**÷c01 Job**

**Our Daily Homily, Job
by F.B. Meyer**

**Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and renounced God in their hearts.** Job 1:5 (R.V.).

TIMES of festivity are always full of temptation. The loins are relaxed, the girdle of the soul is loosed. Amid the general hilarity and the passing of the merry joke, words are said and thoughts permitted which are not always consistent with the character of God and his glorious kingdom and service. Job was not wrong, therefore, in supposing that his children might have contracted some defiling stain.

It necessary for some of us to move in society, and to attend festive gatherings. As the Lord went to the wedding feast, and accepted Simon's invitation, so must we. The sphere of our life lies necessarily in the world. But when we are entering scenes of recreation and pleasure we should be more than ever careful to put on our amour, and by previous meditation and prayer prepare ourselves for the inevitable temptation; and when it is all over, and the lights are down, we should quietly review our behavior under the light that streams from the Word of God. If we then are made aware of frivolous or uncharitable words, of jealousy because others have outshone us, or of pride at the splendor of our dress and the brilliance of our talk, we must confess it, and obtain forgiveness and restoration.

What a beautiful example is furnished by Job to Christian parents! When your girls are going among strangers, and your boys into the great ways of the world, and you are unable to impose your will upon them, as in the days of childhood, you can yet pray for them, casting over them the shield of intercession, with strong cryings and tears. They are beyond your reach; but by faith you can move the arm of God on their behalf.

**A perfect and an upright man.** Job 2:3

EVEN God spoke of Job as perfect. Not that he was absolutely so, as judged by the perfect standard of eternity, but as judged by the standard of his own light and knowledge. He was living up to all the requirements of God and man, so far as he understood them. His whole being was open and obedient to the Divine impulses. So far as he knew there was no cause of controversy in heart or life. Probably he could have adopted the words of the Apostle, "I know nothing against myself." He exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and man.

Satan suggested that his goodness was pure selfishness; that it paid him well to be as he was, because God had hedged him around and blessed his substance. This malignant suggestion was at once dealt with by the Almighty Vindicator of the saints. It was as if God said, "I give thee permission to deprive him of all those favoring conditions, for the sake of which thou sayest he is bribed to goodness; and it shall be seen that his integrity is rooted deep down in the work of my grace upon his heart."

But the book goes on to show that God desired to teach Job that there were flaws and blemishes in his character which could only be seen by comparing it with the more perfect glory of his own Divine nature. His friends sought to prove him faulty, and failed; God revealed himself, and he cried, "Behold, I am vile, and abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

How often God takes away our consolations, that we may only love Him for Himself; and reveals our sinfulness, that we may better appreciate the completeness of his salvation!

**Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day.** Job 3:1

THAT is, the day of his birth. Probably there have been hours in the majority of lives in which men have wished that they had never been born. When they have stood beside the wreck of all earthly hope, or entered the garden of the grave they have cried, "Why died I not from the birth!" The reason for this is, that the heart has been so occupied with the transient and earthly, that it has lost sight of the unseen and eternal; and in finding itself deprived of the former, it has thought that there was nothing left to live for.

One of the greatest tests of true religion is in bearing suffering. At such a time we are apt, if we are professing Christians, to exert a certain constraint over ourselves, and bear ourselves heroically. We have read of people in like circumstances who have not shed a tear or uttered a complaining word; and we have braced ourselves to a Christian stoicism. "I am sure you cannot find fault with my behavior," said one such to me. And yet beneath the correct exterior there may be the pride and haughtiness of an altogether unsubdued self.

There is a more excellent way: to humble oneself under the mighty hand of God; to search the heart for any dross that needs to be burnt out; to resign oneself to the will of the Father; to endeavor to learn the lesson in the black-lettered book; to seek to manifest the specific grace for which the trial calls; to be very tender and thoughtful for others; to live deeper down.

"Nearer, my God to Thee! -- Nearer to Thee!

E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,

Still all my song shall be -- Nearer, my God, to Thee!

Nearer to Thee!"

**But now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest.** Job 4:5 (R.V.).

IT is much easier to counsel others in their trouble than to bear it ourselves. Full often the soul, which has poured floods of consolation on others, feels sadly in need of a touch, a voice, a sympathizing companion, as the chill waters begin to rise towards the knees, and the shadow of the great eclipse falls around. The fact of our having consoled so many others seems at such a moment to leave us the more solitary and lonesome. People have been so wont to be helped by as that they hardly dare approach us; besides, they suppose that all the fund of comfort from which we have succored others must be now available for us. What can *they* say that *we* have not said a hundred times? and if we have *said* it, of course we must *know* all about it; but they do not know how wistful the heart is to hear it said to us with the accent of a sympathetic voice and the touch of a ministering hand.

Ah, it will come unto thee at last. The pain and sorrow of life will find thee out. The arrow will at last fix itself quivering in thy heart. How wilt thou do then? Thou wilt faint unless thy words have sprung from a living experience of the love and presence of Jesus. Thou must have a better hope than "the integrity of thy ways," as suggested by Eliphaz. But there awaits thee the personal fellowship of Jesus, a brother born for the hour of trial. He is the never-failing Friend, who sticketh closer than a brother. Put Him and his will and his choice between thee and thy sorrow, whatever it may be. Hide thee in his secret place, and under the shadow of his wings thou shalt enjoy sweet peace.

"Only heaven Is better than a walk

With Christ at midnight over moonlit seas."

**He maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth and his hands make whole.** Job 5:18

HAS this been your experience lately? Have you been made sore by the heavy scourge of pain, and wounded by the nails of the cross? Do not look at second causes. Men may have been the instruments, but God is the Agent. The cup has been presented by a Judas, but the Father permitted it; and it is therefore the cup that the Father hath given you to drink. Shall you not drink it? How much He must love you, to dare to inflict this awful discipline, which makes your love and trust, that He values so infinitely, tremble in the scale! "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

But do not look back on what you have suffered; look on and up! As surely as He has made sore, He will bind up; as soon as He has wounded, his hands will begin to make whole. Consider the reparative processes of nature. So soon as the unsightly ruin or chasm yawns, nature begins to weave her rich festoons, to cover it with moss and lichen; let the flesh be punctured or lacerated, the blood begins to poor out the protoplastic matter to be woven into a new fabric. So when the heart seems bleeding its life away, God is at work binding up and healing. Think of those dear and tender hands, that fashioned the heavens, and touched the eyeballs of the blind, as laid upon you to make you whole. Trust Him; He loves infinitely, and will suffer none that trust in Him to be desolate.

We must be careful, however, that nothing on our part shall hinder the life of the Son of God from flowing through us, as the sap of the vine through every branch.

**As a brook, as the channel of brooks that pass away.** Job 6:15 (R.V.).

JOB complains of his three friends. He was glad when they first came to his side, as likely to yield him comfort in his sore distress. Instead of this, however, they began probing his heart and searching his life, to find the secret sin on account of which his heavy troubles had befallen him. Their philosophy was at fault. They held that special misfortune is always the result of special sin; and since there was nothing in Job's outward conduct to account for his awful sufferings, they felt that he was hiding some secret defection, which they urged him to confess. Job felt that in all this they cruelly misunderstood him, and compares them in these words to one of the desert streams that are choked with ice and snow in the time of the winter rains, but dwindle and dry up on the first approach of summer. And when the weary caravans come to their banks, lo, their bed is a mere heap of stones. "They come thither and are confounded."

Is it not so with human friendships? We hoped that they would quench the raging thirst of our souls; this hope increases when they draw nigh us in days of sorrow; but how often they fail us -- stones for bread, scorpions for fish, and scorching pebbles instead of water-brooks. How great a contrast to the love and friendship of Jesus! Not like a brook that dries in the time of drought, but like a well of water springing up within the heart for ever. He does not merely give consolation and sympathy, but He is what He gives. He imparts Himself. His promise chases away our fears as his Spirit reminds us of the words, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Nothing gives Him greater joy than to be the perfect circle of which earth's friendships are broken arcs.

**What is man . . . that thou shouldst visit him every morning?** Job 7:17,18

GOD visits us with mercy every morning. Before we are awake He is at work in the world, baptizing it with dew, feeding the birds and wild things, taking pleasure in the jasmine and heliotrope, the honeysuckle, and the rose; and with all his care for his world, He does not forget man, whom He has placed there to be its tenant. There is no life so mean and abject, so suffering and wretched, that He does not visit in order to comfort and relieve it. No heart so forlorn that He does not knock at the door: no window so selfishly curtained and shuttered, at which He does not tap. "Open to Me!" the heavenly visitor entreats, "my love, my dove, my spouse!" Alas for us! that we keep the doors and windows closed to Him -- as the poor widow to a beneficent friend, who called to relieve her, but she mistook him for the rent-collector.

But probably Job meant that God visits us in discipline, training, education. He is the watcher of men; not to detect their failures, but to discover opportunities of leading them on to richer, fuller experiences of his grace and life. Surely, as we consider all the time and pains which God has expended on us, we too may cry, with the patriarch, "What is man?" Man is more than we guess, else God would never take such time and pains with him. When a lapidary spends years over a single diamond, the most careless observer begins to appraise properly its intrinsic value.

Every morning God visits thee, with holy thoughts and warnings, with miracles and parables, with anticipations and forecasts -- oh, realize how much thou art to Him: give Him love for love, thanks and loving recognition, a child's welcome and trust.

**If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee.** Job 8:6

SO Bildad spoke, suggesting that Job was not pure and upright, since God did not appear to deliver him. The premises from which he argued were that God always delivers and prospers pure and upright men, and that therefore, if a man were not delivered and prospered, he was proved to be neither pure nor upright. The fallacy lay in the premiss. It is not universally true that God delivers his saints from adverse circumstances, or prospers them with outward good. There have been in all ages thousands of devoted servants of God who have been destitute, afflicted, and tormented; and there are thousands of such to-day in prisons, in hospital wards, in every condition of privation and trial; but in none of these cases can there be the least imputation on the love and righteousness of God, nor necessarily on their fidelity and goodness.

God's arrangements for us are not governed by the superficial philosophy which would make material prosperity a sign of his favor, and adversity of his displeasure. There are many considerations beside. Our privations in the outward strengthen and ripen the inward. As the outward man decays, the inward is renewed day by day. We have to learn and manifest those passive virtues which can only mature in silence and sorrow. We must be taught to be largely independent of circumstances, and to find in God Himself the springs of unfailing supply. We must learn to carry the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may not trust in ourselves, but in the living God. We have to stiffer with and for others. All these things worketh God with us to make us partakers of his holiness. But amid all our sorrows, He is always awake for us.

**Yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.** Job 9:31

WE shall never got beyond the need of using daily the Lord's prayer. He has bound by the conjunction and the prayer for forgiveness with that for daily bread, as though to teach us that we shall need the one as long as we need the other. At the end of the best day that we ever spent, when we are not aware of having consciously sinned in act, or speech, or thought, we shall still have need of the precious blood. We may know nothing against ourselves, yet we shall not be thereby justified; because He that judgeth us is our holy Lord, and the standard by which we are judged is his own perfect character. A piece of cambric looks extremely fine to the eye, but how coarse to the microscope! Sheep look white against the dark ground of the early spring; but how dark if there should be a fall of snow! Our characters seem stainless, only because we compare ourselves with ourselves, or with others.

But, when our eyes are opened to see God, to behold the whiteness of the great white throne, and we stand in the searching light of heaven, we are as those who have just emerged from a ditch. I heard the other day of a woman being proud of having lived without sin for ten years! So we deceive ourselves. No, at the best we are sinful men and women, needing constant cleansing; even though we may be kept from known sin by the grace of Christ. It was at an advanced period in the life of the great Apostle, and when he lived nearest God, that he realized himself to be the chief of sinners.

"I know not what I am, but only know

I have had glimpses tongue may never speak:

No more I balance human joy and woe,

But think of my transgressions, and am meek."

**The land of darkness and the shadow of death.** Job 10:21

THIS represented the highest thinking of that age about the future. There were gleams now and again of something more; but they were fitful and uncertain, soon overtaken by dark and sad forebodings. How different to our happy condition, for whom death is abolished, whilst life and immortality have been brought to light! The patriarch called the present life Day, and the future Night. We know that in comparison the present is Night, and the future Day. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us put on the amour of light."

For us, too, there is something better. We wait for his Son from heaven; we look for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. "As the waters of the sea are held between two mighty gravitations, the moon now drawing them towards itself, and the earth drawing them back again, thus giving the ebbing and flowing tide, by which our earth is kept clean and healthful, so must the tides of the soul's affection move perpetually between the cross of Christ and the coming of Christ, influenced now by the power of memory and now by the power of hope." It is said of the late Dr. Gordon: "Hardly a sermon was preached without allusion to the glorious appearing. Never a day passed in which he did not prepare himself for it, in which its hastening was not sought for with prayer." "Yet a little while [*Greek*, how little! how little!] and He that shall come will come." The attitude of every believer should be that of waiting: with loins girt and lamp burning, let us be ready to meet our Lord.

"The Best is yet to be,

The Last for which the First was made."

**Canst thou by searching find out God?** Job 11:7

THERE is but one answer to that question. No one can. The very angels veil their faces before the insufferable glory of his face.

"The firstborn sons of light

Desire in vain his depths to see;

They cannot reach the mystery,

The length, and breadth, and height.

Do not be surprised, then, if there should be matters in the Bible, in your own life, and in the Providential government of the world, which baffle your thought. Remember you are only a little child in an infant class, and it is not likely that you can comprehend the whole system of your instructor. God would cease to be God to us, if we by searching could find Him out.

But though we cannot find out God by the searching of the intellect, we may know Him by love. "He that loveth, knoweth God; for God is Love." There is a way of knowing God, which is hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes. Seek to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. Let Christ dwell deep in your heart by faith. Take care to obey all his commandments, and then the Holy God will come into you, and abide. He will give you Himself, and you will know Him as a little child knows its parent, whom it cannot grasp with its mind, but loves and trusts and knows with its heart. We cannot find out God by searching, but we can by loving.

We can also find Him in the character and life of Jesus. He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father; why then ask to be shown the Father? "What is Thy name, O mystery of strength and beauty?" "Shiloh, Rest-Giver," is the deep response.

**Doth not the ear try words? and the palate tasteth its meat.** Job 12:11 (R.V.).

THERE is no appeal from the verdict of our palate. We know in a moment whether a substance is sweet or bitter, palatable or disagreeable. Now, what the taste is to articles of diet, that the ear is to words, whether of God or man. More especially we can tell in a moment whether the fire of inspiration is burning in them. This is the test which Job proposed to apply to the words of his friends; and it would be well for all of us to apply the same test to Holy Scripture.

The humble student of the Word of God is sometimes much perplexed and cast down by the assaults which are made on it by scholars and teachers, who do not scruple to question the authorship and authority of large tracts of Scripture. We cannot vie with these in scholarship, but the humblest may apply the test of the purged ear; and it will detect a certain quality in the Bible which is absent everywhere beside. There is a tone in the voice of Scripture, which the child of God must recognize. This is the interesting characteristic in the quotations made in the New Testament from the Old. All the writers in the later Revelation detect the voice of God in the Old; to them, it is the Divine utterance through holy lips. Hearken, they cry, "the holy Ghost saith." God is speaking in the prophets, as He spake in his Son.

It is one of the characteristics of Christ's sheep that they know his voice, and follow Him, whilst they flee from the voice of strangers. Ask that the Lord may touch your ears, that they may discern by a swift intuition the voice of the Good Shepherd from that of strangers; and for grace to follow immediately He calls you.

**Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.** Job 13:15

THIS was a noble expression, which has been appropriated by thousands in every subsequent age. In every friendship there is a probation, during which we narrowly watch the actions of another, as indicating the nature of his soul; but after awhile we get to such intimate knowledge and confidence, that we read and know his inner secret. We have passed from the outer court into the Holy Place of fellowship. We seem familiar with every nook and cranny of our friend's nature. And then it is comparatively unimportant how he appears to act; we know him.

So it is in respect of God. At first we know Him through the testimony of others, and on the evidence of Scripture; but as time passes, with its ever deepening experiences of what God is, with those opportunities of converse that arise during years of prayer and communion, we get to know Him as He is and to trust Him implicitly. And when that point has been reached and passed, nothing afterwards can greatly move us. Instead of looking at God from the standpoint of his acts, we look at his dealings with us and all men from the standpoint of his heart. Though He put us on the altar, as Abraham did Isaac, and take the knife to slay us, we trust Him. If we die, it is to pass into a richer life. If He seem to forget and forsake us, it is only in appearance. His heart is yearning over us more than ever. God cannot do a thing which is not perfectly loving and wise and good. Oh to know Him thus!

" Leaving the final issue In His hands

Whose goodness knows no change, whose love is sure,

Who sees, foresees, who cannot judge amiss."

**All the days of my warfare would I wait, till my release should come.** Job 14:14 (R.V.).

THE Lord Jesus has chosen us to be his soldiers. We are in the midst of a great campaign: let us endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and strive above all things to please Him (2 Tim. ii. 4). Amongst other things, let us be sure not to entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life. What purpose could a soldier serve who insisted on taking all his household goods with him on the march!

There is no pause in the warfare. We can never, like Gideon's soldiers, throw ourselves on the bank and quaff the water at our leisure. Every bush may hide a sharp-shooter; every brake an ambuscade. It becomes us to watch and pray; to keep on our harness of amour; to be on the alert for our Captain's voice. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenly places; we need to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and to take unto ourselves the whole amour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

But the release will come at last. When the soldier has fought the good fight, the time of his departure will come, and he will go in to receive the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give in that day. "Come," said the dying Havelock to his son, "and see how a Christian can die." Sometimes it demands more of a soldier's courage to wait than to charge. Remember that long waiting on the field at Waterloo, when the day passed from morning to evening. If you can do nothing else, wait. Be steadfast, immovable: lying still to suffer, to bear, to endure. This is fighting of the noblest sort.

**Thou restrainest prayer before God.** Job 15:4

JOB'S friends were bent on discovering the cause of his sufferings in some secret failure and declension. This is why Eliphaz accused him so groundlessly. They did not know of those secret habits of intercession described in the first chapter. But this charge is eminently true of some professing Christians.

*They restrain private prayer.* -- The closet door is too seldom shut behind them, or it is kept shut for to brief a period. They do not give themselves time to get into the mid-current of intercession and be borne forward by it whither it will. The voice of the Holy Spirit is barely able to assert itself amid the hubbub of voices within. They are so taken up with speaking of the Lord, or working for Him, that they slur over private audiences with Himself.

*They restrain social prayer.* -- Their minister never them in the gatherings for intercession on behalf of the work of the Church and the salvation of the lost. They forsake the assembling of themselves with the saints. Like Thomas, they are absent from the gathering in the upper room, and miss the smile of the Lord.

*They restrain family prayer.* -- Surely we ought to gather at least once a day around the family altar. Where Abraham pitched his tent he erected the altar. A prayerless home is apt to become a worldly and unhappy one. There is no such keystone to the arch of home-life and home-love, as the habit of family worship.

How foolish, how short-sighted, how sinful, it is to restrain prayer! What wonder that your soul is famished when you fail to feed it, or impoverished when you neglect intercourse with heaven!

**I was at ease, and He brake me asunder.** Job 16:12 (R.V.).

THE other day, it was the Lord's Day morning, two sparrows fell from the leads of my church into the vestry, which has a lofty glass skylight. As soon as they had recovered from their astonishment at finding themselves prisoners, they flew up against this skylight as though to break through it to the open heaven, and then round and round the room. They were desperately afraid of myself and the verger, whom I had called, not realizing that we were as anxious as they to get them out again into the air. The only thing we could do to help them was to keep them from alighting to rest; so with long brooms and soft missiles we constantly drove them from every cornice and picture-frame on which they alighted, till they fell exhausted, and with panting breasts, to the ground. Then we captured them and set them free. They might have said many a time, in the course of that encounter, "We were at case, and they brake us asunder; they also set us up for their mark." But if they could review that episode now, they would doubtless see that it was love which forbade them to rest anywhere in the vestry, because it desired to give them their fullest liberty.

So with Job. God would not allow him to rest in anything short of the best, and therefore He broke up his nest. Is not this the key to his dealings with you? Oh, believe that behind the perpetual change and displacement of your life God is leading you into the glorious liberty of his children!

"Therefore to whom turn I but Thee, the ineffable Name?

Builder and Maker Thou of houses not made with hands!

What? have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?

Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?

There shall never be one lost good."

**Yet shall the righteous hold on his way.** Job 17:9 (R.V.).

WHEN the real life of God enters the soul, it persists there. Genuine religion is shown by its power of persistence. Anything short of a God-given faith will sooner or later fail. It may run well for a time, but its pace will inevitably slacken till it comes to a stand. The youths faint and are weary, and the young men utterly fall. The seed sown on the rock springs up quickly, and as quickly dies down and perishes. But where there is the rooting and grounding in God, there is a perpetuity and persistence which outlives all storms and survives all resistance.

You shall hold on your way *because Jesus holds you* in his strong hand. He is your Shepherd; He has vanquished all your foes, and you shall never perish.

You shall hold on your way *because the Father has designed through you to glorify his Son*; and there must be no gaps in his crown where jewels ought to be.

You shall hold on your way *because the Holy Spirit has deigned to make you his residence and home*; and He is within you the perennial spring of a holy life.

It is said that there was once a debate in heaven, as to which kind of life needed most of God's grace. That of a man who after a lifetime of gross sins was converted at the eleventh hour, or of a man that for his whole career had been kept from destruction. And finally the latter was agreed to be the most conspicuous miracle. And there is no doubt that this is so. Yet for this also shall God's grace avail: and He shall enable thee to hold on thy way till heaven open to thee.

**The king of terrors.** Job 18:14

SO the ancients spoke of death. They were constantly pursued by the dread of the unknown. Every unpeopled or distant spot was the haunt and dwellingplace of evil and dreadful objects. But the grave, and the world beyond, were above all terrible, and death the King of Terrors. It is difficult for us, who inherit centuries of Christian teaching, to realize how dark and fearsome was all the realm that lay under the dominion of death and the grave. What a shiver in those words, King of Terrors!

But for us how vast the contrast! Jesus has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. He has gone through the grave, and come again to assure us that it is the back door into our Father's house, with its many mansions. At his girdle hang the keys of death and Hades; none can shut the door when He opens it, and none open when He keeps it shut. He was Himself dead; but He lives for evermore, and comes to the side of each dying saint to escort him through the valley to his own bright abode.

There is something better. In the case of immense numbers, who shall be alive and remain when He comes again, death will be entirely evaded. "He that liveth and believeth in Him shall never die." They shall be caught away to meet the Lord in the air. Suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible incorruption. At his coming the grave shall be despoiled of its treasures, and death shall miss its expected prey.

"O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

**I know that my Redeemer liveth.** Job 19:25

THOSE words express the deepest and most radiant conviction of believing hearts. "He lives, the great Redeemer lives!" Man did his worst; the nail, the cross, the spear, were bitter; but He liveth! Death stood over Him as a vanquished foe; but He liveth! Captain Sepulcher and his henchman Corruption held earnest colloquy together about the best method of detaining Him; but He liveth! He ever liveth: and because He continueth ever, He hath an unchangeable priesthood.

But it is not probable that his words meant all this to Job. The word translated "Redeemer " is Goel -- the nearest kinsman, sworn to avenge the wrongs of blood relations. This conception of the kinsman avenger has been always in vogue in the East, where the populations are scattered and migratory, and our system of law impossible. Beyond the heavens Job thought there lived a Kinsman, who saw all his sufferings, and pitied, and would one day appear on earth to vindicate his innocence and avenge his wrongs. He was content to leave the case with Him, sure that He would not fail, as his friends had done.

Beyond the sorrows and anguish of time he should yet see God; and he longed to see Him, that he might learn the secret purpose, which explained the sorrow of his lot. He had no dread of that momentous event, since his Goel would be there to stand beside him.

"Sudden the Worst turns the Best to the brave,

The black minute's at end!--

And the Elements' rage, the fiend voices that rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend,

Shall change, shall become, -- first a Peace out of Pain,

Then a Light, then thy breast."

**This is the portion of a wicked man from God.** Job 20:29

REPEATEDLY in reading this book we are reminded of the strong convictions entertained by thoughtful men among these Eastern peoples, of the sure connection between wrong-doing and its bitter penalty. The friends of the sufferer express their opinions in cold-blooded and unfeeling words; but we can detect their intense convictions beneath all -- that special suffering indicates the presence of special sin, and that all wickedness is sooner or later brought to light and punished.

We are less able to follow the track of God's providences in these crowded, hurrying days; but there can be little doubt of the connection between wrong-doing and punishment. The law is immutable. As a man soweth, so shall be also reap. The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment. He shall disgorge his wealth; he shall suck the poison of asps in the remorse and bitterness of his soul; the heavens shall reveal his iniquity; and his descendants shall seek favor of the poor. These things are still to be seen among us, in the rise and fall of proud men and their families.

Let us go into the sanctuary of God, and consider their latter end; and as we contrast it with that of the poorest of his children, we shall find no reason to envy them. Even though no human tribunal sentence them, they carry the harpoon in their heart, and sooner or later it will bring them to a certain and awful doom. It cannot be otherwise whilst God is God. The psalmist said:

"I have seen the wicked in great power,

And spreading himself like a green bay tree;

Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not."

**Shall any teach God knowledge?** Job 21:22

WE cannot tell God anything He does not know already. The most fervent and full of our prayers simply unfold in word all that has been patent to his loving, pitying eye. This does not make prayer needless; on the contrary, it incites to prayer, since it is pleasant to talk with one who knows the whole case perfectly; and it is a relief to feel that God's answers depend -- not on the information we bring Him, or even on the specific requests we make, but -- on his infinite and perfect acquaintance with circumstances and conditions of which we are altogether ignorant.

"Your Father knoweth." Quicker than lightning is his notice of every transition in your inner life -- of your downsittings and your uprisings; of every thought in your heart; every word on your tongue; of the fretting of that inward cross; of the anguish of that stake in your flesh; of the enemy that, like a sword in your bones, reproaches you with the derisive challenge. "Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." Yes, He knows it all, and loves you better than you know.

Do not presume to dictate to Him; do not dare to say that some other way would be better, some other lot more likely to develop your best self. He knows every track by which to bring sons to glory; and that He has chosen this one is a positive proof that it is the best, the one most adapted to your idiosyncrasies and needs. His ways are, higher than your ways, and his thoughts than your thoughts. You could not teach Him knowledge, or increase his love -- then trust both.

**If thou return to the Almighty.** Job 22:23

THESE words introduce a most exquisite picture of the blessings consequent on return to God. They do not fit the case of Job, to whom they were addressed, because he had not left God; and they sound strange as coming from the mouth of Eliphaz. Still they are full of sublime truth.

*There are three conditions.* -- We must retrace the steps of our backsliding and wandering lives. We must put away unrighteousness from our home-life and business engagements, so that the tent may be free from idols. We must be content to lay our most treasured possessions in the dust at God's feet for Him to deal with as He pleases.

*There are four consequences.* -- Whatever we give up for God, we shall find again in Him; He shall become our treasure. Prayer shall have new zest, new success; be full of delight; become the interchange of face-to-face fellowship. There shall be more certainty and permanence in our decisions and achievements. Our decrees shall stand, our work shall last, our path shall be illumined with light. Trouble and trial shall depress us for only a brief space, like the passing of an Atlantic breaker over a lighthouse rock, whilst a glad relief shall always follow close on disaster.

Let us ask for all this in our daily prayer. O God, be *my* precious silver; give *me* delight in Thee; hear *my* prayers; may I decree what Thou canst establish; let Thy light shine on *my* ways; lift *me* up above all my depressions and fears -- that I may stretch out a strong hand to those who are in trouble.

"Oh, strengthen me, that while I stand

Firm on the Rock, and strong In Thee,

I may stretch out a loving hand

To wrestlers with the troubled sea."

**O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to his seat!** Job 23:3

POOR tempest-driven man, he knew not that God was intimately near, nearer than breathing. There was no need for him to go forward and backward, on the right hand or the left. The Lord his God was nigh him, even in his heart; for his throne was pitched there on the sands of the desert, between Job and his pitiless accusers.

*Thou* needest not speak like this. Thou knowest where to find Him; thou canst find the way to his seat. He is to be found in Jesus, seated on the mercy-seat; in that room where thou sittest reading these words; in that railway train or store. No need to ascend into heaven, or descend into the abyss. Thou couldst not be nearer God, if thou wert in heaven. True, the obscuring veil shall be then removed.

"And without a screen,

At one burst shall be seen,

The Presence in which we have ever been";

but the dropping- of the scales from our eyes will not make us nearer God than we are at this moment.

Now go to his seat, just in front of thee. Order thy cause before Him, and argue it. Wait to know the words with which He shall answer thee, and understand his reply. Only be sure that He will not contend against thee with his great power. Sometimes we are so bewildered and perplexed that we lose the realizing sense of God's presence; but there is no real difference. God is not really farther away; and nothing glorifies and pleases Him more than for us to go on speaking with Him as though we could see his face, and realize his embrace. Be still for a moment, and say, reverently and believingly: *Lo, God is in this place.*

**Yet a little while, and they are gone.** Job 24:24 (R.V.).

JOB here describes the insecurity of the wicked. He may have raged against the poor and innocent; but in a moment he comes down to Sheol, is hurried to stand before his Maker to receive his sentence. As he had treated the poor, so he is treated. As he had devoured the houses of the innocent, so he is devoured. "How are they become a desolation in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image."

For those who fear God there is a greatly contrasted lot. They receive a kingdom that cannot be moved. Zion may be a desolation, and Jerusalem a wilderness; the holy and beautiful institutions in which their early religious impressions were made may crumble; but they are come to the heavenly Jerusalem. The removing of those things that are capable of being shaken only makes more apparent those which cannot be shaken.

Where do you build your nest? In the trees of this world, that sway in the tempest, or may be hewn down by the woodman's axe; or have you learnt to build in the clefts of the Rock of Ages? Is your treasure in human friendships, which may change or be cut in twain by the sharp shears of death; or is it in the love of God, the unchangeable and everlasting Lover of souls? Let us look off from ourselves; from that diseased introspection that so confuses and dims our life; from the old fears that made us tremble and the old matters of which we must speak no more. And let us look upward and forward to that near future, which is so much larger and better than the past has been, and where we shall attain more than the heights of our dreams.

**How then can man be just with God?** Job 25:4 (R.V.).

THIS is the question of the ages. Man knows that he is as a worm, and worse. For no animal, however humble, has consciously and determinedly broken the law of God, and defiled its nature.

Our first effort is to go about to establish a righteousness of our own. Repeated failure only aggravates our misery and chagrin, till we fall helpless at the foot of Sinai. Our vows are broken, the law of God lies shivered around us, the thunders and lightnings make us afraid. Then God in the Person of Jesus comes to our help. First, He meets and satisfies the demands of the broken law, so that it can ask no more. With his own hands He works out, and brings in, everlasting righteousness. And finally, He produces in us that faith by which his finished work is applied to our conscience and heart.

By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation. God is Himself the Justifier of the ungodly. "Whom He called, them He also justified." He takes off the filthy garments, and clothes us in change of raiment.

But the condition is *faith*. We must believe in Him who justifieth the ungodly. They who believe are justified from all things. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are not saved by believing about his work, but in Himself. The Greek of John iii. 16 might be rendered, Whosoever even believeth into Him. The motion of faith is ever towards the heart of Him who died, and rose, and lives. Then through our faith the Spirit produces a holy character.

**How small a whisper do we hear of Him!** Job 26:14 (R.V.).

JOB in thought passes through the universe. Sheol stands for the grave and the unseen world; Abaddon, for Satan, or for the great reservoirs in which the destructive agencies of creation have their home. With a marvelous anticipation of the conclusions of modern science, he speaks of the world as pendant in space. He passes to the confines of light and darkness, rides on the wings of the wind, discourses of the clouds, skims the mighty surface of the sea. All this, however, he deems as the outskirts of God's ways. It is but a whisper compared to the mighty thunder of his glory and power. If this is a whisper, what must the thunder be! If this universe is but a flower on the meadows of God's life, what must not God Himself be!

Perhaps we know something more of the thunder of his power than Job could, because we have stood beneath Calvary and seen Jesus die, and He is the wisdom and power of God; yea, we have witnessed the exceeding greatness of his power, according to the working of the strength of his might, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.

Who of us can fathom or understand the power of God? But what a comfort to know that it is an attribute of his heart. God is not power, but He is love, and his love throbs through and commands his power. Be reverent when you kneel before the great and mighty God; but believe that all his power is engaged on the side of his weakest, needist child. And more: cease not to wait upon God until He endue you with his mighty power, for service and for daily living. A Nasmyth hammer can break a nutshell without crushing or touching the kernel.

**My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let go.** Job 27:6

JOB had an ideal and clung to it. Have you such? A vision of what you may be, and, by the grace of God, will aim at being. Bishop Westcott says: -- "The vision of the ideal guards monotony of work from becoming monotony of life." Bitter indeed is life for those who have not seen the heavenly vision, or heard the calling upward of the voice that says, Come up hither. Any life looks more interesting and attractive when the light of our ideal falls on it, and we realize that every yard leads somewhere, and every step is one nearer the goal. So some one has suggested that "If we cannot realize our ideal, we may at least idealize our real."

But there are many hindrances, many adverse influences to combat, many suggestions that we should let go our ideal. We have so often failed, slipped where we thought we should stand, limped where we thought to overcome by wrestling. The crags are so steep, the encouragement we receive from fellow-climbers so scant, the dissuasions and misconstructions -- like those Job had from his friends -- so many. But Jesus who inspired the ideal waits to realize it, if only you will open your heart and let Him enter. Do you hunger and thirst? then He will satisfy. He does not tantalize and disappoint the seeking soul.

"Have we not all, amid life's petty strife,

Some pure ideal of a noble life

That once seemed possible? It was. And yet

We lost it in this daily jar and fret,

And now live idle in a vague regret.

but still our place is kept, and it will wait.

Ready for us to fill it, soon or late:

No star is ever lost we once have seen --

We always may be what we might have been.

**The deep saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me.** Job 28:14 (R.V.).

In this sublime chapter the holy soul goes in quest of wisdom, which is the perfect balance of the moral and intellectual attributes of the soul; that knowledge of God, and life, and truth, which is only possible when the eyes of the heart have been enlightened to know; that radiancy of spirit which is enlightened and illuminated with God who is Himself the Light.

In a marvelous description of mining operations, which would arrest any company of miners in the world, if read from the Revised Version, Job declares it is not to be found in the deep. From one quarter of the universe after another, he receives the intelligence that it is not there. God alone has the secret; He only can communicate it, or give the disposition to appreciate and receive.

We must deal with God. Looking away from every other source of illumination and satisfaction, we must have close and searching fellowship with Him. Dr. Gordon was wont to say that evangelical faith consists not in a glance alone, but in a gaze. "We live in a very busy, perspiring time, when a thousand clamant calls assail us on every side; but we must have more time for visions if we would be well equipped for our tasks." Let us then turn from the quarters where we have been accustomed to draw our supplies -- broken cisterns, with uncertain and brackish water -- and let us come to God, the eternal source of life and peace. Love and rest we want, Thy love and rest, oh, give us! From men and things; from the mine, the deep, and the sea; from the murmur of human voices, and the crosslights of human interests, we come back to Thee, our Home.

**Oh that I were as in the months of old!** Job 29:2 (R.V.).

WE are irresistibly reminded of Cowper's sad complaint: --

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!

How sweet their memory still;

But they have left an aching void

The world can never fill."

We are all prone to think that the earliest days were the best; and it is quite possible they were. But we must carefully distinguish between the exchange of the freshness and novelty of our first love for a deepening and maturing love, and the loss of love. The streamlet may not babble so cheerily, but there may be more water in the river. We lose the green Spring, but is it not better to have the intense light of Autumn in which the fruits ripen? There may not be so much ecstasy, but there may be stronger, deeper experience. We should not reckon our position in God's sight by our raptures, and count ourselves retrograding because they have gone; there is something better than rapture: the peace of a settled understanding and unvarying faith.

Still, if it be really so, that you have left the old place on the bosom or at the feet of Christ, that your love is cooling and your spirituality waning, I beseech thee, get back! Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works. Jesus yearns to reinstate thee, and has permitted this restless longing for the past to come, that it may be with thee as in the months of old. Again his lamp shall shine above thy head, and the secret of the Lord shall be upon thy tent; thy steps shall be washed with butter, and the rock pour out rivers of oil; thy roots shall spread to the waters, and the dew shall lie all night upon thy branch.

**I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not answer me.** Job 30:20 (R.V.).

IT may have seemed so to the sufferer; but there is not a cry that goes from the anguished soul which does not ring a bell in the very heart of God, where the Man of Sorrows waits, touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

I have sometimes gone to a telephone office, and have rung the bell, asking to be put in connection with my friend, but it has seemed impossible to get at him; either he has been engaged or absent, and one has found oneself speaking to a stranger, and the voice which replied has been unfamiliar. Thoroughly disappointed, one turns away. But this is never the case with God. And the comfort is, that He is most quick to succor those whose cry is lowest. As a mother goes about her work, she is less sensitive to the trains that thunder past, and the heavy drays, and the laughter of boisterous health, than to the stifled cry of her little invalid; and if there could be one thing more sure than another of awakening God's immediate response, it would be such broken cries as pain elicited from Job.

But the answer will come -- nay, it is on its way, timed to arrive in the fourth watch of the night. Perhaps the delay is the answer, because the heart needs to be prepared to receive the great gift when it comes. Perhaps, like the Syrophenician woman, you have to give Christ his right place as Lord, and take yours amongst the dogs. Perhaps the answer is coming all the time by one door, whilst you are looking for it through another; but you cannot and must not say that God is not answering. All the time you are crying, the answer is to your hand, awaiting your appropriation. Go to the post-office for the letter: hasten to the landing-stage for the ship -- it is in.

**Mine integrity.** Job 31:6

INTEGRITY is from the Latin word *integrita*, wholeness. It means whole-heartedness. It is interesting in this chapter to see what, in Job's estimation, it involved.

v.1. Purity in the look.

v.7. Cleanliness of the hands.

v.13. Thoughtfulness for domestic servants and underlings.

v.16. Justice to the poor and the widow.

v.17. Willingness to share morsels, and to be a father to the fatherless.

v.19, 20. Clothing for the naked.

v.21. The refusal to depute to others help which one might render.

v.24.. The heart weaned from the love of gold.

v.26. Refusal to turn aside to idols.

v.29. Inability to rejoice at the destruction of those who had derided and hated.

v. 33. The frank confession of wrong-doing.

It becomes us prayerfully to go over these items, and use them as the catechism of our soul; for if this was the standard of character for one who lived so many centuries before the full revelation of Christ, what should not our standard be! How impossible, however, it is to live like this from without! We must enshrine within us the blessed Spirit of God, who alone originates and maintains that perfect love to God and man which compared to Job's maxims is as the heart to the body. Law is given as the expression of God's will for the regulation of life: but it is impossible to keep the law till we have the love; and it is impossible to have the love until we have the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Ghost.

**There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth understanding.** Job 32:8 (R.V.).

ELIHU had waited whilst the three elder men said all that was in their hearts. He now excuses his youth and demands audience, because so conscious that the breath of inspiration had entered his soul. Wisdom is not with age; but wherever the heart is freely open to God, He will make it wise. We have received not the spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know.

George Fox tells us that though he read the Scriptures which spoke of Christ and of God, yet he knew Him not till He who had the key did open. "Then the Lord gently led me along and let me see his love which was endless and eternal, surpassing all the knowledge that men have in the natural state, or can get by history or books. I had not fellowship with any people, priests or professors, but with Christ, who hath the key, and opened the door of life and light unto me. His one message was the necessity of the Inner Light, the inward witness of the Spirit, his secret revelations of truth to the soul. "

This distinction needs to be deeply pondered. We have been trying to know God by the intellect, by reading the Bible intellectually, by endeavoring to apprehend human systems. There is, however, a deeper and truer method. "There is a spirit in man!" Open your spirit to the Divine Spirit as you open a window to the sunny air. Instantly God enters and fills. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit. The inbreathed life of God gives us light. We know by intuition, by fellowship with God, by direct vision, what the wise of this world could never discover.

**If there be with him a messenger, an interpreter.** Job 33:23

GOD is greater than man, and by his love seeks to hold man back from his purpose. Sometimes He comes in the visions of the night; sometimes in pain and sickness. But we are too dull to understand the inner reason of God's endeavors to deliver us from the brink of destruction; and therefore we need an interpreter, one among a thousand, to explain the meaning of his dealings, and to show us the way in which we should amend our ways. How often has the sick visitor, the minister, the friend, interpreted God's purpose, enabling us to see light in his light. There are few higher offices in this world than to act in this way between God and our fellows.

To perform this function, however, we need to understand two languages; the one of the throne, obtained from deep and intimate converse with our Father, while the other is man's native language of pain and sorrow. Each must be spoken perfectly before we can interpret: --

"And to the height of this great argument

Assert eternal Providence,

And justify the ways of God to man."

But, as Bunyan truly says, the best Interpreter is the Holy Spirit. As soon as the Pilgrim has passed the Wicket-gate, he is conducted through the Interpreter's house by the Interpreter Himself. Are you perplexed as to the meaning of God's Word, the dealings of God's providence, the mystery of God's moral government? Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you through chamber after chamber, unfolding to you the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They are for babes -- for the childlike and pure in heart. He will show you wondrous things out of his law.

**He giveth quietness.** Job 34:29

*QUIETNESS amid the accusations of Satan.* -- The great accuser points to the stains of our past lives, by which we have defiled our robes and those of others; he says that we shall fall again and again; he imputes evil motives to our holiest actions, and detects flaws in our most sacred services; he raises so great a hubbub that we can hardly hear another voice within our souls. Then the great Intercessor arises and saith, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: I have loved with an everlasting love, I have paid the ransom. So "He giveth quietness."

*Quietness amid the dash of the storm.* -- We sail the lake with Him still, and as we reach its middle waters, far from land, under midnight skies, suddenly a great storm sweeps down. Earth and hell seem arrayed against us, and each billow threatens to overwhelm. Then He arises from his sleep, and rebukes the winds and the waves; his hand waves benediction and repose over the rage of the tempestuous elements. His voice is heard above the scream of the wind in the cordage and the conflict of the billows. Peace, be still! Can you not hear it? And there is instantly a great calm. "He giveth quietness."

*Quietness amid the loss of inward consolations.* -- He sometimes withdraws these, because we make to much of them. We are tempted to look at our joy, our ecstasies, our transports, or our visions, with too great complacency. Then love, for love's sake, withdraws them. But, by his grace, He leads us to distinguish between them and Himself. He draws nigh, and whispers the assurance of his presence. Thus an infinite calm comes to keep our heart and mind. "He giveth quietness."

**None saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?** Job 35:10

DO you have sleepless nights, tossing on the hot pillow, and watching for the first glint of dawn? Ask the Divine Spirit to enable you to fix your thoughts on God, your Maker, and believe that He can fill those lonely, dreary hours with song.

*Is yours the night of doubt?* -- A holy man tells us that once as he was sitting by the fire, a great cloud came over him, and a temptation beset him to think that all things came by nature; and as he sat still under it, and let it alone, a living hope arose in him, and a true voice said, "There is a living God who made all things." And immediately the cloud and temptation vanished away, and life rose over it all. His heart was glad, and he praised the living God. Was not this a song in the night?

*Is yours the night of bereavement?* -- Is it not often to such God draws near, and assures the mourner that the Lord had need of its beloved, and called "the eager, earnest spirit to stand in the bright throng of the invisible, liberated, radiant, active, intent on some high mission"; and as the thought enters, is there not the beginning of a song?

*Is yours the night of discouragement and fancied or actual failure?* -- No one understands you, your friends reproach; but your Maker draws nigh, and gives you a song -- the song of hope, the song which is harmonious with the strong, deep music of his providence. Be ready to sing the songs that your Maker gives.

"What then? Shall we sit idly down and say

'The night hath come; it is no longer day'?

. . . . . . . . .

Yet as the evening twilight fades away,

The sky is filled with stars, invisible to day."

**Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any.** Job 36:5

WHAT entrancing assurances are contained in this and the preceding sentence! To think that in all our wayfarings through this world One that is perfect in knowledge is always with us, and One that is mighty is pledged to bring us through! Nothing could be desired beside. This makes prayer new. It is a child's confidential whisper to the One who is attent to the lowest murmur, who cannot forget, who will not relinquish a purpose which He has formed though years pass, and who is able to do exceeding abundantly.

It is because God is so great that He despises none. If He were less than infinite, He might overlook. The boundlessness of his being has no ebb, fails of no soul He has made, and is as much at any one point as if He had no care or thought beside. In fact, those that man despises stand the best chance with God. Just because no one else cares for them, he must; just because no one else will help them, He will. This is necessary to his nature.

When a philanthropist adopts a certain lapsed section of the community, he does so because no one else will. It becomes a matter of honour with him that none of these, outcast by all else, should miss his help. And God has constituted Himself Champion, Guardian, and Saviour, of all who have no help from their fellows. Friendless, forlorn, helpless, despised, He recognizes and meets the claim of their urgent necessity. Bruised reeds, bits of smoking tow, half-consumed fire-brands, lost sheep, prodigal sons, waifs and strays, homeless, destitute, neglected -- these have a first claim on the Almightiness of the living God.

**Men see not the bright light which is in the clouds.** Job 37:21

THE world owes much of its beauty to cloudland. The unchanging blue of the Italian sky hardly compensates for the changefulness and glory of the clouds. Clouds also are the cisterns of the rain. Earth would become a wilderness apart from their ministry. There are clouds in human life, shadowing, refreshing, and sometimes draping it in blackness of night; but there is never a cloud without its bright light. "I do set my bow in the cloud! "

If only we could see the clouds from the other side where they lie in billowy glory, bathed in the light they intercept, like heaped ranges of Alps, we should be amazed at their splendid magnificence. We look at their under side; but who shall describe the bright light that bathes their summits, and searches their valleys, and is reflected from every pinnacle of their expanse? Is not every drop drinking in health-giving qualities, which it will carry to the earth?

O child of God! If you could see your sorrows and troubles from the other side; if instead of looking up at them from earth, you would look down on them from the heavenly places where you sit with Christ; if you knew how they are reflecting in prismatic beauty before the gaze of heaven, the bright light of Christ's face -- you would be content that they should cast their deep shadows over the mountain slopes of existence. Only remember that clouds are always moving, and passing before God's cleansing wind.

"Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen;

Bright skies will soon be o'er me, where the dark clouds have been:

My hope I cannot measure, my path of life is free;

My Saviour hath my treasure, and He will walk with me."

**Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades?** Job 38:31 (R.V.).

THE seven stars of the Pleiades always stand for the sweet influences of spring; Orion for the storm and tempest. In this sublime catechism, Jehovah asks Job if he has any control over the One or the other. As it is with the year, so with our life.

There are times when the PLEIADEs are in the ascendant. The winter is over and gone, the time of the singing of birds is come. Doves coo their love notes in the trees, and the flowers gem the soil. Days of hope, of radiant light, of ecstatic joy! Days in which God seems to be making a new heaven and a new earth within us! Days when our Beloved shows Himself through the lattice-work, and says, "Come, my beloved!" Oh, tender influences of the Pleiades, we would that ye might ever stay, filling us with immortal youth! When God bids them shine, no one can bind them. When He gives joy, none can give sorrow. No mortal man can restrain the outburst of Nature's spring. You might as well stay the resurrection of the Son of God and his saints!

But ORION has his work as well. Storms come; the drenching rain veils the landscape; the mighty billows are lashed to fury. But all works for good. The blast in the forest snaps off dead wood. The rain fills up the wells. Frost pulverises the earth. When God binds Orion, man cannot unloose him; "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." But when the Almighty unlooses Orion, like another Samson, he does his work of devastation, before which we must find refuge in the cleft of the Rock.

"God sendeth sun,

He sendeth shower,

Alike they're needful for the flower."

**Knowest thou?** Job 39:1

THE catechism of this chapter is designed to convince man of his ignorance. How little he knows of nature! Even though centuries of investigation and research have passed, there are still many questions which baffle us. And if we know so little of tile Creator's handiwork, how much less do we know of Himself, or the principles on which He acts!

The knowledge of God is not intellectual, but moral and spiritual. Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, are made known to Love and Obedience. Let the Love of God be shed through the heart, and the will of God be the ruling principle of life, and there will be given a knowledge of God which the research of the investigator could never gain. "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God . . . they are spiritually discerned." Knowest thou?

Dost thou know the exceeding greatness of his power, which He wrought in the Resurrection of thy Lord -- that it is all around thee waiting to do as much for thee also; lifting thee, dead weight as thou art, to sit in the heavenlies?

Dost thou know the hope of his calling to a life within the veil, with the veil behind thee, and the light of the Shekinah ever on thy face?

Dost thou know the riches of his glorious indwelling, that He is prepared so to infill thee, that thou shalt partake of the very life wherewith He liveth and reigneth evermore?

Dost thou know the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of the love that passeth knowledge; and Christ Jesus the Lord?

**I am of small account; what shall I**

**÷c01 Job contd**

**I am of small account; what shall I answer Thee? I lay mine hand upon my mouth.** Job 40:4

WHAT a different tone is here! This is be who so vehemently protested his innocence, and defended himself against the attacks of his accusers. The Master is come, and the servant who had contended with his fellows takes a lowly place of humility and silence.

The first step in the noblest life, possible to any of us, is to learn and say that we are of small account. We may learn it by successive and perpetual failures which abash and confound us. It is better to learn it by seeing the light of God rise in majesty above the loftiest of earth's mountains. "When I was young," said Gounod to a friend, "I used to talk of 'I and Mozart.' Later I said, 'Mozart and I.' But now I only say 'Mozart."' Substitute *God*, and you have the true story of many a soul.

The next step is to choke back words, and lay the hand on the mouth. Silence and meditation! Not arguing or contending! Not complaining or murmuring! Not caviling or criticizing! But just being still -- still, that you may feel God near; still, that you may hear Him speak. "Take heed of many words," said George Fox; "keep down, keep low, that nothing may reign in you but life itself."

The greatest saints avoided, when they could, the society of men, and did rather choose to live to God, in secret. A certain one said, "As oft as I have been among men I returned home less a man than I was before. Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto Jesus, thy Beloved. Stay with Him in thy closet, for thou shalt not find elsewhere so great peace." How good it would be to lay our hands on our mouths rather oftener, whether in silence with our fellows, or in the hour of secret prayer!

**Who then is he that can stand before Me?** Job 41:10 (R.V.).

THE first catechism had been on Job's knowledge; now it turns on his power. The pivot of the one was, *Knowest thou?* of the other, *Canst thou?* If a man cannot stand before one of God's creatures, how much less before the Creator! If we dread the wrath of the enraged crocodile, what should not be our dread before the wrath of the Eternal? Canst thou stand before Him? Canst thou strive against Him, with any hope of success? Canst thou force thyself, unbidden and unfit, into the presence of the Most Holy? Thou couldst not intrude on an earthly sovereign; how much less on Him, in whose sight the heavens are not clean?

"Eternal light! eternal light!

how pure the soul must be,

When placed within thy searching light,

It shrinks not, but with calm delight

Can live, and look on Thee!"

But Jesus can make it possible. Through Him we draw nigh to God. We have boldness to enter into the Holiest of All by his Blood. We may, through Him, be able to say, with Elijah, "Thus saith Jehovah, before whom I stand." Jesus is the minister of the heavenly sanctuary, and in virtue of his office He is able to bring us into, and maintain us within, the Most Holy Place. He comes out to take its by the hand; and then, having fulfilled in us the good pleasure of his will, He brings us in and places us before the face of God for ever. Like Solomon's servants, we evermore stand before the king, see his face, and hear his words.

"The sons of ignorance and night

May dwell in the Eternal Light,

Through the Eternal Love."

**Now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.** Job 42:5-6

THIS is the clue to the entire book. Here is a man, who was universally known as perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil; who abounded in beneficent and loving ministries to all who were in need; to whom respect and love flowed in a full tide. He was not conscious of any failure in perfect obedience, or of secret sin; indeed, when his friends endeavored to account for his unparalleled calamities by suggesting that there was some discrepancy between his outward reputation and inward consistency, he indignantly repelled the charge, and repudiated the impeachment.

But there were inconsistencies and failures in him that needed to be exposed and put away before he could attain to perfect blessedness and enjoy unbroken peace. If man could not discover them, and if Job were unconscious of them, they were, nevertheless, present, poisoning the fountain of his being; as a hidden cesspool, whose presence is undetected, may be doing a deadly work of undermining the health of an entire household. So God let the man into his presence; and, like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Peter, and many others, he at once confessed himself vile. The light of the great white throne exposes all unsuspected blemishes. Have you ever seen God! Oh, ask for that vision, that you may know yourself! In proportion as we know God, we abhor ourselves. Then Jesus becomes unspeakably precious. Through his death we pass into the true life, and begin to intercede for others. We never have such power for the blessing of the world as when we lie most humbly at the feet of God.

**÷c02 Psalms**

**Our Daily Homily, Psalms
by F.B. Meyer**

**…his leaf also shall not wither -** Psalm 1:3

"If a man abide not in Me," said our Lord, "he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered."

The same thought is here. Thrust down your rootlets to the oozy river bed, and there is no doubt about your continuing earnest, patient, God-filled. The sun of temptation may strike you with sword-like beams, but you will have a source of supply which they cannot exhaust. The secret of an unwithering beauty is in the Word of God, delighted in and meditated upon day and night. And what is the Word of God, but the life of God. translated into human speech?

Wean yourself from all beside, and learn to feed on God. Withdraw your rootlets from men and things, and let them travel to the river of God, which is full of water. Close other doors, and open those that. lead out on to the terrace, whence you may behold the far-spread landscape of what He is, and says, and is willing to be to us all.

Note that word meditate. The root must lie in contact with the stream, and the soul must steep itself in the Word of God. We must give the truth time to enter and pervade our souls. We must have retreats, shut away from the rush of life, up and down the glades of which we may tread. These retreats are oftener found within the soul than without. Just as in the temple of old, there was Solomon's porch, where Jesus walked, so in the temple within there are closes and cloisters, where we may commune with our heart, and be still.

**This day have I begotten thee -** Psalm 2:7

The Holy Ghost tells us that this was addressed by the Father to the Son in his Resurrection (see Act 13:33). It was from the grave that our Lord stepped up to his mediatorial throne, whence all the hatred of his foes has had no power to dislodge Him, and never shall have. Death is a birth into the true life. Jesus was the Firstborn from the dead; we too are to be born out of the darkness of the grave into the Life Immortal.

"There is a beyond, and he who has once caught a glimpse of it is like a man who has gazed at the sun. Wherever he looks, he sees everywhere the image of the sun. Speak to him of finite things, and he will tell you that the finite is impossible and meaningless without the infinite. Speak to him of death, and he will call it birth; speak to him of time, and he will call it the mere shadow of eternity."

But is it not wonderful that He has begotten us also unto a living hope by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead to an incorruptible inheritance? We are the sons of the resurrection. In Jesus we are already on resurrection-ground. Our sun shall no more go down, nor our moon withdraw herself. For us, at least, God hath destroyed "the veil that is spread over all nations."

Do not wonder, then, at the hate of men. They will rage, and imagine vain things; they will take counsel together. It cannot be otherwise.

Thou mayest expect, then, to be bruised by thy brethren, and hated by the world. But at such times Christ will come to thee, and give thee fresh accessions of his resurrection life, carrying thee into the hidden house of his abiding, and confirming the weak knees and the heart that faints.

**But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head -** Psalm 3:3

Oh, my soul, hast thou made God thy glory Others beast in their wealth, beauty, position, achievements: dost then find in God what they find in these? Thou needest safety from the shocks of time and change: is He thy shield? Thou must have something outside of time, to complete thy blessedness: is He thine ideal? Thy head is drooping like a flower-cup - it sadly needs the dexterous hand of the Gardener: is it busy with thee

"Nothing resting in its own completeness
Can have worth or beauty: but alone -
Because it leads and lends to further sweetness,
Fuller, higher, deeper than its own -
Life is only bright when it proceedeth
Towards a truer, deeper life above;
Human love is sweetest when it leadeth
To a more divine and perfect love."
God around us as a shield, God above and within us as an ideal, God lifting up the tired and sorrowful face - this was David's threefold conception of his relation with God. All around men were filled with wrath at him. He heard their harsh voices, and what they said. Nevertheless he comforted, and stayed his heart with the words, .But Thou, O Lord. Ah, what an instant change they make!

We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, bravo and clear;
We kneel, how weak - we rise, how full of power!"

Ah, these .Buts! What a difference they make in our lives. There is always the hedge of God's care, always an illimitable reserve of power and help within our reach, of which we may avail ourselves; and we are so sure of it, that we lay ourselves down in peace to sleep, though the foe in thousands encamps around.

**Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself -** Psalm 4:3

The Lord sets apart for his own enjoyment. - " A garden enclosed is my sister." Out of the wild prairie Christ encloses favoured bits of land, that they may become fair gardens in which to walk. God must have spirits with which He can commune; and therefore He shuts selected ones away in sick chambers, in loneliness, and in prisons, that there may be nothing to divert them from the holy intercourse with Himself which is his refreshment and delight.

The Lord sets apart for fellowship in intercessory prayer. - He leads three of the apostles into the shadows of Gethsemane, that they may add their intercessions with his. In each church there is a favoured band to whom He tells his secret anxiety for other souls, and whom He leads out in prayer on the behalf of them and of the world.

The .Lord sets apart for service. - Those that separate themselves from evil become vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use. Do not be surprised if you are withdrawn from the madding crowd, from the ambitions and interests of earlier years; it is the Lord's way of engaging you for special service.

We can never forget how the Holy Ghost bade the early Church separate Barnabas and Saul to their appointed ministry. They were separated unto the Holy Ghost. A similar separation may become ours. Let us live in the world as those who are set apart for God, like the Temple vessels that might not be put, as Belshazzar attempted to put them, to idolatrous and lascivious purposes. Oh to know what God means when He puts his reserve on the soul, and says, This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell!

**In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee -** Psalm 5:3

It is very important to consider the order of our petitions. No man would approach an earthly sovereign without taking time to consider how best to present his requests. He would consider the pleas on which to rely, the arguments to present, and the method in which he would be most likely to carry his case. Upon entering the presence of the great King, our Father, would it not well repay us to stay on the threshold for a moment to ask what petitions we are about to proffer, the order in which we should arrange them, and the reasons we should adduce?

It is manifestly a mistake to pray at haphazard. There is too much random praying with us all. We do not return again and again to the same petition, pressing it home with all humility and reverence, and arguing the case, as Abraham did his for the cities of the plain.

Study the order of the Lord's prayer - the adoration and prostration of soul before God prior to supplication for definite gifts; the acquiescence in the Divine will before the prayer for daily bread; the entreaty for forgiveness before there can be a thought of deliverance from evil. Or consider the order of the High Priest's intercession for his own in John 17. before He pours out his soul in prayer for the world. Lay the wood "in order." Enter the temple of prayer through successive courts - Confession, Absolution, Ascriptions of Praise, the Te Deum, the broken sentences, the outburst of intercession, as suggested by the Church of England liturgy. At the same time, do not forget to be perfectly natural. Whilst the soul ascends the temple by regular steps, let there be the glad conviction of the tender love of the waiting Father.

**...but thou, O LORD, how long? -** Psalm 6:3

You have been long in coming, love says. So miserly are we of the minutes, so leaden-paced is the beat of the pendulum, when our heart stands on the tip-toe of expectation. Moments lengthen to hours when we suffer and await deliverance, just as hours contract to moments when the heart is young and gay.

How long, Lord, ere the trial cease? - When we are entering into the furnace, we like to make bargains with God that it shall not last beyond a certain hour; but He never tells us, lest patience might miss her perfect work. He says simply, It is enough to suffer one moment at a time.

How long, Lord, ere deliverance arrive? - Long ago we sent for reinforcements; and since then the battle has been waxing more fierce. We have looked eagerly to the horizon to see the relieving column, clear-cut on the sky line; but in vain. We think we can hold out no more. We have strained at the oar to the last degree of strength, and if some deliverance does not come to us, the fourth watch of night will see us drifting helplessly to destruction. "Where is thy God?" the enemy cries; and we are tempted to think ourselves forsaken and forgotten.

How long, Lord, ere the Advent break? - He said that He would come quickly - but the weary centuries pass; and, strain our ears as we may, we cannot detect his princely footfall along the corridor of time.

Cease, fond heart, thy complaining. Delay is not denial. He counts a thousand years as a day. He is coming on the wings of every wind; already He is nigh, even at the doors. Never a moment too early - but not a moment too late.

**Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me -** Psalm 7:8

Specific charges were being made against David, of which he knew himself to be absolutely innocent. He would not have dared to challenge God thus, if the whole of his life were passing under review. In that case there would have been no hesitation in confessing that, taken generally, he was a sinful man. Similarly, God's children are often accused of wrongs of which they are absolutely innocent. In such case they have a right to declare their innocence before their fellows; then if this avail not to procure their acquittal, they must turn to God, and ask Him to interpose.

But what a question this suggests! Are you able, child of God, to declare that, as far as you have the light, you are living righteously, soberly, godly, in this present world?. Is your life right-wise - that is, four-square with the demands of God's law, able to bear the test of his line and plummet? Can you assert your integrity? Integrity is derived from the Latin integer, a whole, a number unbroken by fractions. Are you whole-hearted? or, to use the grand old word, is your heart perfect before God If it be, it matters very little what men shall say of your character. If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God on this behalf. What is said is aimed rather at the Master than the servant. God becomes responsible for your vindication. He will arise and show Himself strong, putting to silence the enemy and avenger. Trust your reputation with God, and, in the meanwhile, go on doing his will. There is no harm in calmly and temperately attesting your innocence; but if this avails not to stay the storm, bend before it. Do not appeal to law. God will vindicate you.

**Thou madest him to have dominion -** Psalm 8:6

Yes, broken, beaten, fallen, O child of man, thou wast made to have dominion. Not only over cattle, birds, and fish, but over thine own wonderful nature. Within thee there is a realm as full of multitudinous life as Paradise was when God brought the animals to Adam that he might name them; and over all this thou wast meant to rule. Yea, thou wert made to have dominion also over the wicked spirits that are thy sworn foes. A royal, regnant, victorious life was that which thy Creator inbreathed. There is no reason, on God's side, or in thy original constitution, why thou shouldst not exercise thy dominion. Remember, thou wast made to have dominion.

We see not yet all things put under us. There is open revolt and anarchy within. The will resembles the ancient kings whose sway was limited by proud and strong barons. The animal creation largely defies us, and is in this the symbol of our loss of authority everywhere. But look away to Jesus. This old psalm is fulfilled in Him. His glorious nature rose, by its inherent glory, to the right hand of power. All authority is his in heaven and on earth. And in proportion as we identify ourselves with Him, and receive his life, we regain our lost dominion. He makes us kings and priests unto God. We share a life which neither death nor the devil can master.

What shall we say of the excellency of his name, who is not only our Creator, but our Redeemer, and who at such great cost to Himself has replaced on our brows the crown that sin tore from them? He made us to have dominion by the word of creation. He made us kings unto God by his blood. His name shall, therefore, be honoured through all the earth.

**And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee -** Psalm 9:10

We do not trust, because we do not know. If we were once to know God, it would seem as absurd to doubt Him as to fear that we should fly off at a tangent from the surface of the earth. Men complain of their little faith: the remedy is in their own hands; let them set themselves to know God. We may know about God, and yet not know Him. We may hear what others say about Him, but have no direct and personal acquaintance. "That I may know Him," said the Apostle.

The materials for the knowledge of God are all around thee; make use of them. Think of the promises by which God has bound Himself to succour those that come to Him; of the record of his gracious interpositions for his saints; of the necessity that He should maintain his character and reputation in the face of the universe.

Above all, argue, as Jesus bade, from your own heart. Would you give stones to hungry babes, and scorpions into childish hands? Would you desert a forlorn and hunted soul that trusted? Would you insist on a certain measure of agony before stepping in to deliver? Would you take delight in inflicting needless anguish? And will God? Trust may be read as the superlative of true. To trust is to count God true, though circumstances belie; to count Him truer than the melancholy forebodings of our hearts; to count Him our truest and tenderest Friend. "Yet let God be true, though every man is proved to be a liar."

But for all this, you must make time. You cannot know a friend in hurried interviews, much less God. So you must steep yourself in deep, long thoughts of his nearness and love.

**Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? -** Psalm 10:1

Men in sorrow do not always speak wisely; and they ask many questions which God does not answer. Here is one. God does not stand afar off and hide Himself in times of trouble. As the psalmist sings, in a happier mood, "He is a very present help in time of trouble." But He permits trouble to pursue us, as though He were indifferent to its overwhelming pressure; that we may be brought to an end of ourselves, and led to discover the treasures of darkness, the unmeasurable gains of tribulation. No cross, no crown. No pain, no gain.

We may be sure that He who permits the suffering is with us in it. The form of the Fourth may be hard to distinguish, but it is there in the fire. It may be that we shall only see Him when the trial is passing; but we must dare to believe that tic never leaves the crucible. Our eyes are holden; and we cannot behold Him whom our soul loveth. It is dark - the bandages blind us so that we cannot see the form of our High Priest. But He is there, deeply touched. Let us not rely on feeling, but on faith in his unswerving fidelity; and though we see Him not, let us talk to Him in whispers as though we could detect Him.

"I take the pain, Lord Jesus, from thine own hand,
The strength to bear it bravely, Thou wilt command."

Directly we begin to speak to Jesus, as being literally present, though his presence is veiled, there comes an answering voice which shows that He is in the shadow, keeping watch upon his own. Do not be afraid of the darkness. Behind the cloud, the sun is shining. Little child, your Father is as near when you journey through the dark tunnel as when under the open heaven! Go nearer, and you will feel Him!

**The LORD trieth the righteous -** Psalm 11:5

Do not be surprised if you are passing through trials. The righteous Lord is exercising you towards righteousness, that your face may ever behold his in unswerving communion. As the trainer of a young athlete will place him, now in one position, and again in another, to call certain muscles into play, to strengthen them by use, and to make the whole organization supple and subservient to the impulses of the soul, so God tries us - to call into operation, and test by use, each faculty of our being.

"Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring us to his feet,
Lay us low, and keep us there."

There is a great difference between the temptings of Satan and the tryings of the Lord. The former are intended to make us fall; the great adversary takes pleasure in showing how weak and sinful we are, and in casting us down to destruction. The latter, that we may be led out towards faith, patience, courage, meekness, and other-worldliness. "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." Whatever spiritual power is latent within us, we may be unaware of its value or helpfulness till it is called into exercise by trial. But when once it has been summoned into manifestation, it becomes the invaluable possession of all after time.

There is this consolation in trial, that at least we are not reprobates. The Lord trieth the righteous. The lapidary does not waste his time in cutting common pebbles. If we endure chastisement, we are clearly not bastards, but sons. Our Father loves us too much to let us miss the rich fruit that is to reward us when all the pruning is over.

**The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth -** Psalm 12:6

What a contrast is presented in this Psalm between God's words and man's! "They speak vanity, with flattering lip and double heart." God never flatters; his words are absolutely pure because they have passed through the furnace of his holiness, but they are therefore absolutely reliable and trustworthy.

As silver enriches its owner, so does the Word of God enrich its lovers. Nothing so strengthens the intellect, clears the judgment, enlarges the views, purifies the taste, quickens the imagination, and educates the whole man. The humblest daylabourer who imbibes the Bible becomes rich in thought and speech, and able to dispense his riches to others.

As silver is beautiful to the eye, so fair is the Word of God. After a boy born blind had been suddenly possessed of sight through an operation by a skilful oculist, his mother led him out-of-doors, took off the bandages, and gave him his first view of sunshine, sky, and flowers. "Oh, mother," he cried, "why did you never tell me it was so beautiful?" With starting tears, she said, ""I tried to tell you, my dear, but you could not understand me." We need opened eyes, and then the Bible is more to be desired than fine gold.

As silver is pure, so is the Word of God; and it purifies. It has been the main purifying agent of the world. Though it deals with the corruptions of the human heart, it does so in such a delicate and holy manner as to excite within us something of the abhorrence of the Holy God. Like the passage of water through a sieve, it cleanses the heart and life.

**I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me -** Psalm 13:6

Here is the man who had sorrow in his heart all the day breaking into song! We do not find that his troubles were any less. The enemy was still exalted over him, and boasted of having prevailed; it seemed indeed as though he must soon sleep the sleep of death. But he never let go his trust. Whatever were his outward discomforts and trials, he clung to his God and waited patiently for: Him; with the result that out of his stormy griefs he built a Bethel; and in the midst of his anguish broke out into song.

When we are sitting under the shadow of severe trial, God can wrap us about with the garment of praise, and fill our mouths with singing. Although the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vines, yet the soul may rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of salvation. You cannot starve a man who is feeding on God's promises; and you cannot make that man or woman wretched who has a clean conscience, the smile of God, and the love of Jesus in the soul.

When brave old Thomas Halyburton lost his much-loved son, he made this record: "This day has been a day to be remembered. O my soul never forget what this day I reached. My soul had smiles that almost wasted nature. Oh, what a sweet day! About half-an-hour after the Sabbath, my child, after a sharp conflict, slept pleasantly in Jesus, to whom pleasantly he was so often given Jesus came to me in the third watch of the night, walking upon the waters, He stilled the tempest in my soul, and lo! there was a great calm." When God is bereaving us of all else, He may so fill us with Himself that we shall magnify, his bountifulness.

**When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people -** Psalm 14:7

It is good to have an eye on the future, even though we get sometimes a little weary of waiting, and impatient of delay. Here a captive soul transports itself to the hours when its captivity shall be ended; and although it cannot altogether suppress the "Oh!" of longing desire, it dilates with ecstasy, as it anticipates the outburst of joy that shall hail the Divine deliverance.

Let us look on and up. Bunyan tells us that the heart of the Pilgrim "waxed warm about the place whither he was going." A real lover of Christ, who knows something of the law of sin in his members, and of the dull weight of this mortal tabernacle, is apt to have, at times, eager desires for his home and his glorious inheritance. Paul was one of the most eager of workers, but he was ever dwelling on the blessed hope.

"When," exclaimed Baxter, "when, O my soul, hast thou most forgot thy wintry sorrows? Is it not when thou hast got above, closest to Jesus Christ, and hast conversed with Him, and viewed the mansions of glory, and filled thyself with sweet foretastes, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world?" Such devout anticipations do not slacken our work down here during this little while. It is said of Samuel Rutherford that he was always studying, always preaching, and always visiting the sick; but it was he who exclaimed, "Oh, time, run fast! Oh, fair day, when wilt thou dawn? Oh, shadows, flee away! Oh, well-beloved Bridegroom, be Thou to me like the roe or the young hart on the mountains!"

"The best is yet to be.
The last, for which the first was made."

**LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? -** Psalm 15:1

This holy soul was not content to stand in the outer court without the sacred tent; he coveted to enter where the High Priest entered, and to live there. It was impossible then; the way into the Holiest was not made manifest. No ordinary worshipper might pass the Veil, and the high priest who passed it once a year remained but a few moments.

How marvellously different our experience may be! We have boldness to enter into the holy place, and remain there, by the blood of Jesus; and, by the enablings of his Priesthood, we may spend our entire lives under the consciousness of the presence and favour of God. It is much like the servants of Solomon, to stand before our King, and to hear Him speaking, bidding us either to perform his errands, or fold the wings of activity in wrapt communion.

This is not your experience? Then look carefully through the conditions which this Psalm enumerates. Perhaps you are not transparently truthful; or your tongue is not carefully controlled; or you are not perfectly honourable in your business dealings; or you do not know the power of the blood of Christ, as it cleanses from dead works to serve the living God.

It is worth any sacrifice to maintain this habit of indwelling the Most Holy Place. Ask that it may become your second nature. The Lord Jesus will secure this, since He was appointed for us in things that pertain to God. Whenever anything in the inner life seems faulty and deficient, we may turn with unabated confidence to our High Priest, asking Him to adjust it, to bring us into the presence of God, and to keep us there.

**For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell -** Psalm 16:10

This hymn is for ever sacred because of its application by the Holy Ghost to our Saviour's resurrection (Acts 2.). It was as though our Lord had stayed his soul upon these words as He left this world and entered the unseen. The last words He uttered were of committal to his Father, and then He commenced to traverse the land of shadow, "He that ascended is He that first descended into the lower parts of the earth." The Apostle Peter says that He went to visit the spirits in prison. Whither He went is not material - it is enough for our purpose that He sang, as He went, this hymn of immortal hope. Sure that He was the Father's beloved, He knew that He would not be left in Hades, nor suffered to see corruption. He knew that there was a path of life somewhere, which God would show.

Whenever you are stepping down into the dark, unable to see a hand's breadth before you, and just letting the foot fall from step to step - it may be because of some act of obedience to conscience, or because you are called to enter the unknown and untried, or even death itself - cheer your heart with this holy Psalm. God will never desert the soul that absolutely honours and obeys Him. His way leads to the light through the dark, to the deathless through death, to the abounding fruit-bearing through desertion and loneliness. How lonely the vine-stock is through the winter! Follow Him, He will show.

"She is sinking very fast," whispered an attendant in the dying chamber of a godly woman. "No, no," was the quick response of the departing saint, who had overheard the words; "no; I am not sinking; I am in the arms of my Saviour."

**I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake -** Psalm 17:15

To a good man, then, this is the world of dream and shadow, and death is the awakening. We are like men asleep in some chamber that looks towards the eastern sky. Outside is the day with its revealing beams, but our heavy eyes are closed to it all. "Here and there, some lighter sleeper with thinner eyelids or face turned to the sun is half conscious of a vague brightness and feels the light, though he sees not the wealth of colour it reveals. Such souls are our saints and prophets; but most of us sleep on unconscious." But the moment is at hand when we shall awake and start up and declare ourselves fools for having counted dreams as realities, whilst we were oblivious to the eternal realities.

When we awake we shall behold the face of God. Likeness is properly "form," and is the same word employed in reference to Moses, who saw the similitude of the Lord. We shall see Him as He is. There will be an outward revelation and manifestation of his lovely and holy character, and it will satisfy us completely. "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And we shall be satisfied. The mind will be satisfied with his truth, the heart with his love, the will with his authority. We shall need nothing else. Heaven itself, with its outspread mystery of beauty, will not divert our gaze from God, nor contribute to our satisfaction. To know God, to stand before Him, to realize that we are accepted in the righteousness of the Well-beloved - this will be enough for evermore.

"This life's dream, an empty show;
But the bright world to which I go
Hath joys substantial and sincere;
When shall I wake, and find me there?"

**...thy gentleness hath made me great -** Psalm 18:35

The Nasmyth hammer which can pulverise blocks of tough metal, will break the shell of a nut without hurting the kernel. In this it resembles this Psalm, in the earlier part of which there is one of the grandest descriptions that words can give of God's mighty interposition on behalf of his threatened child. But here we are told that it is the Divine gentleness which has made him great. It is as though God's power were exerted against our foes, whilst our education is undertaken by his love.

Review your life. See the perils from which you have been rescued; the process of your education; the slow degrees by which you have climbed to any eminence of Christian character; the method by which you have attained the power of influencing others: is it not all attributable to the gentleness of the Good Shepherd? Not by sudden cataclysms and catastrophes; not by the earthquake, the fire, or the hurricane; not even by the stringent requirements of law; but by a succession of tenderest, gentlest movements of the Divine Spirit. He has remonstrated in whispered accents; He has seemed grieved and sad; He has turned and looked; He has sent a message by a woman's lips; He has put a little child into your life to lead you; He has poured on you one continual stream of sunshine. Now, it has been the distilling of dew; and again, soft showers on the mown grass: and through all, the purpose has run of eliminating the self-life, and leading you to the full stature of the perfect man. The strongest soul I ever knew, one who seemed to have been fashioned by God's mightiest strokes, was wont, in life's eventide, to attribute all to the effect of God's gentleness.

**...cleanse thou me from secret faults -** Psalm 19:12

It is not likely that we shall be kept from the great transgression unless we are preserved from presumptuous sins; and these in turn will befall us unless we have been cleansed from bidden faults. Just as the germ of disease taken into the system will presently reveal itself in an outburst of malignant fever, so hidden faults flower out into presumptuous sins, and these into great transgression. "Then lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and the sin, when it full-grown bringeth forth death."

First, we need forgiveness for secret sins. The Jewish law made large provision for sins of ignorance. A man might unawares walk across a grave, or touch some article of furniture which was ceremonially unclean, and so become defiled. Even though unconscious of actual transgression, he would find his communion with God broken. Thus, after the holiest day we have ever spent we need to ask for cleansing in the precious blood, for sins which God has discerned, but which in the twilight of our ignorance, and because we compared ourselves with those beneath us in spiritual attainment, have escaped notice.

Next, we need deliverance from the love and power of sin, in lower depths than we have ever realized. We desire to pass muster at the bar, not only of our neighbours and ourselves, but of God. We desire that the Spirit should antagonize the flesh in depths below the reach of the plumb-line of our consciousness. We desire the inner purity of heart. But this is peculiarly God's prerogative. It is his work to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit. "Cleanse THOU me.

**Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed -** Psalm 20:6

This was no doubt true of David as the anointed king of Israel, and of the Lord Jesus for whom the Father hath promised that He will subdue all things under Him; but it is also true of every saint who has been anointed with the Holy Ghost. Christian means an anointed one. Alas, that in so many cases the name is a misnomer! And men cannot claim the saving strength of God's right hand because they have not bent head and heart beneath the chrism of the Holy Spirit. How is it with thee? Art thou included in what Paul said, "He that anointeth us is God"; and in what John said, "The anointing which has once been received, abideth"? If so, there can be no doubt that Jehovah will ever save thee with a present-tense salvation. He saveth those whom He anointeth with the saving strength of his right hand.

Dost thou doubt this? Sayest thou that the annoyances and solicitations, the pitfalls and snares, the antagonisms and temptations of thy life, are so great as to offer an insuperable obstacle to thy entire deliverance from fret, irritation, and failure? Then turn to the marvellous phrase that follows, and tell me, if thou canst, the meaning of the saving strength of God's right hand. Is not God's right hand strong enough? And notice that its strength is pledged not to destroy, but to save. All the strength of God's right hand goes forth to save unto the uttermost. Look away from adversary and temptation, and keep murmuring to thyself, "He shall save me to-day, and always, with the saving strength of his right hand." And is not the right hand of the Most High the place where Jesus sits? Is not the right hand of God moved by the love that died on Calvary? "He laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not."

**For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness -** Psalm 21:3

God is always beforehand with us. The word "prevent" is not as familiar to our modern English as it was when the Bible was translated. Then it meant "that which comes or goes before." And the idea is that God goes before us, preparing our way, and laying up supplies of grace to anticipate our need. This is the meaning of the prayer: "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings."

Go into the chamber where the mother is preparing for the advent of a little babe. You have no difficulty in telling what the wants of the child will be by all the articles which her tender forethought is providing; and when presently the little one opens its eyes in this strange, new world, it finds that it has been prevented with the blessings of goodness.

For ages prior to the appearance of man on the earth, the great heart of God was exercised in preparing for him. To please his ear, Music tuned her lyre; to satisfy his eye, the Great Artist wrought variety of colour and form; to warm him, seams of coal were laid down; to give him drink, rivers poured from crystal urns of snow-clad peaks; and Adam might have adored God's prevenient grace. Think, for instance, of the colour, the light and scent and driving-power in rock-oils!

Still more is this the case in the kingdom of redemption. God has stored all the blessings of goodness in Jesus. In eternal ages, in the incarnation, the cross, the ascension, He has prepared beforehand; for every possible need of our spiritual life. Whenever you pray, remember that you are not to procure unthought-of help; but to avail yourself of the blessings of goodness with which God has anticipated your coming.

**He hath done this -** Psalm 22:31

This is the Hebrew equivalent for the words, "It is finished." Surely it was meet that the Psalm of the Cross, which our Lord must have recited to Himself during those hours of anguish, should close with this triumphant outburst.

Finished, the ceremonial law. - It had served its purpose in prefiguring the person and work of Jesus; but now the rending of the veil betokened the abolition of the forms of the earlier dispensation. The things which could be shaken passed, that those which could not be shaken might remain.

Finished, the fulfilment of prophecy. - Very diverse predictions had met, and were closed, as gates are when the king has passed through. That He should be a King and a Sufferer; a Priest and a Victim; a Lion of the tribe of Judah, and a Lamb for substitution.

Finished, the work which was given to Him to do. - The Messiah was to be cut off, not for Himself, to finish transgressions, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. And each of these great ends was realized.

Finished, the work of atonement. - As the Substitute and Sin-bearer, the Lord Jesus stood with the sins of the race meeting on Him; but when He died He put them away by the sacrifice of Himself. They were borne into the land of forgetfulness, from which they can never be recovered. The demand of Divine justice was satisfied. Mercy and truth had met. Righteousness and peace embraced. And this cry of a finished redemption shall be finally crowned by a cry of complete restitution (Rev 21:6).

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life -** Psalm 23:6

We are well escorted, with a Shepherd in front and these twin angels behind! Some one called them watch-dogs; but I prefer to think of them as angels. Do you not see the special beauty of these fair, strong angel-forms following?. We make such mistakes, give unnecessary pain, leave work ill-done and half-done, often succeed rather in raising dust than cleaning the rooms which we would fain sweep! It is good to think that two such angels follow close upon our track as we go through life, putting kind constructions on our actions, disentangling knots, making good deficiencies, and preventing the consequences of ill-advised and inconsiderate action pursuing us to the bitter end.

There are mothers who are always tidying up after their children. The little ones have had a rare time, which have left confusion and disorder; but the mother comes, mending the broken toys, stitching the rent garments, making everything neat and tidy. As the ambulance corps goes over the battle-field; as time festoons with verdure ruins and decay; as love puts the most tender construction on word and act - so the love of God follows us.

His goodness imputes to us the noble motive, though the act itself has been a failure; credits us with what was in our heart; reckons us the full wage, though we have only wrought one hour. His mercy forgives, obliterates the traces of our sins from his heart, undoes their ill-effect so far as possible towards others, and treats us as if we had never transgressed. Do not fear the future. God's angels do not tire. What has been will be, in all worlds, and to all eternity. All the days, even those in which Satan seems to have obtained permission to sift.

**And the King of glory shall come in -** Psalm 24:7,9

This is what we all want. We must have the King of Glory within. To have Him without, even though He be on the Throne, will not avail. He must come in to abide, to reign, to sway his sceptre. to keep the everlasting doors through which He has passed. This has been our difficulty, that those doors have so often been forced. We want one who is strong and mighty to keep them strongly barred against our mortal foe.

This Psalm was first realized in the entrance of the Ark into Mount Zion, when God went up with a :merry noise. It is supposed that the first part of the verse was a challenge from the warders of the ancient gates, whilst the second was a reply from the escorting band that accompanied the sacred emblem. It was a moment of vast triumph when the Ark of the King of Glory passed to the ancient city of the Jebusites.

A still greater fulfilment took place when Jesus, having overcome the sharpness of death, victor over sin and the grave, mighty in battle, vanquished principalities and powers, and entered the city of God. Then to and fro these challenges and answers flew between the angels that awaited Him, and those who accompanied.

But the most vital fulfilment is when the heart opens to receive Him, and He enters, to go out no more, and to hold it against all comers. Oh, beaten and baffled saint, it is impossible for thee to fail when Jesus, all-victorious, garrisons thy heart! He is strong and mighty. Dost thou want strength? It is in the strong Son of God. Dost thou want might? He is all-mighty. Dost thou want deliverance from thy foes? He is mighty in battle.

**The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him -** Psalm 25:14

What marvellous words! They remind one of the sapphire work which the elders saw at the foot of the throne, and which was like "the body of heaven for clearness." Three different renderings are suggested.

The Secret of the Lord. - To some it is permitted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. To these the white stone is given, on which is engraven a name, which only he knows that receives it. There are secret passages of love between Christ and the believing soul, which it would not be lawful for it to utter. High fellowship: deep blessedness. Things which eye hath not seen. Jesus revealed his secrets when Judas had gone forth. "Wherefore askest thou after my name," He said to Manoah, "seeing it is secret?"

The Counsel of the Lord. - " His Name shall be called . . . Counsellor." He draws near to those that fear to grieve Him, and gives them counsel. He instructs them in the way that He chooses for them; He guides them in his truth and teaches them; He guides them in judgment; and tells them, as He did Abraham, what He is about to do.

The Friendship of the Lord. - " Ye are my friends," said Jesus, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." He longs for friends - those to whom He can tell his desires, on whom He may impose implicit confidence, and who will be so taken up with Him as to be indifferent to everything else, their one purpose to do his least bidding. Oh to be honoured with the personal friendship of Jesus! It were a rare privilege to be entrusted with his secrets, and to hear Him say, "I have not called you servants, but friends."

**I will wash mine hands in innocency -** Psalm 26:6

The Psalmist realized that he could not avail himself of all that was typified by the altar, unless, so far as he knew himself, he had washed his hands in innocency. But he also knew that the washing, to be effective, must be in costlier waters than those of his own innocency. The soul requires a Saviour who comes by water and blood, not by water only.

The compassing of the altar is probably a picturesque way of describing the joyous or penitent circle of worshippers that gathered around the altar; and which needed to be prepared for by the usual lustrations, "The baptisms and laying on of hands." We must separate ourselves from known sin, and wash our hands in innocency, if we are to enjoy the blessings of the altar and its sacred associations.

There is the sacrifice of the burnt-offering, which stands for Christ's perfectness and entire devotedness to God on our behalf. But how can we be utterly given up to God unless, so far as we know, we are innocent of presumptuous and cherished sin?

There are the sacrifices of the meal-offering and the peace-offering. But how can we feed on Christ, or feast with Him in holy rapture, whilst we are concealing the stains of the hands that take the food?

There is the sacrifice of the sin offering. But is it .not a sacrilege to claim a share in its blessing if we permit those very sins which cost the Saviour agony and tears? No; we must come out and be separate; we must be willing for God to examine and prove us; we must hate the congregation of the wicked, their conversation and ways; we must occupy ourselves perpetually with the Divine lovingkindness and truth. So only can we compass the altar of God, and taste its comfort and help.

**One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after -** Psalm 27:4

One purpose dominated prayer and life. It was never long absent from the Psalmist's thought. The men of one idea are irresistible. The arrowy stream will force its way through the toughest soil. See that all the prayers, incidents, and circumstances of life subserve one intense purpose. String all the beads on one thread. When the eye is single, the whole body is full of light.

The Psalmist's purpose. - What a blessing that the Psalmist's purpose may be ours! To dwell in the house of the Lord is to live within the veil in fellowship with God, in the habitual recollection of his presence. To behold his beauty is to keep looking off unto Jesus. To inquire in his Temple is to commune with the Lord about all the concerns of home and business, of church and commonwealth. In senses of which the material Temple could give but a faint conception, we may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives.

The Psalmist's search. - Let us seek after this as well as pray for it. Let it be the fixed purpose and resolution of every day. Let us begin with it in the morning, and at every spare moment remember that we have boldness to stand in the Most Holy Place. Oh to be as intent on this high quest as the man of science to discover nature's secrets; as the business man to make a fortune; as the brave explorer to extort the secret from the Polar Seas!

True prayer will never be presumptuous. It will not ask God to do for us what we may do for ourselves. It will ask as though all depended on asking, but it will seek as though all depended on seeking.

"Thrice blest, whose lives are faithful prayers:
What souls possess themselves so pure?"

**Feed them also, and lift them up for ever -** Psalm 28:9

The people of God are here compared to a flock, scattered over many hills, marked by differing brands, sheltering in varied folds, but under the care of one Shepherd, and being conducted to one Home.

The holy soul is as eager for the welfare of the Lord's "beautiful flock" as He is. Whatever is dear to the loved one is dear to the lover. You cannot love the pastor without taking a keen and constant interest in all that interests him, and especially in the sheep of his pasture, and the people of his hand. Hence when you are nearest the Lord, you are almost certain to begin pleading for his inheritance, and saying: "Save thy people; bless them, feed them, and lift them up for ever."

There is an exquisite suggestion in the R. V. "Bear them up for ever." The Good Shepherd bare his flock through the desert, and carried them all the days of old. It is as easy for Him to bear a flock, as a single lamb. Jesus does not simply lead us to green pastures and still waters, He bears us, and He bears us up, and He does so for ever. Never tiring, though He imparts infinite rest; never ceasing for a moment his shepherd care. Are you depressed to-day? Are there strong influences dragging you down? Does your soul cleave to the dust? Let those strong arms and that tender breast lift you up for ever. A dying child asked her father to place his arms beneath her weary, emaciated body. "Lift me," she said. He did so. "A little higher." He did so. "Higher, father." And when he had lifted her as high as he could, the convulsive movement proved that Christ had come to lift her up for ever.

**In his temple doth every one speak of his glory -** Psalm 29:9

This psalm describes a thunderstorm gathering over the Mediterranean, passing with devastating fury over Palestine, and finally dissolving in floods of rain on the pasturelands of Bashan and Gilead. But how differently such a scene is regarded! To the man of the world it presents an interesting study, or awakes spasms of fear: to the man of God, contemplating the scene from his safe hiding in the Temple, it seems as though nature, with a myriad voices, were proclaiming the glory of God. Many storms are sweeping athwart the world just now. Our standpoint for watching them must be God's presence-chamber.

Somehow, everything that has been, is, and shall be; all that seems startling and dreadful; all that excites fear and foreboding - shall conduce to the glory of God. Wait, O child of God, in patient trust; Jehovah is King, and He shall sit as King for ever; all is under law. "Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things"; and to Him shah be the glory for ever.

Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost: does every whit of it say, Glory? I know of few things that stir my heart more than the repeated ascription of "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." But is that the refrain of our life? Outside there may be confusion and storm, wild chaos and desolation; but see to it that from your heart's shrine there rises moment after moment the ascription of "Glory be to Thee, O Thou most High."

"Glory to God, to God, he saith.
Knowledge of suffering entereth,
And life is perfected in death."

**Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning -** Psalm 30:5

The Hebrew might be rendered, "Weeping may come in to lodge at even" (R. V., marg.). See, at nightfall, a black-vestured guest comes to thy heart. Thou must let him in; he brings a warrant from your King for his quartering and entertainment. But he is only a lodger; he has no abiding-place with thee; at daybreak he must be gone. Canst thou not bear with him for these brief hours? It is only for the brief space of an Eastern summer-night. Let the first tint of the dawn flush yon sky, he will go. Like the ghosts of fable, he dies in the light.

Now, see, the morning breaks! Who is this hurrying up the hill, and knocking at the door? Hark to his joyous shout! Who is this? Ah! It is Joy. The child of the morning light! The firstborn of Resurrection! And he comes not as a lodger, but as the Lord and Master of Life, to abide for ever. Oh, welcome him in the name of the Lord, and throw open each chamber and each closet in your heart, that all may be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And as he enters, sorrow and sighing flee away. They have passed out at the back as he came in at the front.

Joy in the morning at the resurrection of Jesus: Joy in the coming of the Saviour for his bride: Joy as the Millennium breaks on the world: Joy when the Eternal Day comes to gladden those who have drunk of Christ's sorrow, and shall share his bliss.

Child of God, be on the outlook to welcome Joy. Do not fear his advent, nor thrust him away. Milton's L'Allegro is a truer presentation of Christian experience than Il Penseroso. "Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

**Thou hast known my soul in adversities -** Psalm 31:7

Men have a way of forgetting their companions when they fall into adversity. They do not know them or visit them, or recognise them if they meet them in the street. But the love of God is always most tender and considerate then. He seeks us out when the sky is shadowed, and life is overcast with sombre tints. Adversity, so far from alienating Him, draws Him closer, and brings out his tenderest, loveliest traits. He knows us in adversity.

It is only when we are overtaken by adversity that we are revealed in the innermost depths of our nature. God knows us in adversity. "Thou shalt remember," said Moses, "all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart." What revelations of unsubdued pride and imperious self-will are afforded, when we are searched and tested by the fiery trial of pain!

But there suggests another rendering: "Thou hast known the adversities of my soul." Is it not enough that God should know? Need we go to all our friends and explain to them all we are called to endure? Is not this a needless addition to their sorrow, and the sorrow of the world? What a glorious piece of advice the Master gave, when He said, "Anoint thine head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but to thy Father which seeth in secret."

"Thou know'st our bitterness! - our joys are thine!
No stranger Thou to all our wanderings wild!
But yet Thou call'st us Brethren! Sweet repose
Is in that word ; - the Lord who dwells on high
Knows all, yet loves us better than He knows."

**I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go -** Psalm 32:8

"Learn of Me," said the Master: and indeed there is no teacher like Him; no school like his. We stand at the door of the school-house, saying, "What I know not, teach Thou me"; and He does not hesitate to undertake our case. But there are several points of difference from our methods. In Christ's school there is but one Master for all the scholars, and they all learn from the same books; the pupils begin with the upper classes and end with the lowest; and those that are most proficient, and have been longest under his tuition, are most conscious of their ignorance. There are no holidays; but every day is a holy day. The school never breaks up; but the students leave it for Home, and the prizes are sent after them, and given when they arrive.

We need more than personal instruction; we are travelling through an unknown land, and require direction for the way. This also is guaranteed; but not as in the cases of tourists, who extract all information from their friends before they start from home, as to the places they are about to visit. Our Guide accompanies us. He counsels us with his eye upon us, detecting every pitfall and chasm, and warning us; perhaps even guiding us by the movement of his eye.

How greatly then are we in need of the quickened sense! The eye fixed on his eye; the ear open to his slightest whisper; the foot quick to place itself down in his footprints. The horse and mule need bit and bridle; but it is enough for us if the heart fears to miss the least indication of the Master's will. Be willing to know; it then becomes his part to make thee know somehow. If not in one way, then in another.

**The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD -** Psalm 33:5

The Psalmist means that there is no spot in it where the traces and footprints of God's love may not be discerned, if only the eyes and the heart are opened. Just as every corner of a room which faces the south is filled with the morning sunlight, unless artificial and violent means are adopted to keep it out, so every part of human life is full of God's loving-kindness; but may not your eyes be blinded? May there not be more than you suppose? May you not be so occupied with the one irksome thing in it as to be oblivious to ten thousand marks of tender compassion and unobtrusive mercy!

Your chamber is very bare and comfortless; but it is part of the earth, and it is therefore full of God's loving-kindness. Your home seems uncongenial and trying; but it must be full to the brim of loving-kindness. Your daily life is hard and difficult; but there is as much loving-kindness in it as if it were easy and prosperous. There is indeed more loving-kindness in these trying and difficult surroundings than in happier ones. It costs God more to give us pain. We need more love, and we get it. We should rejoice in it if our eyes were opened.

The loveless heart can detect nothing but disappointment and unkindness. But the heart that loves, and sings, and rejoices in the Lord, detects the evident tokens of God's love; just as the child of nature knows when friend or foe has passed through the forest-glade, by indications which would be un-intelligible to our unpractised eye. Echo always answers in the same key in which we address her!

**The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart -** Psalm 34:18

What broke your heart? Unkindness? Desertion? Unfaithfulness on the part of those you trusted? Or did you attempt to do something which was beyond your power, and in the effort, the heartstrings snapped? A bird with a broken wing, an animal with a broken leg, a woman with a broken heart, a man with a broken purpose in his life-these seem to drop out of the main current of life into shadow. They go apart to suffer and droop. The busy rush of life goes on without them. But God draws nigh. The Great Lover of man is always at the best when the lights burn low and dim in the house of life. He always comes to us then. He shall sit as the Refiner.

Where do you see love perfected? Not between the father and his stalwart son who counts himself independent, or between the mother and the girl in whom love is awakening in its first faint blush: but where the crippled child of eleven years lies in the truckle-bed, pale and wan, unable to help herself. There the noblest fruits of love ripen and yield refreshment. The father draws nigh to the little sufferer, so soon as he gets home at night, and the mother is nigh all the time to sympathize and comfort and minister. So brokenness attracts God. It is dark; you think yourself deserted; but it is not so. God is there - He is nigh; call to Him - a whisper will bring a response.

"There, little one, don't cry;
They have broken your heart, I know
And the rainbow gleams
Of your youthful dreams
Are things of the long ago;
But heaven holds all for which you sigh -
There, little one, don't cry."

**Them that are quiet in the land -** Psalm 35:20

A significant title for the saints, which has been adopted at least by one great religious body. In every age God has had his quiet ones. Retired from its noise and strife, withdrawn from its ambitions and jealousies, unshaken by its alarms; because they had entered into the secret of a life hidden in God. We must have an outlet for the energies of our nature. If we are unfamiliar with the hidden depths of eternal life, we shall necessarily live a busy, fussy, frothy, ambitious, eager life, in contact with men and things. But the man who is intense on the eternal, can be quiet in the temporal.

The man whose house is shallow, but one room in depth, cannot help living on the street. But directly we begin to dwell deep - deep in God, deep in the watch for the Master's advent, deep in considering the mysteries of the kingdom, we become quiet. We fill our little space; we get our daily bread and are content; we enjoy natural and simple pleasures; we do not strive, nor cry, nor cause our voice to be heard in the street; we pass through the world, with noiseless tread, dropping a blessing on all we meet; but we are no sooner recognised than we are gone.

Get quiet, beloved soul; tell out thy sorrow and complaint to God. Let not the greatest business or pressure divert thee from God. When men rage about thee, go and tell Jesus. When storms are high, hide thee in his secret place. When others compete for fame and applause, and their passion might infect thee, get into thy closet, and shut thy door, and quiet thyself as a weaned babe. For if thy voice is quiet to man, let it never cease to speak loudly and mightily for man in the ear of God. Oh to be a Quietist in the best sense!

**Lord, all my desire is before thee -** Psalm 38:9

God knows our desires. We cannot always put them into words; we dare not trust them to the ears of our dearest, but they lie open to Him - the ideal we desire in our holiest moments; the thorn in the flesh from which we long to be delivered; the prayer for one who is dearer to us than life. "Lord, all my desire is before Thee."

Think of the desires of the saints - for the realization of their ideals; for the salvation of men; for the glory of the Redeemer; for the Divine answer to the scoff, the sneer, the taunt of infidelity; for the coming of the King, the restoration of his ancient people, the setting up of the millennial reign.

"Lo, as some ship, outworn and overladen,
Strains for the harbour, where her sails are furled;
Lo, as some innocent and eager maiden
Leans o'er the wistful limit of the world:
"So even I, and with a pang more thrilling;
So even I. and with a hope more sweet.
Yearn for the sign, O Christ! of thy fulfilling,
Faint for the flaming of thine advent feet."

And remember, He who implanted the desire does abundantly above all we ask or think. There is allways a defect in every earthly joy, a something which shows itself for a moment to elude us.

"It blossoms just beyond the paths I follow,
It shines beyond the farthest stars I see;
It echoes faint from ocean caverns hollow,
And from the land of dreams it beckons me."

But it never can be thus with any desire that God has taught us to cherish. Of these, as the ages pass, we shall say: It was a true report that I heard, but the half was not told. The desire which is directed to God cannot miss gratification.

**I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were -** Psalm 39:12

Sorrow and pain had taught the Psalmist some deep lessons touching the life of men around him-they seemed to be shadows pursuing shadows. They walked in a vain show, and were disquieted in vain. At their best estate, i.e., when most firmly rooted, they were only a breath, curling from lip or nostril into the chili morning air, and then gone for ever. The outward life and activity of man seemed to him as the shadow which darkens for a moment a whole mountain side, and, whilst you look, it has been chased away by the succeeding sheets of sunshine.

Amid all these vanities, the child of God is a pilgrim to the Unseen. He passes through Vanity Fair, with his eyes steadily fixed on the Eternal City, whose Builder and Maker is God. Abraham first described himself as a stranger and sojourner, when he stood up from before his dead, and craved a burying-place from the sons of Heth. All his children, those who inherit a like faith, must say the same. Faith cannot find a home on this side of the stars. It has caught a glimpse of the Infinite, and it can never be content with anything less.

But we are sojourners "with God." He is our constant companion. What Greatheart was to the women and feeble ones, God is to each of his saints. We may be strangers; but we are not solitary. We may he compelled to relax our grasp from the hands of beloved ones; but never alone - the Father is with us. Good company, safe escort, is it not? In the strength of it, we may obey without reluctance or fear the old motto - Habita, ut migraturus: Live as about to emigrate. "There is nothing greater than God; nothing less than I. He is rich; I am very poor, but I want for nothing."

**I delight to do thy will, O my God -** Psalm 40:7,8

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Psalm 40:10.) lays great stress on these words. He says that this yielding up of Christ's will to his Father's was consummated on the cross, and was the inner heart of our Saviour's passion. "By which will (surrendered and given back to God) we have been sanctified." He then proceeds to suggest that it is only as we enter into a living oneness with Jesus in this that we can pass from the outer court and have boldness to enter into the Holiest of all. This, he says, is the new and living way. Jesus entered into the Holiest because He gave Himself absolutely to his Father. We cannot expect to go thither till we have become possessed of the same spirit.

It is a solemn question for each. Have we all stood at the cross, as the slave of old at the doorpost of his master's house, and said, "I love my Master. I will not go out free"? Have we been united to that cross, as by the boring of the awl? Have we so embraced the will of God that we are prepared to follow it, though it lead to the Cross and grave? Then one condition at least is fulfilled for our standing unabashed where angels veil their faces.

But there is yet another condition. We can have no right to stand within the Holiest, except through the blood of Jesus, shed for sin on the cross. This is necessary ere sinners can have boldness in the presence of Divine Purity.

When Rutherford was like to die of sore illness, instead of a martyr's death, he said, "I would think it a more glorious way of going home, to lay down my life for the cause at the cross of Edinburgh or St. Andrew's; but I submit to my Master's will. Oh for arms to embrace Him!"

**÷c02 Psalms contd**

**Blessed is he that considereth the poor -** Psalm 41:1

The realm of Blessedness is all around. It may be entered at any minute, and we may dwell in it all the days of our life. Our enjoyment of blessedness is totally undetermined by outward circumstances. If you stand in some great retail emporium and watch the faces of the women, you will be greatly instructed. Yonder sits a richly-dressed lady with society and fashion, dress and money at her command, but her manner and tone are utterly weary and dissatisfied; whilst across the counter a girl waits on her, whose thin face and simple attire tell their own story, but her expression and bearing betoken the possession of an inner calm and strength, an inexhaustible fund of patience and sweetness. Such contrasts meet us everywhere. The realm of blessedness dips down into humble and lowly lives on every side of us. Have we entered it.

Christ's beatitudes give us eight gates, any one of which will immediately conduct us within its confines. But here is another: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Even if you cannot help or relieve them to any appreciable extent, consider them; let them feel that you are thinking of and for them; do not hurry them when they recite their long, sad story; put them at their ease; treat them with Christian courtesy and consideration. Begin at once. There are plenty around you, who, if not poor in the things of this world, are poor in love and hope and the knowledge of God. Tell them of "the blessing of the Lord," which "maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." Silver and gold you may have none; but such as you have be sure and give. Learn to consider people. Try and look on things from their standpoint.

**Deep calleth unto deep -** Psalm 42:7

There are wonderful harmonies in nature. Voices call to one another across vast spaces. The depths below the firmament call to the heights above. The deep of the ocean calls to the deep of the azure sky. Listen, O my soul, to the mighty voices sounding ever through the universe of God.

The deep of Divine Redemption calls to the deep of human need. - It sometimes seems as though the opposite were true, and as though the cry originated in man; but it is not so. God is always first; and as He looks into hearts stricken and desperate, conscious of unfathomable yearnings, and infinite capacity, He calls aloud, and the depth of his heart appeals to the depth of the heart of man. Would that it might ever answer back!

The deep of Christ's wealth calls to the deep of the saint's poverty. - He looks down upon our attenuated and poverty-stricken experience with an infinite yearning. He cannot endure that we should go through life naked and miserable, poor and blind, when He has got gold, and precious stones, and white raiment. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider. Forsake thy father's house. Come unto Me, and receive from my fulness. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

The deep of the Holy Spirit's intercession calls to the deep of the Church's prayer. - He awakens in us groanings that cannot be uttered, and burdens us with the will of God.

Whatever depths there are in God, they appeal to corresponding depths in us. And whatever be the depths of our sorrow, desire, or necessity, there are correspondences in God from which full supplies may be obtained. Thou hast the pitcher of faith, and the well is deep.

**O God my God -** Psalm 43:4

What a change within the soul one short hour spent in God's presence will prevail to make! The psalmist is opposed by an ungodly nation, and resisted by a deceitful and unjust man. He mourns because of the oppression of the enemy; he questions whether God has cast him off. Then led by those twin angels, Light and Truth, commissioned and sent forth for that purpose from the presence of God, he enters in thought and spirit within the precincts of the Divine Tabernacle, and stands before the Altar. Immediately the clouds break. Putting his puny hand upon the great God, he appropriates all He is and has, as though it were his own, and takes again, in a very ecstasy of realizing faith, his harp, too long silent, and breaks into rapturous melody.

Have you not sometimes groped in the dark, till those two angels have come to lead you also to the altar where the High Priest stands? Then what a change! Your circumstances have not altered, but you have conceived a new idea of what God can be to you. You have said, This God is my God for ever and ever. You have said, O God, MY God! You have laid your hand on God's wealth and called it all your own. You have chided your soul for being disquieted and depressed whilst such a heritage is yours. You have spoken of God, first as the God of your strength; secondly, as the gladness of your joy; thirdly, as the health of your face.

"Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others - that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak and heartless be,
Anxious or troubled when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?"

**Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances -** Psalm 44:4

Before a man can say that God is his King, he must have very definitely consecrated himself to God. The relation of too many believers to Christ falls short of this supreme act of the soul; and in consequence their lives lack directness, power, victory over temptation. My reader, thou hast been sorely tried by overmastering temptations before which thy resolutions have been swept as children's sand-heaps by the tide. Wilt thou quietly consider whether from the very depth of thy being thou hast ever said to God, Thou art my King. The kingship of Jesus is always associated with victory; and just as soon as his supremacy is acknowledged, He will begin to command deliverance and victory.

Behold, thy King cometh to thee, having salvation. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in; but He is also the merciful Saviour. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. It is always Prince first. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, thou shalt be saved.

What a battle-shout this is! Whenever temptation is near; when the foe seems about to take the citadel by assault; when heart and flesh quail before the noise of battle - then to look up to the living Christ, and say, Thou art my King, O Son of God: command victory! There is no devil in hell but would flee before that cry of the tempted and tried believer; and God could not be neglectful of such an appeal. Jacob is only a worm; yet even he is more than a conqueror when God fights for him. It is thus that Jacob Behmen begins one of his letters: "May the Overcomer, Jesus Christ, through Himself, overcome in us all his enemies."

**I speak of the things which I have made touching the king -** Psalm 45:1

This dignifies the meanest occupation. By this motive the apostles urged their converts to daily duty, slaves though they were in the houses of rich and godless owners. They were taught to look upon their lot as the will of God; and to do service as. unto the Lord, and not unto men, seeking the praise of God as their sufficient reward.

As we take in hand the bits of carved work which once stood high in the cathedral roof, but now lie almost hidden by rank vegetation, and consider the exquisite carving, which the artists never thought would be so minutely inspected, we feel that each unknown craftsman did his work for the King. There is no doubt that the religious intention of their work elevated their meanest toils to the level of sacred service. Let us endeavour each day to realize that everything may be done for Jesus which may be done at all. Do you take food? It is that the body may be deft and quick to execute his purposes. Do. you rest and seek recreation? It is that your energies may be recuperated, and that the tide of nervous power may return with fresh vigour. Do you manufacture, buy and sell, advise and preach? All may be inspired by the one purpose, that Iris will may be done, his kingdom come - which is righteousness, peace, and goodwill to men.

Such a life, however, is only possible when the heart overflows, bubbles up and over, with goodly matter. The heart must always be in contact with the fervent love of Christ. It is only as the Divine heat passes into us that the affections will boil up. and overflow in holy act. Let us make the things about the King before we speak them. Let us give time to muse, that the fire may burn.

**He maketh wars to cease -** Psalm 46:9

"My soul is among lions, and I dwell among those that are set on fire: even the sons of men, whose words are spears and arrows, and their tongue .a sharp sword." Such is the frequent confession or the child of God. Hemmed in by foes, the butt of vehement hate! But the moment comes at length when God arises to deliver. He utters his voice the earth melts. In the night the enemy has wrapped up his tents and stolen silently away. War has ceased, and all the land of life lies plain and open.

God makes the wars of the outward life cease, so that as life's afternoon comes the man who had fought his way through overwhelming odds - as a reformer, or inventor, or philanthropist - spends his years amid troops of friends and loving recognition.

God makes the wars of the home cease, so that the disturbing elements pass out, or are transmuted by invincible patience and love.

God makes the wars of the heart cease, so that Satan no longer annoys. The storm dies down, and the river which makes glad the city of God purls quietly through the soul. Sennacherib and his vast array lie as the leaves of autumn, silent in the last sleep.

If as yet God has not made your wars to cease, it is because He knows that you have still strength to fight on. Do not faint in the day of battle. Ponder those great words of Cromwell: "Call not your burden sad or heavy, for if your Heavenly Father sent it (or permitted it) He intended it to be neither." It is through the fight that you are winning experience, strength, the approval of your Captain, .and the crown.

**He shall choose our inheritance for us -** Psalm 47:4

"Choose for us, our Father." We say it; deliberately. If He were to give us our choice at this moment, though there is no one of us that does not cherish a secret longing too deep for words, we would put it back into his hand and say, "Thou knowest better than words can tell Thee what lies closest to our soul, but we dare not take the opportunity of snatching at it; Thou wilt give it or its equivalent in the sweetest form and at the most opportune hour," Would not this be the wisest attitude for any one of us to assume, believing, as we do, that our Father's wisdom is only outshone by his love?

Wilt thou, O soul of man, standing at the foot of the Hill of God, ask thy Father to choose the track He knows thy strength and powers of endurance; He knows also thy ardent yearning for the best. Subordinate thy choice to his in all things. Then whatever the difficulties may prove to be, dare to believe that they are less than any that would have opposed thee hadst thou chosen the route for thyself. Never look back; never doubt thy Father's personal interest; the clouds that sweep darkly over thy path may hide Him from thee, but not thee from Him.

And thou, who hast had much experience of God, wilt thou not still say, He shall choose? Thou canst not repent the trust which thou reposedst years ago in his selection. Thou wilt not withdraw thy confidence. For evermore, whatever life may bring here or hereafter, we will cry, He shall choose, He shall choose. As Nicholas Herman said: "Pains and sufferings would be a paradise to me which I should suffer with my God; and the greatest pleasures hell, if I could relish them without Him."

**Consider her palaces -** Psalm 48:13

The pious Jew broke into exclamations as he considered the beloved city of his fathers. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. In proud confidence he challenged the world of men to walk about Zion, count her towers, and mark her bulwarks. Finally they were to traverse her palaces. But what Jerusalem was to the Jews, God's lovingkindness is to us, as we think of it, in the midst of his temple. Let us consider its beauty and joy, its strength and glory. "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!"

Traverse the rooms in the Palace of God's love - that council-chamber of the eternal foreknowledge where we were chosen in Christ; this suite of apartments, which began with the unrobing-room of Bethlehem, and ended with the golden stairway of Olivet; those mansions of the Home-land which He is preparing for them that love Him; the pavilion whither He will lead his bride where He comes to take her to Himself: then look onward to the new heaven and the new earth, where God shall spread his tabernacle over his people, and all our loftiest ideals will be realized for evermore.

Life is a traversing of the successive rooms of the Palace of Love. They are not alike: each has its own beauty; each leads to something better; in each God is All. Some seem to pass through the rooms veiled or blind; others miss seeing the King. But those who dare to look for Him everywhere, find Him. Always our Christ for ever and ever; always our Guide even unto death, and beyond. Always the present opening to something better, as the rosebud to the rose; as the acorn to the oak; as the chrysalis to the butterfly.

**Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil -** Psalm 49:5

Have I not God? At sundry times and in divers manners, He spake to, and succoured his saints. Will He not come to me, and cast around me the soft mantle of his protecting love? And if I love Him, do I need any beside?

"Who that one moment has the least descried Him,
Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
Pleasures and powers that are not, and that are?"

Did He not walk with Enoch, and then take him home, before the deluge came? Did He not shut Noah in, with his own hand, that there should be no jeopardy from the overflowing flood? Did He not assure Abram that He was his shield and exceeding great reward, quieting his fears against any possible combination of foes? Did He not preserve his servant Moses from the fury of Pharaoh and the murmurings of Israel?. Was not Elijah hidden in the secret of his pavilion from the wrath of Ahab? Did He not send his angel to shut the lions' mouths that they might not hurt Daniel? Were not the coals of the burning fiery furnace as sweet and soft as forest glades to the feet of the three young confessors? Has God ever forsaken those that trusted Him? Has He ever given them over to the will of their enemies?

Wherefore, then, should I fear in the day of evil? I may be standing on the deck, whilst the ship is beset by icebergs and jagged splintered rocks; the fog drapes everything, as the way slowly opens through this archipelago of peril: but God is at the helm - why should I fear? Days of evil to others cannot be so to me, for the presence of God transmutes the evil to good.

**Our God shall come -** Psalm 50:3

The years pass as snowflakes on the river; and as each drops into the mighty past, it cries, God will come! Each Advent season, with its cluster of services, herald-voices, reminiscences and anticipations, lifts the message clear above the turmoil and tumult of mankind, God will come! The disappointments of our fairest hopes, the overcasting of our sunrises, the failures of our politicians, statesmen and counsellors, to effect a permanent and radical improvement of man's nature, all take up the word, Our God shall come!

"Surely He cometh, and a thousand voices
Call to the saints and to the deaf and dumb;
Surely He cometh, and the earth rejoices,
Glad in his coming, who hath sworn, I come."

Dear heart, get thee often to thine oriel window, and look out for the breaking of the day. Did not the Master assure us that He would soon return? Hearken, He saith again to-day, "Surely I come quickly." The little while will soon be over, and He will come first to receive his saints to Himself, and afterwards to come with them to the earth. Why are we disconsolate and dismayed? The perplexities of the Eastern problem, the gradual return of the Jews to Palestine, the despair and lawlessness of men, the unrest of nations, the preparedness on the part of the Church - like so many minute guns at night - keep the heart awake. Oh, let your eyes flash with the glow of thanksgiving! Be glad and strong, confident and calm. Let your loins be girded, and your lamps burning. Through heaven's spaces you shall detect the advent of your God; and when He comes He will break the silence of the ages with words of majesty and might.

**÷c03 Proverbs**

Proverbs 1:33a

Quiet from fear of evil.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

“Whoso.” This promise is to us all. To the man in the street, as much as for those of us who have been nurtured in Christian homes.

The evil is taken out of things for those whose hearts are full of God. Nothing which God allows to come to us is really evil, except sin. Put away sin from your heart, and let it be filled with Love and Faith, and behold all things will become new. They will lose their evil semblance, because you will look at them with new eyes. Men talk against the March wind; but when they understand that it is cleansing fetid dens of fever-germs, they regard it as a blessing. Men dread change, anything unwonted or unaccustomed; but when they find that, like the transplanted fruit-tree, they will often attain a greater maturity than when left to one spot of soil, they welcome it. If you look at things apart from God, especially if you anticipate the future without Him, you have good cause for fear; but if you hearken to and obey Him, if you know and love Him, if you abide in God and God in you, you will see that the evil is not in the things or events, but in yourself. Give yourself as alms to God, and lo, all things will become clean to you.

Death shall lose its terrors, and become the Father’s servant, ushering you into his presence. Pain and suffering shall but cast into relief the stars of Divine promise. Poverty will have no pangs, and storm no alarms. You shall become so habituated to find the rarest blessings associated with what men often dread most, that you will be quiet from all fear of evil, and able to look out, with serene and untroubled heart, on a sea of troubles. In fact, it is very doubtful if anything is really evil for those who love God.

Proverbs 2:4–5

If thou seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, etc.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

There is a beautiful illustration of the truth of these words in the life of Justin the Martyr, who died for the Gospel in the second century. As a young man he earnestly sought for truth, specially that which would arm him with self-control. He took up one system of philosophy after another, trying them as a man might explore mine after mine for silver. Finally, he found that every effort was futile.

“All at last did faithless prove, And, late or soon, betrayed my love.”

At length, wandering in despair on the seashore, he met an aged man, a Christian, who spake as none had ever done to his heart, and pointed him to God in Christ. Beneath those words, that afternoon, he understood the fear of the Lord, and found the knowledge of God.

Thomas longed for evidences of the Resurrection, and Christ came to him. The Chamberlain, as he sat in his chariot reading the book of Esaias the Prophet at Isaiah 53, was desirous to know the truth, and Philip was sent to him. To Saul of Tarsus, groping in the midnight, there came fuller revelations than ever Gamaliel gave, through Stephen and Ananias, led by the Spirit of God.

But you must be prepared to sacrifice all. He who seeks diamonds, or pearls, or gold, will leave his native land, and what other men hold dear, and centre his whole attention on hi quest. Not otherwise must it be with those who would understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. They must be willing to count all things but loss, to sell all they have, in order to buy the field with its treasure-trove.

Illustration - A man was out walking in the desert when a voice said to him, “Pick up some pebbles and put them in your pocket, and tomorrow you will be both sorry and glad.” The man obeyed. He stooped down and picked up a handful of pebbles and put them in his pocket. The next morning he reached into his pocket and found diamonds and rubies and emeralds. And he was both glad and sorry. Glad that he had taken some—sorry that he hadn’t taken more. And so it is with God’s word.

Proverbs 3:6

He shall direct thy paths.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

Thy paths! Then, every man’s path is distinct for him, and for no other. The paths may lie side by side, but they are different. They have converged; they may diverge. When Peter had been told of the rugged nature of the predestined path which was marked out for him in the Providence of God, he turned towards John, his companion and friend, and said to Jesus, “What shall this man do?” The Lord instantly replied, in effect: “That is a matter in which I can brook no interference; it is entirely a matter for my choice and will; if I will, it may be that he shall tarry till I come.”

We need to be divinely directed. — The man who stands above the maze can direct you through all its labyrinth by the readiest path. God who made thee for thy life, and thy life for thee, can direct thee, and He only.

First: Lean not to thine own understanding. — One is apt to pride oneself on one’s far-sighted judgment. We consult our maps and guides and the opinions of fellow-travellers, to find ourselves at fault. We have to learn that our own understanding is not keen enough or wise enough to direct; we must abjure and renounce all dependence on it.

Second: In all thy ways acknowledge Him. — Let thine eye he single; thy one aim to please Him; thy sole motive, his glory. It is marvellous how certainly and delightfully our way opens before us when we no longer look down on it, or around at others, but simply upwards into the face of Christ. “It is a universal law, unalterable as the nature of God, that no created being can be truly holy, useful, or happy, who is knowingly and deliberately out of the Divine fellowship, for a single moment.”

Proverbs 4:18a

The light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

This may be referred to the work of God in the heart. He who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. A little glimmering ray at first, God’s light in the soul grows ever from less to more, revealing Himself and manifesting ourselves, so that we are growingly attracted from the self-life to circle around Him.

But probably it is true also of the graciousness of the believer’s life. At first it shows itself in little acts of blessing on children and the poor; but the range of influence is always apt to increase, till what was a glimmer of helpfulness becomes as the sun shining in strength. The Sunday-school teacher becomes the preacher; the visitor among the poor becomes the philanthropist; the witness to the Gospel in the factory is called to witness in the great theatre of the world. See to it that there is a steady obedience to God’s least promptings and monitions. Follow on to know the Lord, and to be conformed to his all-wise purpose.

Once again, notice the comparison in its exquisite beauty. Light is so gentle, noiseless, and tender. There is no sound; its voice is not heard. So is the influence of the holy soul. Its life becomes the light of men. As with the angel over the plain of Bethlehem, it sheds a light around those whom it will presently address. Like the Gulf Stream, which changes our climate from northern rigour to the temperate zone, so a holy life gently and irresistibly influences and blesses the world. The world is no worse than it is, not because of the holy words spoken on the Lord’s Day, but for the holy lives of obscure saints.

Proverbs 5:6, 21

The level path of life. He maketh level all his paths.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

It is a remarkable expression, “the level path of life”; and there is great comfort in knowing that God is ever before us, leveling our pathway, taking insurmountable obstacles out of the way, so that our feet do not stumble.

It may be that you are facing a great mountain range of difficulty. Before you, obstacles, apparently insuperable, rear themselves like a giant wall to heaven. When you cross the Jordan there is always a Jericho which appears to bar all further advance, and your heart fails. But you are bidden to believe that there is a level path right through those mighty barriers; a pass, as it is called, in mountainous districts. The walking there is easy and pleasant if only you will let yourself be led to it. God has made it, but you must take it. How we dread the thought of those steep cliffs! It seems as though we could never climb them; but if we would only look at the Lord instead of at the hills, if we would look above the hills to Jehovah, we should be able to rest in sure faith that He will show us the level path of life.

Your path is not level, but full of boulders which have rolled down upon and choked it. But may this not be partly due to your mistakes or sins-to your willfulness and self-dependence? There are sorrows and trials in all lives; but these need not obstruct our progress. The text surely refers to those difficulties which threaten us with their arrest, putting barriers in our way. When Peter reached the iron gate he found it open; when the women reached the sepulchre door they found the stone gone. What an awful indictment against the child of sensual pleasure, “She findeth not the level path of life!”

Proverbs 5:6-21

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

THE LEVEL PATH OF LIFE. HE MAKETH LEVEL ALL HIS PATHS. Proverbs 5:6-21

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Proverbs 6:21

Bind them continually upon thine heart tie them about thy neck.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

If the son addressed here is bidden to thus care for the words of his parents, how much more should we ponder those of God as given us in God’s blessed Book.

When thou walkest, it shall lead thee. — There is a little circle of friends whom I know of who read this book of Proverbs through every month for practical direction on the path of life. A West-countryman said of this collection of wise words, “If any man shall maister the Book of Proverbs, no man shall maister he.” Take for instance the weighty counsels of the first five verses. How many lives would have been saved from bitter anguish and disappointment if only they had been ruled by them! Let every young man also ponder the closing verses. Let us all meditate more constantly on the Word of God.

When thou sleepest, it shall watch thee. — The man who meditates on the Word of God by day will not be troubled by evil dreams at night. Whatever unholy spirits may prowl around his bed, they will be restrained from molesting him whose head is pillowed on some holy word of God. And on awakening, the Angel of Revelation will whisper words of encouragement and love.

And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. — The heart is accustomed to commune with itself about many things, but when the mind is full of God through his Word, it seems as though the monologue becomes a dialogue. To all our wonderings, fears, questionings, answers come back from the infinite glory in words of Scripture. Some wear amulets about their necks to preserve them; but the Word of God is both a safeguard and choice treasure.

Proverbs 7:4

Say unto Wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call Understanding thy kinswoman.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

This wisdom might seem to be too unearthly and ethereal to engage our passionate devotion, unless we remember that she was incarnated in Jesus Christ, who, throughout this book, seems forthshadowed in the majestic conception of wisdom. And who shall deny that the most attractive and lovable traits blended in his matchless character as Son of Man and exalted Redeemer.

With what sensitive purity He bent his face to the ground and wrote on the dust, when her accusers brought to Him a woman taken in the act of sin! With what thoughtfulness He sent word to Peter that he was risen, and provided the meal for his weary and wave-drenched sailor friends on the shores of the lake! With what quick intuition He read Mary’s desire to anoint Him for the burying!

It was this combination of what is sweet in woman and strong in man, which so deeply satisfied men like Bernard, Rutherford, Fénélon, and thousands more, who have been shut out from the delights of human love, but have found in Jesus the complement of their need, the satisfaction of their hunger and thirst. In Him, for them, was restored the vision of the sweet mother of early childhood; of the angel sister who went to be with God; of the early love that was never destined to be realized.

Women find in Jesus strength on which to lean their weakness; and men find in Him the tender; thoughtful sympathy to which they can confidently, entrust themselves. We are born for the infinity and Divine; earthly loves, at their best, are only patterns of things in the heavens. They are priceless; but let us look into them and through them, to behold the unseen and eternal that lie beneath.

Proverbs 8:22

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

This wisdom is not an abstract attribute or quality, but a Person. Whether the ancient writer of these glowing paragraphs realized fully what deep things he was saying when he so depicted her — as one who was brought up with the Father before the world was, as rejoicing in the habitable pans of the earth with the children of men — we cannot positively determine; but we at least may lift the curtain, and see here Christ, who is both the Power and the Wisdom of God. Is not his chosen name the Word of God?

There, in that divine Man, in his gentle love, in his deep and weighty words, in his power to give life to them that find Him, we have the highest embodiment of the wisdom of God, which was before all worlds, and yet stoops to each lowly and obedient heart. It is not enough then for us to seek knowledge and get understanding apart from Jesus; but to seek Him diligently and early, as we are bidden in Proverbs 8:17, sure that when we win Him, we shall possess all the wealth of truth and knowledge that we require for this life and the next. He is the Truth and the Life. Truth apart from Him neither nourishes nor inspires.

Would you know the wisdom of God, then be still in heart, wait before God, quieting all your soul before Him; remember that Jesus is near, waiting, longing to impart Himself. Be not content till you have pressed through the words to the Word, though the Scriptures to Him of whom they testify. His delights are with the sons of men. Nothing will fill Him with greater joy than that we should hear Him, watching daily at his gates, and waiting at the posts of his doors.

Proverbs 9:4, 16

Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

Twice over this invitation is given — first by wisdom, and secondly by the foolish woman. To every young life, in its first setting forth, many voices and inducements speak. Wise, grave voices mingle with siren songs. The strait gate into the narrow way stands side by side with the wide gate that leads into the broad way. The counsels of the fathers lips, the tears and prayers of the mother, amid the enticements of sinners, and the blandishments of the world. Here the true Shepherd, there the hireling; here the true Bride, there the apostate Church; here that which condemns the flesh, there that which takes its side.

Life is full of choices. There is no day without them. We are perpetually being reminded of the way in which the Creator introduced lines of division into his earliest work. For it is thus that He proceeds with the work of the new creation within. Repeatedly we hear his voice as He divides the light from the darkness, calling the one Day and the other Night. Would that we ever acted as children of the Light and of the Day, choosing the one and refusing the other! We are always being exercised in this, and our beat life depends on the keenness and quickness with which we refuse the evil and choose the good

Wisdom appeals to conscience. She says nothing at the outset of the sweetness of her service, or the pleasantness of her paths; but bases her appeal on whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Yet she has rich rewards to those that choose her. Length of days, honour, a heart at leisure from itself, sure satisfaction, the assurance of the favour of God, a sure and certain hope of blessedness for evermore.

Proverbs 10:17

He is in the way of life that heedeth correction.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

It is a wise prayer, “Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment.” Happy is the man whom God correcteth; for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth. Sometimes God corrects us with rebukes, making our beauty to consume away as a moth before the stroke of illness or physical weakness. At other times we are corrected by the faithful rebuke of a friend, or the question of a little child. And yet again, correction comes to us through the sore discipline of having to reap the results of our sine Some heed correction; others resist and refuse it. Many get weary of it, and for their sakes it is written, “We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?”

Do not be weary of God’s correction, my chastened friend. He does not expose you to the searching trial for his pleasure; but for your profit, and that you may be a partaker of his holiness. Heed correction. Ask why it has come, and what it is designed to teach. Set yourself to learn the lesson quickly. Above all, let us heed more carefully God’s Holy Word, which is profitable for correction, as well as for teaching, reproof, and instruction. How often might we have been spared the searching correction of trouble if we had allowed our lives to be pruned by God’s Word!

Our behavior under correction will show whether we are in the Way of Life or not. If the Life of God be truly within us, we will meekly accept and profit by the correction, from whatever source it comes. Otherwise we will murmur and fret, till the wine becomes vinegar, and the milk sour.

Proverbs 11:24

There it that scattereth, and yet increaseth.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

This scattering is a conception borrowed from the husbandman. From out of his barns he takes the precious seed, and scatters it broadcast. The child of the city might wonder at his prodigality, little weaning that each of the scattered seeds may live in a hundred more, and perpetuate itself for successive autumns.

We are bidden to measure our life by its losses rather than by its gains; by the blood poured out, rather than by its storage in the arteries of life; by its sacrifices, rather than its self-preservation; by its gifts, rather than its accumulations. He is the richest man in the esteem of the world who has gotten most; he is richest in the esteem of heaven who has given most.

And it is so ordered that as we give we get. If we miserly hoard the grain, it is eaten by weevils; if we cast it away it returns to us multiplied. Stagnant water is covered with scum; flowing water is fresh and living. He who gives his five barley loaves and two small fishes into the hands of Jesus sees the people fed and gets twelve baskets over. Tell out all you know, and you will have enough for another meal, and yet another. Set no limit to your gifts of money, time, energy; in the act of giving the whole that you have expended will return to you, and mere also. Freely ye have received, freely give; freely give, and freely ye will receive. “He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.... And He that supplieth seed to the sower, and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness, ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality.”

Proverbs 12:13

The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

It has been well remarked that God has set many snares in the very constitution and order of the world for the detection and punishment of evil-doers. Amongst others, is the liar’s own tongue. Watch a criminal trial, and you will find abundant illustrations of this in the detection of a false witness, who makes statement after statement, which are not only inconsistent with truth, but with each other. Presently he comes to a point, where he falls into one of his own lies, which he had forgotten, and lies, floundering like a wild beast in a snare. It is impossible for a liar to imitate the severe and inflexible majesty of truth. In his endeavour to appear true, he will fall into a trap of his own setting.

But whilst the wicked goes into a snare, the righteous shall come out of trouble. It is not said that he will always escape it. Our Master clearly foretold that all lives which were molded on the example of his own would pass through similar experiences. For them also the bitter hatred of the world, the title Beelzebub, and at last the cross. “But the just shall come out of trouble.” It is not possible that we should be holden by it. We belong to Him who has come out of the great tribulation. Just now we may be following the serried ranks down into the heart of the sea, on either hand the heaped-up billows, and the stars bidden by the pale of thundercloud. But He who led us in will lead us out. On yonder bank we shall stand among the victors. That weary hand shall wave the victor’s palm; that tired head shall be crowned with light. Listen to the voices that come from that radiant shore: Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world: and, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Proverbs 13:3a

He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life. (r.v.)

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

What we say influences others, but it has a reflex influence on ourselves. When we speak unadvisedly and impurely, we sow seeds of ill harvests not in others only, but in ourselves, and the very utterance injures us. When, on the other hand, we refuse to give expression to a wrong or unkind thought, we choke and strangle it.

Will each reader and hearer of these words carefully bear this in mind. If you express what is uncharitable or wrong, you gratify the evil nature that is in you, and you strengthen it. If, on the contrary, you refuse to express it, you strike a death-blow at the cursed thing itself. When you guard your mouth you keep your life, because you weaken that which is gnawing insidiously at the root of your life. If there is fire in a room, be sure not to open door or window; for air is its fuel and food. And if a fire is burning within you, be sure not to give it vent. What goes forth from you defiles you. Would you see good days? Refrain your lips from evil.

Perhaps you find yourself unable to guard your mouth. You are only discovering the truth of those terrible words: “The tongue is a fire, the world of iniquity among our members, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire of hell.... The tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” If man cannot tame it, the Savior can. Cry to Him then, saying, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” The fire of God’s love will burn out the fire of hell. Hand the bridle, or rudder, as the apostle James calls it, over to Him.

“Take my lips, and let them be Filled with messages from Thee.”

Proverbs 14:30a

A Tranquil Heart.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

If we would have a tranquil heart, we must resolutely put from us the ambition to get name and reputation among men, to exert wider influence for its own sake, and to amass large accumulation of money. Directly we begin to vie with others, to emulate them, or compare our position and influence with theirs; directly we allow strong desires to roam unchecked through our nature; directly we live on the breath of popular applause, we are like those who step from the pier on a rocking boat — all hope of tranquillity is at an end.

“In God’s will,” Dante said, “is our peace.” When the government is on his shoulder, of its increase and of our peace there is no end. Would you have your peace flow as a river? — then rest in the Lord, be silent unto Him; fret not thyself; turn away from the things that are seen and temporal; set thy face to those that are unseen and eternal. Live in the secret place of the Most High, and hide under the shadow of the Almighty. Say of the Lord that He is thy fortress and high tower. Put God between thyself and everything. Let the one aim of thy life be to please Him, and do the one small piece of work He has entrusted thee with. Look away from all others to Him alone. And learn to look out on others with a tender sympathetic gaze, turning to prayer about them and all things else that might ruffle and sadden. Let all thy requests be made known unto God, so shall his peace keep heart and mind.

“Draw me to Thee, till far within thy rest, In stillness of thy peace, thy voice I hear— For ever quieted upon thy breast, So loved, so near.”

Proverbs 15:3a

The prayer of the upright is his delight.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

We too seldom consider the pleasure that the prayer of his people gives to God. Often we go to Him with no other thought than to find relief from the pressure of anxiety or sin. We hardly realize that He is looking for our coming because He loves us. Thus nothing delights Him more than the time we consecrate for heartfelt fellowship with Him. Think, O child of God, when next the hour of prayer comes round, that God is waiting for you. Would you cause Him disappointment by curtailing it, and by passing cursorily through a form, when He looks for the fellowship of the soul? Remember how Jesus said, “The Father seeketh such to worship Him.”

The prayer which gives God delight is one which is characterized thus:— (1) It must be an identification with the prayer of the Lord Jesus. In Him alone can the Father take delight, and in us only as far as we are in the Beloved, and He in us. (2) We must come in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our lives rid of all known inconsistency and impurity. (3) We must give time for God to speak to us. Rev. Andrew Murray says, “Bow quietly before Him in humble faith and adoration. God is. God is near. God is love, longing to make Himself known.” (4) Lie very low before God. Sink down before Him in the lowest dust of self-abasement, reckoning yourself to be nothing. (5) Present yourself to God that He may fulfil through you his own loving purposes.

In the Book of Revelation, we are bidden to behold the Angel of the Covenant mingling much incense with the prayers of all the saints. That incense is the merit of Jesus, which makes our prayers delightful (Revelation 8:3–5).

Proverbs 16:3

Roll thy works unto the Lord, and thy purposes shall be established.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

There are four matters which we are to roll upon God — ourselves, as the Messiah in Psalm 22; our burden; our way; and here our works. The genesis of Christian work is on this wise. We become conscious of the uprising of a noble purpose. We are not sure at first whether it is of God or not, till we have taken time to subject it to the winnowing fan of his good Spirit. It is always wise to subject it to the fire of his criticism before it takes shape. Even then, however, all is not done. We must submit our plans before they are executed, our methods by which they are being executed, and the results of the execution, to the infinite wisdom of our Heavenly Father.

What a comfort it is to roll our works upon God! That servant of God who is carrying the responsibilities of a vast missionary enterprise! That preacher with his church and organizations! That promoter of philanthropic and ameliorative agencies! Let them roll their works upon God, and be content to take the subordinate place of acting as his agents and executors. The heart will be light, and the hands free, if only we can learn the blessed secret of imposing the responsibility and anxiety of our efficiency, finance, and success on Jehovah. Roll thy works, and see that they do not roll back again. Put on the arrest of faith to make them keep their position. Reckon that God takes what you give; and when you have let your works go, be sure to cast yourself after them on his patient carefulness. Remember that He desires to work in us to will and to work of his good pleasure. Do not worry, nor fret, nor be always looking for results. Do your best, and leave the rest to Him, who is our rearward. He will follow up your efforts and establish the work of your hands.

Proverbs 17:27

He that spareth his words hath knowledge.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

THE a.v. and r.v. marg. suggest a better rendering, “He that hath knowledge spareth his words.” It is a wise thing to say as little as possible to man, and as much as possible to God. The ultimate test of friendship has always seemed to me to be in the ability of true friends to be silent in each other’s presence. In silence we best may open the heart to receive the infillings of the Divine Spirit. When people are always talking to one another, even though they talk about God, they are liable to lose the first fresh sense of God’s presence.

Ordinary conversation greatly weakens character. It is like the perpetual running of a tap which inevitably empties the cistern. It seems to me disastrous when the whole of a summer holiday is spent in contact with friends, however dear, who leave no time for the communing of the soul with itself, nature, and God. We cannot be perpetually in society, speaking to the nearest and dearest, without saying things which will afterwards cause us regret. We shall have spoken too much of ourselves, or too little of Christ, or too much about others; or we shall have allowed the things of the world and sense to bulk too largely. Besides, it is only in silence and thought that our deepest life matures, or the impressions of eternity are realized. If we are always talking, we give no opportunity for the ripening of the soul. Nothing makes the soul more fruitful than to leave it fallow. Who would pick a crop of fruit when first it began to appear on the trees? Live deep. Speak as little as you may. Be slow to speak, and swift to hear.

“Not seldom ceases outward speech awhile,

That the inner, isled in calm, may clearer sound.

Proverbs 18:17

His neighbour cometh and searcheth him out.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

It is easy to boast of what we are or are not; but the real question is as to what others think of us. A Christian lady told me that a little time ago she went to a meeting where one after another arose to say how long they had been without sin. When an opportunity was given, she asked simply if they might be allowed to hear something from those who had lived with the persons that had been so loudly expressing themselves; because she said that she had observed that the opinions of those who shared the same room or home as Christian professors were apt to vary greatly from those of the professors themselves.

It is a grave question for us all — what do our neighbors and associates think of us? Would they credit us with the highest attainments in Christian living? Would they concede the reality and beauty of our characters? After all, may not we be mistaking our ideals for our attainments, and judging ourselves by a lower standard than we apply to others? Might not our wives and sisters, our husbands and brothers, search us! It is so much easier to plead our own cause in a meeting than to stand clear in the searching scrutiny of the home.

And if our neighbors search us, what does God think of us as the fierce light of his eyes scans no and reads our deepest secrets? What should we do were it not for the Blood of Christ? I used to hesitate once to call myself a miserable sinner; but as I know myself better, I begin to feel that it is a reasonable designation. That is what we are by nature, though we have been made by divine grace, children, heirs, joint-heirs with Christ. Job, the righteous man, confessed himself vile when God’s light revealed him.

Proverbs 19:17a

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

What a revolution would be wrought among us if we really believed this! We are glad to lend to our friends in a temporary strait, especially when we know that our money is safe and will come back to us with a substantial increase. To have an I O U is quite sufficient. But in the light of this test we are taught to look on God as the great Borrower. He comes to us, asking that we will lend to Him. In every needy one who deserves our aid the request of the Almighty may be heard asking a loan.

What mistakes we make! We think we keep what we hold and invest well. But we really keep what we give away. The best investments are the heavenly shares and stocks, which are found in the needs and sorrows of the poor. Will you not, my reader, resolve that you will begin to lend to the Lord in the person of those who need your help, whether for their personal necessities or the work in which they are interested? You are called to be a steward of God’s free gifts to you. You must be ready, as his almoner, to deal out his wealth. He will pay you for doing it, by giving you your own present maintenance; and one day He will say, “I was hungry, and you fed Me; thirsty, and you gave Me drink: inherit the place prepared for you.”

Just ponder the magnificence of this promise: “His good deed will He pay him again.” God will never be in your debt. He is exact and punctilious in his repayment. No man ever dared to do his bidding in respect to any case of need, and found himself the poorer. “Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down and running over shall they give into your bosom.” Was not Ruth’s love to Naomi well compensated?

Proverbs 20:27

The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

See that row of unlighted candles, standing in silver sockets, chased and wrought with wondrous skill — such are the souls of men by nature, rich in attainments and generous impulses, highly educated, perhaps, apparently fit for high and glorious work, but they have no light. They are a puzzle to themselves and others. Whilst another, who has none of their powers or advantages, casts a glow on his age, which lingers long after he has gone. He is like a common candle, but lit. The spark from God has ignited his soul.

But remember that while the candle shines with the light of God, it wastes. The slowly-dwindling length shows the amount of the inevitable expenditure. Our Lord said of the Baptist, “He was a burning and shining light.” There must be burning before there can be shining; we must suffer in order to serve. It is good to know this, for it gives purpose to pain. “I cried to Thee, O Lord, and unto Thee I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood?” What profit! If we only knew that, the pain might be borne proudly and lightly. Oh, never dare to think of blessing men, except at a cost of blood and tears, that may seem to thee as a guttering candle, the wax of which is flowing down in trickling streams, or curling up in rugged contortions!

“Therefore, O Lord, I will not fail nor falter. Nay, but I ask it; nay, but I desire— Lay on my lips thine embers of the altar, Seal with the sting, and furnish with the fire.

“Quick in a moment, infinite for ever, Send an arousal better than I pray; Give me a grace upon the faint endeavour, Souls for my hire, and Pentecost to-day.”

Proverbs 21:1

The heart ... as the watercourses. (r.v.)

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

Madame Guyon says that there are three classes of souls that may be compared to rivers flowing towards God as their ocean.

1. Some move on sluggishly and feebly. These are often discouraged, dwell much in the outer and emotional, and fail to seek God with their whole strength.

2. Some proceed decidedly and rapidly. These have large hearts, and are quick in their responses to God’s Spirit.

3. Some press on in headlong impetuosity.

This comparison of our hearts to watercourses filled with torrents from the hills is a very beautiful one, and is capable of great expansion.

Watercourses need fresh supplies of water from the hills: and our hearts are in constant need of freshets from the everlasting fountain of God’s nature.

Watercourses must fulfil their ministry in all weathers: and we must continue patiently in faith and well-doing, whatever be our circumstances or emotions. If we fail, the whole land will be smitten with drought.

Watercourses end in merging their waters with the ocean tides: so God will one day be all in all.

Will you let God lead your heart whither He will? Just as a husbandman will cut watercourses in different directions to conduct the flow of the water, so will you not let God lead your life? You can be a watercourse: He must give the water. Only be content, like the river-bed, to lie deep hidden beneath the waters; not noticed or thanked by those that stoop to drink the refreshing draughts. It is impossible for the water to pass through you without nourishing your own soul.

Proverbs 22:5

Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

This is due to the love of God, shown in the constitution of the world. It would have been malignity indeed to have placed us in the world without the warning signal of pain to show us where we are wrong, and to sting us when we go astray. By the pitiful mercy of our Creator, pain is the inevitable consequence of the breach of physical and moral law; thus men are shown that they are on the wrong path, and driven back in repentance and rectitude. The Greek motto said: “Pain is therefore gain.”

You say that there are many who suffer, who are among the holiest and meekest of mankind; and you wonder how it is that those snares have come so plentifully to their share. But you must remember that though an individual may not have broken the law himself in any special sense, yet he inherits broken law. By virtue of his union with a sinful race he reaps a harvest sown by others’ sins; and by bearing it meekly and lovingly he enters into union with some aspects of the death of Christ, and fills up that which is behind of his sufferings. When wrong is borne sweetly and uncomplainingly, some froward deed that started long before, and had been cursing the world, is for ever arrested and cancelled; as a cannon ball in a bank of sand.

But, in addition, there are some who suffer according to the will of God. Pain, beneath the touch of the Spirit of God, is in the highest degree disciplinary. As the angels watch the result on a soul of God’s sharp ordeal of suffering, they say:

“The keen sanctity, Which with its effluence, like a glory, clothed And circled round the Crucified, has seized And scorched, and shrivelled it”

Proverbs 23:17

Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

I asked a working man the other day how he fared. His wife, the partner of many years, has died, and there is no one to welcome him on his return from work and prepare for him. His fellow-workmen, younger men, delight in tormenting him and increasing his arduous toils, because they hate his simple godliness. A physical weakness grows upon him distressingly. But he said that he was very happy, because he lived in God. All the way along it was Jesus — Jesus when he woke in the morning; Jesus when he went to bed at night; Jesus when he wrote a letter; Jesus when he went to the butcher’s shop to buy his little piece of meat for Sunday-said he, “He made the beasts; He must know what is good to eat.” And when I asked how he managed to maintain this life, he said, “I always ask Him to rouse me up early enough to have a good time in fellowship with the Master.” From the way he spoke, he reminded me of the priest’s portion of the shoulder and breast as symbolizing the strength and love of the Lord Jesus.

If we are in the love of God we shall be in his fear; for though perfect love casts out fear that hath torment, it introduces the fear that dares not cause needless pain to the Infinite Lover of souls. We fear to tear open his wounds again, to expose his heart to the spear-thrust, or to miss aught of his gracious pains to make us what He wants us to become.

“If ye keep my commandments,” the Master said, “ye shall abide in my love.” To abide in his fear is equivalent to abiding in his love. They are two sides of the same coin. Only they love who fear. The woman feared Solomon’s sword, because the babe was her own.

Proverbs 24:11–12

If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death....

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

Christ has greatly added to the convicting power of truth. Before his time men were taught that it was wrong to do wrong; but He taught that it was wrong not to do right. In the Christian church we confess that we have done the things that we ought not to have done — we do this in common with all men that acknowledge the rule of conscience. But we are taught by our Lord, and by such passages as this, to go farther, and confess that we have not done the things that we ought to have done. This is our great and damning crime.

The priest and Levite that did not go to the help of the wounded traveller; the servant who simply did not use the Lord’s money; the nations that did not feed, clothe, or visit Him in the persons of the distressed; the virgins who had not oil in their vessels; the trees that did not bear — these Christ held up to shame and everlasting contempt. We cannot ignore the evil around us, and say we are not responsible for it. We cannot shut our eyes and avert our faces from wrong-doing, and tyranny, and oppression. We cannot profess that it is not our business, whosoever else’s it may be, without it becoming known to the Searcher of all hearts, who will certainly reckon it against us on the day of account. Not to do is to incur Christ’s displeasure.

What a striking illustration is afforded to these words in the Book of Esther! When the young queen was hesitating, Mordecai said very truly: “If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy fathers house shall perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not some to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Proverbs 25:21–22

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

The pagan ideal of a manly life was to succeed in doing as much good to your friends, and as much injury to your enemies, as possible. A few exceptions to this rule are recorded; but the wonder at them proves that the sentiments of forgiveness and mercy were foreign to popular morality and public opinion. How different is the teaching of the Bible! and in this have we not an evidence of its Divine authority? Our Lord went further even than this noble maxim; He said, “Love your enemies, and pray for them which persecute you.”

We are not taught to be entirely indifferent to the moral qualities of actions. The perception of sin and evil is necessary to a holy soul. And it is not required that we should abjure that holy resentment to wrong-doing, to which the apostle alludes when he says, “Be ye angry, and sin not.” We must always resent wrong as wrong, though we must carefully eliminate any vindictive feeling towards the wrong-doer.

Do you think that others have wronged you? Pity them; pray for them; seek them out; show them their fault, humbly and meekly; wash their feet; take the mote out of their eye; seek to restore them in a spirit of meekness, remembering that you may be tempted; heap coals of loving-kindness on their heads; bring them if possible into such a broken and tender frame of mind, that they may seek forgiveness at your hand and God’s. If you cannot act thus with all the emotion you would feel, do it because it is right, and the emotion will inevitably follow. It was said of Archbishop Leighton, that to do him an injury was to secure his lasting friendship.

Proverbs 26:20

For lack of wood the fire goeth out. (r.v.)

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

How simple a parable! Of course it must be so. As soon as a fire has reached the end of the material on which it fed, it expires.

This is true of the fire of slander. As long as there is an ear to receive, and a tongue to pass on, some piece of malicious slander will continue to circulate. But directly it reaches a hearer who will not whisper it forward, in that direction at least its progress is arrested. Why do you not adopt this role, and urge others to do so? Hear if you must the whisper of the slanderer; but let it stop with you, locked in the secret of your own breast. You may be voted rather uninteresting and stupid by a certain society which thrives in whispered calumnies; but you will save many a heart from being torn and lacerated by unkindness and falsehood.

How graphic that word “whisperer” is! People always tell you to be sure not to tell; it is a way they have, though they do not expect you for a moment to keep the story to yourself. It is the kiss under which they betray. Always tell them that you refuse to be an accomplice in evil. If there is a wrong concerning which you must neither take action nor speak, you had better not defile your ears with it.

This is true of the fire of the Holy Ghost. You must feed it by your loving obedience, your study of the Word of God, your faith and prayer. Yield yourself more entirely to his possession. Let your spirit, soul, and body, your every act and desire, be as fuel to the Spirit of God. Pile up the wood of continual sacrifice and self-surrender, till the Divine fire reaches out its hands toward heaven. Even though the wood, like Elijah’s, be drenched with water, God’s fire will conquer!

Proverbs 27:7

The full soul loatheth an honeycomb.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

Honey was not used in sacrifices made by fire unto the Lord. Its luscious taste may have made it an emblem of the pleasures of the world. As bees roam from flower to flower, sipping nectar here and there, so does the heart of the worldling roam over the world for satisfaction; settling nowhere for long, but extracting sweets from a variety of attractive sources.

The best way of combating worldliness is by satisfying the heart with something better. The full soul loatheth even the honeycomb. When the prodigal gets the fatted calf, he has no further hankering after the husks which the swine eat. The girl who gets real jewels throws away her shams; and the child who has become a man has no taste for childish toys that once seemed all-important. This is the meaning of the old proverb: Love God, and do as you like. Whenever the spirit of worldliness gets into a congregation, you may be sure that the teaching has been defective, and that souls have not been made to sit at the rich banquet of the Divine providing.

We are reminded of the words which the psalmist applied to the Word of God: “Sweeter than honey, or the honeycomb.” Fill your heart with God and his sacred truth, and the things of the world will lose their charm. Do you know this absorbing love of Jesus? We can at least choose to know it, and present ourselves to the Holy Spirit, that He may shed it abroad in our hearts. Oh to be full! Full of the more abundant life of which the Lord spoke, of the unspeakable joy, of the peace that passeth understanding — in a word, of Jesus, as the chief and best.

Proverbs 28:13a

He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper. (r.v.)

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

There must be confession before forgiveness. This is clearly taught everywhere in God’s Word. “If thy brother trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times a day turn to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” But he must turn and say, I repent. This is the clear condition. You may and must use every method of inducing him to say this; but he must be brought to say it, before it is right to pronounce the gracious formula of absolution. There may be the disposition to forgive, but there cannot be the declaration of forgiveness, until the wrongdoer perceives the wrong and expresses his regret and sorrow.

The prodigal must say to his father, “I have sinned.” It is only as we confess our sins, that our merciful High Priest can forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Confession is to take God’s side against sin. It is the lifting out of one thing after another from heart and life, and holding them for a moment before God, with the acknowledgment that it is our fault, our grievous fault.

There is only one way in which transgressions can be covered: that of which the psalmist speaks, when he says, Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered, because hidden under the propitiation of the blood. In Hood’s poem, Eugene Aram sought to cover his sin under the leaves of the forest, and beneath the waters of the river. But in vain. So sinners try to cover their sins in vain. But God hath set forth Christ Jesus to be a propitiation — a word which denotes the mercy-seat — the lid that covered the stone slabs on which the finger of God had written the Law.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no vision.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

What a difference it makes to our teaching and preaching where there is no vision! The people perish for want of seers of those who can say with the apostle, “That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you also, that ye may have fellowship with us.” It is not difficult to know whether a poet or painter has a vision. If he have, there is glow and passion in his work. And it is not more difficult to detect in the accent of the speaker on divine things, whether he is speaking at secondhand, or as the result of direct vision.

This vision of God was vouchsafed to Moses and Elijah and the apostle Paul. Concerning the latter God said, “He shall be a minister and a witness of things which he has seen.” This is our only qualification for teaching others; not intellect, nor imagination, nor rhetoric, but to have seen the King and beheld the pattern on the mount. For such a vision, on our part, there must be humility, patience, and faith, a definite withdrawal from the life of sense, and a definite fixedness of gaze on the things that are unseen and eternal. But on God’s part there must be revelation. “It pleased God,” said the apostle, “to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach Him.”

The apostle said, “I could not see for the glory of that light.” A party of tourists was divided one dull morning in Switzerland; the majority thought that it was useless to attempt the mountains. A few started, soon got beyond the low-hanging clouds, spent a day in the heights under marvellous skies, and returned at night, radiant, and overflowing with what they had seen. Ah, speaking is easy when one has seen!

Proverbs 30:8a

Feed me with the food that is needful for me. (rv)

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

God knows what you need for the maintenance of physical life and strength. The body is more than meat, and to have given you this is a pledge that He will give you that. The body is the vehicle and organ of the soul; and since God has given such a wonderful instrument into your custody, He is bound as need arises to furnish needful supplies. He could not expect that you should do what He has arranged should be done in your life, without providing for the repair and maintenance of the wonderful machine through which alone your life-plan can be realized. Trust in his faithfulness. He cannot deny Himself.

But there is other food which is needful. The daily bread of love, of hope, of holy thought, and fellowship. There is other hunger than that of the body. But this also will be provided, according as each day requires. If the human fails, the Divine will take its place, and God Himself will become the complement of your need. The Chinese Christians often put on the gravestones of their cemeteries the words, “They shall hunger no more,” in allusion to the idea of the Confucians that children must constantly be sending on supplies to maintain their ancestors. And may we not say, with unwavering certainty, of those who have learnt to be satisfied with God, “They shall hunger no more”?

Notice the alternative rendering of the rv, “The bread of my portion.” In God’s granaries there is our share of corn already calculated for and provided. Let us ask for and claim it. We have no wish to have more than our share, or to despoil others. As Jesus said, Give us each day the day’s supply. O happy child of the great Father, his hired servants have enough and to spare; there is plenty for thee!

Proverbs 31:11a

The heart of her husband doth safely trust to her.

This alphabetical poem to godly womanhood is one of the gems of Old Testament Scriptures. It should be read from the r.v., that its significant and beautiful touches may be appreciated. Clearly the Hebrew woman was held in high honour, and had as much freedom of action as she enjoys in Christian countries. Herein the contrast was very marked, as against the women of other Oriental nations. But in the whole delineation there is hardly any trait more beautiful than this — absolute trustworthiness. You can see the pair together: the husband comes in from sitting among the elders, his heart weighted with affairs of state, and he seeks her confidence and advice. He has no fear of her betraying his secrets. He can safely trust her.

This surely is the most sacred joy a woman can have. To be consulted, to be trusted, to share the common toils and responsibilities. Who would not work willingly with her hands, and rise while yet night, and engage in ceaseless toils, if only she had the inspiration that trust brings!

“If then your future life should need

A strength my love can only gain

Through suffering — or my heart be freed

Only by sorrow from some stain,

Then you shall give, and I will take

This Crown of fire for Love’s dear sake.”

Can Christ, in like manner, safely trust us? (John 2:24, r.v.). Can He trust us with his secrets, his interests, his money? Abraham was one whom God could safely trust, and He did trust him as his friend: “Shall I hide from Abraham,... for I have known him?” It is required of us also that we be absolutely trustworthy.

**÷c04 Ecclesiastes**

Ecclesiastes 1:7

All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full.

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

The complaint of this chapter is the tiresome monotony of existence. Always the same tedious routine! The jaded soul of the worldling, who has put God out of his life, sees nothing fresh or interesting anywhere, and yawns with weariness. King Solomon had everything that the world could give to make his years rich, glad, and useful. But his heart turned away from God to things, from the only true God to idols, from the spiritual to the sensual, from heaven to earth; and he became a jaded voluptuary, who records his experiences on these pages, to warn coming generations. His words remind us of Byron’s lament at his life being in the sere and yellow leaf; of the closing sentence of “Vanity Fair”; and of entries in the journals of the world’s greatest wits and courtiers.

All the rivers of earthly joy may be flowing into your heart, but they will never fill it. They may recede, or dry up, or ebb; but if not, still they will never satisfy. The pleasures of this world after a while become monotonous, and pall on our taste. The appetite grows with its food. But in Christ there is perennial interest. The water that He gives rises up to eternal life. In his love and service there is always satisfaction and blessedness. We need not go outside of Him for new delights; and to know Him is to possess a secret which makes all things new.

I know of a gentleman, who has everything that wealth can give, but who is kept in a perpetual state of irritation, because he cannot eradicate the daisies from his lawn. There is a freckle on every flower, a stain on every leaf, a drawback in every lot, that we may be driven to find perfect fruition in God only.

Ecclesiastes 2:23

All his days are but sorrows, and his travail is grief. (r.v.)

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

What a glimpse this is into a heart that has put God out! Solomon’s power turned away his heart, so that he was not perfect with God, as David, his father. He drifted from God; and plunged into pleasure and laughter; into building and planting; into the pursuit of science and learning. “Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. And, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind” (r.v.). Nothing can satisfy us but God. We were made for Him; and the heart, as Augustine says, must be for ever restless till it finds rest in Him. Thus the shell, brought home from the sea-shore and placed on the shelf, sighs each time you place it to your ear for the ocean whence it came.

We have no need to envy those who prosper in this world, but are without God, and without hope. Their days are sorrows, and their travail is grief, and at night their hearts take no rest. But if we are to avoid their inward anguish, we must avoid their fatal mistake, and learn to take God into our lives. The river of life, which is the Holy Spirit, flows at our feet; but we must stoop to take it freely.

Dr. Gordon records the story of a traveller in Barbary, who saw a beautiful clear spring of water, over which was inscribed the legend; “Drink, and be gone.” Robbers infested the region, and were constantly on the track of the traveller, ready to waylay and rob him. Therefore he must snatch the cooling draught and hasten on. Shall we refuse ourselves all pleasure in this world? Shall we write Touch not on every innocent gratification? No; but as soon as we have tasted of the pleasant draught, and lingered long enough to refresh our jaded souls, to hasten to life’s serious tasks.

Ecclesiastes 3

He hath set eternity in their heart. - Ecclesiastes 3:11

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

The Preacher has been enumerating the various extremes and alternatives of existence, and the natural conclusion might seem to be that since each neutralizes the other, it might be as well for a man to do nothing at all. But a deeper thought is suggested. Man is greater than the changes around him; he has eternity in his heart, and therefore all the varied circumstances of human life resemble the wheels of some great machine, the cogs of which turn in different directions, but the effect is a forward motion, and the manufacture of a fabric that will outlive the machinery that made it. We are greater than circum stance, or change, or things. We have the capacity for the Eternal and Infinite. As the sea-shell sighs for the ocean, so our hearts cry out, though sometimes inarticulately, for God, for the living God. Christ said that foxes have holes and the birds their nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head; and this is true in another sense. The noblest men are those least able to rest anywhere short of God.

God made man in his own image; and nothing more surely attests the greatness of our origin than those faculties of the soul which are capable of yearning for, conceiving, and enjoying the Infinite, the Immortal, and the Divine. And every appetite in nature and grace has its appropriate satisfaction.

Let us come to Him who has the words of eternal life, who is Himself the Bread that endureth unto eternal life. He that cometh to Him shall never hunger; he that believeth in Him shall never thirst.

“Here would we end our quest; Alone are found in Thee The life of perfect bliss — the rest Of immortality.”

Ecclesiastes 4:1

Behold, the tears of such as were oppressed.

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

“Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers, Ere the morrow comes with years? They are leaning their young heads against their mothers, But that cannot stop their tears. The young lambs are bleating in the meadows; The young birds are chirping in the nest; The young fawns are playing with the shadows; The young flowers are blowing toward the west— But the young, young children, O my brothers, They are weeping bitterly! They are weeping in the playtime of the others, In the country of the free.”

It is a sad, sad world, and perhaps must get sadder yet. It may be that we have not yet reached the darkest hour. Oh the tears of the oppressed; the tiny children; the terror-stricken fugitives from the Turk, the European trader, and the drunken tyrant of the home! Through all the centuries tears have flowed, enough to float a navy.

There need be no difficulty in accounting for them. Our race has elected the service of sin and self. Turning our back on God, for whom we were made, we have turned every one to our own way, and are inheriting the ancient curse of travail, tears, thorns, and death. It is quite true that many suffer innocently and vicariously, because we are members one of another; and by the mysterious arrangement of the Almighty the whole race is bound together by mysterious but indissoluble cords. In Adam all die, all suffer, all sorrow and weep, just as in Christ shall all be made alive. The pain must last, till the Stronger than the strong comes to divide the spoils, and met the captives free.

How comforting it is to realize that God knows our sorrows, puts our tears into his bottle, is afflicted in all our affliction. and bears us on his heart.

Ecclesiastes 5:1

To draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools. (r.v.)

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

This is certainly half of our business, when we kneel to pray. It is a drawing nigh to hear. One has truly said that the closet is not so much an oratory, in the narrow sense of making requests, as an observatory, from which we get new views of God, and new revelations of Him.

We are all inclined to be rash with our mouth. We rush into the presence of God, leave our card as on a morning call, and then plunge into the eager rush of our life. We have spoken to Him, but not stayed to hear what He would say in reply. We have suggested many things to Him, but have not sought for his comments, or suggestions, in return. We do not take time to fix the heart’s gaze on the unseen and eternal, or to abstract our mind from the voices of the world, so as to hear the still small voice that speaks in silence and solitude.

“Only the waters which in perfect stillness lie Give back an undistorted image of the sky.”

Keep thy foot; take off the shoes from thy feet, when entering the Presence-chamber, whether alone or with others. Walk warily and reverently; behold He is near, before whom angels veil their faces with their wings. Come into his presence with holy fear. Let there be no irreverence in demeanor. One writes of the late Mr. Gladstone, “The House of God seemed to be to him at all times just what its name implied; and it is impossible to think of him at any service missing a response, or forgetting ax ‘Amen.’ Devotion, earnestness, and concentrated attention were the regular attributes of his nature when engaged in worship. He realized in the simplest fashion that worship was communing with God.”

Ecclesiastes 6:1

Under the sun.

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

The Preacher constantly refers to what is done under the sun; and is not this the clue to so much that is puzzling in this book? If your horizon is limited to what the sun shines on, it is impossible to get the true standpoint of vision, or discover the real policy of life. If this world and the time-day are all, we are entangled in an inexplicable maze. It is impossible to believe in the existence of a benign and wise Creator unless there is more than we can see, larger than we can grasp. We have no choice but blank materialism, unless we believe there is some one and something over and above the sun, and that the sun and his attendant train of worlds is but a speck in the vastness of his existence.

O Christian soul, let you and me get beyond the sun, which one day will be no more, to the Lord, who is an everlasting light. Let us sit with Him in the heavenlies, and thence look down upon man and his little life. What inconsiderable atoms do kings and empires appear; even our affliction seems to be but light, and for a moment! Not on this side of the sun, but on that lies our true portion and home, our enduring substance.

In order to live as we should, the sun must be under our feet, a position which is only possible to those who are in Christ Jesus. “I knew a man in Christ,” says the Apostle, “caught up into the third heaven, and he heard unspeakable things.” Would you be unworldly, seek to become other worldly. Do you want the sun to grow dim? — ask for the light which is above the brightness of the sun.

Set your affections on those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

Ecclesiastes 7

By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made glad. - Ecclesiastes 7:3

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

Who does not know that our most sorrowful days have been amongst our best? When the face is wreathed with smiles, and we trip lightly over meadows bespangled with spring flowers, our heart is often running to waste. The soul which is always blithe and gay misses the deepest life. It has its reward, and it is satisfied to its measure, though that measure is a very scanty one. But the heart is dwarfed, and the nature, which is capable of the highest heights, the deepest depths, is undeveloped; and life presently burns down to its socket without having known the resonance of the deepest chords of joy. “Blessed are they that mourn.”

Stars shine brightest in the long dark nights of winter. The gentians show their fairest bloom amidst almost inaccessible heights of snow and ice. God’s promises seem to wait for the pressure of pain to trample out their richest juice as in a wine-press. Sorrow brings us nearest to the Man of Sorrows, and is the surest passport to his loving sympathy. Only those who have sorrowed know how tender his comfort can be. It is only as the door shuts upon the joys of the earth that the window is opened to the blessedness of the unseen and eternal. Let sadness cover your face, Jesus will enter the heart, and make it glad, for the days in which you have been afflicted, and the years in which you have seen evil.

Is your face sad? Are you passing through bitter and trying experiences? Be of good cheer. Out of the sorrows that make the face sad will come ultimate joy. This affliction is working out afar more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And the day is not distant when God will wipe tears from off all faces.

Ecclesiastes 8:4

The King’s word hath power. (r.v.)

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

When our King speaks it is done. He spoke in creation, and power went with his word to call all things out of nothing. He spoke in his earthly ministry, and power accompanied every word, in giving eyes to the blind and life to the dead. He spoke, and the paralyzed had power to walk. He spoke, and the winds dropped, whilst the tumultuous waves were hushed to rest. He spoke, and men knew their sins were forgiven, to be remembered against them no more for ever. He spoke, and the dying thief passed into Paradise.

Whatever He bids you do by his word, be sure that He will enable you to do it by his power. He works in us to will and to work of his good pleasure; that is, He never directs us in any path of obedience or service without furnishing a sufficient supply of grace. Does He bid you renounce some evil habit? The power to renounce it awaits you. Claim it. Does He bid you walk on the water! The power by which to walk only waits for you to claim it. Does He bid you perform irksome duty? There is such transforming power issuing from Him as to make duty a delight, if only you will avail yourself of it. Whenever you are called to stand up to speak the word of your King, be sure to seek and obtain the power — that shall prove your best credential. Take the power of the King with you: it is his signet-ring, by which men will be convinced that you have been entrusted with his word.

“Sustain me, that with Thee I walk these waves Resisting! — Breathe me upward, Thou in me Aspiring, Who art the Way, the Truth, the Life— That no Truth henceforth seem indifferent, No Way to Truth laborious, and no Life, Not even this life I live, intolerable!”

Ecclesiastes 9

The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. - Ecclesiastes 9:11

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

This is true in another sense than the Preacher meant. His conclusion was that time and chance happen to all alike in the race and battle of life. To no it means that God comes to those who are not swift, but, like Mephibosheth, lame on both feet, and gives them the prize which they could not win; that He bends over those who are not strong, and gives them the victory which they could not procure. The Gospel is full of promise to younger sons, bruised reeds, lame and helpless souls, to babes and sucklings, to those that have no might; whilst it hides its secrets from the wise and prudent, and withholds its rewards from the swift and strong.

You are not swift. Long ago the spring was taken from your life, and the elasticity from your feet. For many years you have lain by the Beautiful Gate, seeing the happy souls pass to the inner shrine, and coming out entranced. You have been content to live on their alms. But better things are in store. He who knows your case will even now give you perfect soundness Though you cannot win the prize of your high calling by running, it shall be yours by receiving and taking. It is a gift; and though you have not legs you have surely hands.

You are not strong. But it is well. Many of us are too strong for God. He has to weaken us by touching the sinew of our thigh. When Jacob went from fighting to clinging, he became a prince with God. Isaiah left it on record that God gives power to the faint, and increases might to those who have no power. And the great Apostle of the Gentiles gloried in his infirmities, because he had discovered that when he was weak then he was strong, since the power of Christ was only perfected in weakness.

Ecclesiastes 10

If one do not whet the edge, then must be put to more strength. - Ecclesiastes 10:10

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

If this is true, as we know it is, may we not often use it as an appeal to God? There are times with all who work for God, when they are blunt, through much usage. The brain is blunt, and cannot think. The heart is blunt, and cannot feel. The voice is blunt, and has lost its ringing note. How often the evangelist, towards the end of a series of services, feels blunt! Sometimes also there are private sorrows, of which we cannot speak, which take off the edge. At all such times let us turn to God and say, “Put in more strength. Let thy power be magnified in my weakness. Give more grace, so that thy work shall not suffer.” I suppose Paul meant this when he said that he gloried in infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Surely more work is done by a blunt edge and Divine power, than by a sharp edge and little power.

This, however, does not justify us in seeking to be blunt. And when we are conscious that the edge is going off, it becomes us to seek a fresh whetting. The time is not lost in the harvest-field when the reapers whet their scythes with musical tinkle. A day in the country or a week by the seaside are very pleasant whetstones. Solomon says that friendship, the face of a friend, will sharpen a blunt edge; and full often we have been sharpened and quickened by seasons of holy fellowship. But after all, nothing gives us such a keen edge as the devotional perusal of the Divine Word. Let us appropriate the words of the prophet, and each one ask to be made a new sharp threshing-instrument having teeth, that we may thresh the mountains, and make them small, and give our God as little anxiety as possible.

Ecclesiastes 11

In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand. - Ecclesiastes 11:6

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

We are all tempted to look too much to the winds and clouds. We study the faces of people, their moods and circumstances, and say, “It is not a favorable time to approach them about their souls. He does not look to be a likely case, or in a likely mood.” But how do we know? If we are always waiting for favoring conditions, we shall resemble the farmer who is ever looking out for perfect weather, and lets the whole autumn pass without one handful of grain reaching the furrows; or who is always studying the clouds, seeking for a spell of hot summer weather; and presently the chance is gone, and the crop lost.

In fact, we can never tell what God is doing in the secrets of the heart. He may have been prosecuting his deep and wise designs with the souls that appear most untoward and unprepossessing. He may have led them to such a point that they are most eagerly yearning for the hand to lead them into the light. The eunuch in his chariot, might not, from a distance, have seemed specially ripe for the Christian evangelist; but, on coming near, he was discovered to be an enquirer. Saul of Tarsus was the least likely man in all Palestine to be a Christian; but God had been at work with him. Let us dare then to trust God, not looking for winds or sunshine, but scattering everywhere the precious seed of the Gospel.

“Say not, the struggle naught availeth, The labour and the wounds are vain; The enemy faints not, nor faileth, And as things have been things remain.

“For while the tired waves, vainly breaking, Seem here no painful inch to gain, Far back, through creeks and inlets making, Comes silent, flooding in, the main.”

Ecclesiastes 12

The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words. - Ecclesiastes 12:10

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

The wise preacher or teacher is not content with merely teaching the people knowledge, he will ponder and seek out and set in order the lessons of Divine wisdom; and when these are settled, he will go on to find out acceptable words. We must be careful to secure the “apples of gold,” and no less careful to place them in the “pictures of silver.” Not that we are to make beauty of language an object in itself; but having conceived high and holy thoughts we should give them a worthy expression, so that the Royal word may ride forth in a becoming equipage. It is unfit that the vessels of the sanctuary should be carried only in badger skins; their first covering at least must be “all of blue.” If we are stewards in God’s household to give his children food, let us serve it up suitably. The linen should be clean, and the table garnished.

Remember, however, that the words of the wise are as goads and nails. They must have points, sometimes to prick to duty, at other times to stick fast in the memory. In every sermon or lesson there should be points. To arrest and compel attention is more important than to please the ear. Do not refine and beautify it to such an extent that there may be nothing left to stir the conscience and lacerate the heart.

Words that best fit the enunciation of God’s truth are given from the One Shepherd. We are enriched by Him, not only in all knowledge but in all utterance. He who made the mouth can put his words into the mouth. Ask Him to speak to you, that you may speak in accents borrowed from his tone; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.