

*A Day In The  
Lord's Court*

**J.B.Chapman**

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In the Lord's Court*

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By J. B. Chapman, D.D.,



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## *Getting Ready to Leave*

It is now seven o'clock. But we have been working definitely already for more than an hour "getting ready to leave." In fact we have been talking of our journey and making general preparations for it for a good many days. But the word is that we are to start this morning "sometime between nine and ten." So we are putting the last things into our bags, putting the things we are to leave behind in their places, and getting all the details in shape. Our plan is to be ready early, then, if there is a little time of waiting, we will not be disturbed or hurried. We must arrange our affairs so that those who come after us can find things, and know what to do. And we must take with us, not only the things we may need on the journey, but things that will be of value to us at our destination. There is no loud talking about the place this morning. All are serious and busy. Moreover, we are solicitous for others, as well as for ourselves, and ever and anon, we ask, "Did you lock the windows on the sun porch?" or "Are you sure you put your hymn book into the brief case?" For our own preparedness includes the preparedness of those who are to travel with us.

But in the little intermission between the first of the morning's duties and the final things yet left

to do, I have been thinking of that other long journey. Of course we have been on that journey ever since we were born. But much of the time we have not been fully aware. And always we have been approaching the final stage of that journey—the stage marked by the lifting of the anchor that we may sail to the other side of the sea. We are nearer that port of embarkation now than we ever have been before, and in the words of the old hymn, “We may be nearer now than we think.” What folly it would be not to “get ready”! Our fathers were wise when they spoke of “getting ready to die.” We of the present generation, in our fight against pessimism, have tabooed talk of death. But why should we? The journey we are about to start this morning is a serious, but not a sad adventure. Why should that other one be different? Today, tomorrow, and the other days of our current journey promise surprises and things of interest that make us “look ahead,” knowing always that life is monotonous only to the dull. Why then should we not lean to the things of the long-reaching future, not only with courage, but with happy anticipation? The light at the river of death! The glory of Christ’s second advent! The first glimpse of “the city four-square”! The home eternal! Ah, yes, “We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Let us get ready for the journey hither.

## *Going Home with Jesus*

*They said unto him, Rabbi, . . . where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day (John 1:38-39).*

There is no better single word by which a universal characteristic of man can be described than that word *homeless*, and no word has a more universal appeal than the word *home*. "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." But houses and furniture and food and all material appointments do not make home. Home implies companionship and love and compatibility. The home is older than the church or the state, and is the best picture of heaven that the earth can afford.

A wayside sign reads: "Christian homes are happy homes," and it may be said in truth that Christian homes are the only truly happy homes; for all human companionship and love and compatibility are sanctified and multiplied by the presence of Christ, who is himself "a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," whose love "never faileth," and whose very name is "Prince of Peace." No home is poor any longer after Christ comes into it to abide, for the glory of His presence transforms the hovel into a palace—"Where Jesus is 'tis heaven there."



Happy and wise are they who say to Jesus Christ, "Abide with us."

But think of going home with Jesus! Think of sitting at the table where He is the host! Think of abiding in the Lord's house forever! "Master, where dwellest thou?" The kindly response is, "Come and see." And any who stop to look, as did those disciples of John, are sure to abide with Him, for what they see has supreme appeal, and the greatest of all is the beauty of His own person. "To the lovely face of Jesus, nothing ever can compare."

In the morning, after a night spent with the Master, the wondering disciples went out to call their friends, and to say, "We have found the Christ." When any hesitated, the argument was, "Come and see." They learned this from the Lord. There is a standing challenge in the words, "Wisdom is justified of all her children." That is, all who know the Lord love and adore Him. "Whosoever will, let him come." And let him come with the assurance that he will be received, pardoned, cleansed and relieved, and that thereafter he will ask for no greater boon than to be permitted to "dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

## *The Young May, the Old Must*

A recent news item told of a ninety-three-year-old father who "worked against" his two life-insurance-agent sons by calling upon their companies to pay him the amounts due on his policies, seeing he had lived beyond all their calculating tables and was supposed to be dead. But the story serves to remind us that some time between our present age and ninety-three we shall all, except one in a million, be dead. Our chance for living to be ninety-three is such a narrow one that we may as well discount it entirely, and conclude that we have left to us on earth no more time than yet remains to us before reaching that age. I am sixty-one, so I may as well plan definitely to conclude my life's pilgrimage in not more than thirty-two additional years.

But on the other hand, the young too may die. So while there is a ceiling on life's tenure, there is no floor for any of us. It is trite to say, any of us may die today, but it is well to think it often for our own benefit.

Tolstoy tells of a man who fled from a tiger, leaped into a dry well to escape it, laid hold upon a shrub which grew from the wall and held fast; looking down, the man saw a mad dragon at the bottom waiting to devour him whenever he should fall. The man determined to hold fast as long as possible; but

just then he discovered two mice, one a black mouse, the other a white mouse, gnawing at the roots of the herb. Still the man could not loosen his grasp to drive the mice away. This is a picture of the plight of those who have hope only in this life.

A Salvation Army officer tells of a woman who was the victim of a wasting disease. But she was strong willed, and determined she would not die. However, at the end, propped up on pillows, she used up her last breath laboriously saying, "I will not die," and thus passed on into the valley of the unseen.

The old must die, the young may die, and there is no escape for any. There is therefore only one wise thing to do, and that is to get right with God now, live the Christian life every day and hour, and keep in such condition of preparedness as to be able to say with St. Paul: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

## *I Must Wait Until I Am Ready*

The camp meeting management had not expected me until the next day. My early and unexpected arrival caused a mild flurry. Someone had to be moved from his quarters a day earlier than had been planned, and a number of special orders had to be issued and carried into effect. As I waited about in more or less restless mood I was reminded of the song which gathers about the refrain, "Angels get my mansion ready, I am coming home," and at first thought I was comforted and a little cheered. But on further thought my parable of comparison gave way to a parable of contrast. I have no idea but that my place in heaven is quite ready enough, and that I should be happy with it just as it is forevermore. Why, then, I asked myself, am I not invited to come at once to the Father's House? And the answer in my inner consciousness was this: the mansion is ready for you, but you are not yet ready for it. There is something yet that trial and test and temptation and prayer and worship and service and divine love and holy living can do for you, and when these processes are sufficiently finished, you will be ready, and then you will be called.

And so today I find that I am in no mood to pray the angels to hasten work on my mansion. Rather I pray the God of grace to hasten, if such a

thought is permissible, the preparation of my heart and life that I may be ready for that mansion and prepared for the companionship of saints and angels as I shall know it there. It savors of pride for me to suppose that I am kept here only for the small measure of good I can do. This, and in addition to this, no doubt, I am kept here that the processes of grace may bring me into more complete harmony with that blessed land for which my spirit sighs. His mercy has brought me a free pardon, His love has expelled every base affection and enabled me to love Him with all my heart. But at most I can compare myself only with the fruit that hangs immature and green upon the tree. I need growth and I need mellowing, and perhaps the twilight of a world of probation is better suited to the processes I require than the blazing sunlight of the Celestial City would be. There is therefore nothing I can do that is better than to lift up my heart to Him today with the prayer, O Lord Divine, transform me more completely into the image of the heavenly, and give me that readiness that shall make my entrance into heaven but the consummation of the product of Thy mercy and grace; for I believe that when I am ready, with the readiness that pleases Thee, I shall come into my house made without hands.

## *Other-Worldly Mindedness*

Alexander the Great is a striking example of those whose whole heart is upon the present world. He abandoned himself to the search for worldly honors and riches and to the pleasures of the flesh. He died from the effects of debauchery, but not until he had given the world its most notable example of insatiable craving for the things of this world of "time and sense."

Diogenes, the philosopher, saw the folly of such a course as Alexander pursued and he adopted the theory that life's chief good can be found not by attempting to satisfy desire but by suppressing and finally destroying it. Diogenes was in some particulars the antipode of Alexander, but in another way, he was but a step—a short step—removed from him. His position was a negative one. He was not worldly minded for he was not minded at all. The practical result was that he sat with unwashed person in his filthy tub and lazily allowed matters to take their course without suffering himself to hold any preference as to the way in which they would finally come out.

But the true opposite of Alexander is found in men like the Apostle Paul, who did not only renounce the course of the present world seeker and conqueror, but who also went beyond the negative

position of Diogenes on into the realm of "Other-Worldly Mindedness." With men like this, riches or poverty, fame or ignominy, pleasure or suffering, life or death were and are but incidents—passing, casual incidents—in a life that is to last forever and which reserves its principal prizes for the sector which begins at death.

Alexander loved and enjoyed today as the only day that is worth while; Diogenes discounted today as being, like all others, more trouble than its joys are worth, while Paul accepted today as a matter of course, neither thinking too much or too little of it, but wearing it like a loose-fitting garment, willing to keep it or ready on the shortest notice to lay it down. With those of Alexander's class, today is all, with those of Diogenes' class, no day is worth while; with those of Paul's class today is valuable as the seed corn of tomorrow's harvest and as the training school for heaven's everlasting bliss.

## *Today, Tonight and Tomorrow*

Last night I thought of the whole of human existence with all its appurtenances as constituting the theater of God. Time is the dressing room, eternity is the real stage of action, and death is the door which opens between the dressing room and the stage. Out there in the auditorium are God and men and angels and all created intelligences, constituting the "so great a cloud of witnesses," which now and hereafter does and shall compass us about.

Our thoughts should dwell much upon the debut which we must sometime make, and most solemnly should we ask and answer for ourselves the question, "Where shall I spend eternity?"

It is well, also, that we should look soberly upon that door which hides us as yet in the dressing room from the gaze of at least some out there in the grand theater itself. We know not how soon that door shall swing aside and we shall be presented to those who wait out there. We need, then, often and earnestly to pray, "Prepare me, Lord, to die."

Yet we must not permit eternity's immensity to paralyze, or death's imminence to appall, so that we shall squander time. For the peace which we shall possess while passing through the door, and the showing we shall make upon the stage beyond, de-



pend upon the care with which we fit ourselves while yet in the dressing room.

Living grace becomes dying grace, without any effort on the part of its possessor, whenever the door between the dressing room and the stage opens, and the same becomes glory when the rays of fadeless light which emanate from the throne of God and of the Lamb fall full-orbed upon it in "The City Foursquare."

Life, death and eternity! What solemn thoughts these words inspire! And these all are so closely related that they can but affect or be affected by one another. Life is today, death is tonight, eternity is tomorrow. Day stands for labor, night for rest, and tomorrow for rewards. But without labor there can be neither rest nor reward. "Work while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." And to do the work of God means, primarily, to definitely and continuously believe on Him whom God has sent to be the Saviour of the world. The stage is set, the door is about to swing ajar, are you dressed and ready for the great debut?

## *The Invited Guest*

At least twice in the scriptural record Jesus was prevailed upon to stop, when it appeared He would pass right by. Once it was a dark and stormy night, the little ship wherein the disciples were seemed likely to capsize. The Master appeared "walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them" (Mark 6:48), but the men in distress "cried out"; and even though their cry was more of fear than of faith, "immediately he talked with them and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." The other time, after the resurrection, Jesus walked with the two on the road to Emmaus, and upon reaching their house, "made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; . . . . And he went in to tarry with them" (Luke 24:28, 29).

We may not know whether the Master would have stopped, had He not been invited. What we do know is that He accepted the invitations and came. And what we know still further is that He comes to us now when we invite Him; and our invitation is not to be casual, but earnest and insistent. It is not enough that we should raise no objection to His coming. It is not enough that we should say, "Come sometime when it is convenient." Our cry must be real and insistent: Master,

come and abide with me! We cannot induce Him by offers of affluence—He has no need that looks to us for supply. We can induce Him only by the warmth of our welcome. He passes by the palace where the door is closed to enter the cottage where the welcome is wide.

Once the disciples were pressed by a keen fear, on the sea that night: the other time they were pressed by a sullen disappointment, on the road in the evening late. But in each case the Master came in answer to pressing invitation to take away fear and to revive hope and give blessed assurance.

There are stories of those who entertained the Lord inadvertently, as did Abraham at Mamre and Lot at Sodom, and these remind us to be always on the watch for the Master in the form of His servants. But we may also have Him at our house by special and intended request. "Jesus now is passing by" as truly as He was passing that night on the sea or that evening at Emmaus. Who can say that He will not actually go on? Who can be sure He will come this way again? Now is the time to press your claim. Come, Master, come and abide with me!

## *Christ the Gardener*

Another beautiful pen portrait of the Christ is that by Evangeline Booth, which may well be termed "Christ the Gardener," given in her recent work, "Toward a Better World." He appeared to Mary, "not in luminous garments of angels, not in lambent flame as to Gideon, not in the vestment or robe of state, not in the soft clothing of kings, but in the garb of a gardener, bearing the unmistakable marks of a gardener's vocation!"

He is not only the Christ for Sabbath morning—best clothes, pealing organ, open song book, thrilling sermon, trained choir—He is the Christ who comes in everyday dress, for everyday workshops and everyday toils; when we are controlling our business, tilling our fields, striking our anvils, pruning our trees, mending our children's clothes, cooking in the kitchen. A Christ for all toilers, whether they toil with heavy hammer or weary pen; whether they toil with bent back or taxed brain—whatever the duties and discipline that fill up the six days of the week. He is a working day Christ, in working day clothes, for working day hardships! The wealthy and the wise may share His goodness, but as I look at the Christ in the picture of my text, clad in the homespun of a gardener, I cannot but think that the men with rough, gnarled hands, the

women with needle-pricked finger-tips, the mill girl with hair and clothing white from the flying flax, and hard-working childhood feigning maturity, have a splendid claim upon Christ, the Gardener.

He stands in Mary's path not as a Caesar, nor as a Plato, not as Croesus, but as a humble, hard-working gardener. From which I learn that Christ is in special sympathy with every hand that toils, and every foot that tramps, and every back that bends, and every brow that sweats, and every heart that aches.

## *My Creed for Today*

I believe that God is a person of infinite power, knowledge and love, and that in a universe so large the telescope cannot discover its outer fringe and so perfectly formed that the microscope reveals a miniature universe in its smallest visible portion, I am yet the object of His tender consideration, and "He knoweth the way that I take," and goes with me in that way to see that I am properly cared for.

I believe that God will see that all things work together for my good because I love Him, and, as it is given me to know His will, obey Him in things both great and small. Both the good and the evil are forced into my service by the power and love of God, and at the end I shall see that it is so.

I believe that I myself am an immortal spirit come from God, and that I shall live with Him forever. My body is but the house in which for the present I live. Death cannot touch my spirit.

I believe all men are my fellow creatures, and my fellow heirs of redemption, so that I am obligated to serve them as I serve myself, and by all means bring them to know God through Christ that they with me may feel and know the life which is eternal.

I believe that to live a good life I must think as little as possible of myself that I may think of God,

my friends and those I can help. My work is a sacrament, not a slavery. I am not working for men or for money, but for God, and with Him recompense is sure. "I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to be true." And by being true I shall win, even though the outer circumstances of my life are loath to admit my victory. I am going to live honestly, bravely, patiently, lovingly, trustfully. I am going to rise above the world of time and sense and live a spiritual life. Then some day I shall see His face and all will be well. This is my creed for today.

## *Taking Spiritual Inventory*

There was a merchant, so it is said, who refused to take inventory, because he found from experience that he never was quite as prosperous as he thought he was, and preferred to enjoy appearances to mourning over realities. But it is a proverb in the business world, I am told, that the man who takes no inventories finally becomes bankrupt.

Pressing the conditions for getting sanctified, Bishop Foster said, "If you have no sense of need, you will assuredly make no progress. If, with them of Laodicea, you say, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing'—I have religion enough, I see no special reason for making so much ado about the matter, if such, or anything resembling this, is your feeling, you will not soon occupy advanced ground. Seek to realize your wants. But how shall you do this? There is but one way. O that we could prevail upon you to be faithful here! Taking the twin lamps of truth: the Bible and conscience, with sincere prayers for the guidance of the Holy Ghost, make that diligent search which the importance of the case requires. Be candid with yourself. Make no extenuations, no apology, use no tenderness. Ferret every recess thoroughly; probe to the bottom; pass through every chamber of your soul; search it through and through with a deter-



mination to know your case, to look at yourself stripped of every disguise. What do you find? Are there no idols in the sacred temple? No 'images of gold'? No 'Babylonish garments'? No concealed 'spies'? No pride, no envy, no jealousy, no anger, no malice, no undue love of the world, no undue desire for the praise of men, no improper ambition? Does God possess your heart without a rival? Are you wholly the Lord's? Oh, for faithfulness! Would you attain to holiness? Linger at this point. Have no mercy on yourself, be resolved to know the worst! You may have such discoveries as will astonish and distress you; still, make diligent search. What is your example? Is it all that a Christian's should be? Do you daily exhibit, in the family, in the social circle, in your business, everywhere, those tempers which should adorn the Christian character? What is your influence? Is it, so far as it is under your control, always decidedly and undividedly for Christ?"

But no matter how discouraging the results of this inventory may be, let no one give over to everlasting bankruptcy. Confess the need to Christ without any shamming. Press your claim, through the merits of His blood, for immediate help. Believe His promise. Receive His Spirit. Obtain the riches of full salvation today.

## *A Prayer of Personal Dedication*

O Blessed Lord, we come today to reaffirm our emplacement upon Thy altar where we have lain in the past. We come to say again that we will follow Thee wheresoever Thou leadest. We make this promise without condition. We do not say simply that we will follow if others will do likewise. Rather we will follow even though we must go alone. But we sometimes feel that our devotion is formal and passive, rather than vital and active, and we come to Thee for help. As Thou hast given us Thy love, wilt Thou not also give us Thy compassion. Give us that unselfish concern and burning pity that broke Thy heart at the tomb of Lazarus at which time Thou didst burst into tears. Give us that understanding compassion which forced that expression of sorrow when Thou didst look upon procrastinating Jerusalem from the lookout of the mountain. Break us up and break us down. Melt us up and melt us down. We would not waste away on the wood. We would be consumed with the fire which Thou wilt send upon Thy altar. We would not give concern to watchers, who like Abraham, engage to keep away the birds of prey, lest Thy altar should be robbed. Rather we would have Thee hasten the burning lamp and fiery furnace that we might be consumed. O give us the divine passion

that consumes. We would live well, rather than live long. But we would not die for naught. We would sell our lives dearly in terms of Thy glory and the salvation of men. We would be intensive, rather than extensive. If Thou canst use any martyrs, please give us a chance. Our poor hearts have known the fire and they cannot now be content with the smoke. We have experienced the real, the artificial will no longer do. We have known the deep and cannot tolerate the shallows. We crave the divine. We hunger for bread such as the men of earth know not of. Our eyes strain for that light that never yet shined on land or sea. Our ears are set to hear Thy whisper. Our hearts expand with pent-up longing for the tokens of Thy love and of Thy presence. Our spirits droop in the atmosphere of mere creature pleasure. We would have the refreshing rain of heaven. We would have Thee alone. And so this day we come into Thy throne room to be henceforth Thine own peculiar possession. Possess us in conscious communication, and we shall be Thine forevermore. Amen.

## *Keep Your Ladder on the Ground*

Last night, in my dream, I climbed up to the top floor of a lofty building by means of a very long ladder. As I waited the moment before stepping off on the floor of my choice, I looked about and found there were many ladders touching the landing. And as I waited, one of these ladders became dislodged and took up its wild descent to the main floor of the building where there were many people walking about. I watched in fear and amazement to see what the end would be, and was relieved when the ladder landed with a bang on a vacant place on the polished hardwood floor beneath. Then I fell to musing as to why the ladder fell, and discovered by logical study of what I had seen that the dislodged ladder had all the time been suspended in mid-air, and that the lower end had never reached all the way to a safe beginning.

Sister Sparks of Ontario, now gone to heaven, in describing her unquenchable zeal for the promotion of the work of God, used to say, "Whenever I see a ladder I want to climb." And you know Jacob saw a ladder, one end of which reached to heaven, and the other end rested upon earth. Well, ladders, normally, are means for climbing—for ascending. If men want to descend, they can fall. But if they want to arise, they need a ladder. And ev-

ery man's ladder logically and rightly reaches to heaven, for God has set no limits anywhere below the Celestial City. But to be useful, a ladder must have safe footing; and the higher the intended climb, the more necessary the footing.

Jesus was of course the ladder of Jacob's dream (John 1:51). And although He was and is the infinite God, He is also very man. And although He does indeed reach to the highest heaven, He also is now within reach of the barest beginner. And salvation through Christ, although "uttermost" in its reach, has its footing in genuine repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as present, personal Saviour. And holiness, blessed attribute of God to men imparted, has its footing in full consecration and simple faith in the cleansing blood. And final perseverance, glorious and wonderful as it is to contemplate, must rest upon the grace of God. And if we are to be wise and safe Christians, we shall not disregard the footing of our ladder at any time. Reputation is of value only when it arises from holy character, position is holy only when it springs from a devotion that would hold, even though the emotion were denied.

## *What I Expect of My Religion*

The word religion covers a wide scope of meaning in the instances in which it is used to describe the hopes and fears of men in general. But I use it here as synonym for Christ and Salvation. It was in this sense that the people used it in the meetings in which I became a Christian, and where they exhorted me to "get religion" on the promise that this would do something for me which I very much needed to have done, and which I, in my serious moments, very much desired to have done.

I expect my religion to bring to me an inward sense of pardon and peace. Guilt and condemnation are a burden too great to be borne, and I expect my religion to bring me rest from their weight. The crisis of conversion did bring me a genuine sense of forgiveness, but I expect my religion to bring me recurring emotions of acceptance in the favor of God whenever there is any sense of divine disfavor either by reason of remissness on my part or by reason of the accusation of the devil against me.

I expect my religion to bring to me the knowable, conscious witness of the Holy Spirit that I am a member of the family of God and "accepted in the beloved." It is not enough with me to be able to claim my standing on logical grounds. I expect

that my inner feelings shall be agreeable to the standing which is promised to one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

I expect my religion to bring to me the conscious witness of the Holy Spirit that my heart and affections are completely purified and alienated from sin and the world and exalted to supreme love to God. I know that faith is the condition for sanctification, but I expect my religion shall be real as well as potential, and that a state of inward holiness shall be a conscious and continuous experience with me.

I expect my religion to result in my possessing power to overcome such temptations as shall fall to my lot from day to day, and I expect that power to be sufficient to enable me to live before God in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life. I do not expect my religion to make all my circumstances agreeable, but I do expect it to make me sufficient for any and all circumstances and conditions which may fall to my lot on earth.

I expect my religion to deliver me from slavish fear—fear of myself, fear of other people, fear of wicked spirits, fear of any earthly calamity, fear of poverty and old age, fear of death, fear of the final judgment and fear of what I shall find in eternity when all units for measuring time and earthly values have become obsolete. And in all these expectations, “Christ is not a disappointment.”

## *What My Religion Demands of Me*

My religion demands that I turn my back forever upon everything that is wicked and worldly and wrong. I cannot hold to faith in Christ except as I set my will uncompromisingly to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts." Being friends with God necessitates that I break all voluntary friendships with the ungodly world.

My religion demands that I not only refuse the things which are expressly forbidden, but also all such as I find by experience as I go along to be at variance with the fullest light God lets shine upon my pathway, and which serve in any measure to lessen my enjoyment of God. Whenever I fall into even a temporary carelessness concerning the details of the will of God for me I suffer the threat of spiritual eclipse, and find it necessary to take myself in hand and give fullest heed to the checks of the Spirit.

My religion demands that I devote myself to God and to His work without stint and without limitation. I have as yet not been called upon to die a martyr's death, but I am called upon day by day to live a martyr's life—ready to pay the last installment yet due on a martyr's crown at the first intimation that this is God's plan for me. My service is often no more significant in appearance than the giving of a



cup of cold water, but the spirit with which I serve must always be of the highest possible order.

My religion demands that I identify myself with the deep needs of dying humanity, and that I serve, as God shall show me how, my day and generation without respect to the approval or disapproval of those whom I seek to save and to serve. I am called to minister, and not to be ministered unto. My life is not my own. It has been bought by the price of Christ's own precious blood. I cannot take a way because it is pleasant, nor refuse another way because it is disagreeable. Two questions only matter, and they are answered as one: Where am I needed, and where does God want me?

My religion demands that I obey the will of God, as it is given me to know that will, instantly, gladly and fully, without regard to the consequence or apparent consequences; for "There's no other way (for me) to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

## Price of a Soul

Jesus represented the value of a soul as beyond comparison, and yet souls can be bought; not bought on the market like grain or cattle, but bought with prayer, heart burden and well-directed service. How much will you bid for a soul?

A little company of friends were leaving a meeting in which the speaker had said, "If we raise and spend a million dollars for this project, and as a result just one boy is saved, the investment is justified." One of the company asked, "Do you believe one boy is worth a million dollars, as the speaker said tonight?" A thoughtful parent in the group replied, "Yes, if he were my boy."

That father's reply suggests the key. It is when the boy is our boy that we bid up the price we are willing to pay for his salvation. And when does he become my boy? He becomes my boy when I take him on my heart to bear him up before God, and when I come to feel that I am responsible for him. Until then, he may have been a stranger. He may have been a member of an alien race. But when I take him on my heart in sincere prayer and responsibility he becomes in the most real and sacred sense "my boy."

A busy and successful doctor left his practice, and in company with his family started on a cruise

around the world. In order that he might not be called upon for professional service, he covered the fact that he was a doctor. While the ship stood in a tropical port, the sailors fished someone from the water who had fallen overboard, and did all they could to restore life. The traveling doctor looked on from a distance, but by and by drew near, more out of human curiosity than anything else. But when he saw that the body over which the sailors worked was that of his own four-year-old son, he threw aside his assumed modesty, took charge of the case himself, sent others scurrying on orders, and worked for two straight hours before he was rewarded with the first indication of returning life. True concern has its basis in acknowledged relationship. The most doleful wail is "No man careth for my soul." But, if we could but realize it, the next in degree of melancholy is, or should be, "I am indifferent about the souls of others."

It has been said in lighter vein, "Love finds a way." But we make the application here also. If you truly love souls, do not be too much affected by the thought that you are not artful in seeking them. An ounce of earnestness is worth a ton of professional wisdom.

## *Aiming Toward the Higher Perch*

Yesterday a godly woman whose sanity and saintliness are above reproach with those who know her, told of a dream in which her own soul assumed the form of a flying bird winging its way across the fields of time toward its home in heaven. But the bird was not flying very high above the earth; and along on the earth, following the shadow of the wing-weary bird, was a dragon of frightful mien and hungry jaws. For a time the bird kept its advantage, but the woman was awakened by a voice which spoke to the dragon, saying: "Follow on. The bird will at last become so weary that it will find a perch on a low limb of some tree, and there you will be able to catch and devour it."

The dream was depressing to the awakened Christian. But after a time of prayer and consideration, she remembered that the voice had actually admitted that her soul (in the form of the bird) was now free and triumphant, and that the encouragement to the beast had been based on the prophecy that she would yet become weary and settle on a low perch somewhere. And so she drew courage from the word of her foe, and arose to say: "The mention of a low perch suggests that there are higher perches, and to these I will fly, and there the dragon will not be able to reach me. Pray for

me that I may fly on, even if my wings do become weary, and that if I must settle for rest upon a branch, that I may find a perch so high that the old black dragon of my dream shall not be able to reach me."

The sin of the low perch! How strong the appeal and how destroying the consequences! How devastating the final results! The dragon cannot indeed catch us while we are "on the wing," but he is known for his perseverance, and would swallow us up at the last. The only safe resting place is in the "high places" of God. "He shall dwell on high," said the prophet regarding those who are safe; and "His place of defence shall be the munition of rocks." Here, as in earthly warfare, "offense is the best defense." True spirituality is the cure for worldliness, and to have the house of the heart fully occupied by the Holy Spirit is the way to keep evil spirits from finding lodging there.

In the Christian life, as in other spheres and phases of life, we tend to go where we look and to hit where we aim. Let us look up! If we look about, like Peter, we shall see engulfing waves. If we look at ourselves, we shall see only weakness and utter insufficiency. Let us look up! Let us look to Jesus! And let us aim at the highest attainments of grace that we may arise above the reach of the dragon and be ever safe in Christ!

## *The Home with the Two Bears*

It was observed by friends that old Brother and Sister Brown were getting on more agreeably together than they had formerly done. Asked for an explanation, Brother Brown replied: "Well, about a year ago we decided to keep two bears in the house all the time. One of these bears is 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' and the other is 'Forbear one another in love.' And since we took these two bears in we have found the going easier."

There are a surprising number of people in the world who ought to be happy that are really not so. The failure of many of these of course is the result of want of grace. People who habitually live in a low state of grace just as habitually are given to a grouchy disposition, and to a tendency to find fault with others. And there are many people who are mismated in that their intimates are unconverted and worldly-minded. And everybody who looks for it can find an alibi. But the fact remains that many whose essential goodness none of us would like to call in question are, nevertheless, more or less unhappy because of limitations and weaknesses which it is within their power to reduce or altogether eliminate. Living is an art to be learned and practiced, as well as a responsibility to be used.

It is so easy to just forget to be kind. One may permit his devotion to a good work to so pervert his humanity that he will think he does God's service when he neglects his family, forgets to be considerate of his overwrought and overworked wife, speaks hastily to a thoughtless child or an offending neighbor or cuts himself off from association with men to the point of becoming a community bore.

It is so easy to misinterpret our calling so that we come finally to believe it is ours to be ministered unto, rather than to minister to others, and such a bias usually makes us unapproachable and apparently indifferent. If such becomes our estate, we can but expect that when we die, and the provincial ask, "What was the complaint?" that the reply of those who saw us pass by "on the other side" (as passed the priest and the Levite by the wounded Samaritan), will be, "There was no complaint. Everybody is satisfied."

Let us pray with godly Abraham, "Bless me, Lord, and make me a blessing," lest we shall live in vain, and come out either with no soul saved but our own or else while casually seeking to save others we ourselves shall become castaways.

## *The Ensemble of Grace*

*Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (II Peter 1:5-7).*

The Greek chorus is the figure in the background. Faith stands up in the position of the leading soprano and carries the melody. But soon faith reaches out the hand to virtue. Virtue in turn calls knowledge to her side. Knowledge requires the help of temperance. Temperance invites patience to share. Patience gives the nod to godliness. Godliness beckons to brotherly kindness; and brotherly kindness joins hands with charity. Faith, courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love! And thus the chorus is completed.

Faith, at one end of the line, is the high soprano; love, at the other end of the line, is the basso profundo. Courage, knowledge, and self-control find their notes with faith on the treble staff. Patience, godliness, and brotherly kindness read their parts with love on the bass staff. The treble stands for activity and objectivity. The bass emphasizes potentiality and passive reality. But the two are com-



plementary and indivisible in the harmony of rounded Christian character. It is said of all members of the chorus, and not of some particular member of it, "If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful. . . . But he that lacketh these things is blind" (verses 8-9).

Solos (Christians of one virtue), duets, trios, and even quartets are incomplete. The Christian experience is a chorus of eight essential parts. In terms of the substantive, faith is faithfulness or fidelity; virtue is courage; knowledge is wisdom; temperance is self-control; patience is long-suffering, or the power to endure; godliness is habitual victory over evil; brotherly kindness is spiritual toleration; and charity is divine love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. If any one of these is wanting, the whole ensemble is thrown into confusion.

The ancients imagined that the planets and the stars produced music by their motions in their orbits. But for us, the music of the soul is of infinitely more importance. The Celestial Ensemble of which we speak is a translation for the choir of heaven to our hearts. The music made is a gift of grace, and not a product of art. It is only by the ministrations of His grace that we may say, "There's music in my soul today. . . . And Jesus listening can hear the songs I cannot sing."

## *It's the Music That Counts*

Ole Bull, the great violinist, and John Ericsson, the scientist and inventor (inventor of the Monitor of Civil War notoriety), were fellow countrymen and friends. The scientist claimed he had no ear for music, and he was impatient of lectures on the subject. He would not even go to hear his friend play. But one day Ole Bull took his beloved violin down to where Ericsson worked and played for him. Under the spell of the master, the cold heart of the scientist melted, his eyes filled with tears, and when the musician paused, John cried, "Go on, Ole, go on! I can hear it, and it does me good."

Perhaps we have here a suggestion of the difference between lectures about Christ and Christ in the heart "the hope of glory." Stanley found Livingstone in the heart of Africa and stayed with him for six months. Stanley was a professed skeptic when he went to find Livingstone—he came away a Christian. Asked what Livingstone said that converted him, Stanley replied that it was what Livingstone was that brought him in. Livingstone, according to Stanley's report, never asked Stanley if he were a Christian, and never preached to him nor seemed to pray for his conversion. But Livingstone was so thoroughly a Christian that it dawned upon Stanley that one who is not a Christian is something

less than a Christian. Livingstone read his Bible and prayed in Stanley's presence without strain or apology, and went about his daily work of ministering to the bodies, minds and hearts of the poor Africans with such modest naturalness that Stanley came to think of himself as the strange and unnatural one, and to become like Livingstone he had to become a Christian. It was the music that counted!

One good revival is better proof of the reality and desirability of revivals than all the lectures of the experts. Praying and getting answers from God is better than all an encyclopedia can say on the subject. Asked to give an address on the subject of prayer, a modest Christian replied, "I pray every day, and it helps me." Asked to speak on the joy of salvation, an old-fashioned saint said simply, "It's better felt than told." Asked if he believed in the second blessing, Dr. Godbey answered, "I not only believe in the second blessing, I have the second blessing." At a banquet with notables, a well-educated Christian woman quoted from the Bible. A skeptic asked, "Do you believe the Bible?" The Christian woman replied, "Oh, yes, I believe the Bible. I am acquainted with its Author, you see." Yes, it's the music that counts!

## *After We Pray*

The exploits of Moses, Gideon, Hannah, Samuel, Solomon, Elijah, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, Ezra, Zechariah and other men and women of God in the Old Testament period all came "after they had prayed." In the early New Testament Church it is said, "When they had prayed, the place was shaken." Even our blessed Master prepared for the selection of His twelve by a night of prayer.

There were of course prayers of thanksgiving following deliverance, but it was the previous prayers that opened the channels for the coming of God to the help of men.

The implications of "The Great Commission" bore heavily upon the disciples of the resurrected Christ, and there may have been an impulse in them to rush to the task so soon as the Author should return to the angel-guarded gates of the Throne City. But the Lord tarried a moment to say, "Tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." That power from on high came down after protracted prayer. The disciples were to go after they had prayed.

Men are wont to describe our times as "busy days," and some would rejoice that we are saved from the vices of idleness. But activity too is fraught with dangers. Men may easily become too busy to

pray. And whoever is too busy to pray is indeed too busy. Such men are too busy because they have given business the first place—the place that rightly belongs to prayer. Men lose time when they steal it from prayer to give it to activity. This is true, because the man who prays does more in the time left after he prays than he could have done if he had worked all the time, including the time when he should have been praying. The man who is too busy for private and personal prayer is personally inefficient. The head of the family who is too busy with “the necessities of life” for family prayer has left off the first responsibility to the members of his household. The church that substitutes activity for prayer is just going ’round and ’round with blind Samson at the treadmill of the Philistines.

After we pray there will be many things we can do and should do. But until we have prayed there is nothing we can do or should do. We must bring men to God before we are fitted to bring God to men.

## *"Hid in the House of the Lord"*

(II Kings 11:3)

A man of my acquaintance who wanted to be known as a free-thinker and man of broad conscience, said apologetically: "I go to church. I go regularly. I do it on account of my boys. I know it is of little use for me to urge them to go if I don't go, and at their age they need the protection of the church. I think I have the stability to live a decent life, but my two boys are still unsettled, and if they fall into bad company they may take to drink and wild living, and may easily wind up in crime and in prison. One of the best things I can do for them is to keep them in the company of church people and under the influence of the gospel."

J. Edgar Hoover marks the period between boyhood and manhood as the "crucial time of any youthful career." I was converted to Christ during that period—when I was barely fifteen. Last week a friend said, "I do not believe you know the abounding wickedness that exists in the hearts and homes of the people of the land. You have been saved from so much by being saved early and by being constantly associated with the Christian people."

But while childhood and youth are crucial, all life is probationary, and willful exposure is danger-

ous to adults also. If it can be said that juveniles who regularly attend Sunday school do not find their way to crime clinics, it can just as truly be said that church-attending, tithe-paying, prayer-observing families do not break up in divorce courts, and truly spiritual middle-aged and old people do not get caught in the meshes of the cults.

Through accident, sickness, or age, death comes to all. But death is grim or friendly, depending on where he must come to find us. If he must come into the house of the Lord to call, there his steps are softened and his voice is mellowed. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." And one who has spent his life here in the fellowship of his Saviour does not leave His courts when he comes to die, but only passes from his present glory room into the room of "more excellent glory," and continues to affirm his oft repeated testimony, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

## *Christ Is My Portion*

When the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, the Levites were given no allotment of land. In compensation for this lack, God himself proposed to be Levi's inheritance. The occurrence is a symbol of the situation of those who in these days have said in their hearts and in practical choice, "Give me Jesus, and you may have all this world." Stated from the world's perspective it looks like God's people are left out of the program of the pleasures of men. What! no liquor, no tobacco, no shows, no balls, no worldly adornment of the body, no card games, no horse races! You must be lonely and poor! No, not so! The Holy Spirit gives holy joy of which all narcotics and intoxicants are but sloven substitutes and tormenting opposites. The satisfactions of grace make worldly entertainments not only unnecessary, but stale and uninteresting. And the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother" makes the child of God easy in a crowd and contented when he is by himself. Jesus observed that "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better." In application: No man fresh from the fountain of God's salvation will immediately wish for the broken cisterns of the world, for he is satisfied with the inheritance of grace.



The don'ts of the law are useful for guidance in practical conduct to the well-saved Christian, but the threats of judgment for disobedience do not loom large with the Spirit-filled; for such have respect to the reward of obedience, and are not worried by the question, "Is it wrong to do this?" They are too busy "doing the things that are pleasing in His sight."

They say that the average man, fully dressed, has thirteen pockets. But many of us need at least one more to enable us to carry the things we want with us. But if one should come to me today and propose that I empty my pockets of their contents that he might fill them with fine gold, I would not hesitate to make the exchange, and I would not go about among my friends thereafter bemoaning the loss of the things discarded. And with Christ as my portion, I gladly "forget the things that are behind," totally ignore the things of the moment which are either unlawful or inexpedient for me as a Christian, and I rejoice that here and now and forevermore I am the winner. The banks of the world could not pay the interest on my eternal investments. Through the poverty of Christ I am made rich.

## *The God of the Sparrow*

Some people are tremendously impressed by the oceans and the whales which inhabit them; some get strength from the forests and the huge land animals which live therein; some read parables in the mighty rivers and tall mountains; some read the handwriting of God in the stars: and no one can doubt but these speak of the infinity of God's wisdom and power. The God of the telescope, by His mighty creative genius, brings the pride of man down to the dust, and inspires a sense of reverence in the hearts of kings and all mighty men of earth.

But pride is not the vice of all. Millions must fight against an inward sense of uselessness. There is no greater loneliness than that which a man may suffer when he is one of a crowd. By comparison such a man is but a cog in a wheel, a number on a registration machine or even just one drop of water in a lake. To people like these (mothers in the homes, workers in the shop, soldiers in the ranks) the God of great things is too far removed to be a source of strength and courage.

But the handwriting of God is not better read in the stars than His footprints in the lowly sand. God has left His monogram on the molecule in just as full relief as upon the mountain. He paints the daisy in more delicate colors than ever an earthly

painter used, and clothes the grass in finer robes than ever Solomon wore. The gentle wren is as much the object of His care as the mighty whale, and the chirping sparrow is heir to His protection in as full measure as the roaring lion.

Faith is too abstract to have practical worth until it brings its owner to feel and say, "He careth for me." There are those who say, God does not care for the lowly—why should He care? We would not send such doubters out to look at the stars; we would send them to look at the homely nettle which the scientist has found to be a laboratory large enough to occupy a university class for hours upon hours. We would hand these doubters a microscope and ask them to behold in the tiniest portion of matter a universe as well ordered as that larger one which the telescope brings to sight.

The little, the weak, the sick, the poor, the illiterate, the unfortunate, the sinned against, the forgotten, the heartbroken, the homeless, the bruised, the wounded, the starving, the dying: these all have a share in the God of the falling sparrow and they should come now and claim their full inheritance!

## *Only the Good Endures*

Word passed throughout the nervous crowd that Abraham Lincoln was dead. Soon the crowd became a mob capable of the most unreasonable action. James A. Garfield, the preacher-statesman, stood out on the balcony of the hotel, and when silence was secured, he cried: "God reigns, and the Government at Washington still lives!" The words fell like a clarion note of faith and hope upon the ears of a nation tempted to take a plunge into the pit of despair. "God reigns," therefore the death of a leader or the fall of a dynasty is not an abdication of the crown.

Stunned by the flood of trash that comes from the printing press, good people sometimes wonder whether bookmaking is a blessing or a curse. But it is encouraging to note that bad books, like bad people, soon have their day and pass into the discard; while good books, like good people, live on. The Bible was the first book to be printed from movable type, and it still remains "the best seller" because it is **THE BEST BOOK**.

Men may approve bad manners by their practical choices during the days of health and life. But no man ever yet hired poets to sit by his dying couch to sing of his sins while he fought with pain and death. Nor have any asked to have stories of their

follies and wickedness recited at their funerals. Nor have any begged posterity to forget any decent word they may have spoken or any kindly deed they may have done. Those who have sought to immortalize have found it necessary to bolster greatness with goodness to enable it to stand. And "debunkers" have been despised as though they were desecrators of the dead. Men must be good, as well as wise and great, or the world will forget them.

Those who propose annihilation as a substitute for the Bible threat of judgment that is everlasting have not improved the prospects for the wicked; for there is an aversion to extinction in everyone. And not for extinction only, but also for demotion, and for deserved shame and contempt. Men want to live forever, and they want to live in peace and happiness forever. Well, let them read all the books on all the shelves of all the libraries of the world, and still they will find promise of what they want, and on terms that they can certainly meet in only one book—our blessed Bible! Then let them read that Blessed Book and they will find that its promise of eternal happiness rests upon the condition that they turn from sin to the Lord Jesus Christ, and find in Him the "way, the truth, and the life."

## *I, Too, Like Little People!*

Our visit to the parsonage was brief, but long enough to give the little four-year-old opportunity to sing the little song she had learned in Sunday school. She did so well that we all praised her. Then I went on to speculate on how much larger she is now than she used to be, and how much larger she will be next year, and the next. At last, unable to contain her sense of appreciation any longer, the little one looked at me with an expression of sincerity, and said, "I don't want you to leave." These words repaid me for all my efforts, and I came away remarking on what a fine, well-behaved little girl the preacher has. And this morning as I was making appraisals, I found that I like little people. I don't care so much for the great—they make me feel insignificant, and they do not notice my efforts to please them. I like little people—they make me feel "grown up" by comparison, and they are so appreciative and easy to please.

But, come to think of it, it was the Lord himself who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not;" and He himself is described as "meek and lowly in heart." And God has elsewhere expressed His aversion to the proud and self-sufficient, and made choice of the humble. Humble people are just people who are little in

their own eyes, no matter what their weight or their position.

But it is not enough for me to love little people; I love God and want Him to love me. And I have found out that He likes me better when I feel my dependence upon Him, and feel and express my appreciation of any attention He may give me. The prerequisite of the first full notice from God is to "be converted and become as a little child," and the condition for continued divine attention is to remain childlike in faith, love, and thankfulness.

Pride is a blighting curse. It is a hydra-headed and myriad-handed monster that assumes the form most appropriate to our age and situation, but in its best mien still breathes out defeat and destruction. Judging only by his assumption of unbecoming dress and unkempt person, one "old saint" quaintly testified, "Of all God's creatures, I am the most humble." But humility is too delicate a flower to bear up under limelight like that, and hearers instinctively said, "If he were he would neither know it nor say it." Spiritual pride may show itself as being proud of one's humility—a practical impossibility and a profound absurdity. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

## *The True Optimism*

It is now a good many years since I heard a rugged old preacher use the text, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God" (Acts 27:25), but I still remember his illustration. Firemen, he said, saw the face of a child at the window in an upper story of the burning building. The extension ladder was set, and a courageous fireman went swiftly up. But he encountered flames and hot air. The ladder swerved, the man hesitated. But his fellow fire fighters on the ground below, and the anxious crowd that had gathered about joined in cheering him on. The words of encouragement were what was needed. The brave man pushed on up, broke open the window and rescued the child. This, said the old preacher, is the way it is with many a soul: faced by the fires of trial, scorched by the hot breath of hell, uncertain of his own ability, and tempted to give up, he is cheered on by those who have seen visions of God in the night and who now rise up to say, "Be of good cheer: for I believe God."

There is a shallow optimism that without reason tries to say, "All is well." And this baseless cheer is mockery to the tried and trembling, who know by present pressures that all is not well. The passing and easy saying, "All things work together for good," is of no use to one who wonders whether his plight



is due to his obedience or to his folly. The true optimism is well-founded upon the promises of God and the obedience of the believer. When one can look up in loving defiance and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," that soul has reached the place where nothing more can harm him, and his future "is as bright as the promises of God."

Warning His disciples against anxious care, the Master said, "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34); He was not speaking of moral evil in their own lives: for God makes no allowance for evil in His people except His grace to deliver them from it. But evil comes in many forms. It comes as sickness, weakness, poverty, persecution for righteousness' sake, a disappointment, bereavement and an unnamed sense of impending calamity and death. God does not remove all these from anyone, but He does give assurance that He himself knows and cares. And, moreover, He gives assuring promise that "when I am tried, I shall come forth as gold." He gives assurance that we shall "come forth." We shall come forth into a better day either in this world or in the world to come. We shall not stay always in the crucible. We shall be "purified, made white and tried," and shall then come forth to "shine as the stars forever and ever." "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

*“What Time I Am Afraid,  
I Will Trust”*

Unfounded fear is cowardice. But courage is more than an emotion: it is a studied weighing of danger against the odds or, in its higher form, it is the weighing of the price against the prize and the deliberate choosing of the prize. It is folly to deny danger when danger exists, and to accept danger when the prize is insufficient is greater folly still.

Instinctive fear, like the child has regarding the dark, is either constitutional or the result of experience, and, being non-volitional, is also non-moral, and should be overcome by practice, and not condemned as a moral sin.

Intelligent fear has its basis in fact, and abides even when investigation is complete. To say that there is nothing to fear except fear itself is to adopt a Pollyanna philosophy that breaks down in the tests of real life. There is much to fear, and no one should be embarrassed to say, “I am afraid.” I am afraid of sin, of evil spirits and of wicked men, and this fear helps me determine to be rid of sin in my own heart and life, to resist the devil when he or any of his emissaries seek to advise me, and to reject the counsel and company of wicked men when they would have me think that by joining hand to hand we together can escape the punishment due to sin.

No one is going to allay my fears by telling me that sin is innocent, the devil is a myth and that all men are "good at heart." That is the way it would have to be if there were nothing to fear but fear. But sin is deceptive and damning, the devil is the greatest intelligence there is outside the Godhead, and the broad way that the great majority travel has its terminal in hell. Intelligent fear is both wise and healthy.

Fear mixed with doubt weakens and destroys us. Fear and faith are the combination that spells strength and life—"What time I am afraid, I will trust." In fact, faith in its constant form of trust brings an end to that blighting form of fear which brings torment. It was to this tormenting fear that Isaiah referred when he said, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid" (Isaiah 12:2), and it is this type of fear that perfect love casts out (I John 4:18).

That faith or trust that robs fear of its power to torment is not trust in circumstances, not trust in men, not simply faith in faith (as some so vainly strive to show). It is trust in God. "God is my salvation." That is why I can trust and not be tormented by fear. For God will rule wherever He is permitted to rule, and He will overrule where men refuse to give Him the throne. And when my trust is in Him my ultimate good is sure, and in the darkest and narrowest place in the path, I can still see through.

## *On Being Fenced In*

A call for unfenced pastures is a testimony that the grass is sparse, and therefore there must be more acres. When the sheep eats to its full and lies down in the midst of green, uncropped grass, it has no aversion to fences that hold it in—it would not wander, even if there were no fences at all. Fences around green meadows are to keep strays from coming in, not to keep the favored from going away.

Sin is bondage. Salvation is liberty. Sin imitates liberty, but the best it can do is to offer the tinsel of license. No man is ever free to "do as he pleases," unless he is able to bring his desires into the fencing of righteousness. License cannot ever make wrong right. It can only strive vainly to make right and wrong change places. In the end license becomes bondage. The only man who ever drinks all he wants to, smokes all he wants, gambles all he wants, dances all he wants, and carouses all he wants is the man who does not want to do these wrong things at all; for if evil is catered to it increases its demands so that at the end the desire is farther ahead of indulgence than it was at the beginning. God works it the other way. He takes out of the heart all desire for the forbidden, and gives the rest and peace and joy of righteousness that result in a

deeper satisfaction than the world ever dreamed could be possessed.

Hell is a pit. Heaven is a city. Hell has impregnable walls and gates and bars, for its inhabitants must be fenced in. Heaven has walls, but they are made of jasper and are for beauty, and not for strength. It has gates also. But the gates are never closed, for there is no one in that city that wants out—not ever! They would raise no objection to the closing and locking of the gates, for the gates are ornamental, not utilitarian, in purpose. The inhabitants of that city want nothing that is outside the city. They are monumental pillars in the house of God and shall go out no more forever. The love of God and the contentment of heaven have fenced them in forever.

“Sweet will of God, still fold me closer.” Shut me in within the palace walls of Thy love, O God of peace and grace and purity. Fence me in with Thy protecting care. Fence out everything that ministers not to Thy praise. For in Thy mercy there is length and breadth and width and height beyond all my ability to explore, even in the eternity of the eternities!

## *The Lowlands Get the Rain*

Traveling through an irrigated section of the country, we observed that some portions were well-watered and fruitful, while some were dry and barren. Upon inquiry we found that the difference was not determined by the quality of the soil, but by "the lay" of the land. The barren portions were too high to permit their partaking of the water which filled the ditches at their borders. The lowlands received their portion and were made glad thereby.

There are well-watered souls, and souls that are dry and thirsty and barren. It is not that God is partial with His grace: it is not that some are more fortunate by nature than others; the difference is in the volitional elevation of the two classes. The possibilities are abundant for all. But the lowly get the rain, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

Elevation is of the spirit, and is not determined by accidents of birth or position. Abraham was rich, but he made God, not money, his trust. David was popular, but he "encouraged himself in the Lord." Hezekiah was a king and the son of a king, still he walked before God "with a perfect heart." On the other hand, Lazarus was a beggar; still the angels knew where to find him when they were sent to bear his ransomed spirit home. Stephen died the

ignominious death by stoning, but his dying eyes saw the receiving Saviour. Nothing is recorded of Barnabas' pedigree, but "he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." It is those who think of themselves more highly than they ought to think who are lifted up above the water line of grace. And those who become the willing disciples of the "meek and lowly in heart" find those fountains of water which never run dry—the lowlands get the rain.

Our whole world is a desert. There are streams of grace flowing through the desert. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them. The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." But this gladness, like the fruitfulness of the natural oases, is reserved for those who assume the position of receiver and servant. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad."

## *Full Heads Bend Over*

Observing that only part of his congregation bowed when prayer was called, the minister remarked that he had observed in the wheat fields the full heads bent over as the harvest neared, but those heads that bore no grain stood upright even as the reaper approached.

The wise head is humble, even as the good heart is reverent. Sound thinking and noble emotions are inseparable companions. The wise man, conscious of sin, bows in repentance; assured of pardon, he bends in thanksgiving; aware of his ignorance, he stoops in humility; surveying his weakness, he reclines in meekness; crushed by sorrow, he falls low in submission; conscious that he is recipient of unmerited favors from both God and men, his head goes limp in wonder and praise. Full heads bend over!

The wise man enters the house of God with prayer in his heart and on his lips. He bows in petitionary prayer for blessings upon the hour of worship. He refrains from listless staring, from conversation with his fellows, from laughter and all lightness during the waiting moments, during the preliminary service and during the time in which the Word of God is read and expounded. When prayer is called, the wise man bows, shuts out the



world of time and sense and enters into the closet with his God. Full heads bend over!

Seeing Daniel Webster about to enter an orthodox church, a light-thinking acquaintance of Unitarian leanings asked: "Are you going in there to worship three gods?" to which he with the full head made answer, "My friend, there are many things that are true that you and I do not understand." And so saying, Webster went on to his place to worship—full heads bend over!

Skepticism has laid ready claim to possession of the brains of the world. But sober investigation does not support its claims. The rule with science as with religion is that full heads bend over. But since it is the exceptional that makes news, it is so unusual that one should be humble enough to enter the kingdom of knowledge while yet too arrogant to enter the kingdom of grace that when one does this contradictory thing the whole world takes notice. Still, looking upon a meeting of real scholars one would observe that here as in the church, the full heads bend over!

## *The Dependability of "The Blessed Hope"*

There is something more than poetry in that old observation, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and sometimes the persistence of this hope has pathetic aspects. In terms of consequences, it may be said that men hope for lasting peace, for health and long life, for prosperity and for that indefinable thing called happiness. Hope that these things may yet come gives men power to endure war and conflict, sickness and suffering, poverty and sacrifice, and misery and withering woe.

But when hope for good is based upon unsubstantial foundations, it is doomed to end at last in disappointment. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." "The wages of sin is death." He is dubbed a fool who lays up treasures on earth and is not rich toward God. Happiness is a snare when it consists alone in the pleasures of the flesh, and in the good which is transient and accidental.

But men are right in hoping for peace and health and prosperity and happiness, for these are involved in the heritage of the godly. In their full and lasting measure these things are connected with redeemed man and his corrected environment. The price of redemption already has been fully paid, but

the application of redemption's benefits has not yet come to its consummation. The environment of even the wholly sanctified is as yet very unfriendly. We do not yet see all things put under Christ.

Entrance upon the full heritage must await the coming of Jesus Christ in the glory of His second advent. But the assurance that the event draws on apace brings fuller meaning to what Paul called "the blessed hope" that involves all well-conditioned hopes within its scope, and overshadows all hopes besides.

Those who read the signs and announce that the night is getting darker have left out the principal part of the message—and that is that the morning break is at hand. The king is at the door! The kingdom is about to be established! The day of peace, health and happiness is in the dawning! "It won't be long: it may be soon." And as we gaze upon the reddening skies, our response to the promise is: "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

## *Eternal Security*

Insecurity is tormenting. In its worst and most chronic forms, it is demoralizing. The head that wears the crown is often restless upon its pillow because both the crown and the head are insecure. The rich are grasping because they know that money has wings and may at any time fly away. Those whose holdings are small are careful about warranty deeds, and insistent on mortgage releases. Office holders work with one eye on the election clock, managers of business must take care to be acceptable to directors and stockholders, and people whose labors are dubbed as jobs must keep in the good graces of the boss. Orators do not have to use a lot of logic to secure a following if their program lays stress on "social and economic security," and promises liberal pensions when the days of productive labor are over.

But the fact is that our earthly tenure is temporary, and if we would we cannot make our stewardship last very long. No matter how much reserve we may build up or how much surplus health and strength we may possess, "The times and places which now know us will soon know us no more forever." The Patriarch Job spoke poetically of man's breath being in his nostrils, but the prosaic truth is that we are all within one breath or one heartbeat of life's terminal at any instant in which we think

of the matter. The earthly life is like the evening dew that evaporates before the morning sun, or like the vapor which the gentle, passing breeze may quickly drive away.

But there is a security plan that begins now and continues forever; for godliness has promise of the life which now is and also of that which is to come (I Timothy 4:8). There is no such thing as "unconditional election," no such thing as irresistible grace, the will of man is not bound, the atonement of Christ is not limited, and final perseverance requires that its subject shall persevere in faith and love and obedience until the Day of Christ. But the conditions for present, full, continued and final salvation are such as any who will can meet, and when these conditions are observed, present and eternal peace and joy are guaranteed by One who is sublimely good in His greatness and incomparably great in His goodness, and whose promise therefore cannot fail. Have you obtained a share in this blessed and effective plan for eternal security?

## *The Misplaced "If"*

*If thou canst do any thing . . . . If thou canst believe (Mark 9:22, 23).*

Arrested for the first sin, Adam blamed his wife; taking lessons from her husband, Eve blamed the serpent. And ever since then sinners have been blaming others for their own guilt. Speaking of rhetoric, it has been suggested that the most difficult sentence to say is, "I am wrong."

But man's worst alibi comes to the fore when he charges up his failure to God: "If God had made us different:" "If God were on our side:" "If it were just God's time to bless," etc. Oh, the infinitude of God's patience! How can He be silent while men so insistently and unjustly accuse Him?

But sometimes God does speak up. He does not do it ever "just to get even." He does it only when there is a chance to help. It was a sincere and anxious father that said in doubt and sadness, "If thou canst do any thing," and it was a loving, assuring Saviour who replied, "If thou canst believe." The father was fully aware of his own great need, but it never occurred to him that he was himself responsible for the failure of supply to meet that need. His love was too strong to permit his questioning of the Master's will to help. So he lodged his "if"

against ability. His doubt was not sinful—it was just paralyzing. His question would not keep him out of heaven, but it would bar his child from bodily healing and make his own religion weak and impractical.

There are “ifs” in the experience of us all, and it is well that we learn where they belong. There is a hopeless pessimism that would place the “ifs” all out of reach—in realms where we can do nothing about them. “If the world were different, if the Church were more spiritual, if God would or could”—but the important “ifs” are in our own lives: If we repent, God will forgive; if we seek with all our hearts, He will be found of us; if we dedicate our redeemed lives and trust His grace, He will sanctify wholly; if we follow on to know the Lord, we shall be strong and do exploits; if we obey implicitly, we shall know what His will is; if we persevere unto the end, we shall find Him faithful to keep, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

## *It's the Grind That Gets Them*

*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9).*

In the "automobile cemetery" there are a few cars which came to their end by means of violent accident: but by far the greater number came there just because they could no longer endure the grind—just the grind of daily demand finally got them. And it is like that in matters pertaining to the life of man. A few die physically by reason of violence, but the great majority succumb just by reason of the unrelenting demands of everyday life. And it is like that in the sphere of morality and spirituality. We hear of the instances in which a soul yielded to satanic assault, but where there is one in this list, there are a thousand who gave up to the siege.

Word comes that a man has forsaken the doctrine to which he has been devoted, and we are likely to suppose that he is an intellectual casualty: but it is much more likely that he has just given way to the grind. The Christian life and service is set up on the supposition that Christians will live in the romance of a full Pentecostal experience, and under such conditions the demands are not rigorous, the denials are not irksome, and the commandments are not grievous. But it is the plan of God that as the



outward man grows weaker, the inner man shall be strengthened by daily renewals, and when one is no longer recipient of these spiritual strengthenings, the grind gets him. And more men revise their doctrine to make it fit their poor inward estate than the world knows of.

The whole of life is a probation, and even those who make good during some initial period of Christian profession must not be presumed to be immune to either attack or siege. Especially one must not presume himself to have apprehended. In the parable of the Master, it was not springing up "immediately" that bespoke a harvest from the sowing, but it was taking root, enduring the weather and persevering to the ripening. It is not running well at the beginning of the race, but following on to the finish that assures one of the prize.

It takes patience and faith to plow deep, harrow the corners of the field, disk, drag, roll, and carefully dig out the weeds. Then to work on and hope on in spite of deluge or drought, and to keep the courage up right on past a dozen light harvests, hoping still for the full "ingathering" that vision has seen—but such they must do who would know the rejoicing of the last great harvest home. And while the grind gets the quitters, the grind polishes the persistent, and heaven is inhabited by those who have been "purified, made white and tried."

## *The Challenge of Inactivity*

*Having done all, to stand. Stand therefore* (Eph. 6:13, 14).

It has been reported from the army that one of the first lessons a soldier must learn is to hurry up and get there so he can wait. But surely the soldier has nothing to teach a person who eats in cafes and visits ration boards in these days. We all have to hurry all the time to make way for the time we must spend in waiting. Sometimes, like the soldier, we must hurry to get there so we can wait, and at other times we must hurry to make up for the time we have lost in waiting. Those who complain that their activities overtax them are to be envied rather than pitied, for waiting wears one more than work.

And yet life which demands no waiting is a very incomplete life, and one who has never yet been challenged by enforced inactivity is still an untried, and hence unknown factor. Many a person who bears up well amidst push and movement breaks down or blows up when he is forced to stop.

Dr. H. C. Morrison once remarked that he had gone so many years at top speed and wondered what would happen if he were compelled to stop stock still. Evangelist James Pierce spoke up from the audience and said, "I have tried the other side too,

Dr. Morrison, I was laid low with illness and was unable to preach or do anything at all to lead a soul to Christ for a full twelve months, and God kept me through it. Gave me faith for means to support my family, and kept me sweet in my soul." Dr. Morrison replied, "Brother Pierce, you have made good in the hardest test that can come to one—the task of keeping sweet when you must be inactive."

But inactivity must be enforced to be a blessing. Elected idleness ministers no grace to the slug-gard. And, further, it is only the pause which comes at the end of one's best endeavor to "prepare the way of the Lord" that adds to the harmony of the harp of life. One can "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" only when he has been sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal Lamb and sallied forth to the stark banks of the Red Sea. It is in this sense that "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

In full obedience to the divine exhortation to possess our souls in patience, let us first do all (in separation from sin, in devotion to God, in obedience to the divine will, and in unwavering faith for God's answer), and then, "having done all," let us stand in faith and in patience and in passive (as well as active) obedience. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

## *Plenty and on Time*

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalms 46:1).*

The sad saying, "Too little, and too late" is familiar in every phase of conflict in which human strength is the dependence. But when God is the confidence we are assured of plenty on time. The picture is that of a drowning man whose cries for help do not reach the life guard on the beach, but who is instantly picked up by a strong-limbed swimmer who was at hand all the time.

How often we are told of "the coming man," when we need succor right now! How tormenting it is to be told, "There were giants in the earth in those days," when the current enemy is bearing down hard upon us! How disconcerting to be told that priority is required for an article that is currently indispensable!

All earthly help requires time for its application. The hunger of the starving man must await the slow processes of digestion for its full relief. How much more must the help for the spirit which comes from the deeds and words of men approach with laden feet! But God is a Spirit and He can come directly to our spirits, as the resurrected Jesus passed through the closed and bolted door. God is our

refuge and strength! That is why He is instantly available. He requires no adaptations.

Bud Robinson spoke in metaphors when he said he went down on his knees an illiterate, and came up able to read his title clear to mansions in the skies; he went down a pauper and came up a multi-millionaire; he went down an outcast and came up with God his Father, Jesus Christ his Elder Brother, and saints and angels his everlasting companions, and heaven his Eternal Home. That is, his words were metaphorical, but the facts he described were real; for God is an instant help in time of trouble. His cures are direct, His strength is communicated without delay, His help is the help we need when we need it.

O needy soul, O sorely burdened heart, the answer to your call, the supply of your deep need is closer to you now than the very air you breathe, and His fullness is exceedingly, abundantly, above all you can ask or think.

## *The Little Maple Tree at My Window*

The wind was brisk—almost a gale—this morning. The little maple tree at my window—now clothed in full summer foliage—appeared alternately amused and frightened by the treatment accorded it. Sometimes the little tree bowed and straightened gracefully or twisted grudgingly and resumed its poise without a smile. Sometimes the gust was so sudden and so violent that the little tree bent sharply, and sprang back like a drawn bow, and seemed to look at me appealingly as though trying to say, "That was a narrow escape."

That little maple tree spoke to me as a parable of the humor and seriousness of life. Perhaps in theory the tree would prefer the motionless evening, when there is no strain and no unusual risk. But I think in fact it is partial to the gale. At any rate, I am sure it enjoys part of the wind's rough play, and the rest is helpful, if not pleasant. For by resisting the wind's attempts to move it from its moorings, the roots of the tree are enabled to push more deeply into the soil; the exercise the wind makes necessary contributes to the toughness of the tree's fiber, and the everchanging front which the blow forces the leaves to present gives fuller opportunity to the at-

mospere to make its contribution to the general form and culture of the tree.

Perhaps we all dream of ease and security and inactivity. We think we should like to be left alone by everything that occasions labor and strain and inconvenience. But this is just theory. Like the little maple tree, I think in fact we all love the conflict, the strain, the activity—the gale—and not the calm. Perhaps we do not like it all, but some, like Dr. Vance, so long the beloved pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Nashville, are even willing to admit that they “have had lots of fun fighting the devil.” But whether we confess to enjoyment or not, it is the strong wind that becomes the occasion for our stability, our rugged dependability, and our most noticeable enlargement.

We need not concern ourselves as to whether the winds will blow or not. They will blow, we can count on that! Our concern is to make them the occasion for the development of a surer, stronger, fuller, more satisfying Christian experience and life. Phillips Brooks warned that we were not to pray for tasks equal to our strength, but for strength equal to our tasks. God is the ruler of our strength, but the overruler of our storms. If He permits the wind to blow hard, that is just proof that He is ready with strength to enable me to survive and to become stronger thereby.

## *And Still There Is Hope*

*Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed (Psalms 46:2).*

Speculation regarding the future of the world is a popular pastime. Once this was confined largely to preachers and sociologists and an occasional philosopher-geologist. But the advent of the atomic bomb has turned loose the sociologists, physicists, chemists, and politicians. Pseudo-statesmen would drive us into international combines on the plea that right or wrong, we must do it to keep somebody from exploding the universe.

It is foolish for anyone to attempt to say what will or will not happen in our world of tomorrow. But sin as a principle in the hearts of men, and as a practice in the lives of men and of nations, is a million times more debasing and destructive than all the atomic bombs of today or any other day. The bombs may explode the material universe; but sin damns the immortal souls of men. A thousand years from now it will be seen and known that the return of liquor to curse the American home and debase the American youth was a greater disaster than the atomic bomb has been or ever can be.

The hopes of optimists who visualize a new and better world based upon some form of a world



state or a commonwealth of states or a league of nations or anything of the sort have no firmer foundation than the fears of the pessimists. The chances are that the course of the future will not take either extreme. Methods for controlling and destroying the atomic bomb will probably appear, world associations will likely fail and break down, and the mixture of good and bad will continue right on to the time of the end when God shall bring men into judgment.

We have no panacea for world collapse and no great faith in the widespread good for which some labor. But we do have this: we have in Jesus Christ a place of refuge and safety where all men may hide until the storm be over—past. We have in Jesus Christ a solid foundation for faith and hope and love that will withstand the deepest floods and endure the hottest fires. The exploding atom may turn the desert sand into glass, and finally the earth and the atmosphere may melt with fervent heat. But still there is hope. "All other ground is sinking sand" or perhaps it is melting sand. But Christ still remains the solid Rock—"The Rock of Ages." Flee, man, flee right now to the Sheltering Rock, to the House that will stand, "though the earth be removed."

## *In the Furnace Heat*

Yesterday a man told me that the son of a certain minister in the town had just been killed in the war. As I walked down the street I came face to face with that preacher, and in the best words I could command assured him of our full sympathy and prayers. Then last night a dear brother called on long distance to say that the son of one of our leading preachers has been reported "missing in action," and this morning I undertook to write that preacher and his family a word of condolence. And although it has been my own lot to know deep sorrows, I cannot deceive myself with the thought, "I know how to sympathize with you," for, by experience, I have been convinced that no one really knows how to sympathize with another in true and deep sorrow. "Jesus knows all about our struggles," and He is the only one that does. So my lines to the family in question were brief, and concluded with these words, "The God whom you serve continually will not forsake you in the furnace heat." And that's my confidence today for myself and for every true child of God.

We learn from the experience of Daniel and his three friends that neither royal favor nor high wisdom can save us always from the lions' den and the seven-times heated furnace, and those who find

rejoicing only in the fact that they and their loved ones have been given special immunities are grasping at the passing shadow—the immunities will not continue forever. The den and the furnace await us. The lasting consolation is the assurance that God will keep us company in the den, and the Son of God will come and walk with us in the furnace. And a lions' den with God is better than a castle without His presence, and a furnace in the company of Jesus is happier than a garden of herbs in which one must walk alone.

It is a mistake to say the furnace has no effect upon one who walks there in the divine company; for its excessive heat does serve to burn off our fetters, so that we thereafter walk more freely than before. What those fetters are in each individual case is a secret between the soul and God. But fire makes immune to further fire, and with each succeeding step there is the consolation of knowing we shall not have to come this way again; for our faces are set, not for return to any earthly Eden, but to a heavenly paradise. And coming up out of great tribulation with robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, we shall stand before the throne of God in a land where there is no more hunger, sickness, death, or crying, and where the Lamb shall lead us ever unto fountains of waters. The furnace shall give way to the fountain!

## *Seeing God in the Dark*

*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord (Isaiah 6:1).*

Isaiah was a favored prophet in that he had the king for his friend. The friendship was so intimate that the king made the prophet his biographer (II Chronicles 26:22), and it could not be otherwise than that the prophet's words were enforced by the king's authority, and the prophet's lot was made easier and more effective by the king's bounty.

But the king died, and the prophet suddenly found himself in the midst of human uncertainties. Would the new king be his friend? Would old opposers be emboldened to resent the prophet's reforms? Would the emoluments to which the prophet had become accustomed be taken away? The prophet betook himself to prayer, and instead of being assured of the new king's assistance, he saw God as his ever-present comfort and strength.

Last week a wife received word that her husband is a prisoner of war. Yesterday a sister had word that her only brother was seriously wounded on the western front. "Missing in action" was the message a mother received regarding her son. "Killed in action" read the telegram handed to the anxious father concerning the child of his heart. These sorrows are added to the usual sorrows which come to

the hearts of men and women in time of peace and of war.

One mother prayed that she might just see her son once more as he used to appear in life. But it is better that we see God when we pray in the dark. The vision of a departed loved one, if such a vision should be given, would be but a transient apparition. But when we see God upon His throne we may be sure that He has not just now taken the throne nor will He leave it ever. He is God when it is dark, just as He is when it is light.

But it is not bereavement alone that makes it dark. There are the disappointments occasioned by the living. There are the disillusionments that come through unfriendly seasons and exploding investments. There are the discouragements that arise from our own sense of weakness and inability. And, worst of all, there are the shame and guilt which come from our personal sins and unrighteousness—the cloud arising from transgressions which separates us from the face and favor of God.

But no matter what causes the darkness, our solace is to be found in the place of prayer, as it was with Isaiah. For when we see God we see also the burning coal of purging which is brought from His altar, and we see the vision of His holiness which not only makes the temple glorious, but which also fills our own souls with strength and comfort and everlasting assurance. "In thy light shall we see light" (Psalms 36:9).

## *What Do You See in the Night?*

Raymond Calkins says, "It is what men see in the night that tests them and proves their strength, the quality, and the fiber of a faith which beholds the realities of God and His enduring power and love." It is in this particular that the prophets of God differ from the prophets of men; for while the latter may see the blood-curdling apparitions as the former do, it is only the former who see the end of evil and the final triumph of God. And it is characteristic of the songs of Zion that they all end with notes written in the major key.

Men capable of seeing in the dark are agreed that apparitions like another war of world-wide scope, the use of the atomic bomb, revolution on a basis and on a scale never known before, and many others of like hideous mien lift up their ugly heads and chill with their horrible, skull-like grins. And there are some who see these grim monsters only, and who must therefore posit doom as the finale for man, and the hearts of such properly fail them for fear of those things that are coming upon us and our world. But there are those who see beyond these sinister things to the day of the Lord at which time Christ shall come as the Sun of Righteousness to drive away the thick clouds and dark shadows and usher in a time of peace and righteousness—a day

beyond the night and after which there shall be no night.

It is observed that each section of Zechariah's prophecies begins with the words, "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw"—that is, he looked up to see. That is the right attitude for us all. If we look down we see but the hopelessness of men. If we look about we see but the encompassing waves and hear the howling winds of despair. But when we look up we see God within and beyond all else besides. We see His power and His wisdom and His love revealed and destined to be finally justified and established.

Introspection even has its limitations; for if we look too much upon ourselves we see our insufficiency and want of merit. It is the upward look that brings assurance, and then the onward-upward look that sustains hope. The rain clouds bring out the rainbow, and the nighttime brings out the stars to those who make God their trust, and who insist on seeing everything through the telescope of His eternal purpose as well as under the microscope of His blessed will. And to the men of faith in our time, as well as to the people of Galilee in the days of Jesus, "The people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

## *The Fruit of the Spirit*

*Ye shall know them by their fruits* (Matthew 7:16).

The witness of the Holy Spirit to both adoption and to sanctification is direct to the human spirit, and none but the recipient knows certainly whether this witness has been received or not. But the fruits of the Spirit-filled life are both subjective and objective; the former being manifest in the individual life to the consciousness of the bearer himself, and the latter being open to the appraisal of observers from without.

The subjective fruits of the Spirit (or as some think of it, the fruit of the Spirit analyzed) are stated as being love, joy, peace, longsuffering (or patience), gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Galatians 5:22, 23). And in the place of our secret prayer it is good that we should each of us examine his own heart to see whether we possess this indirect witness that we are clean and holy in the sight of God.

Bishop Foster suggests that we make our examination along three lines: tempers, duties and experience. Under tempers he would have us ask ourselves: "Do you become impatient under trial? are you fretful when chided or crossed? are you angry or



revengeful when injured? are you vain when flattered or proud when prospered? are you complaining when chastened? unbelieving when forsaken? unkind when neglected? are you subject to discontent, to ambition, to selfishness? are you worldly? covetous of riches, of vain pomp and parade, of indulgence, of honor, of ease? Are you unfeeling, contemptuous of others, seeking your own, boasters, proud, lovers of your own selves? Beware! These are the sediments of the old nature."

On duties, Bishop Foster would have us ask ourselves: "Do you delight in them? are they your pleasure? do they constitute your chief joy? When God evidently calls, do you go willingly, though it be through a furnace; through persecution; through losses, reproaches, sorrows?"

On experience, Bishop Foster would have us ask ourselves: "Have you unwavering confidence in God? Is your peace of mind full? Have you joy in the Holy Ghost? Do you have free communion with God? Do you realize within a consciousness of purity?—Are you entirely the Lord's?—In your work, in your rest, in your indulgences, in your denials, in your affections, in your volitions, in your associations, in your endeavors, are you always, everywhere, by intention and effort, in union with God?"

## *The Things That Endure*

People from all parts of the world have marveled at the fantastic forms to be seen in Colorado's "Garden of the Gods." Geologists explain that there was once a whole range of high plateau and higher peaks along there. But time, through the processes of erosion by rain and frost and wind, wore away the softer portions—the earth, the sand and the poorly congealed rocks—and what one sees now is just the portion that refused to give way. The substantial portion of the big range is still there.

It has been said, "Time is the leveler of all things." But this is only relatively true. Time first levels the things that are transient, and there are some things it cannot level at all. Paul put it this way, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Let us think in terms of examples: take the Bible—take my Bible: In the first place, here is the Bible as a book made of paper and leather and printer's ink. This book is temporal. Already it is showing the effects of wear, and in time it will become unusable and I shall have to discard it. But here is the Bible as the Word of God. And in this form "His word cannot be broken." When the book is finished and discarded, the Word

will be as new as ever. Then here are our bodies which Paul likened unto tents. Here is our physical universe which the writer of Hebrews says God will some day fold up as a vesture. But over against our tent is "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and over against the passing material universe is "the city foursquare" that shall never fail. Likewise, those who have lived among us and are now gone on into the more excellent glory have not perished—they have only changed.

Let us give passing attention to transient things and first attention to lasting things. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The glory of God, the salvation of our own souls, the ministry of the good news of grace to others—these are the things that will continue when the others have disappeared. To these let us turn, to these let us cling, and in these we shall be rewarded.

## *Keeping My Part Straight*

My mother used to tell us that they kept the streets of Rome clean by each man keeping the part clean that was in front of his own house. She applied this proverb to many phases of life. By means of it she taught us each to take care of his own clothing, each to look to the learning of his own lessons, and each to do well the portion of the family chores assigned to him. By quoting this proverb she often cut short a general criticism that one of us was in the process of making. All the wide scope of duties required of a family of six boys and five girls, we found could be well covered by the simple expedient of each one of us making good on the portion which fell to his lot.

But the proverb applies to the church quite as fitly as to the city of Rome and the family or school. We are each in some vital sense our "brother's keeper," but the first obligation of this trust demands that the keeper be right and clean and holy himself. No amount of preaching can excuse the preacher from the obligation to practice. No amount of exhortation can save us from the duty of attending our own class meeting. "Physician, heal thyself" may become the verbal hiding place of the unreasonable critic, but before it is such it is the reasonable demand of both the listener and the observer of him who would cure the ills of his fellows.

Christians are all reformers and evangelists. It is their principal calling to ask men to change and to demand of them that they be made new. But they best succeed only in small degree in the business of saving that which was lost—measured in terms of the number they are able to bring to genuine conversion and to true sanctification. It is only our own recovery that can be complete and permanent, and the reluctance of others can be no basis for disobedience in ourselves. That old tract made useful application of the principle involved in the adage, "Others may, you cannot." And there is a place for the complementary sentiment, "Others may not, but you can just the same." The others may be friends and loved ones, but neither our responsibility nor destiny is wrapped up in them. They may not, but I can just the same.

How shall we make and keep the church spiritual? Simply like they did it in Rome—each one of us attaining to this worthy state himself. How shall we support the program of the gospel? Just the same way—by each one of us paying his tithes, making offerings, and qualifying for the blessedness that belongs to the cheerful giver. How shall we release the revival for which we pray and long? Simply by each of us, like Andrew of old, going out and bringing in his brother Simon. My own part is my first responsibility.

## *It Makes All the Difference*

It makes all the difference whether man is immortal or not. If he is not immortal, then the best philosophy of life is "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." But if he is immortal, then this life is a probation period in which we are expected to prepare for the unending ages yet to be, and "seeing all these things are to be destroyed, what manner of men ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

It makes all the difference whether there is a supreme God of infinite power, wisdom and holiness. If there is not such a God, then the universe and ourselves are mere accidents of blind chance, and no moral responsibility is involved, and no judgment awaits us. But if there is such a God, then we are His creatures, no matter how much we may make of secondary causes, and we are responsible to Him now and shall answer to Him later when our day on earth is finished.

It makes all the difference whether sin is truly reprehensible and defiling. If it is not, then there is no reason to become agitated about it. If it is mere weakness and misfortune and is no more than a rash on the skin, we do well to forget it and go on in moral and spiritual indifference. But if it is truly the despicable thing that God hates; if its guilt bars

us from the favor of God and its defilement makes us unhappy in the company of the holy now and everywhere, all possible duties must give way to a search for a remedy for a mortal moral ailment, and salvation for ourselves and others is the chief concern.

It makes all the difference whether Jesus Christ is God. If He is not God, then He is merely a great teacher and example whose wisdom may enlighten us and whose manner of life may inspire us to our own best human effort. But if He is God, then His blood is merit for our pardon and purifying and His Spirit is efficient to make us good where we are bad, and victorious over all the enemies of our highest good.

Man is immortal: God is, and is infinite in power, wisdom and holiness: sin is indescribably real and terrible: Jesus Christ is very God, as well as very man. Therefore we are responsible creatures, salvation is our one chief concern, the blood of Jesus Christ is efficacious for our pardon and cleansing, and the Holy Spirit is present with His offer of help to regenerate and sanctify and to empower. And those who build upon these facts and conclusions are never disappointed!

## *Assurance and Reassurance*

We had been following the marked highway through the country and through the towns, and had developed a sense of assurance that we were steadily drawing nearer to the goal which had been set for us. But of a sudden one of the party observed that the mark which distinguished the highway had not been seen for some time, and there began to appear a sense of uneasiness in us all. Had we become so engrossed in conversation or so employed by the sights along the way that we had failed to observe some turn in the road? But just as our anxiety reached special height, our eyes were greeted by the familiar and welcome sight of our course, and we were "reassured," and rejoiced to know that we were "still on the right road."

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit" at the beginning of the true Christian journey, and we are permitted to sing, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." But how wonderful it is to be "reassured" by "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord!" There is a dependence upon emotion that must be avoided, but the only Christian that can afford to speak disparagingly of feeling is the one who is blessed with plenty of it. For the one who does not have it does better to take himself to class meeting to find out why he is void of this just-



ly expected fruit of faith and obedience. We did continue for a while on the highway reasoning that we must be right since we were unaware of being wrong. But nevertheless, we were much happier when we were reassured by the appearance of the dependable road sign. Likewise we walk on in confidence when the way is void of spiritual joy. But it is like "snow in harvest" to our drooping spirits when the "oil of gladness" is poured out afresh upon our heads and hearts.

"How long has it been since it rained?" I asked of my neighbor yesterday upon my return from a month's absence. He named the days, and then insisted that I should not be disappointed at the appearance of lawns and gardens. But today the rain came down, and the gardens are refreshed. How long has it been since "showers of blessings" came down upon your soul? Shall we not reach up the hands of prayer and faith for the joys of reassurance that come when "Jesus shows His smiling face"? Shall we not claim His promise that His blessings "shall be new every morning"?

## *"Oh, to Be Like Thee!"*

Yesterday, passing through the White Mountains of New Hampshire, we stopped beside "Profile Lake" and gazed for a time upon "The Old Man of the Mountains," "The Great Stone Face" of Hawthorne's story, and were reminded vividly of the transformation the writer describes as having taken place in the lad who looked so often and so long and so appreciatingly upon this phenomenon of nature, imagining, as he did, that the "Great Stone Face" was the facsimile of a living man who would come as the benefactor of mankind. And the lad gazed and mused until his own face came to look like the face of the man of his dreams, and his character and his deeds assumed the likeness of his prototype.

Not only the story, but the lesson it presents, is familiar and true to the facts of life; for we all tend to become like those upon whom we look, and to be transformed into the image of the object of our worship. Contemporaries of our Lord's disciples "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus," and Peter was discovered to his companions about the fire in the court because, as they said, "thy speech bewrayeth thee."

The results of contemplation are hastened, it is said, if the subject is willing and insistent. If he looks on purpose, and lingers by choice, the trans-

formation will be speeded, and the lines will be more deeply drawn. Passing glances help, but longer waitings, like the longer exposures of the camera, bring more permanent impressions. In the abstract, David described the righteous man as meditating in God's law "day and night." And if we would be like Jesus, we must walk with Him and talk with Him as the habits of our life. If we would assume His form, we must gaze upon Him as our model. We must look intently, we must look appreciatingly, we must look often and long. "Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus, I've lost sight of all beside; so enchained my spirit's vision, looking at the Crucified."

The Christlikeness we seek is not a matter of outer imitation so much as a matter of inner character. We would indeed "do as Jesus did," but we would have our words and deeds to be like His because our hearts are copies of His own. Our deep-springing prayer is: "Oh, to be like Thee—pure as Thou art—Come in Thy fulness—Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart."

## *“At the Top of the World”*

Describing an experience on the approaches of Mount Everest, Mrs. Bishop Fisher called her book *At the Top of the World*. The title was fitting as becometh the earth's highest lift above the level of the sea, but it is also fitting as descriptive of the estate of one who is by grace “clothed with the sun with the moon under his feet.”

We must all suffer a sense of futility in connection with the world's bent to run riot in wickedness, drunkenness, lasciviousness, idolatry, war, and forgetfulness of God—there is so little we seem to be able to do about it. We know now that Socrates was mistaken when he identified knowledge and goodness; for in the world's best day for knowledge it is having its worst day for goodness.

But although we cannot save the world, we ourselves may be saved out of the world. As a ship, the world is fast sinking. But we, thank God, have already taken to the life boats, and we shall not go down in the maelstrom. Security is a magic word in the vocabulary of the day, and yet, in fact, there is less security now than ever before. Just as men talk “peace and safety” while “sudden destruction” approaches apace, so, likewise, they talk “security” when everything we have accounted dependable in economic life threatens to fall into decay.

But the shifting sands of the world order are not the only place there is. There is a Rock upon which we may stand—a solid Rock—and be safe even when the smoke of burning Sodom ascends the heavens. There is a place “at the top of the world” where the redeemed in Christ have taken their stand. Here no flood can reach them, no fire can burn their dwelling, no famine can drive them away. “At the top of the world!” Mountains are forbidding as barriers, and intolerable as weights. But as pedestals they are superb. Our place is “at the top of the world.” Up here the air is pure and free from dust, so breathing is easy and the vision is clear. This is not a good place from which to start for worldly destinations. But this is a station on the road to heaven. In fact, “Where Jesus is, 'tis heaven there.” And in this place “at the top of the world,” there is peace and victory and fellowship as becometh “the Mountains of God.” “Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong” (Psalms 30:7).

## *There Are Leaves on the Fig Tree*

It is said that Frederick of Prussia once said to his court chaplain: "Give me in a word conclusive proof that the Bible is true. I do not want an argument. Just a summary." The chaplain thoughtfully replied: "The Jew." And there are those who believe that the Jew is the fig tree which Jesus bade us observe for signs of the coming spring. True, men, in attempting this observation, have fallen into error because of their giving way to speculations. But we are still called upon to look for the leaves which would tell us as followers of Jesus how close is the time of His coming back to the earth. If the buds are bursting and the leaves are blooming, then we should not hesitate to say, "Spring is at hand. The day of the Lord breaketh."

We are in the midst of history. The daily changes are so great as to make the week's news obsolete. We have no sufficient distance to give us perspective, but no thoughtful person can doubt that some of the things we hear are prophetic, and that some of the sounds are the rustling of the leaves on the fig tree. We may, through the influence of proximity or personal interest, overestimate some occurrences and underestimate others. For this reason we forbear to recite instances, and ask only that you lift up your eyes and see the leaves on the

fig tree (some of these leaves are about grown now), and know that the coming of the Lord is at the door.

The persistence of the Jew in the face of tremendous odds (all the nations who were contemporaneous with the Jews in the times of their arising, full flowering and decline are gone) is proof of God's faithfulness in keeping His promises. The curious plight in which the Jews continuously find themselves is proof of God's remembrance to execute judgment. And the changing relation of the Jews to other peoples is indicative of the progressive designs of God in ruling and overruling in the affairs of men and of nations.

From the size of the leaves on the fig tree—the Jewish nation—we do well to take knowledge of the fact that “the summer is nigh, even at the door.” For although the change in seasons will mean judgment upon the nations, it will mean the coming of blessing in measure hitherto unknown to the true people of God—to them who love Him and pray for His appearing.

## *Eternal Praise*

A woman who described her vision of heaven, said that although there is no night in heaven, there is a softening of the light in suggestion of lessened activity, and that at such a time, she lapsed into peaceful thought. At the time when the light brightened, suggestive of a new day, this new arrival in heaven arose, knelt, as her custom on earth had been to do, and sought to pray. But she found no petition in her heart, and finished her devotions, as she commenced them, on the note of praise and thanksgiving. Later she asked one who had been there longer, "How do you pray in heaven, seeing there is no unsatisfied desire?" The answer was, "Prayer in heaven is just all praise." Think of it: every longing satisfied, every mystery made clear, every prayer a praise!

But even in this world, praise is one of the very most important elements of prayer. There is no surer way to added blessings than true thankfulness for blessings already received, and there is no fuller plea than that which speaks, "Not my will, but thine be done." David made praise volitional, saying, "I will praise the Lord." If praise is spontaneous, well and good. But if it is not spontaneous, then let it be volitional. Praise God in the sunshine, praise Him in the shadows. Praise Him when



your heart is joyful, praise Him when you are sore and tired. Praise Him when there are evidences of His favor. Praise Him by faith when He seems to hide His face. Make praise a vocation: for there is no greater thing that anyone can do than to worship God in the beauty of holiness and to bring an offering and come into His court. "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." When one cannot praise God for his circumstances, it is yet his privilege to praise Him in spite of his circumstances, even as Job said in his distress, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Those who praise God here by faith, shall praise Him there in sight; for to them who make the glory of God their goal, the glory of God shall be revealed. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord!"

## *Positive Profit*

Men have puzzled their minds trying to find an answer to the Master's question, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But they would do well, also, to consider how much a man is profited if he saves his soul, even if he loses the world.

There is a big sense in which a man loses the world, if he loses his soul. Paul said: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Timothy 4:8). No one can gain the world in the sense of obtaining a permanent title to it, and that man gains the world in the fullest possible sense who makes of the world opportunity for salvation and for service. Such a man owns the world now, and will inherit it for eternity.

There is no occasion for us to deny the passing good found by the pleasure seeker, the honor grabber, or the money gatherer. But none of these actually gain the world. Not only do they not gain the world in its entirety, they do not even gain a worthy share of it. The man who saves his soul gains the world in a far better sense than these or any others we might name.

It has been observed that increase of income does not necessarily minister to happiness, and that

promotion does not satisfy ambition. The observation is that wants out-travel money increases, and that new worlds appear faster than anyone can conquer them. But men do not always confess that the fault is in the man, and not in the things in which he seeks his satisfaction. The reason such men cannot save the world is that they have not saved their own souls. And the proof that this is true is found in the fact that they who have truly saved their own souls have also found "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." The portion may be little or much, the position may be an invalid's couch or a ruler's throne. But in any case, the lot is a pleasant one. And it is the Christian's firm faith and hope that "he that gains heaven gains all." There is no view of rewards for the future that can befog the faith that the merest babe who gets to heaven will be infinitely full and happy forevermore.

## *"Watchman, What of the Night?"*

What time is it by the clock of God in the day of the world? This day of man had its dawn at the time of creation when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God (the angels) shouted for joy." It had its morning when the earth was young and men sought their way by the light of conscience and tradition. It had its noontide when the Son of God walked the shores of Galilee, died upon a cross for the sins of men, and arose from the dead to send forth His Spirit in Pentecostal fullness upon regenerated children of God. But what time is it now? If Pentecost was noon, it is sometime in the afternoon now. But is it early afternoon, midafternoon or do the curfews toll the knell of passing day, and the shadows mark the falling of the night?

It has been the trend of men (Peter observed it as a custom from old times) to say, "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were," and they are loath to give up the morning of time, even as they are reluctant to admit the passing of their own youth. And they have sought comfort in the suggestion that God's clock ticks off the minutes at a given rate, and that there is as much duration from noontide to sunset as from sunrise to midday. But even a little consideration forces the conclusion that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years,

and a thousand years as one day" in that his clock may turn a thousand years in a day or hesitate a thousand years at a given point; for God is greater than His usual methods (we call them laws) of procedure, and is himself bound by no limitations, having made no commitments whatsoever. The ancients observed that "the mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine." However this is but a partial truth. For sometimes the mills of God grind very fast. Sometimes the clock turns as far on the dial in a generation as it had previously gone in a millennium—witness the history of men and of nations in proof.

It is afternoon by the clock of God. The indications are that it is late afternoon. The minutes tick away fast—the sun approaches the horizon and prepares for "the dip." It hesitates on the margin, but it surely cannot be long now until the cry is made: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!" Do you have your lamp trimmed and burning and oil in your vessel with your lamp?

## *The Imminency of Christ's Second Coming*

No man may say Christ will surely come today; but all who believe in the Holy Scriptures are able to say He may come today. And there is a wide difference between the two statements. A thing that is imminent is impending, but hangs suspended, and it may continue to be suspended for an indefinite length of time. And it is just thus with the time of Christ's second coming—it is of itself sure, sure as the promises of God—but the time of its occurrence is uncertain. "It won't be long, it may be soon." This, without doubt, is the meaning of the Master's words, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

But while we do not know the exact time of Christ's second coming, the Lord has given "signs of the times" which if we properly observe, we shall be watching, so that the day shall not come upon us as a thief in the night. Governmentally, the time of the end is to be a time of "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Ecclesiastically, it is to be a time when men shall in large measure have "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Domestically, it is to be a time when the

home shall go to pieces and people shall be marked as "without natural affection." Spiritually, it is a time when because iniquity shall abound "the love of many shall wax cold." Judicially, the times will be marked by the fact that men are "truce-breakers." And yet, over against all these evil things, the times of the end are to be marked for the progress made in the preaching of the gospel "among all nations," and there will be a remnant of true and holy people who will keep "faith on the earth." And any who know and think will, I think, agree with the statement that all the conditions involved are with us now. This being true, "Jesus may come today!"

Those who inject certain factors as being necessary yet before Jesus can come are making gratuitous guesses and doing the cause of God and the souls of men a disservice, for they are practically saying, "My lord delayeth his coming," and this false announcement, now as in the past, serves to make God's people careless, and to give up the instant watch for the lighting up of the heavens with the glory of His blessed advent. Every dependable voice declares, "His coming draweth nigh," and all His loyal people say, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." May this day be that glad day when He shall appear!

## *Today's Attention to Tomorrow's Vision*

The optician warns that we must take care of tomorrow's vision today, and this, too, is a moral and spiritual necessity. Even what a man believes about tomorrow reflects in what he does today. Paul stated the motto of those who believe tomorrow is oblivion, as "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." Stated in "modern version" this saying is, "Be happy while you live, for when you die you will be dead a long time." But how different the faith and conduct of the Christian: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. . . . Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found in him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (II Peter 3:11-14).

But vision refers not only to scope and distance, but also to clarity. To see well, one must see clearly, as well as to see early. Today is but the tomorrow we either anticipated or dreaded yesterday. Tomorrow is but an extension of today. The present moment is part of and prelude to eternity. To regret the past and to dread the future is to waste energy that should be expended in improving the present. A



Christian's past, insofar as it might ask for regret, is under the blood of the Cross, where it should be definitely allowed to rest. The Christian's future holds nothing that can properly call for dread, for the exhaustless resources of God are pledged for his security. This clears the way for giving undivided attention to the present.

We all want to wear tomorrow: therefore let us weave today, and let us know that we shall be well clothed in eternity, if we hold steadily to distaff and shuttle in time. Or, if the concept be of cottage or palace, then this is the time for gathering material for that house that shall be our home forever. Or, if glory be the goal, then this life is the place for winning victories, eternity the place for rejoicing over victories won, and for wearing crowns and waving palms. Or, if the concept has to do with pleasure and joy, today is the time for labor and travail, tomorrow we shall rest and rejoice. "Today is the day of salvation"; tomorrow is heaven for the saved. If you would have a safe tomorrow, make sure of it by means of a holy and useful today; for today's attention is essential to tomorrow's vision.

## *On Earth and in Heaven*

Last night I dreamed that, to the amazement of my fellows and without wings or other mechanical assistance, I could fly. I seemed to be able to accomplish this most useful and remarkable feat simply by a mere pleasant exercise of my will.

But, after a short period of triumph, I found that I did not want to fly any more, for the simple reason that I did not particularly want to go anywhere, and I missed the joy of work, and mourned the challenge which the necessity of moving mountains or lifting rocks once brought to me. Moreover, the joy of my advantage over my fellows was largely lost by the absence of fellowship which my accomplishment occasioned, and I found myself wishing I might stay where I was, walk as others must do, and eat my bread by the sweat of my face, as those about me were compelled to do. In fact, I found my greatest joy in the fact that some still recognized me as a "brother in tribulation," and gave me unspoken sympathy in my struggle to climb the hill of goodness toward God and immortal glory.

Today I am awake, and am glad that, like Phillips Brooks, I prefer to be a miracle of grace to the possession of power to work miracles. I do not crave the doubtful compliment contained in the words, "I did not think you could do it" (a word that ex-

alts the work above the worker) . Rather I long for that appraisal which envalues character more than reputation, manhood above money, moral force above physical power, and godliness above all gain. For I know that where I am is incidental, what I do is of small consequence, but what I am makes for happiness in the sight of God and in the favor of heaven forevermore.

I therefore ask not for emoluments or for endowments. I ask for weight and worth that shall find expression in the praise of God, and which shall account His "well done" here and in the days to come as sufficient reward.

Looking forward into the new year, I ask only to be numbered among the poor of this world, rich in faith, whom He hath chosen to be heirs of His everlasting kingdom. In such an estate, and in such company, I shall be content to dwell both on earth and in heaven.

## *Forty Forgotten Years*

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the writer follows the path of faith in the history of the worthies step by step chronologically until the crossing of the Red Sea; then there is a jump of forty years to the capture of Jericho (Hebrews 11:29-30). Even the crossing of the Jordan is skipped. But come to think of it, if there had been no wanderings, there would have been no Jordan, and the people would have entered Canaan at Kadesh-Barnea. The story therefore is told as God designed it to be; and the way men, through disobedience, marred it is altogether ignored. The emphasis is therefore lifted from "how to cross," and is made to rest upon "how to possess."

It is not important that we learn how not to do things. This is the weakness of most "life's stories" (I have learned to avoid the man who wants to tell me his life's story); for the body of such tales is composed of the material of the forty years that are better skipped. The Red Sea and Jericho are spiritual contiguities, and their separation is witness principally to the foibles and misadventures of men.

It sometimes has been the habit to judge one's attainments in grace on the basis of the reluctance with which he came to repentance, and to conse-

cration and to deliverance. But that is giving the forty forgotten years the chief place. If these years must be brought to attention, let them be assigned to subordinate rank; for in the story of possession, Jericho is next after the Red Sea.

Often we have marveled over the simplicity of the outline of the lives of saints. All the essentials are involved in the brief lines: "Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested" (I Chronicles 4:10). More words might be used, but no more could be said, for the wilderness of men's wanderings is incidental to the main biography of any man. And the true Christian boast is in God's ability, not in man's inability. The destination, not the journey, is the goal.

## *Thank God, We See Through!*

*Now we see through a glass, darkly* (I Cor.13:12).

Paul was nearing the triumphant conclusion of his poem on divine love; so it must have been the *seeing through* that impressed him. There was some mist on the glass, but it was still a glass. There were limitations to the power of sight, but he could still see *through*. The mist and the limitations must have been confined to the interim, and beyond the interim it was clear and the power of sight was full.

So many unknown factors enter that it is always hazardous to forecast the course of nations or the fate of the individual man. There is always mist on the glass and limitations of the eyesight. These factors cause us to "see darkly," that is, with want of clarity. But for all these, thank God we can still "see through"! We can see through the present war; we can see through the Great Tribulation itself; we can see through the period of test and trial which yet lies ahead for us individually. Thank God, we can see through!

No matter how clearly anyone can see, if he cannot see through, his vision is of small consequence. The road that is plain at the moment may yet turn out to be a "dead-end street." It is ability

to see beyond the wall and on past the turn in the road that enables one to make his destination.

To most of us poverty, illness, loss of friends, old age, strain and death are mists upon the glass. We are not deceived by the passing parade. We know "that bonds of afflictions abide" us; but we know that these things are not only coming, but they are coming "to pass." We see through!

Take the Book of Revelation: to many of us it is a difficult book. We understand the spiritual counsel given to us by way of the seven churches of Asia, but after that the course of time is not so clear. We could sit and bewail the mist that darkens the glass; but we shall not do that—we shall look on to the coming down of "The City Foursquare," to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, to the New Heaven and the new earth, to the eternal victory of God and His redeemed and glorified. There is much that is dark in the interim, but thank God, we see through to where it is clear and bright and blessed beyond compare!

## *When the Autumn Leaves Turn Yellow*

Yesterday a man approaching ninety stopped to tell me of his recent weeks in the hospital, and of how the prayers of God's people brought him out. But I could not escape the conclusion that his affliction is age, rather than disease, and that his recovery is but a temporary stay of the inexorable processes of deterioration, rather than a healing of disease. It is of course every person's duty to live as long as he can in keeping with his calling, but old age is more permanent than the acute illnesses of youth.

No one should be willing to get old prematurely, but it is disappointing to see one whose glory is all in his past or who holds on to youth as though it were the sum of life's experience. The normal life, when finished, is summed up in the words, "I have been young, and now am old," but it is a happy life only if it arises to say, "Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." For autumn has its beauties and its fruits just as springtime has its vitality and its flowers. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness," and old age is a calamity only to those who live for this world—the gate of



exit, like the evening sunset, may surpass in glory the aurora of the morning's dawn.

To "hold on" to one's youth when the face is prone to bear the marks of angels' touch and the hair seeks to change its brown of earth for the silver of heaven is but to say that one did not live well the time of flowers, and fain would delay the season of fruit. That is like stalling in the grades to escape the riches of college. Nay, rather let the attitude be that of Robert Browning, who in his "Rabbi Ben Ezra," sings:

Grow old along with me;  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made:  
Our times are in His hand  
Who saith, A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half; trust God;  
See all, nor be afraid!

## *Cling Closely to the Trunk*

When climbing a tree (and even more in descending to earth again), it is important to keep close to the trunk. The limbs and branches may be more easily grasped, but they are likely to break and let you fall. Moreover, the limbs and branches have the inclination of becoming separated from each other, as they reach outward from the trunk, and this may make it difficult, even impossible to pass from one to the other of them in ascending or descending. There are times, even (as boyhood experiences now remind us), when one must cling, fly-like, to the trunk without asking any help at all from the limbs and branches. And when the branches are used, one does well to remember that their usefulness depends upon their vital adherence to the trunk (dead branches may occasion disaster to the climber).

Life is like a tree, and is composed of root, trunk, and branches (twigs and leaves also being necessary to complete the picture). And we must cling to the trunk of principle, rather than concern ourselves too much with the limbs of partial vision or the twigs and leaves of detailed words and actions. The details are there, but their force and usefulness require that they spring from and retain their vital relation to the principles. The principle of Chris-

tian conduct is love—to love God supremely and our neighbors as ourselves is to fulfill in principle all that is involved in the law and the prophets, so far as ethical conduct is concerned, and anything that is contrary to this is to be avoided.

Does a suggested course tend to diminish my enjoyment of God? Does it tend to mislead my neighbor? Does it make me less the Christian? Then, even though there is no specific rule against it, it is out of bounds for me. Does the matter contemplated bring glory to God, good to men, and increase of faith and love to me? Then I will do it, even though I cannot find it emphatically demanded by written codes of conduct. For I must cling to the trunk of the tree of conduct.

In the parable of the vine and the branches the fundamental interpretation is given. Christ is the vine or trunk, and our life is in Him; detached from Him we perish. We cannot even depend on other branches. The call is, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4). Other live branches may be of some assistance, but there are times when (like our boyhood experiences remind us) we cling only to the trunk, and devoutly say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

## *Eyes in the Front of the Head*

It has been observed that we have two ears with which to hear and only one mouth with which to speak, and this is thought to impress the wisdom of being "swift to hear, slow to speak." The uprightness of man's posture is significant also; for man was made to lift his heart to God, his Maker.

But surely there is meaning in the fact that our eyes are in the front of our heads. This must mean that we are designed to "hasten on." Even the sinner can gain nothing by looking back in remorse. He must look forward in repentance and upward in faith. How much more should the Christian forget the things that are behind and press forward to the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

It is one of the snares of joy that it seeks to hold us back. When the past is too pleasant, one instinctively looks and lives back there. When the present is too enjoyable, one wants to build a tabernacle and stay here, neglectful of the suffering crowd down in the valley. Contentment also dulls the ears to the call and challenge, "Let us go on!"

Men of vision are said to be men who see sooner than other people see, and see more clearly than others see. But it must also be observed that seeing visions is in contrast with dreaming dreams.

Dreaming is the occupation of sleepy old men ("old men dream dreams"). Seeing visions is the call of wide-awake people whose principal interests are out ahead ("young men see visions"). But there is yet a third class that neither dreams nor sees visions. The people of this class are too sound asleep to either dream or see, and so they fall into the pit of current pessimism.

But with eyes in the front of our heads, let us look ahead, and let us walk where we look. Let us go on! Let us go on in personal religious experience. Let us go on in the task of evangelizing the world. Let us go on to new heights of service for God and humanity. Let us go both deeper and farther. Let us look forward and go on. Let us go on to perfection. Let us follow that path of the just which is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day!

## *Pike's Peak in the Distance*

The first time I ever visited Colorado Springs, I had to ask someone to point out Pike's Peak to me. Our position right at the foot of the range made the lower peaks that were close at hand appear as tall as the ancient landmark for overland travelers. But later, approaching from the eastern plains on a clear day, our eyes looked upon what seemed to be a solitary and beautiful mountain standing up from a level floor. The distance was sufficient to conceal all the lower peaks, and to make the landmark appear as the one and only.

Among the myriads of men that have lived upon earth, a bare hundred thousand have attained to stature of sufficient proportions to justify calling them great. Among the hundred thousand, the average student of history will agree in the main with the experts who set out to name the hundred who are one in a thousand among the great. But when the list is limited to ten—that is, to one in ten thousand, the task is more difficult. Men are seldom great to their contemporaries. Or if they are great to their contemporaries, time usually levels them. It is usually necessary to wait for a hundred years—and it's better if a thousand years is available—to make sure what appraisal history will make of a man. Like the mountain peaks, men may seem tall

because they are close at hand; it takes distance to make the test complete.

But now the world has had two thousand years to look at Jesus Christ. And what shall we say? There is, I think, no escape from the conclusion that He is the only tall one there is. The others do not lift their heads high enough for them to be seen above the plain, while He stands there as the solitary sentinel and guide of the ages. Those who would cross the trackless prairies of life's monotonous way are guided to the pass of His peerless person. His name is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." Beside Him all the great of earth become as pigmies, and the least of earth, lifted to His shoulder, shall see farther, live longer and be more sublimely blessed both now and forevermore than the giants who know Him not could ever imagine. "Oh, Jesus is a rock in a weary land, a shelter in the time of storm!"

## *Permanent Pillars*

*Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God (Revelation 3:12).*

Pillars are of two kinds: supporting pillars and commemorating pillars. The purpose of the first is to sustain weight, and of the second to preserve records. Heaven requires no supporting pillars—at least none such as men could furnish; but the high goal set before every follower of Jesus Christ is that of becoming a commemorating pillar in the city of God.

Two factors describe the pillar: its permanence and the inscription it bears. Glorified saints, as pillars in the heavenly temple, “go no more out,” and they bear as inscriptions the name of God, and the name of the city of God—New Jerusalem.

But these factors of dependability and testimony are not acquired in heaven—they are just fully revealed there. They are found through the grace of God on earth, and taken along to heaven for the fuller revelation of the glory of the Redeemer. The full processes of grace in this world usually involve being purified, made white and tried (Daniel 12: 10), and this world is well adapted to the carrying



out of such processes. Through the merits of Jesus' blood, and by the ministry of the sanctifying Spirit, we are purified and made white, and by means of the trials and temptations incident to our life in the flesh, we are tried. Those who enjoy speculation may ask why the trial of the sanctified is required. But it is enough for us that the fact is so. God does not always hasten people off to heaven as soon as they are saved and sanctified—this we know. And because this is true, we cannot escape the conclusion that there is something God designs to do for us and through us in this world that can in many cases be done better here than in heaven. And since this is true, let us believe that it is better so.

Figuratively, if not actually, there is written upon the armor of every overcomer at the close of life's war, "He kept the faith." And the means of his victory were the "blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony." Such shall become commemorative pillars in the temple of God in heaven and shall go no more out. May this eternal honor be yours and mine.

## *Shadows of Things to Come*

When Robinson Crusoe saw a man's tracks on his island, he knew he was no longer alone, for while a man's tracks are not a man, man's tracks could be made only by a man. Shadows are like that: they are not realities, but they are the product of realities and cannot exist apart from realities. To be "afraid of one's shadow" is to mistrust oneself, for the shadow is a picture of the shadowed.

There are shadows of things past. These silhouette against the background of our own moral choices and words and deeds, driven by our own consciousness of light, and lo! in them we behold our own essential likeness! There are shadows of the present—projections of persons and things upon the screen of our own moral and spiritual reactions—"to the pure all things are pure," and to the depraved all sheep are black sheep.

But there are also shadows of things to come: shadows of life and of death; shadows of victory and of defeat; shadows of judgment and of mercy; shadows of heaven and of hell. There is a sense of course in which things to come are yet in the making. But their shadows, like the tracks of Friday on Crusoe's island, prove that they are coming, and in the only sense in which future things can be real, these are real.

Perhaps we may take lessons from the past and from the present that we may be wise for the future. The past is good or bad now only on the basis of the responses we made to the things that happened. The present likewise takes its power from our own munitions. So the future promises weal or woe according as we prepare to meet it. Take death for example: death is always a serious thing, but it cannot actually be an evil thing when its subject is saved and holy and prepared for earth and for heaven. Judgment before God, likewise, is always a serious matter of which to think. But it is a day of rewards, as well as a day of punishments, and it will bring as deep joys to some as the measure of sorrows to others.

David did not fear "the valley of the shadow of death" because of his consciousness that God was with him. Death cannot actually reach the man who enters the valley with God—only the shadow of the monster will be seen and passed through. And "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" when all shadows will disappear and only reality shall remain.

## *If Christ Should Come Tonight*

A serious Scotch preacher asked each in a company of friends, "Do you expect Christ to come to-night?" and when each in turn said he did not really expect Him, the preacher quoted, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

And it is not enough for us to think abstractly on this matter. The personal aspect is the most important one involved. It may be flattering to my creed that I should affirm my belief that "His coming draweth nigh," but for that belief to be truly a hope, I must be ready for that coming. The promise of a crown to "all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:8) hinges upon this very idea, for only those who are "robed and ready" truly love His appearing. Others may think His appearing near, but they cannot love His appearing, for only those whose lamps are trimmed and burning have hope of going in to the marriage.

There are those who say that hope for the soon coming of Christ diminishes zeal for the present work of Christ. But this should not be so; for there is no alert that is keener than that which characterizes men who anticipate the imminent inspection of their work by the lord of the labor himself. And if this be true of earthly relations, how much more

should it appertain to reapers in the harvest fields of God?

Evangelist John B. Culpepper once drew a word picture of a woman who anticipated the return of her husband from a long journey. At first he imagined the woman leaving the housework, forsaking the care of the children, neglecting the absent husband's special hobbies, and persistently sitting on the front porch uncombed and bedraggled, doing naught but looking for her beloved to appear. Then he admitted the unseemliness of the picture, and proceeded to correct it. In revised form, the waiting wife insisted on having the house in "apple-pie order," the children washed and in their clean clothes, and everything in the form and condition that she knew would please the husband at his appearing. And it was reasoned that if the husband should come and find the wife busy keeping ready for his coming, he would be more pleased than he would be should she drop her work in the interest of indolent watching. And the parable needs no formal application except, "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

## *My Two Footmen*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life (Psalms 23:6).*

It has ever been the lot of the poor to travel on foot, and, but for chance company, to travel unattended. Slight affluence might enable one to mount a beast, but only the wealthy or the noble could afford a carriage attended by footmen. What then must be the height of the throne of the one whose footmen are themselves men of honor? How honored the king whose chariot princes delight to race after on foot!

The Scriptures distinctly teach that earthly riches are no standard by which to measure genuine worth, and yet true riches make draft upon mammon for imagery to describe their immunities and privileges—the good man has the blessed antitypes, whereas the rich have only the types.

There are many yet alive who with me can remember with what tremendous force Dr. Bresee called to him two brethren whom he named “Goodness” and “Mercy,” and how he asked these brethren to follow him about the rostrum and chancel as his ever-present attendants. The picture was impressive and moving and gave rise to a sense of security and good fortune that made one instinctively say, “I’m glad I am a Christian.”

The usual alternatives are "goodness and severity," but the Christian finds even his judgments tempered, so his footmen are "goodness and mercy." Goodness when it is health and prosperity, mercy when it is sickness and adversity. Goodness when there are friends and money, mercy when there are foes and poverty. Goodness when it is calm and peace all about, mercy when it is storm and strife. Goodness when it is youth and life, mercy when it is old age and death.

It is difficult to preach and not witness. Today I feel in my body fresh tokens of mortality, reminding me that much of the race is now behind me. But my faithful footmen bring up treasures of happy memories from the past, assure me of present acceptability with the King, and point to alluring joys yet to come. "My cup runneth over." Horses of holy love pull my chariot along, goodness and mercy press hard on behind, the towers of the celestial city begin to appear through the mist, my abounding hope makes glad acclaim: "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever!"

## *Tomorrow Is Almost Here*

The farthest tomorrow is more imminent than the nearest yesterday; for the farthest tomorrow will come sometime, while the nearest yesterday is already gone forever. Yesterday has taught many people to dread tomorrow, but such lessons are not of universal application. There is infinite difference between "him that serveth God and him that serveth him not," and God has vouched for the righteous that their tomorrows shall be "better than today."

Yesterday had more fasts than feasts; but "God's tomorrow" will have more feasts than fasts. Yesterday had more tears than smiles; tomorrow with God shall have smiles and no tears at all. Yesterday had many disappointments. The saint's tomorrow shall have many surprises, but they will be glad surprises. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart (imagination) of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

We must always be careful to distinguish between the transient, immediate tomorrow and the permanent, final tomorrow. The first is heavy with uncertain forebodings; but the latter is big with certain anticipations. War and strain and lengthening casualty lists make the immediate tomorrow a



dread. The delay of the postman seems to augur restrained bad news. But the final tomorrow speaks of blessings held back until, like a swollen river, they break all restraints and inundate with floods of glory. And it is that final tomorrow for which we wait!

Let us rejoice that our "salvation is nearer now than when we first believed"—this is that final salvation which only the glorified know. Yes, it is nearer, ever nearer, and, speaking relatively, we rejoice that it is almost here. And, because it is so near, we shall take today and the close tomorrow with better grace. Those who have no certain and permanent tomorrow may well sorrow as do those who have no hope; but it shall not be so with us. Our hope is like an anchor that holds us sure to the everlasting rock which underlies the raging sea. Tomorrow is almost here, and "I know that God's tomorrow shall be better than today."

## *If I Should Die Today*

In many homes is seen the motto which says, "Do nothing you would not want to be found doing when Jesus comes; say nothing you would not want to be found saying when Jesus comes; go nowhere you would not want to be found when Jesus comes." And the same thought holds concerning death. We should live always in the presence of death and conduct ourselves as becometh those who may live but must die.

But life is positive, as well as negative, and preparation for death involves positive choice and positive faith and positive action. The ideal life is one to which sudden death would mean sudden glory. It is not within our power to choose when and how we shall die; but it is within our power to be so well prepared that death cannot surprise us by finding us off our guard. That man who cried, "I have missed it at last," when he faced certain and immediate death told the truth, but he did not tell all the truth; for he not only missed it at last, but he missed it before the last. One does not miss it at last unless he has missed it earlier also.

Death is always serious, but it is not calamitous to the man who is prepared for it. And it is a fortunate circumstance for us that the same conditions that make for good living make also for triumphant

dying. An admiring friend once said to George Whitefield, "I hope I shall be present to hear your dying testimony." But Whitefield answered, "I have been privileged to testify so often for Christ while I have lived that I shall not be surprised if I am not at all permitted to speak in the dying hour." But he did not say this with regret, but with joy; for to him there was no greater privilege than that of being always up to date on his witnessing for Christ.

Asked what he would do if he knew he should die by the following evening, John Wesley simply rehearsed the plans he already had, and then added just the one—his appointment to meet the Lord. "He died as he lived," they often say of the impenitent sinner. But how much more appropriate is this word concerning one who has counted life as Christ and death as gain!

If I should die today! Well, if I should die today I would die in peace, for my soul has found rest in its Saviour and Lord. If I should die today I would die in hope, for Christ, the Lord of my life, is Lord also of the resurrection. If I should die today I would die in the full assurance of faith, for Christ is even now my All in All!

## *Rivers Must Have Banks*

*I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of valleys (Isa. 41:18).*

*That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up the rivers (Isa. 44:27).*

Rivers must have banks, otherwise they would have no channels, and they would spread out as sloughs and swamps. The banks do indeed limit the rivers, but they also direct them and enable them to develop force for the wheels of industry and depth for the accommodation of commerce. Perhaps the rivers are restive under restraint and wonder why they are not always permitted to do as they please, seeing their purpose is to do good. And yet it is the banks that give the rivers their course and character, and although the rivers may protest against them, and may at times disregard them, the banks help the rivers, even when they seem most to hinder them.

There are rivers in our lives, and these too must have banks. There is the river of liberty which is carefully restrained by the banks of duty, and without these banks liberty would spread out into the miasmatic swamp of unrestrained license. The river of pleasure chafes against the banks of pain. The river of joy must flow between banks of sorrow.

Even the river of peace keeps channel and course because turmoil guards it from the wide reaches that it must some day attain that it may be a sea covering the earth.

But rivers and banks are only contrasting terms. Natural rivers have been known to depart from their ancient beds to cut new channels, and to turn the former channel into a bank to restrain the new-formed river. And so with us! When woe is the river, divine consolation forms the banks. God proposes to open rivers in high places, and to say to the deep, "Be dry." And how often that happens with us: that which was the river becomes the bank, and that which was the bank becomes the stream.

When death is the river, one of its banks is life and the other is everlasting life. Between these two banks, thank God, the river of death is confined, and those who are saved by His grace do not traverse the river lengthwise at all—they just enter on the side of life and cross over to the side of everlasting life. "There's a light at the river for me!"

## *Crossing the Narrows*

*And they went over Jordan before the king. And there went over a ferry-boat to carry over the king's household (II Samuel 19:17, 18).*

A ferry testifies to three things: solid ground from which to start, a narrow crossing, and solid ground on which to land. If there were not solid shores no conveyance for water transport would be in place, and if the water were wide more pretentious ships would be required. A ferry-boat is adapted only to narrow crossings where there is little danger from storms and tides.

Men have dubbed our earth *terra firma*—solid ground, but heaven is more real than earth, because its properties are of more enduring substance. In the glorified state we shall have eyes, and things to see; we shall have ears, and sounds to hear; we shall have minds, and thoughts to occupy them; we shall have hearts, and objects for love. They are wrong who would make heaven a state and not also a place.

Between earth and heaven there is a stream to cross—the river of death. But the crossing! Ah, how the crossing challenges us. Thank God, the stream is not wide, and the ferry comes out from the other shore to bear us over. And those who enter do not

cross alone—the King is in the boat. No storms or tides are expected—the boat is but a ferry. The Jordan, they say, is but thirty yards wide. But this river of which we speak can, as Dr. Talmage thought, be spanned with four arms' measure. We follow our loved ones to the bank and reach out to touch their hands when they are in midstream. And from that midstream our loved ones reach to join glad hands with those who wait at the landing to welcome them. It is just four arms' length from earth to heaven.

Our sainted loved ones have the advantage of us. We do not know just where they are, but they know where we are. We do not know just when we shall step from the wharf to the ferry on this side, but it may be they have advance information as to when we shall reach the shore over there, and they will reach out to meet us as we come.

## *A Day in the Lord's Court*

*A day in thy courts is better than a thousand*  
(Psalms 84:10).

A life spent in the service of God is better than a thousand lives lived for the purposes of time's short day. In childhood and youth we naturally look ahead and pray for the time when we will be grown up and out on our own. This is a healthy attitude, for a man's eyes are in the front of his head, indicating that it is designed that he should look and move forward.

But when the worldly man passes the zenith, he is embarrassed to view old age and death, so he changes his attitude and begins to look backward toward childhood and youth—toward the "land of never-return." This is an unhealthy attitude and breeds regret, disappointment, bitterness and frustration of spirit.

But the good man ever looks before. In childhood and youth, like the others, he looks toward the time of fuller life ahead. But when his earthly sun passes the meridian his eyes still follow it toward the west—toward the "land of yet to be." This attitude inspires anticipation, sweetness of temper, and fulfillment of life's best dreams. In this sense of attitude, the good man lives in perpetual youth—it's



always morning with the child of God, for "the day" is just beyond the brim.

And, what's more, the good man, no matter what his age, is always living—not either getting ready to live or coasting into the wharf after the journey's end. He is always living because he is a child of God, and God lives in the eternal now. He is always living because he is always doing just what it is planned he should do at the moment—he is neither a probationer nor a has-been. He is always at the place and always just arriving.

No matter when a good man dies, his life is complete, for it is what it should be at the moment. Therefore, departing, he leaves neither regrets nor frustrations. His life is a day—a segment of eternity—and it is an arc that will fit into the circle—no matter how short or how long the arc. So at the end, the good man (be he young or old) says, simply, "I have had a good day," and passes his arc on to the Architect, who will fit it into the circle, and all will be well. The life in Christ Jesus is the only good life!