ps 94:19).

THOUGHT: My God is the Great Comforter.

PRAYER: Lord, come today and comfort me.

MONDAY, MARCH 7

PSALM 95

MATTHEW 4:1-11

Walk circumspectly.

Be vigilant.

TEMPTATION EVER PRESENT

A holy character does not avert temptation—Jesus the holy Son of God was tempted. When Satan tempts us, his sparks fall upon tinder to our peril; but with the Lord, the sparks “fell on water.” Yet the tempter persisted in his malicious probes. Now, if the devil goes on attacking without result, how much more will he when he knows what inflammable stuff our hearts are made of!

We may be greatly sanctified by the Holy Ghost, but it makes no difference to the enemy: he never rests from his attacks. Whether we are among the multitudes or in total seclusion, he is quite capable of coming at us. Our Lord was led away from human society. In the wilderness the tempter confronted Him. Solitude has its benefits, but gives no protection against the devil; he can intrude into any secret place. His wiles know no bounds.

Do not suppose that it is only the worldly-minded who have to endure dreadful thoughts and blasphemous temptations from the evil one. Even the most spiritually-minded persons suffer the same. Into the holiest position may come the darkest temptation. Our Lord most holy was tempted. The fact is the harder we try to serve the Lord, the fiercer the enemy’s attacks.

But thank God, He does not leave us defenceless against the foe. He prepares for each of His children a full set of armour. “*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand*” (Eph 6:13). May God keep us strong and watchful at all times.

THOUGHT: The roaring lion may come as an angel of light.

PRAYER: Lord, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.

TUESDAY, MARCH 8

PSALM 119:89-96

HEBREWS 13:1-6

*“One jot or one tittle
shall in no wise pass...”*

“HE HATH SAID”

If we can only grasp these words by faith, we have an all-conquering weapon in our hand. God’s *almighty word* will dispel every doubt and remove every fear. The distresses of life, the pangs of death, our inner corruptions, the snares threatening without, the trials from above and temptations from beneath—all become but light afflictions, when we can hide ourselves beneath the bulwark of “*He hath said.*”

Yes, whether for delight in our quiet moments, or for strength in our conflict, “*He hath said*” must be our daily resort. And this may teach us the extreme value of searching the Scriptures. God’s Word would have a promise which exactly meets your need, but unless you search you will not have its comfort. Like prisoners in a dungeon, there is one key in the bunch which could set you free. But because you refuse to look for it, you remain a prisoner, even though liberty is so near at hand.

The Holy Scriptures is like a great pharmacopoeia, containing the precise cure for your ailment, but you continue in your sick condition because you have not searched its pages to discover what “*He hath said.*” Search, then, the treasure house of God’s Word, and store your memories richly with the precious promises of God. More to be esteemed are these than the sayings of great men, or the verses of famous poets. Believing that what “*He hath said*” is the source of all wisdom, and the fountain of all comfort, let it dwell in you richly as “*a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*”

THOUGHT: God’s Word will never change or grow old.

PRAYER: Lord, write Thy word within my heart.

THE SECRET OF UNDERSTANDING

We should be able to teach others, and not be carried about by every wind of doctrine, if we have a sound understanding of God’s Word. As the Holy Ghost is the Author of the Scriptures, He alone is able to enlighten us in our understanding. Should we, then, not constantly ask His teaching and guidance into all truth? By our own wisdom we will understand nothing.

Recall how the prophet Daniel asked of the Lord for the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream which baffled all the wise men and astrologers of Babylon. The Apostle John in his vision saw a book sealed with seven seals which none was worthy to open. John, moved to tears, wrote: *“I wept much.”* His “liquid prayer” was the sacred key by which the sealed book was opened by none other than our Lord Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

The message is clear: If we desire to be *“filled with the knowledge of (God’s) will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,”* fervent unceasing prayer is the key. It alone unlocks God’s vast treasure house of spiritual understanding. Like Daniel in Babylon or John on Patmos, our Lord will give us understanding. Stones are not broken except by vigorous and strenuous use of the hammer. The spiritual stone-breaker must go down on his knees, and let the hammer of prayer be applied. Then no stony doctrine of Scripture profitable for us to understand will not be opened under the exercise of the prayer of faith. God has untold hidden treasures for him who asks in faith.

THOUGHT: The perfect Teacher is the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy holy light illumine my mind.

THURSDAY, MARCH 10

GENESIS 49:22-26

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

*To the world
it is a mystery.*

MADE STRONG BY THE GOD OF JACOB

The strength which God gave to Joseph was *real divine* strength, not a boasted valour, not empty talk or fiction. It was proven and tested in his life. Why was Joseph able to stand in the face of temptation? Because God gave him strength. Joseph trusted and obeyed the Lord, and so should we. We can do nothing without His power.

Notice how God gave this strength to Joseph: “*the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.*” In a blessed and familiar way, God put His hands on those of Joseph, 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 loving condescension! God Almighty, Eternal, Omnipotent, stoops from His throne to make His child strong!

Now, whenever you read of the God of Jacob, you should remember the covenant with Jacob. It is the covenant of promise and blessing. All the power, grace, mercies, comforts, and other good things flow to us from the mighty God of Jacob through the covenant. If there were no covenant, then we fail instantly, for all of God’s grace gifts proceed from it.

See Jacob in the wilderness fleeing from Esau. God’s angels came to him by way of God’s ladder, at the top of which stood the God of the covenant. Fearful and fainting, “*the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.*” How loving and assuring! That night God renewed His covenant to Abraham. He renews it to you, only look to Him in faith.

THOUGHT: Mighty men all perish in their time.

PRAYER: Lord, strengthen my feeble hands with Thy divine strength.

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

NAHUM 1:1-7

2 PETER 3:8-10

*“All power
is given unto Me.”*

THE LORD GREAT IN POWER

Jehovah “*is slow to anger*” even against those who rebel who deserve nothing but hell-fire. But God takes no pleasure in the sinner’s death. His sceptre of mercy is ever in His outstretched hand. His sword of justice is in its scabbard, held down by that pierced hand of love which bled for the sins of men.

“*The Lord is slow to anger*” because He is great in power. He is truly great in power because that power doth restrain Himself. The power that binds omnipotence is omnipotence surpassed. A man with a strong mind can bear to be insulted long; the weak mind is irritated and soon loses control. The strong mind is like the rock of Gibraltar, unmoved though a thousand breakers dash their malice upon it.

God knows His enemies, for nothing escapes His notice. Yet He bestirs not Himself, but holds His anger. If He were less than divine, He would long have sent forth His thunders and discharged the magazines of heaven. He would long before this have blasted the earth and all sinful men out of existence. But the greatness of His power brings mercy to all.

Dear reader, what is your relationship to this God of great power? Have you by faith received the Lord Jesus as your Substitute, your Saviour and Redeemer? In Him, you need not be afraid of God’s power, but that power becomes your refuge and shield, your protection. In Christ, rejoice that He who is “*great in power*” is become your Father and Friend.

THOUGHT: Power belongs to God alone.

PRAYER: Lord, may I feel Thy touch of power.

SATURDAY, MARCH 12

JOSHUA 1:1-9

HEBREWS 13:1-8

“I am with thee always.”

“I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE”

No promise is of private interpretation. What God has said to any one saint, He has said to all. When He opens a well for one, it is that all may drink. When He opens a granary-door for one starving man, all hungry saints may come and feed. When He gave the Word to Abraham and Moses, He has given it to thee as one of the covenanted seed. There is not a high blessing too lofty for thee, nor a wide mercy too vast for thee. He loves all of Abraham’s seed.

God has promised a land to His people. Climb to Mount Pisgah’s summit, and lift up thine eyes to the north, east, south, and west, and view the utmost limit of the divine promise. All that land is thine own. There is not a brook of living water of which you may not drink. All of the milk and honey are yours who are of the seed of Abraham.

To the saints of old He said, *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”* This promise is to all His people through all ages. God with us! What a blessed thought and assurance it is, that the Almighty is with them that trust Him. To us He makes available His might, His love, His mercy, His truth, His peace—all these shall be engaged on our behalf.

Think again on God’s promise and its utmost implication: There is nothing you can need in time or eternity, nothing in this world or the next, nothing on earth or in Heaven, which is not contained in the promise: *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”*

THOUGHT: And it includes me!

PRAYER: Lord, teach me always to stand on Thy promise.

"TAKE UP THY CROSS..."

The Lord has a cross for you. You are not to make your own, although unbelief is a master at cross-making. Neither are you permitted to choose your own cross, although self-will would prefer to be lord and master. Your cross is appointed by divine love, you are to cheerfully accept it. You are to take it up as your badge of discipleship, and not to stand and shrink from it. This is the Lord's command.

Hear His gracious and tender call: *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your soul. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matt 11:29-30). Jesus bore His own cross; He leads the way in the path of sorrow. You could not desire a better guide! And if He your Lord and Master bears a cross, what nobler burden could you desire? Follow Him! The Via Crucis or Way of the Cross is the way of safety. Fear not to follow Jesus all the way.

Beloved, the cross is not made of feathers, or lined with velvet. To unwilling shoulders it is heavy and painful. It is a wooden cross, designed just for one man. The Man of Sorrows carried His for our sakes. *"Take up your cross,"* He says. Lovingly He sends you the Blessed Spirit to strengthen you. Soon you will be in love with it, and it will be precious to you. Follow Jesus, then, dear believer, and you will be amazed: The cross grows lighter with the days. And for you who persevere to the end, He promises a crown!

THOUGHT: The way of the Cross leads Home.

PRAYER: Father in Heaven, help me to follow Thy Son with joy.

MONDAY, MARCH 14

EZEKIEL 34:20-26

JAMES 1:17

*Every perfect gift
is from above.*

“THERE SHALL BE SHOWERS OF BLESSING”

Here is sovereign mercy, for who can say, “*I will cause the shower to come down in his season*”? In all the world there is only one voice which can speak to the clouds and bid them drop rain: “Who sendeth down the rain? Who scattereth the showers upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord?”

Every gift of grace is from God, not created by man. Without God’s grace man can do nothing. You may plough the earth, sow your seeds, add your fertilizers, but what can you do without the rain? In life the divine blessing is absolutely needful. Your labour is vain unless God sends plenteous showers of blessing upon you.

Our God sends “plenteous showers,” not a few drops. This is God’s way. So it is with grace: It is so abundant that oftentimes there is not room enough to receive it. Abundant grace! We need it to keep us humble, to make us prayerful, to make us holy, to make us zealous, to preserve us through this life, and at last to land us safe in Heaven. Without God’s abundant grace what can we do?

God’s grace comes down “*in his season.*” What is your season today? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the season for showers! Is it a season of great heaviness with threatening black clouds? Then that also is the season for showers! Our God has promised His blessings in showers, one after another, thick and fast, like links in a golden chain. He converts and comforts. He sends showers for our blessing.

THOUGHT: Our God is the God of abundant mercy.

PRAYER: Lord, let Thy mercy showers fall on me.

COMFORTABLE WORDS

“O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem...? And the LORD answered the angel... with good words and comfortable words” (Zech 1:12-13). What a gracious answer to an anxious enquiry! Let God’s people rejoice for Zion, the City of God. O Zion, there are good things in store for thee! Thy time of travail will soon be over; thy children shall be brought forth, thy captivity shall end. Bear patiently the rod, and under the darkness still trust in God, for He loves thee.

Ponder the unspeakable love of God. God loves the Church with a love too deep and too vast for human comprehension. He loves her with His infinite heart. Therefore let all saints be of good courage. Prosperity follows soon to those whom God speaketh *“good words and comfortable words,”* for He is *“jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.”* He cannot bear the Church to go astray or to be afflicted by her enemies. When God seems most to leave His Church, His heart is still warm towards her. Whenever He uses a rod to chasten His people, He always breaks it afterwards.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him” (Ps 103:13). God does not hate us because He smites. His are the strokes of love. If He loves the Church as a body, He also loves each of us individually. Did you think that the Lord has passed you by? Fear not, O thou of little faith! He who counts the stars, and calls them by their names, does not forget His own. He knows your need as though you were the only creature He ever made or the only saint He ever loved!

THOUGHT: And I must love Him too!

PRAYER: Lord, comfort me with Thy word of truth.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16

GENESIS 19:23-29

MATTHEW 3:7-12

*Bring forth fruits
meet for repentance.*

THE WRATH TO COME

It is pleasant to smell the freshness of the herbs after the storm has spent itself; the rain has passed, leaving its pure diamond drops on the leaves. That is the picture of a Christian's experience. He is going through a land where the storm has spent itself upon the Saviour's head, and the drops of sorrow falling were actually distilled from God's clouds of mercy. Our Lord cheers him: These also have come from above, "*from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*" (James 1:17).

But witness now the approaching tempest, the forewarnings of the storm: birds droop their wings in fear, cattle lay their heads low in terror. Observe the grim face of the sky as it grows black, obscuring the sun, and the heavens frown with pent up anger! The whole earth cowers with trembling until—all of a sudden—the storm bursts! The wind roars on in fury, tearing up houses, uprooting trees, hurling down everything in its path, bringing destruction and death without respect of man or beast.

Unrepentant sinner, this is your present position. No torrential downpour or typhoon winds have burst as yet, but God's tempest of judgment is gathering. Let not the calm before the storm deceive you. It is only God's hand of mercy that holds up the hurricane; it is only His longsuffering that extends the day of grace and repentance. O sinner, when God's thunderbolts are unleashed and the fury of His judgment falls, where will you hide your head? Flee today to Christ and find shelter in Him, the Rock of Ages cleft for you.

THOUGHT: Behold now is the day of salvation!

PRAYER: Lord, shelter me till the storm is past.

THURSDAY, MARCH 17

JONAH 1:1-15

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

*In His presence are
joys for evermore.*

THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

Instead of obeying the Lord and going to Ninevah to preach the Word, Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord to Tarshish. Shrinking from doing God's will is not without its consequences. By running from God, Jonah lost the presence and comfortable enjoyment of God's love. When we serve our Lord Jesus, as believers should, our God is with us. Even if the whole world should be against us, what does it matter? *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"* (Rom 8:31). Is this your assurance?

It is folly to run away from God and seek our own inventions. We are at sea without a pilot. When we realize our plight then we bitterly lament, "Where, my Lord, hast Thou gone? How could I have been so foolish as to shun Thee, and lose the smile of Thy face? This is a price too high. Let me return to Thee, that I may rejoice again in Thy presence."

Jonah, separated from the Lord, lost all peace of mind. His disobedience robbed him of all comfort. He lost the promise of divine protection, being removed out of God's ways. He could not pray, "Lord, I am in these difficulties in the discharge of my duty. Help me please!" Jonah was reaping the fruit of his sin. His own conscience was pricked, and he could not deny it.

Dear reader, do not be a Jonah, unless you wish to have the waves and billows swallow you too. To shun God's work carries a hard price, far harder than to obey without delay. Jonah learnt it the hard way. It is easier that we learn from his mistake. Learning from our own mistakes is costly and painful.

THOUGHT: People are wise after the event; wisdom is to be wise before.

PRAYER: Teach me simply the lesson of obedience, Lord.

SALVATION IS OF THE LORD

Salvation is the work of God. He alone is able to quicken us “*who were dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph 2:1). It is He also who maintains the soul in its spiritual life. He is both “*Alpha and Omega*.” From beginning to end, from first to last, my life as a Christian and believer is His gracious work. If I am prayerful, God did it; if I have graces, they are His gifts; if I lead a consistent life, it is because He upholds me with His hand. I do nothing towards my own preservation, except what God Himself first does in me. All my goodness is of the Lord.

And what if I should sin? Wherein I sin, that is my own corruption of heart, my waywardness, my folly. For that I must seek afresh His forgiveness. Then He receives me again to Himself. “*Salvation is of the Lord*.” If I resisted some temptation, it was the Lord’s strength that nerved my arm. If I have lived a consecrated life, it is not I, but Christ who liveth in me. Am I sanctified? It is the Spirit’s work. Am I weaned from the world? God’s chastisements did it.

“*He only is my rock and my salvation*.” He leads me and feeds me with His life-giving Word. He feeds with Himself, the manna from heaven, even His body and blood. Yes, He is the vine, I am but a poor branch, joined to Him. Without Him I can do nothing; without Him I have no hope, no salvation, no future. But I praise Him: “*Salvation is of the Lord*.”

THOUGHT: Jonah learnt in the fish’s belly; may I learn in my quiet study.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for so great a salvation.

SATURDAY, MARCH 19

LEVITICUS 13:9-17

MATTHEW 8:14-17

Washed white
in the blood of the Lamb.

PRONOUNCED CLEAN

It is strange that this regulation appears (Lev 13:13), yet there is wisdom in it. The throwing out of the disease proved that the constitution was sound. Let us see what lesson we can learn from so unusual a rule. We too are lepers in the spiritual sense. Read again the law of the leper as applicable to ourselves. When we see ourselves as altogether ruined, covered over with the defilement of sin, we disclaim any righteousness of our own. Then pleading guilty before the Lord, we seek His cleansing and forgiveness. He cleanses us with His precious blood, and by the grace of God forgives us all our sins.

Hidden, unconfessed sin is spiritual leprosy. But when sin is admitted and confessed, it receives a deathblow, and the Lord looks with eyes of mercy upon the penitent soul. Nothing is more deadly than self-righteousness; and nothing is more hopeful than self-wretchedness with contrition of heart. When we confess that we are “nothing but sin,” the Holy Spirit begins His work in us, convincing us of sin, and turns us in repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

O poor sinner, thou leper without a sound spot, take heart from today’s text. Come as you are to Jesus the Lord. He Himself “*took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*” (Matt 8:17). “*He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...with his stripes we are healed*” (Isa 53:5). He alone can wash away all your soul’s diseases and pronounce you clean. He will make you whole.

THOUGHT: Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for Thy cleansing flow at Calvary.

THE LORD THY HABITATION

The Israelites in the wilderness were continually exposed to change. Whenever God's cloudy pillar stayed its motion, the tents were pitched. But the next day, ere the sun had risen, the trumpet sounded, the ark was in motion, and the cloudy pillar was leading the way through mountain passes, or along the arid wilderness. They had scarcely time to rest before they heard the sound of "Away! This is not your rest; you must be on your way!"

Yet they had an abiding home in their God. His cloudy pillar was their roof-tree, a shelter from the sun by day, its flame their household lantern by night. For forty years they had no secure permanent dwelling place. "Yet," says Moses, "though we are always changing, Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place throughout all generations." Their security was in the Lord. Though they were continually on the move, yet in the Lord they had the sure promise of Canaan. It was the Lord, not so much the land, that was their sure habitation, their unmoveable home.

The Christian owns and belongs to the same Lord. We know no change with regard to our God. Under His care and leading, we journey onwards to our heavenly Canaan. Our God provides and protects from day to day, from place to place. We may be rich today and poor tomorrow; we may be sick today and well tomorrow; we may be in happiness today and sorrow tomorrow. Circumstances and things around us change, but there is no change in our relationship to God. He is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever (Heb 13:8). He loves me today as He loved me yesterday, and He will love me to the end. He is my strong habitation.

THOUGHT: In Him I continually abide.

PRAYER: Satisfy me early with Thy mercy, O Lord.

“FROM EVERLASTING”

The Lord Jesus had goings forth for His people as their representative before the throne of God, long before they appeared upon the stage of time. It was “*from everlasting*” that He covenanted with the Father to suffer the agony and death, paying the price of blood on behalf of His people. It was “*from everlasting*” that He gave Himself up without a murmur, to be mocked, scourged, spat upon, pierced, rent asunder, and hung on the cross. His goings forth as our Surety were “*from everlasting.*”

Pause and ponder, O my soul! You had “*goings forth*” in the person of Jesus “*from everlasting.*” His delights were with you, long before you were! He first thought of you long ages ago. From everlasting to everlasting He has set His affection upon you. My soul’s salvation was part of His plan “*from everlasting.*” If that is so, will He not accomplish it finally? Can it be that one day He will lose me? He whose power made heaven and earth, and all things, has He not power enough to keep me to the end?

God’s Word has the answer: He gives me the full assurance that He who loved me “*from everlasting*” will love me to the end. He is the unchanging and unchangeable Saviour God. If He could grow weary of me, He would have done so long before now. If He had not loved me with an everlasting love, He would have turned from me long ago. What assurance and everlasting joy to know that I am His everlasting inheritance given Him by His Father before the foundation of the earth! Everlasting love shall pillow my head this night.

THOUGHT: Reckon in terms of eternity, not time.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for Thine everlasting plan.

MONDAY, MARCH 21

PSALM 62

1 THESSALONIANS 1:5-10

*Without Christ,
a hopeless end!*

WHAT IS YOUR EXPECTATION?

“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.”

Only the believer is privileged to say so. For a man to look for anything from the world is poor expectation indeed, for the world and all in it will shortly pass away. But the man who looks to God, whether for temporal or spiritual blessings, his expectation will not be in vain. He is assured of God’s inexhaustible supplies from His bank of faith and lovingkindness. I would rather have God for my banker than all the Rothschilds in the world.

Consider this, my friend: My God never fails; He never fails to honour His promises; when we present them as cheques at Heaven’s bank of faith, He never rejects any. Every promise is honoured in full. Therefore I wait at His door which, I know, He ever opens with the hand of munificent grace. My expectations will never be disappointed.

But our expectation go beyond this life to the next. In the Land of Promise our highest expectations will be gloriously rewarded. I know, when I shall say goodbye to this earth, my Saviour will send an angelic messenger to conduct me there. I shall hear His welcome voice: *“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Matt 25:34). In God’s Kingdom harps of gold and crowns of glory await all who now serve Him with great expectation. But for today let our expectations be translated into action. Let us serve the Lord in His vineyard, *now!*

THOUGHT: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”

PRAYER: Lord, lift my expectation toward Heaven.

TUESDAY, MARCH 22

1 KINGS 17:8-16

MATTHEW 6:25-34

*His promises are
yea and Amen.*

OUR DAILY NEEDS

See the faithfulness of divine love. The widow of Zarephath, like any other woman, had daily necessities. The famine was grievous, and what she had was enough for herself and her son for just one last meal. Now, the prophet Elijah was to be fed too. Though the need was greater, yet the supply did not exhaust itself. Each day she went to the barrel, yet the meal remained the same. Each day she poured from the cruse, yet the oil flowed as before.

Dear reader, your situation is not much different from the widow's. Your barrel of meal and cruse of oil, in the normal course of use, will be exhausted. But we have a God who is above the "normal course." He knows your needs, the needs of every single one of His children. Rest assured that He has fresh supplies for each day because His Word says so. Read again Matthew 6:25-26. Our Father will supply!

Look, then, in faith to the Heavenly Father. His promise is: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matt 6:33). Each day may bring fresh troubles, but each day we prove His love as He sends fresh help. Our Father's grace and mercy will outlast all our years of need, even if you should outlive Methuselah! Child of God, trust in the Father in Heaven. He who cares for widows and orphans, birds and beasts, cares more for you His child!

THOUGHT: Amazing grace of my loving God.

PRAYER: Give me more faith to rest in Thy promises, O Lord.

LOVINGKINDNESS WINS THE DAY

The thunders of the Law and the terrors of judgment are all used to bring men to Christ; but the final victory is effected by lovingkindness. The prodigal set out for his father's house from a sense of need; but his father saw him a great way off, and ran to meet him, so that the last steps home were with his father's kiss still warm upon his cheek, and the welcome still like music in his ears.

“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve a heart of stone.”

The Master came one night to the door, and knocked with the iron hand of the Law. The door shook but the man inside would not open. Another day, the Master came back, and with His own nail-pierced hand, knocked again—oh, so softly and tenderly. This time the door did not shake, but, strange to say, it opened, and the once defiant host rejoiced to welcome his Guest.

“Come in, come in! Your gentle knock melted my heart to open the door. I see Your nail-pierced hand and hear Your loving voice. Your love has won my heart.” So it is, in every case, lovingkindness wins the day. What Moses with his tablets of stone could never do, Christ does with His pierced hand. Such is the doctrine of effectual calling. “He drew me, and I followed on, glad to confess the voice divine.”

THOUGHT: “Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord to the cross where Thou has died.”

PRAYER: Lord, I love Thee for Thou hast first loved me.

THURSDAY, MARCH 24

LUKE 11:9-13

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-16

*He is the
blessed Holy Spirit.*

THE BEST GIFT

Dear reader, have you received the spirit which is of God, wrought by the Holy Ghost in your soul? The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart may be clearly seen from this fact, that “all the works of God the Father, and God the Son, are ineffectual to us, unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls.” Let us consider this statement of truth.

The doctrine of election: It is a dead term in my consciousness until the Spirit of God illumines me, and calls me out of darkness into His marvellous light. Then through my calling, I see my election, and knowing myself to be called of God, I see myself to have been chosen in His eternal purpose.

The everlasting covenant: It was made with the Lord Jesus Christ by the Father. But what value is that covenant to us until the Holy Spirit opens our hearts to receive its blessings? The blessings are for us but we cannot reach them; and, except the Spirit hands them to us, we have no part in them.

Covenant blessings are like manna in the sky, out of mortal reach. The Spirit of God comes to our aid, opens the windows of heaven and scatters the living bread around the camp of the spiritual Israel. It is the Holy Spirit who quickened us even while we were dead in sin, giving us new life in Christ. Let us walk lovingly towards Him and tremble at the thought of ever grieving Him.

THOUGHT: The heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask.

PRAYER: Lord, fill me with Thy Spirit.

THE FRAGRANCE OF GOD'S GRACE

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.”

The God-given graces in every believer are like spices in the garden. When stirred up they bring forth odours well pleasing to the Master. Graces unexercised are as sweet perfumes slumbering in the cups of the flowers. It is God's will that His people abound in spiritual graces to make glad Emmanuel's heart. The dead calm of indifference of your garden needs to be aroused!

Our souls, responding to the Spirit's prompting, cry out, “Awake, O north wind...blow upon my garden, that its perfumes may flow out.” We are weary of the deadness and unholy calm of our spiritual lethargy. May God's visitation with the harsh wintry blast of trouble stir up our plants of grace, be they His chastisement or rod of correction. We must submit to the reproofs of the Beloved if we are to please Him. So, come wind, come foul weather, aid us to magnify our Saviour.

But we desire also the warm south wind of comfort—the smiles of divine love, the joy of the Redeemer's presence. These are often mightily effectual to arouse our sluggish spirits. Our heart's desire is only to be able to delight our Beloved Lord with the spices of our garden. What use are they if the Master never breathes their fragrances? How cheering a thought that Jesus finds comfort in our poor feeble graces!

O that we all realize today this amazing truth. We could then welcome trial, nay, even death, if we shall thereby be enabled to make glad Emmanuel's heart. May the great Husbandman employ His perfect way, affliction or consolation, to draw forth fragrant perfumes of faith, love, patience, hope, submission, joy, gentleness and many others, to His greater glory.

THOUGHT: Hereby we also bless our Saviour.

PRAYER: Lord, make me to abound in every grace.

SATURDAY, MARCH 26

PSALM 32

1 PETER 2:1-10

*He is the fairest
of ten thousand.*

HE IS PRECIOUS

As all rivers run into the sea, so all delights centre in our Beloved. The glow of His face outshines the sun; His beauty is fairer than the fairest flower. No pearls or gemstones can measure His preciousness. The Apostle Peter tells us that Jesus is precious, but he could not tell us how precious, nor can any of us compute the value of God's unspeakable gift. No words can adequately describe the preciousness of the Lord Jesus, nor fully tell how vital He is to our happiness.

Believer, have you not found that in the midst of abundance, there is a great void and emptiness if our Lord was absent? In the brightest day, if Jesus should hide Himself, all the world becomes steeped in gloom and darkness. Without Him the world becomes a howling wilderness. If He should hide Himself, the flowers wither, our fruits decay, the birds cease their songs, and our hopes are overturned.

How shall we describe Him, our glorious Saviour and Lord? He is the soul of our soul, the light of our light, the life of our life. What would you do in the world without Him to sustain you in times of temptation and distress? What would you do in the morning without Him to begin your day? How will you face the day's battles? What would you do at night if there were no door of fellowship with Him? Praise God, our Lord Jesus never leaves us or forsakes us. He is the same yesterday, and today and forever.

THOUGHT: How precious is Jesus to me?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to appreciate my Saviour more.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

We are engaged in a great war with the Philistines of evil. Every weapon within our reach must be used. Preaching, teaching, praying, giving, all must be brought into action. Talents which have been thought too mean for service must now be employed. Coulter, axe and mattock are rough tools, but they deal hard blows. Slaying need not be elegantly done, so long as the Philistines are killed. In our warfare against evil, each moment of time, each fragment of ability, each opportunity, must be used, for our foes are many and our resources but slender.

Our tools need sharpening. We need to improve our perception, tact, energy, promptness, and devotion for the Lord's work. Practical common sense is badly lacking among some of God's servants. There are lessons we can learn from the enemy, even as Israel made the Philistines sharpen their weapons. May the Holy Spirit help us sharpen our zeal through careful observation. See the energy of the priests of Rome, how they compass sea and land to make one convert. Mark the heathen idolators, what tortures they endure in the service of their idols!

Now look at ourselves, how lacking our zeal in following the Lord, how lukewarm the fire of prayer, how feeble our personal witness, and how timid our standing up for the Lord. The devils are united as one in their evil schemes, while we in the Lord's army are divided, arguing and bickering. Away with all unspiritual and unprofitable activity! Unite! Look unto Jesus, and let us fight the good fight of faith as one man.

THOUGHT: Every soldier must fight.

PRAYER: Lord, strengthen me for today's battles.

“OHMS”

“On His Majesty’s Service” marks out a person as someone not to be despised: He is in the employ of the sovereign of the land. The Apostle Paul was such a person, privileged to serve the Lord Jesus, KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS. Called by the Lord, he entered upon the Gospel ministry with intense delight and gratitude. His success greatly humbled him: The fuller a vessel becomes, the deeper it sinks in the water.

If you seek humility, try hard work. If you would know your nothingness, attempt something significant for Jesus. Try especially to proclaim “*the unsearchable riches of Christ,*” and you will know, as you never knew before, what a weak and unworthy thing you are. The Apostle was actually conscious of, and confessed, his weakness. But as to the subject of his ministry, he was never in doubt. From his first sermon to the last, Paul preached Christ, nothing but Christ. “*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*” was his unchanging theme.

How about you and your theme? Paul has set us the example, and there is no better. In all your personal efforts to spread the Gospel, let the same theme “*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*” be yours. Be also like the spring flowers which open their golden cups to the sun. Let us open wide our hearts to the Lord, the Sun of Righteousness, and be filled with His radiance. Then go and speak of Him, and Him alone. This subject is “live coal to the lip of the preacher, and master-key to the heart of the hearer.”

THOUGHT: From first to last, preach Christ, and Christ only.

PRAYER: Lord, fill my heart and shine through me.

MONDAY, MARCH 28

ISAIAH 48:9-15

LUKE 12:7

*Never fear,
He is near!*

“I HAVE CHOSEN THEE”

Comfort thyself, suffering saint, with this thought: God says, “*I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction*” (Isa 48:10). Does not the word come like a gentle shower, cooling the heat of the furnace? Let affliction come—God has chosen me. Poverty may stare in at the door, but my Lord is inside already, and He has chosen me. Sickness may brush me, but I have a balsam ready—God has chosen me. Whatever befalls me on this side of eternity, in this vale of tears, I rest contented in Him—He has chosen me.

Dear reader, are you going through the furnace too? Remember, the Son of Man walks with you! Wherever you are, there is by your side One Whom you have not seen, Who goes with you, Whose promise is “*I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*” You may not be aware, but He is with you in your bed of affliction, smoothing your pillow for you. In your humble dwelling place the Lord of glory is an ever present Guest. No abode is too lowly or too lonely for Him to visit.

In Him we have a Friend so true. He sticketh closer than a brother. You cannot see Him, but you may feel the touch of His hand. Do you not hear His voice? In the valley of shadow He says, “Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.” Fear not! In every fiery trial, His presence is your comfort and safety. He who chose you will surely not forsake or leave you. Therefore, fear not!

THOUGHT: Many are called but few chosen.

PRAYER: Lord, may I choose in all things to please only Thee.

TUESDAY, MARCH 29

1 SAMUEL 16:12-14

MATTHEW 3:13-17

*Be filled
with the Spirit.*

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

As the Spirit of God descended upon the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church, so He also descends upon us the members of His body. His descent to us is after the same fashion as that in which He descended upon our Lord.

The descent of the Spirit of God has a singular rapidity about it. Before we are really aware, we are impelled onward and heavenward beyond all comprehension. Yet, there is none of the hurry of earthly haste.

Quietness is part of the spiritual operation. The Lord speaks by His still small voice; His grace, like dew, is distilled in silence. As the dove is the symbol of purity, the Holy Spirit is holiness itself. Where He is present, everything that is pure and lovely is made to abound.

Peace reigns where the Holy Dove comes with power; He bears the olive branch which shows that the waters of divine wrath have subsided. Gentleness is a sure result of the Sacred Dove's transforming power. Hearts are made meek and lowly for ever. Harmlessness follows, as a matter of course, so we must learn to be harmless as doves.

The soul visited by the Blessed Spirit abounds in love, like the Dove. This divine love shows itself to God, to the brethren and to sinners. Blessed Spirit, as Thou didst rest upon our dear Redeemer, even so rest upon us from this time forward and for evermore.

THOUGHT: All that we do for God is "by the Spirit."

PRAYER: O Spirit of God, help me always to submit and never to grieve Thee.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF DIVINE GRACE

If God's saints were never poor and tried, we should not know half so well the consolations of divine grace. God's wondrous grace is manifested and magnified in the poverty and trials of suffering saints. The wanderer who has not where to lay his head can yet say, "Still will I trust in the Lord." The pauper starving on bread and water still keeps praising the Lord. The bereaved widow overwhelmed with grief still sings, "Jesus is all the world to me." Job in the depth of affliction still looked to God with hope and declared, "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*" (Job 13:15).

O the glorious Gospel of Christ! Strengthened and comforted by its promises, saints bear up under discouragement, disappointment and distress. These and other apparent evils and setbacks may come their way, but the true believers see beyond the dark clouds of affliction the good hand of God. They have the confidence that their God will deliver them speedily, or if not, will most assuredly support them in the trouble. This patience of believers proves the power of divine grace.

The all-sufficient consolations of God's grace are seen when men stand in the midst of difficulty steadfast, unmoveable,

"Calm 'mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory."

He who would glorify his God must be prepared to meet with many trials. If yours be a storm-tossed path, rejoice, because you will better show forth the all-sufficient grace of God, to His greater glory.

THOUGHT: "*My grace is sufficient for thee*" (2 Cor 12:9).

PRAYER: Lord, help me to glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

THE KING’S TABLE

The Queen of Sheba was amazed at the sumptuousness of Solomon’s table. She lost all heart when she saw the provision of a single day. She marvelled at the company of servants who feasted at the royal board. But what is this compared to the hospitalities of the God of grace? Ten thousand and thousands of His people are daily fed at His table, and not one goes unsatisfied. Our divine Master has more than enough, enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore.

Though the host that feed at Jehovah’s table are countless as the stars of heaven, yet each one has his goodly portion. Think how much grace one saint requires. Nothing but the Infinite God of grace could supply. And yet the Lord spreads His table, not for one, but for many; and not for one day, but for years unnumbered, for generation after generation. Observe the sumptuous feasting spoken of in the text (Ps 36:8). The guests at God’s banquet are satisfied, nay, *“abundantly satisfied,”* and that not with ordinary fare, but with fatness, the exquisite riches of God’s table.

To the hungry ones, our Lord has an invitation: *“Come and dine!”* A great feast is assured by a faithful promise to all who put their trust under the shadow of Jehovah’s wings. Come to God’s banquet: He will give you not crumbs or scraps of left-overs, but ten times more than you could have expected of the best from His amazing stores of grace.

THOUGHT: God gives nothing but the best.

PRAYER: Father in Heaven, feed me till I want no more.



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