



Daily Manna
July

from
Haus Barnabas
in the Black Forest

Explanation

These daily readings are intended to add a new dimension to the ministry of Haus Barnabas. Our aim is to make these notes available for all our guests to use personally as they may wish and also to use the Scripture readings for our communal prayer time after breakfast.

For many years we have used the Daily Light selection of Scriptures for our morning prayers in Haus Barnabas and the concept and format of the Daily Light, namely a range of short Scriptures based on a particular theme verse form the basis for our own new selection of Scripture readings. The Bible translation we have used is the New King James Version. We cannot emphasize too strongly that it should be these verses of Scripture itself which should be the kernel for our spiritual nourishment. The meditation that follows is but one line of thought from the theme verse and God might want to use the Scripture verses to say something quite different to you personally. Spend time with the Scripture verses. 'Chew' on them prayerfully during the day, in the same way as you will see Black Forest cows sitting chewing the cud!

We also expect the meditations to prove a blessing to many of you. We wouldn't dare to say this if we had written them ourselves! They all originate from C.H. Spurgeon's Morning and Evening devotions and we have taken the liberty of up-dating the language. Whilst we 'oldies' who already have a high regard for C.H.S probably don't find this necessary and perhaps question the audacity of attempting it, my prayer is that this slightly up-dated language will help to make these well loved, soul-nourishing devotional thoughts more acceptable to Christians of all denominations and age groups in this twenty-first century.

With a prayer that the Lord will use His Word to bless you in a wonderful way,

Len Holder.

Scripture readings

In both summer and winter it shall occur

And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth.

The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. - The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; - I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink". - "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Zech 14:8-9 - Isa 58:11; Ps 23:1-3; Mal 3:6 - John 7: 37; John 4:14 - James 1:17

Suggested additional reading: Isaiah 35

Meditation

In both summer and winter shall it occur. - Zechariah 14:8

The streams of living water which flow from Jerusalem are not dried up by the parching heat of midsummer any more than they are frozen by the cold winds of winter. Rejoice and be encouraged, O my soul,

that you are still able to testify of the faithfulness of the Lord. The seasons change, your circumstances change and you change, but your unchanging Lord remains the same, and the streams of His love are as deep, as broad and as full as ever. The heats of business cares and scorching personal and family circumstances leave me gasping for the cooling influences of the river of His grace, but I'm able to go at any time and drink from the inexhaustible fountain for both in summer and in winter its refreshing water is pouring forth. The upper springs are never short of water, and blessed be the name of the Lord, the lower springs cannot fail either.

Elijah watched the stream Cherith slowly dry up (*1 Kings 17: 5-7*), but he proved that Jehovah was still the unchanging God of providence (*1 Kings 17: 8-9*). Job said that his brethren were like deceitful brooks (*Job 6:15*), but he found his God an overflowing river of comfort. The Nile gave Egypt its confidence and prosperity, but its floods, on which the land depended, were not dependable. Our Lord however is always the same. By turning the course of the Euphrates, Cyrus took the city of Babylon, but no power, human or infernal, can divert the current of divine grace. The tracks of ancient rivers have been found dry and desolate, but the streams which have their source in the mountains of divine sovereignty and infinite love will always be full to the brim. Generations melt away, but the course of grace is unaltered. The river of God may sing with greater truth than the brook in Tennyson's poem:

*For men may come, and men may go,
But I go on for ever.*

Prayer

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? Ps 42:1-2

Scripture readings

Our heart shall rejoice in Him

I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me.

The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him.

Hear, O Lord, and have mercy on me; Lord, be my helper! You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

Your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labour, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

It will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in His salvation.

Ps 33:21 - Ps 13:5-6 - Ps 28:7 - Ps 30:10-12 - John 16:20-22 - Isa 25:9 - Ps 35:9

Suggested additional reading: Psalm 33

Meditation

Our heart shall rejoice in Him. - *Psalm 33:21*

It's a wonderful fact that Christians have been able to rejoice even in the deepest distress. Although trouble may surround them, they still sing; and, like many birds, they sing best in their cages. The waves

may roll over them, but before long their souls will rise to the surface and see the light and love of God's face. They have a buoyancy about them which keeps their head above the water, and helps them to sing "God is with me still." even in the midst of the tempest.

Who should have the glory for this? It's Jesus! It's all through Jesus. Comfort doesn't come naturally to the believer in times of trouble, but the presence of the Son of God with him in the fiery furnace fills his heart with joy. He is sick and suffering, but Jesus visits him and warms his heart. He is dying, and the cold chilly waters of Jordan are gathering about him up to the neck, but Jesus puts His arms around him, and cries, "Fear not, beloved; to die is to be blessed; the waters of death have their fountain-head in heaven; they are not bitter, they are sweet as nectar, for they flow from the throne of God." As the departing saint wades through the stream, and the waves gather around him, and heart and flesh fail him, the same voice sounds in his ears, "*Fear not; I am with you; be not dismayed; I am your God.*" (Is 41: 10). As he nears the borders of the infinite unknown, and his senses begin to fear the approaching shadows of death, Jesus says, "*Do not fear ... it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" (Luke 12:32). Thus strengthened and comforted, the believer is not afraid to die; rather he is even willing to depart, for having glimpsed Jesus as the morning star, he longs to gaze on Him as the sun in his strength. It's the presence of Jesus which gives us our joy and is all the heaven we desire. He is at once

*The glory of our brightest days;
The comfort of our nights.*

Prayer

Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, just as we hope in You.

Psalm 33:22

Scripture readings

And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows.

They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. - You have shriveled me up, and it is a witness against me; my leanness rises up against me and bears witness to my face.

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked - I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

He who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Gen 41:4 - Ps 106:13-15; Job 16:8 - Isa 55:2; Rev 3:15-18 - Gal 6:8

Suggested additional reading: Revelation 3

Meditation

The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. - Genesis 41:4

What Pharaoh dreamed has sadly too often been a living experience in my life. My days of laziness have ruinously destroyed all that I had achieved in times of zealous activity; my seasons of coldness

have frozen all the happy warmth of my periods of fervency and enthusiasm; and my fits of worldliness have thrown me back from my advances in the divine life. I am very conscious that I need to beware of lean prayers, lean praises, lean duties, and lean experiences, for these will eat up the fat of my comfort and peace. If I neglect prayer even for short a time, I lose all the spirituality which I had attained. If I draw no fresh supplies from heaven, the old corn in my granary is soon consumed by the famine which rages in my soul.

When the caterpillars of indifference, the cankerworms of worldliness, and the palmerworms of self-indulgence, leave my heart completely desolate, and make my soul to languish, all my former fruitfulness and growth in grace are no help to me whatever. How important it is that I avoid lean-fleshed days and ill-favoured hours! If every day I was journeying steadily towards the goal the Lord has set before me I would soon reach it, but backsliding leaves me still far off from the prize of my high calling, and robs me of the advances which I had so laboriously made.

The only way in which all my days can be as the “*fat cows*,” is to feed them in the right meadow, to spend them with the Lord, in His service, in His company, in His fear, and in His way. Why shouldn't every year be richer than the past, in love, and usefulness, and joy? — I am nearer the celestial hills, I have had more experience of my Lord, and should be more like Him.

O Lord, keep far from me the curse of leanness of soul; let me not have to cry, “*My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!*” (Is 24:16), but may I be well-fed and nourished in Your house, that I may praise Your name.

Prayer

Remember me, O Lord, with the favour You have toward Your people. Oh, visit me with Your salvation. Ps 106:4

Scripture readings

Sanctify them by Your truth.

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; ... the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. - We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 17:17 - 2 Tim 3:15-17 - Ps 19:7-9 - Eph 5:25-27; 2 Cor 3:18 - John 8:31-32

Suggested additional reading: Psalm 119:1-16

Meditation

Sanctify them by Your truth. - John 17:17

Sanctification is the process by which God makes us holy like Himself and it begins in regeneration. At the point when we are born from above the Spirit of God infuses into us that new living principle by which we become "*a new creation*" in Christ Jesus. (2 Cor 5:17)

This work, which begins in the new birth, is carried on in two ways, namely by mortification, whereby the lusts of the flesh are subdued and kept under control, and vivification, by which the life which God has put within us is made to be “*a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life*”. (John 4:14). This is carried on every day in what is called “perseverance,” by which the Christian is preserved from the power of evil and enabled to continue under the influence of God’s grace. By thus walking “*according to the Spirit*” (Rom 8:1-5) our lives are able to produce many good works which bring praise and glory to God and finally all will culminate or come to perfection, in “glory,” when the soul, being thoroughly purged, is caught up to dwell with holy beings at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

But while the Spirit of God is both the author and producer of sanctification, yet He employs a visible agency which must not be forgotten. “*Sanctify them,*” said Jesus, “*by Your truth, Your word is truth.*” (John 17:17). The passages of Scripture which prove that the instrument of our sanctification is the Word of God are very many. The Spirit of God brings to our minds the precepts and doctrines of truth, and applies them with power. Our ears hear and our eyes read this truth and through the Spirit it is received in our heart, where it works in us to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. (*Phil 2:13*). The truth is the sanctifier, and if we do not hear or read the truth, we shall not grow in sanctification. We only progress in sound living as we progress in sound understanding. “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*” (*Psalms 119:105*). Don’t ever say of anything that is contrary to God’s Word, “It is just a matter of opinion.” Nothing that the Holy Spirit teaches us will contradict the sacred writings that He himself has inspired.

Prayer

With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You. Ps 119:10-11

Scripture readings

Called to be saints

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. - As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us. - Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God ... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Rom 1:7 - 1 Cor 1:2; Peter 1:15-16 - Eph 5:1; Phil 2:14-15 - 1 Thess 4:3-5;7 - 2 Peter 1:3-4

Suggested additional reading: 2 Peter 1:1-10

Meditation

Called to be saints. - Romans 1:7

For many of us it's often difficult not to think of the apostles as a special class of “*saints*”, way and above the level of other children of God. In fact as Christian believers we are all called by God's

grace, and sanctified by His Spirit so we should not think of the apostles as extraordinary beings, knowing nothing of the weaknesses and temptations that we face and sometimes fall under. Let's not forget the established fact that the nearer a man lives to God the more intensely he will be aware of his own personal sin and the more his Master honours him in His service, the more the evil in his heart will vex him and taunt him day by day.

It's beyond doubt that if we had met the apostle Paul, we would have thought him remarkably like the rest of the chosen family of God; if we had talked with him, we would have realised that his experience and ours were very much the same. We would have found him more faithful, more holy, and more deeply taught than us but with the same trials to bear. No, in some respects we would have seen him as a Christian with far more trials than us.

Don't then, look on the saints of old as being exempt either from infirmities or sins; and don't regard them with that mystic reverence which would almost make us idolators. Their holiness is attainable even by us. We are "*called to be saints*" by that same voice which constrained them to this high vocation. It's a Christian's duty to force his way into the inner circle of saintship; and if these saints were superior to us in their attainments, as they certainly were, let's follow them; let's emulate their ardour and holiness. We have the same light that they had, the same grace is available to us, and why should we rest satisfied until we have equalled them in heavenly character? They lived with Jesus, they lived for Jesus, therefore they grew like Jesus. Let us live by the same Spirit as they did, "*looking unto Jesus,*" (Heb 12:1-2) and then our saintship will soon be apparent.

Prayer

Look upon me and be merciful to me, as Your custom is toward those who love Your name. Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me. Ps 119:132-133

Scripture readings

**Whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure,
without fear of evil.**

Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares.
- Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates,
waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life,
and obtains favour from the Lord. - Oh, that you had heeded My
commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and
your righteousness like the waves of the sea. - You will keep him in
perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in
You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in Yah, the Lord, is everlasting
strength.

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I
will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the
rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that
house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and
though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its
waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its
swelling. - He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast,
trusting in the Lord.

Prov 1:33 - Prov 8:34-35; Isa 48:18; Isa 26:3-4 - Matt 7:24-25 - Ps 46:1-3; Ps
112:7

*Suggested additional reading: **Prov 1:20-33***

Meditation

***Whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure
without fear of evil. - Proverbs 1:33***

Our awareness and appreciation of God's love is increased when it is
seen against the background of His judgements. As that single star
smiling though the break in those black storm clouds and that fertile
oasis blooming with life amidst a wilderness of sand; so awe
inspiring and encouraging are evidences of divine love when all

around is experiencing His deserved wrath. When the Israelites provoked the Most High by their continued idolatry, He punished them by withholding both dew and rain. Their land was visited by a terrible famine; but while He did this, He took care that His own chosen ones were secure. Even if all other brooks were dry, yet there was one reserved for Elijah (*1 Kings 17:3-4*); and when that failed, God provided him with a caring landlady and an unfailing supply of simple nourishment. (*1 Kings 17:9*). But despite his fears Elijah was not the only one who hadn't bowed his knee to Baal. God had a remnant according to the election of grace, who were hidden by fifties in a cave! Although the whole land was subject to famine, yet these fifties in the cave were protected and fed, (*1 Kings 18:13*) and amazingly their food came directly or indirectly from King Ahab's own table. Their heavenly Father had placed a faithful, God-fearing man, Obadiah, in Ahab's household as steward to take care of them.

Let us learn from this that, come what may, God's people are safe. Let convulsions shake the solid earth, let the skies themselves be torn in two, yet amidst the wreck of worlds the believer will be as secure as in the calmest hour of rest. For if God decides not to save His people *under* heaven, He will save them *in* heaven. If the world becomes too hot to hold them, then heaven is waiting to receive them and their safety is assured. Be confident then, when ye hear of wars, and rumours of wars that all is well. Don't allow agitations to distress you. Be quiet from fear of evil. Whatever comes on the earth, you, under the broad protecting wings of Jehovah are secure. Remind yourself of His promises; rest on His faithfulness, and defy the blackest future to disturb your peace, for nothing can come that is beyond your Father's controlling influence. Your sole concern should be to show to the world the blessedness of listening to and obeying your Saviour's voice of wisdom.

Prayer

I cried out to You, O Lord: I said, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Ps 142:5

Scripture readings

Brethren, pray for us.

Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me.

... that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.

... that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ ... that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

... that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified ... and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?

1 Thess 5:25 - Rom 15:30 - Eph 6:19 - Col 4:3-4 - 2 Thess 3:1-2 - 1 John 5:14-15 - Matt 26:40

Suggested additional reading: 2 Thess 3

Meditation

Brethren, pray for us. - 1 Thess 5:25

Our theme verse this morning exhorts the believers to pray for Paul and his fellow apostles and ministers and we would take the opportunity to remind you of your duty to pray for God's servants whom He has sent to minister to you. It is helpful firstly to consider

the solemn responsibility of the Christian ministry. We as your ministers are on eternal business concerning the souls of men and women and young people. Our word is either an “*aroma of life leading to life*”, or of “*death leading to death*”. (2 Cor 2:16). A very heavy responsibility rests upon us, and we would consider it a tremendous mercy if at the last we could be found clear of the blood of all men. As leaders in Christ’s army, we are marked out for the enmity and attack of men and devils. They are watching for any weaknesses and failure in order to discredit our Master and His cause.

Then our sacred calling also involves us in particular personal temptations from which many other Christians are exempt. We can often be drawn away from our personal enjoyment of truth into a mere ministerial and official consideration of it. We meet with many knotty pastoral cases, which can leave us feeling helpless and confused. We observe distressing backslidings and our hearts are wounded. We realise that millions around us are perishing, and our spirits sink. We long that you and your children will find profit and blessing through our preaching and are concerned that it will be relevant to all who hear us.

Please therefore, dear friends, intercede for us with our God. Without God’s blessing through your prayers we are helpless but to know your love and prayerful support gives us new confidence. You shouldn’t look to us personally for spiritual blessing but to our Master. Have you received those blessings through His ministers then ask again and again that we may be the human vessels into which the Lord may put the treasure of the gospel. We, the whole company of ministers, missionaries, and Christian workers beseech you in the name of Jesus:

“BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US.”

Prayer

Save now, I pray, O Lord; O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity.

Ps 118:25

Scripture readings

Please tell me where your great strength lies

The Lord will give strength to His people. - The Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honour come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.

I am the Lord, I do not change. - My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Judg 16:6 - Ps 29:11; 1 Sam 15:29 - Rom 4:20-21 - 1 Chron 29:11-12 - Mal 3:6; Ps 89:33-34 - 2 Tim 2:13; Phil 4:13

*Suggested additional reading: **Heb 6:13-20***

Meditation

Please tell me where your great strength lies. - Judges 16:6

Where lies the secret strength of faith? It lies in the food it feeds on. Faith looks behind the promises of Scripture and seeing them as an expression of divine grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God, says, "My God could not have given this promise, except from love and grace; therefore it is quite certain His Word will be fulfilled."

Then faith thinks further, "Who gave this promise?" It doesn't consider so much the greatness of the promise, as who its author is. She remembers that it is God who cannot lie - God omnipotent, God immutable; and therefore concludes that the promise must be fulfilled. Then with this firm conviction she can advance in confidence that what God has said He will perform.

For further strength she remembers why the promise was given, - namely, for God's glory, and she feels perfectly sure that God's glory is safe, that He will never stain His own reputation nor mar the lustre of His own crown; and therefore the promise must and will stand. Then faith also considers the amazing work of Christ as being a clear proof of the Father's intention to fulfil His word. "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" (Rom 8: 32). Moreover faith looks back on the past, for her previous battles have strengthened her, and her victories have given her courage. She remembers that God has never failed her; no, that He has never once failed any of His children. She recollects times of great peril, and how eventually deliverance came; hours of awful need, but how there was sufficient grace and strength for each day and she cries, "No, nothing will persuade me that He will change and leave His servant now. Hitherto the Lord has helped me, and He will keep on helping me."

In this way as faith views each promise in connection with the God who gave it, she is able to say, "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!*" (Ps 23 6)

Prayer

O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, for You have done wonderful things ... You have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat. Isa 25:1;4

Scripture readings

Forget not all His benefits

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! - Remember His marvellous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgements of His mouth. - What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people.

When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgements, and His statutes which I command you today.

Remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh ... were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

Ps 103:2 - Ps 68:19; Ps 105:5; Ps 116:12-14 - Deut 8:10-11 - Eph 2:11-13 - Luke 17:15-19

Suggested additional reading: Neh 9:1-17

Meditation

***Forget not all His benefits.* - Psalm 103:2**

It can be an enjoyable and helpful study to trace the hand of God in the lives of the saints of old, to observe His goodness in delivering them in times of trouble, His mercy in forgiving them their sins and

His faithfulness in keeping His promises to them. But shouldn't it be even more interesting and profitable for us to identify the hand of God in our own lives? Doesn't the history of our own lives give us as much proof of God, His goodness, His truth and His faithfulness as the lives of any of the saints who have gone before? We do our Lord a gross injustice when we imagine or assume that all His miraculous and mighty acts were reserved for those who lived in earlier times and are no longer to be expected by us today. Think over your past life. Surely you can remember happy incidents which you can identify as God's special blessing. These should encourage and refresh you and give you good reasons to glorify and honour God.

Are there no special *deliverances*? Rivers you've crossed supported by the divine presence? Fires which you have walked through unharmed? Have you had no *manifestations*? Experiences when you have sensed God's presence in an extraordinary way? Surely you have been aware of some personal *favours*? The God who gave Solomon the desire of his heart, has He never listened to you and answered your prayer? That generous God of whom David could sing, "*He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness*". (Ps 107:9) has He never satisfied your appetite? Have you never been made to lie down in green pastures? Have you never been led by the still waters? Surely the goodness of God has been the same to us as to the saints of old.

Let us, then, weave His mercies into a song. Let us take the pure gold of thankfulness, and the jewels of praise and make them into a crown for the head of Jesus. Let our souls produce music as sweet and as exhilarating as that which came from David's harp. Let us exalt the Lord whose "*mercy endures for ever*".

Prayer

I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. Ps 9:1-2

Scripture readings

Fellow citizens with the saints

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

- For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. - For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. - "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

Eph 2:19 - Eph 2:19; Gal 3:26-28 - Eph 3:4-6; Phil 3:20 - John 14:2-3; John 17:24

Suggested additional reading: Eph 2:11-21

Meditation

Fellow citizens with the saints. - Eph 2:19

What does it mean to be a citizen of heaven? Firstly, it means that we are ***under heaven's government***. Christ the king of heaven reigns in our hearts. Our daily prayer is, "*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" (Luke 11:2). We listen out for all the proclamations and communications issued from the throne of glory, receive them gladly as the decrees of our King and cheerfully obey them.

Then as citizens of the New Jerusalem, ***we share heaven's honours.*** The glory which belongs to the saints who have gone before us belongs also to us. For we are already sons of God, (*Gal 3:26*) already princes of the blood imperial; already we wear the spotless robe of Jesu's righteousness; already we have angels for our servants, saints for our companions, Christ for our Brother, God for our Father, and a crown of immortality for our reward. We share the honours of citizenship, for we have come to "*the general assembly and Church of the first-born who are registered in heaven*". (*Heb 12:23*)

As citizens, we have ***common rights to all the property of heaven.*** Ours are its gates of pearl and walls of chrysolite; ours the azure light of the city that needs no candle nor light of the sun; ours the river of the water of life, and the twelve manner of fruits which grow on the trees planted along its banks (*Rev 22:1-2*); there is nothing in heaven that doesn't belong to us. "*Things present, or things to come*" (*1 Cor 3:22*) all are ours.

Also as citizens of heaven we ***enjoy its delights.*** Do they there rejoice over sinners that repent - prodigals that have returned? So do we. Do they chant the glories of triumphant grace? We do the same. Do they place their crowns at Jesus' feet? All the honours given to us we place there too. Are they charmed with His smile? It is just as precious to us who dwell below. Are they looking forward and waiting for His second advent? We also look and long for His appearing. As then, we are thus citizens of heaven, let our walk and actions be consistent with our high dignity.

Prayer

For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. Ps 84:10

Scripture readings

After you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. - In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. - He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

The glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

1 Peter 5:10 - Col 2:6-7; 1 Peter 1:6-7 - Deut 28:9-10; 2 Cor 1:21-22 - John 17:22-23

Suggested additional reading: 1 Peter 5

Meditation

After you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you. - 1 Peter 5:10

You have seen the wonderful arc of a rainbow spanning a valley silhouetted against tree covered hills or perhaps against the sky line of one of our cities. Its colours are glorious. Its hues are breathtaking. It's beautiful, but, alas, it quickly passes away. You look a second

time; it's already fading, then it's gone. Those noble colours give way to fleecy clouds, and the sky is no longer brilliant with the tints of heaven. It has never been "*established*". How could it be? It is but a glorious show made up of transitory sun-beams and passing rain-drops, how could it remain more than a few minutes? This is the challenge for us today; the graces of our Christian character must not resemble the rainbow in its transitory beauty, but, on the contrary, must be established, settled, abiding. Seek, O believer, that every good thing you have may be an abiding thing. May your character not be a writing on the sand, but an inscription in the rock! May your faith be no "*baseless fabric of a vision*", (Shakespeare's *Tempest* Act IV, Scene i) but may it be built of material able to endure that awful fire which shall consume the wood, hay, and stubble of the hypocrite. May you be rooted and grounded in love. May your convictions be deep, your love real, your desires earnest. May your whole life be so settled and established, that all the blasts of hell, and all the storms of earth shall never be able to remove you.

But notice how this blessing of being "*established*" in the faith is gained. The apostle's words point us to *suffering* as the means employed - "*After that ye have suffered a while.*" It's no use hoping that we shall be well rooted if no rough winds have passed over us. Those old gnarlings on the root of the oak tree, and those strange twistings of the branches, all tell of the many storms that have swept over it, and they are also indicators of the depth into which the roots have forced their way. So the Christian is made strong, and firmly rooted by all the trials and storms of life. Shrink not then from the tempestuous winds of trial, but take comfort, believing that by their rough discipline God is fulfilling this benediction to you.

Prayer

Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just; for the righteous God tests the hearts and minds. Ps 7:9

Scripture readings

Sanctified by God the Father - Sanctified in Christ Jesus. in sanctification of the Spirit.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. - The church of God ... those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. - Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 1; 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Peter 1:2 - Matt 28:19; 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Peter 1:2 - John 17:16-19 - Heb 2:10-11 - 1 Thess 5:23

Suggested additional reading: 1 Cor 1:1-9

Meditation

Sanctified by God the Father. - Jude 1.- Sanctified in Christ Jesus. - 1 Cor 1:2 - in sanctification of the Spirit - 1 Peter 1:2

Note here the union of the Three Persons of the Godhead in the work of sanctification which is in fact true of all that God does. How unwisely those believers talk who make preferences in the Persons of the Trinity. Some suggest that Jesus is the embodiment of everything lovely and gracious, while the Father is severely just and without

kindness. Equally wrong are those who think much about the Father's electing love and the atonement of the Son, but hardly think at all about the work of the Spirit. In every way that they demonstrate mercy and grace no one of the Persons of the Trinity acts without the other two. They are as united in their actions as in the essence of their united being. In their love towards the chosen they are one, and in the actions which flow from that great central source they are still undivided.

Especially notice this here in the matter of sanctification. While we may without mistake speak of sanctification as the work of the Spirit, yet we mustn't think that the Father and the Son have no part in it. It is correct to speak of sanctification as the work of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit. In the beginning Jehovah said, "*Let Us make man in **Our** image according to **Our** likeness*" (Gen 1:26), and in this way we are "*His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, that God prepared before hand that we should walk in them.*" (Eph 2:10).

See the value which God sets on real holiness, since the Three Persons in the Trinity are shown as working together to produce a Church without "*spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.*" (Eph 5:27). And you, believer, as the follower of Christ, must also set a high value on holiness, that is on purity of life and godliness of conversation. Value the blood of Christ as the foundation of your hope, but never underestimate or speak lightly of the work of the Holy Spirit which is preparing you for the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us live today in a way that shows to the world the work of the Triune God in us.

Prayer

Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

Ps 51:11-12

Scripture readings

Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

How long till you put an end to words? Gain understanding, and afterward we will speak. - Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.

Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret - it only causes harm. For wrath kills a foolish man, and envy slays a simple one. - He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly. He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. - So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

The Holy Spirit says: ... "I was angry with that generation, and said, They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways." ... Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?

Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.

Jonah 4:9 - Job 18:2-4; Job 40:4-5 - Ps 37:7-8; Prov 14:29; Prov 16:32; James 1:19-20 - Heb 3:7;10;17 - Ps 4:4-5

Suggested additional reading: James 3

Meditation

God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

- Jonah 4:9

Anger is not always or necessarily sinful, but anger has such a tendency to run wild that whenever it shows itself, we should be quick to question its cause, with this enquiry, "*Is it right for you to*

be angry?” It may be that we can answer, “YES.” Although very frequently anger is the madman’s firebrand, sometimes it’s Elijah’s fire from heaven!

Firstly we do well when we are angry with sin because of the wrong which it commits against our good and gracious God; or when we are angry with ourselves because we remain so foolish after so much divine instruction; or angry with others solely of the evil they are doing. If we are not angry at transgression we become a partaker in it. Sin is a loathsome and hateful thing and no renewed heart can patiently endure it. God himself is angry with the wicked every day, and it is written in His Word, “*You who love the Lord, hate evil.*” (Ps 97:10).

It is much more likely that our anger is unjustifiable, and then we must answer this question with a resounding “NO.” Why is it that we lose patience with children, are irritable with servants, and have rows with our equals? Is such anger honourable to our Christian profession, or glorifying to God? Isn’t it rather our old evil heart seeking to exert itself, and surely this is something to resist with all the strength of our newborn nature. Many professing Christians give way to temper acting as though it were useless or hypocritical to try and resist it; but let the believer remember that he must be a conqueror in every point or else he cannot be crowned. If we can’t control our tempers, what has grace done for us? Some one once told Mr. Jay that grace was often grafted on the stump of a crabapple tree. “Yes,” said he, “but the fruit won’t be crabapples.” We mustn’t make natural infirmity an excuse for sin, but we must fly to the cross and pray the Lord to crucify our tempers, and renew us in gentleness and meekness after His own image.

Prayer

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.

Ps 131:1-2

Scripture readings

If you use your tool on it, you have profaned it

If you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. - David built there an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on the Lord; and He answered him from heaven by fire on the altar of burnt offering.

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ... Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. - I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing. - For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Ex 20:25 - Ex 20:25; 1 Chron 21:26 - 1 Cor 15:3-4; 1 Cor 2:2 - 1 Tim 6:3-4; Rev 22:18-19

Suggested additional reading: Gal 1

Meditation

If you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. - Ex 20:25

God's altar was to be built of natural, unhewn stones so that there was no trace of human skill or labour seen on it. Human wisdom delights to trim and arrange the doctrines of the cross into an artificial system more acceptable to the depraved tastes of fallen

nature. However instead of improving the gospel carnal wisdom pollutes it. It soon turns it into “*another gospel*” (Gal 1:6), and not the truth of God at all. All alterations and amendments of the Lord’s own Word are defilements and pollutions.

Proud man is very anxious to have a hand in the justification of the soul before God; preparations for receiving Christ are dreamed up, humblings and repentings are trusted in, good works are emphasised, natural ability is much boasted and the attempt is made by all sorts of means to use human tools to build God's altar. It would be good if we as sinners would remember that so far from improving the Saviour’s work, our carnal confidences only pollute and dishonour it. The Lord alone must be exalted in the work of atonement, and not a single mark of man’s chisel or hammer will be allowed. There is an inherent blasphemy in seeking to add to what Christ Jesus in His dying moments declared to be finished, or to improve that in which the Lord Jehovah already finds perfect satisfaction. Trembling sinner, away with your tools, fall on your knees in humble supplication, accept the Lord Jesus to be the altar of your atonement, and rest in Him alone.

Many professing Christians need to take warning from this morning’s text in regard to the doctrines they believe. There is far too much inclination amongst us as Christians to square and reconcile the truths of revelation. This is a form of irreverence and unbelief. We need to fight against it, and receive truth as we find it in the Scriptures; rejoicing that the doctrines of the Word are unhewn stones, and for this reason are all the more fit to build an altar for the Lord.

Prayer

Your word is very pure; therefore Your servant loves it. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth.

Ps 119:140;142

Scripture readings

A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.

Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.

Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. - He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Lev 6:13 - Gen 35:3 - Ps 55:17; John 15:5-8 - Col 3:16 - Jude 20-21

*Suggested additional reading: **Jude***

Meditation

The fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out. - *Leviticus 6:13*

Keep the altar of *private prayer* burning for it's the sustaining source of a truly spiritual Christian life. Our public worship and the family altar borrow their fires from here so let it burn well. Secret devotion is the very essence, evidence, and barometer, of vital and experimental religion. Burn on this altar your best sacrifices. Let your personal quiet times be, if possible, regular, frequent, and undisturbed. Effectual prayer avails much. (*James 5:16*). Have you

nothing to pray for? Let us suggest the Church, the ministry, your own soul, your children, your relations, your neighbours, your country, and the cause of God and truth throughout the world.

Let us examine ourselves on this important matter. Is our private time with the Lord a lukewarm affair? Does the fire of devotion burn only dimly in our hearts? If so, let us be alarmed and see this as a serious sign of a low spiritual state. Let us come to the Lord in repentance and ask Him for a fresh anointing of His Holy Spirit. Let us set apart a special time for special prayer. For if this fire in our personal devotions is smothered by, for instance, the rush and tear of a life following the attitudes and way of life of this ungodly world, it will quickly dim the fire of every other expression of our faith in Christ and lessen our influence both in the Church and in the world.

The text can also apply to the altar of the heart. This is truly a golden altar. God loves to see the hearts of His people glowing towards Him. Let us give to God our hearts, all blazing with love, and seek His grace, that the fire may never be quenched; for it will not burn if the Lord does not keep it burning. Many enemy influences will attempt to extinguish it; but if the unseen hand behind the wall pours the sacred oil on it, it will blaze higher and higher. Let us use texts of Scripture as fuel for our heart's fire, for they are live coals. Let us take every opportunity to hear the preaching of God's Word, but above all, let us be much alone with Jesus.

Prayer

O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.

Ps 116:16-17

Scripture readings

They gathered manna every morning

Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. - Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. - Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth. - Give us this day our daily bread.

Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" - My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up. - To You I have cried out, O Lord, and in the morning my prayer comes before You.

He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

Ex 16:21 - Isa 55:6; 2 Cor 6:2; Prov 27:1; Matt 6:11 - Lam 3:22-24; Ps 5:3; Ps 88:13 - Deut. 8:3 - John 15:5;7;8

Suggested additional reading: Exodus 16

Meditation

They gathered manna every morning. - Exodus 16:21

Remind yourself constantly that you are entirely dependent on the Lord and His good will and pleasure for all your richest enjoyments in life. Don't try to live on the "old manna", or to look for help in "Egypt". What doesn't come from Jesus can never really help or satisfy. Memories of past blessing in themselves can never give on-

going life and unction to your spiritual life. Your head needs to be anointed afresh from the golden horn of the sanctuary or it will lose its glory.

To-day you may be rejoicing in the Lord and feel yourself to be on the summit of the mount of God, but He who has put you there must keep you there, or you will sink far quicker than you ever dreamed possible. The mountain of blessing where you sense your Saviour's love will only remain firm as He graciously maintains it. If He were to hide His face, you would soon lose your sense of peace and feel your spirit troubled and disturbed. Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, but if Jesus saw it would be for your ultimate good He can shroud it in total darkness for as long as he pleases. If He chooses to hide His face, you will soon lose the joy of your heart, the light of your eyes, and the strength of your life. All your comforts lie in His hand.

The Lord wants us to be aware of our hourly dependence on Him. He has taught us to pray for “*daily bread,*” and has promised us that “*as our days our strength shall be*”. This must surely be best for us. It ensures that we come constantly to our God in prayer and that there are daily reminders of His provision and love. Oh! how rich is the grace which provides a continual supply and doesn't freeze up because of our ingratitude! The golden shower never ceases and the cloud of blessing hovers constantly above us.

O Lord Jesus, we would bow at Your feet, conscious of our utter inability to do anything without You. Your every favour flows to us from Your inexhaustible love. We would adore and worship You. Please help us to trust Your faithfulness which is new every morning.

Prayer

I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. Ps 63:4-5

Scripture readings

Knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. - All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. - The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you".

When the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. - Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

1 Thess 1:4 - 2 Thess 2:13-14 - 1 Tim 1:15; John 6:37; Jer 31:3 - Titus 3:4-5; Eph 2:8-10; 2 Tim 1:9

Suggested additional reading: 1 Thess 1

Meditation

Knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. - 1 Thess 1:4

How can we know that God chose us to be His child before the creation of the world? Some imagine that until they have some hope of this they have no right to look to Christ for salvation. Such thinking comes through the influence of Satan and not from the Holy

Spirit. The Bible teaches us the exact opposite, namely that we can only know our election by *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith”*. (Heb 12:2).

Knowing our election of God is one of the greatest blessings and comforts of being a Christian, but there is only one path that can lead us into the certainty of this. As you think of God in all his holiness do you feel yourself guilty, helpless and lost? Then go immediately to the cross of Christ, and tell Jesus so. Tell Him that you have read in the Bible, *“the one of comes to Me I will by no means cast out”*. (John 6:37). Tell Him that these were His own words and that you have also read, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”*. (1 Tim 1:15). Look to Jesus, believe on Him, trust him completely. If you are sincere this will be a life changing experience and is proof of your election, for all who believe, by giving themselves and their lives completely to Christ are God’s chosen ones.

But if you stop and say, “I must know first whether I am elect,” you are asking something you can never know until you know Christ. Go to Jesus, however guilty and unworthy you may feel. Forget all these theological inquiries. Go straight to Christ and hide yourself in Him and in the wounds He suffered for you on the cross. He will give you the assurance of the Holy Spirit so that you’ll be able to say, *“I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to Him.”* (2 Tim 1:12).

Christ was there at that council of the Godhead before the worlds were made. He can tell you whether you were chosen or not; but you cannot find it out any other way. Go and put your trust in Him, and His answer will be: *“I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”* (Jer 31:3). There will be no doubt that He has chosen you, when you have chosen Him.

“Sons we are through God’s election, Who in Jesus Christ believe.”

Prayer

I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

Luke 10:21

Scripture readings

They shall break camp last, with their standards.

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God.

Then the standard of the camp of the children of Dan (the rear guard of all the camps) set out according to their armies. - I have shown you in every way, by labouring like this, that you must support the weak. - And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear!" - The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, and will say, 'Destroy!' Then Israel shall dwell in safety.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Saviour, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

Num 2:31 - Deut 25:17-18 - Num 10:25; Acts 20:35; Mark 9:35 - Isa 35:2-4; Deut 33:27-28 - Jude 24-25

Suggested additional reading: Acts 20: 17-38

Meditation

They shall break camp last with their standards. - Num 2:31

The camp of Dan were to take the rear position. When the armies of Israel were on the march the Danites were to set out last and follow behind all the other tribes. This was God's purpose for them but in no way did this make them inferior for they were just as much part of company as those at the front; they followed the same fiery cloudy pillar, they ate of the same manna, drank of the same spiritual rock, and journeyed to the same inheritance.

Perhaps this is just the encouragement you are needing to persevere in serving your Master? You sense you are behind everyone else. The position in which God has placed you through His providence appears inferior to others in your Church fellowship. Your sphere of Christian service doesn't have as much honour and respect as you would like. You, yourself are often overlooked and your particular ministry is very rarely mentioned in the prayer meeting. "Come, my heart, cheer up, although last and least it's a privilege to be in Christ's family, and I do in fact have the same benefits as those in leadership positions. Some one must be behind, some one must do menial work for Jesus, and why shouldn't that be me? In a poor village, among a less educated country people, or in a city back street, among degraded sinners, I will work on, and follow behind with my banner".

The Danites occupied *a very useful place*. Discouraged stragglers needed to be helped to persevere, and lost property picked up. Those with fiery temperaments may dash forward over untrodden paths to learn fresh truth and win more souls for Jesus; but some of a more conservative spirit may be just as profitably engaged in reminding the church of her ancient faith, and restoring her fainting sons. Every position has its duties, and the more slowly moving children of God, bringing up the rear, will find that their particular position, often with more maturity, can provide a blessed stabilising influence on the whole company.

The rear guard is also *a place of danger*. There are enemies behind us as well as in front. We read that Amalek attacked the rear ranks, all the stragglers at the rear, when they were tired and weary (*Deut 25:18*). The experienced Christian will find very important work helping those poor doubting, desponding, wavering Christians, who are behind in faith, knowledge, and joy. They must not be left without assistance and it should be the business of well-taught believers to lift up the banner of love for Jesus in the support of the stragglers.

Prayer

I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. - John 17:15

Scripture readings

The Lord our God has shown us His glory

Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. - The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. - Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. - What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. ... although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man ... and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. - He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.

Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"

Deut 5:24 - Ps 24:10; Ps 19:1; Isa 6:3 - Rom 1:19;21;22;23;25 - Isa 40:4-5; John 1:14; John 7:18 - John 11:40

Suggested additional reading: Exodus 33

Meditation

The Lord our God has shown us His glory - Deut 5:24

The great and ultimate purpose of God, lying behind all He does and has ever done, is to reveal and express His own glory. Every aspect of God's character and being is glorious and to have any aim other than to express this glory would be unworthy of Him. But man has a real problem recognising God and His glory. His fallen, sinful nature

has given him a bias towards himself and an overriding concern for his own honour. God's own assessment of mankind is that when he might have known God he has not glorified Him as God but has become futile in his thoughts; his foolish heart has become darkened and he worships and serves the creature rather than the Creator. (*Rom 1:21;25*)

We must be forced to lose confidence in ourselves and our own abilities that there might be room for God to be exalted. This is why God often brings His people into straits and difficulties. He is forcing us to recognise our own foolishness and weakness, that we might be in a position to see the majesty of God when He steps in to deliver us. The Christian whose life is a smooth and even path will see very little of the glory of the Lord. Because he has few occasions when he is emptied of a reliance on himself there is little opportunity for him to be filled with the revelation of God. Those who navigate little streams and shallow creeks, know but little of the God of tempests; but those who “*do business on great waters, they see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep*”. (*Ps 107:23-24*). Among the huge Atlantic-waves of bereavement, poverty, temptation, abuse and scorn, we learn the power of Jehovah, because we feel the littleness of man.

We should learn to thank God, then, if we have been led along a rough road. It is this which has given us our experience of God's greatness and lovingkindness. Our troubles have enriched us with a wealth of knowledge to be gained by no other means. Our trials have been the “*cleft of the rock*” into which Jehovah has placed us, as He did His servant Moses, that we might behold His glory as it has passed by. (*Ex 33:22*). Let us praise God then that we have not been left to the darkness and ignorance which continual prosperity might have involved, but that in the struggles of our problems and needs we have been able to recognise the outshinings of His glory in His wonderful dealings with us.

Prayer

But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. Ps 3:3

Scripture readings

Have faith in God

Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

He who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. - For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. - "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." ... when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.

Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." - And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Mark 11:22 - Heb 11:6 - James 1:6; Mark 11:23-25 - Ps 62:8; 2 Chron 20:20;22 - Mark 9:23; Acts 3:16

*Suggested additional reading: **Heb 11:23-40***

Meditation

Have faith in God. - Mark 11:22

Faith is the soul's feet on which it can march along the road of God's will. Love can make the feet move more swiftly; but it's faith which

carries the soul along. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and sincere Christian living to move smoothly. Without faith the wheels squeak and groan and will eventually sieze up completely.

With faith I can do all things; without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men and women who serve God the best, you must look for those with the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith can't do great things for God. Poor Little-faith couldn't have fought "Apollyon;" it needed "Christian" to do that. Poor Little-faith couldn't have slain "Giant Despair;" it required "Great-heart's" arm to knock that monster down. Little faith will go to heaven most certainly, but it often has to hide itself in a nut-shell, and it frequently loses everything except its jewels. Little-faith says, "It's is a rough road with many sharp thorns and full of dangers; I'm afraid to go;" but Great-faith remembers the promise, "*Your sandals shall be iron and bronze; as your days, so shall your strength be*" (Deut 33:25): and so she goes forward boldly. Little-faith stands desponding, adding her tears to the flood water around her; but Great-faith sings, "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you:*" (Isa 43:2) and she fords the stream at once.

Do you want to be comfortable and happy? Do you want to enjoy the Christian life? Do you want to be a smiling Christian and not a long faced pessimist? Then "*have faith in God.*" If you love darkness, and are satisfied to live in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith; but if you love the sunshine, and would sing songs of rejoicing, covet earnestly this best gift, "great faith."

Prayer

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! Mark 9:24

Scripture readings

I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content

... I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.

He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." - Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

Phil 4:11-13 - Phil 3:8-11 - 2 Cor 12:9-10 - Heb 13:5; Heb 10:35-36

Suggested additional reading: Phil 4

Meditation

I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.

Phil 4:11

These words show us that contentment doesn't come naturally to us. An old proverb said; "Ill weeds grow apace." and covetousness, discontent, and murmuring are sadly as natural to man as thorns are

to the soil. We don't need to sow thistles and brambles; they come up naturally enough, because they are indigenous to earth: and in the same way we don't need to teach men to complain; they complain fast enough without any education. But the precious things of the earth must be cultivated. If we want wheat, we must plough the field and sow the seed; if we want flowers, there must be the garden, and all the gardener's care. Now, contentment is one of the flowers of heaven, and if we would have it, it must be cultivated. It won't grow in us by nature; it is only the new nature alone that can produce it, and even then we must be specially careful and watchful that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in us.

Paul says, "*I have **learned** ... to be content;*" by which he is certainly implying that there was a time when he didn't know contentment. It cost him pain to attain to the mystery of this great truth. No doubt he sometimes thought he had learned it, and then his settled state of mind would break down under pressure. And when at last he had attained unto it, and could say, "*I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content,*" he was an old, grey-headed man, on the borders of the grave, having much suffering behind him and at that very moment still a poor prisoner shut up in Nero's dungeon at Rome.

Contentment is a precious jewel that few attain too. It can't be learned without suffering and only suffering can be the real test of its existence. Would you be prepared to endure Paul's infirmities, and share the cold dungeon with him, in order to acquire it? Don't indulge the notion that it will come through the study of books on the subject. God's grace in times of weakness, persecution and pain is our teacher and to relax in contemplation of the patience of Christ Jesus is no doubt the key to its acquisition. With this thought in mind let us hush our murmuring and persevere as diligent pupils in the College of Contentment.

Prayer

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver. Ps 119:71-72

Scripture readings

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

We have been made a spectacle to the world. ... We are fools for Christ's sake ... we are weak ... we are dishonored! ... We both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. ... For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

2 Cor 1:5 - 1 Cor 4:9-13 - 2 Cor 12:9-10 - 2 Cor 1:3-4 - Isa 43:2-3

Suggested additional reading: 2 Cor 1

Meditation

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. - 2 Cor 1:5

Here is a wonderful statement by the apostle Paul of how he experienced the balancing of God's grace in the circumstances of his life. The Ruler of Providence has a pair of scales, on one side He

sees His people's trials, and in the other He places His comforts and consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty, you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition; and when the scale of trials is full, you will find the scale of consolation just as heavy. When the black clouds gather most, the light is the more brightly revealed to us. When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on, the Heavenly Captain is always closest to His crew. It is a blessed thing, that when we are most cast down, then it is that we are most lifted up by the consolations of the Spirit.

One reason for this is, because *trials make more room for consolation*. Big hearts can only be made by big troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper, and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart and when He finds it full of worthless things. He begins to break up our comforts in order to draw our heart away from these worthless things and make more room for His grace. The humbler a man lies, the more comfort he will always have, because he will be more fitted to receive it.

Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles, is because **then we have the closest dealings with God**. When the barn is full, man can live without God: when the purse is bursting with coins, we try to do without so much prayer. When the shelter of the gourd is gone (Jonah 4:6-7), we want our God; once the idols are cleansed out of the house, then we are compelled to honour Jehovah. "*Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord*". (Ps 130:1). There is no cry so good as that which comes from the bottom of the mountains; no prayer half so hearty as that which comes up from the depths of the soul, through deep trials and afflictions. Our sufferings as Christians bring us to God, and we are then happier because of them; for nearness to God is happiness. Come, troubled believer, don't fret over your heavy troubles, for they are the preparing the way for weighty blessings.

Prayer

Your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up. In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul. Ps 94:18-19

Scripture readings

We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." - You are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me.

We ... sent Timothy ... to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened.

God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

He said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple."

Acts 14:22 - Matt 10:38-39; Luke 22:28-29 - 1 Thess 3:1-4 - 1 Cor 10:13 - Rev 7:14-15

Suggested additional reading: 1 Thess 2:13-3:13

Meditation

We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. - Acts 14:22

God's people have their trials. God never intended, when He chose them that they should be an untried people. They were "*chosen in the furnace of affliction*" (Isa 48 10) and they were never chosen to worldly peace and earthly joy. Freedom from the sicknesses and

pains of a mortal body was never promised them. On the contrary, when their Lord drew up the charter of privileges, He included suffering among the things which would be part of their heritage here below.

Trials are a part of our lot; they were predestinated for us in Christ's last legacy (*John 16:1-4*). As surely as the stars are fashioned by his hands, and their orbits fixed by Him, so surely are our trials allocated to us: He has planned their season and their place, their intensity and the effect they will have on us. Good men must never expect to escape troubles; if they do, they will be disappointed, for none of their predecessors have been without them. Mark the patience of Job; remember Abraham, for he had his trials, and by his faith under them, he became the father of the faithful. (*Gal 3:9*). Read the biographies of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and you'll discover that coping with difficulties and testings played an important role in shaping them as vessels of honour for Him. The cross of trouble, as the means of bringing blessing, can be identified almost as God's signature on those He loves, it is like the royal mark which distinguishes those honoured to belong to the King.

But although tribulations lie around many corners of the pathway God's children must walk, they have the comfort of knowing that their Master has walked this path before them and is even now with them. They have His presence and sympathy to cheer them, His grace to support them, and His example to teach them how to endure; and when they reach "*the kingdom*," the glorious experience they will enter into will more than make up for the "many tribulations" they have encountered along the way.

Prayer

Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.

Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted within me? hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God. Ps 43:3-5

Scripture readings

Yes, He is altogether lovely

For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? - No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. - For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given ... and His name will be called Wonderful ... - The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever. - All bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. - Jesus ... said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God." ... and He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear ... He who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.

What is your beloved more than another beloved ... My beloved is ... chief among ten thousand. ... He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend.

Song 5:16 - Ps 89:6; John 1:18; Isa 9:6; John 1:14 - Ps 45:2; Luke 4:22; Mark 10:14;16 - 1 John 4:18-19 - Song 5:9;10;16

*Suggested additional reading: **Song 5:2-16***

Meditation

Yes, He is altogether lovely - *Song of Solomon 5:16*

The superlative beauty of Jesus is overwhelmingly attractive. This beauty is not so much to be admired as to be loved. Jesus is more than pleasant and fair, He is lovely. Surely the people of God can fully justify using this golden word, for He is the object of their warmest love. A love which is founded on the intrinsic excellence of

His person, the complete perfection of His character.

Look, O disciples of Jesus, to your Master's lips, and say, "Are they not the most precious?" Isn't it true that His words cause your hearts to burn within you as He talks with you? (*Luke 24:32*). You worshippers of Immanuel, look at His head, "*as of the most fine gold*", (*Song 5:11*) and tell me, are not His thoughts precious to you? Isn't your adoration sweetened with affection as you humbly bow before that countenance which "*is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars*"? (*Song 5:15*). Isn't there a charm in His every feature, and isn't His whole person so fragrant that we too can say "*Your name is like ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love You*"? (*Song 1:3*). Is there one single part of His glorious body which is not attractive? - one portion of His person which doesn't draw your soul to Him? - one of His names which doesn't warm your heart to Him?

Our love is not just as a seal set upon His heart of love alone; it is fastened on His arm of power also; (*Song 8:6*), nor is there a single part of Him upon which it doesn't fix itself. We anoint His whole person with the sweet spikenard of our fervent love. (*Mark 14:3; John 12:3*). We want to imitate His whole life ; we want to represent His whole character to the world. Having seen and known Him and recognised His perfection we see lack and failure in everything else. Even the best of His favoured saints have had blots upon their garments and wrinkles upon their brows; He is nothing but loveliness. All earthly suns have their spots; creation around us has its wildernesses; the most lovely things have their defects; but Christ Jesus is gold without alloy; light without darkness; glory without cloud - "*Yes, He is altogether lovely.*"

Prayer

But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favour You will surround him as with a shield.

Ps 5:11-12

Scripture readings

In my prosperity I said, "I shall never be moved."

I said, "I shall die in my nest, and multiply my days as the sand. My root is spread out to the waters ... my glory is fresh within me, and my bow is renewed in my hand." - "Come," one says, "I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant."

The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?" - And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry. " But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?"

Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. - We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Ps 30:6 - Job 29:18-20; Isa 56:12 - Dan 4:30 - Luke 12:19-20 - 2 Cor 12:7-8; Rom 5:3-5

*Suggested additional reading: **Daniel 4***

Meditation

In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved - Psalm 30:6

“Moab has been at ease from his youth; he has settled on his dregs, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” (Jer 48:11). Give a man wealth; let his ships continually bring home rich cargoes; let the winds and waves appear to be his servants; let his lands yield abundant harvests and the weather favour his crops; let uninterrupted

success attend him; let him stand among his fellowmen as a prosperous, successful businessman; let him enjoy settled good health; allow him to march through the world with enlivened spirit and sparkling eye, to live happily with a loving and loyal family and have a perpetual song on his lips – and the natural consequence of such an easy, happy state for any man, even if he is one of the best Christians who ever breathed, will be *presumption*. It was David here who said in his prosperity, “*I shall never be moved;*” and none of us can claim to be better than David, or to have a closer relationship to the Lord than he.

Brother, if you are treading the smooth and easy places along the narrow way to glory, thank God, but watch yourself. But if the way is rough be even more thankful. If God were always to rock us in the cradle of prosperity; if we were always dandled on the knees of fortune; if we hadn't a stain or two on the alabaster pillar; if there weren't at least a few clouds in the sky; if we hadn't any bitter drops in the wine of this life, we would become intoxicated with pleasure and would imagine that we were standing secure and immoveable. We would be standing, but we would be standing on a pinnacle; we would be like the man asleep up a mast, each moment in great danger of falling fatally.

So let's bless God, then, for our afflictions; let's thank Him for those circumstances which force us to rethink and make changes in our lives. We should extol His name for losses, being aware that if, in his parental love, He hadn't dealt with us in this way, we might well have become too secure. Continued worldly prosperity is a fiery trial but afflictions, even when they seem severe, are in fact mercies in disguise.

Prayer

You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Ps 73:24-26

Scripture readings

Sin ... exceedingly sinful

Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

Sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. - When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

It shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel. - To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. - The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. - We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. - Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed.

Rom 7:13 - Rom 5:12; Jer 17:9 - Rom 7:8; James 1:15 - Josh 7:15; James 4:17; Rom 6:23 - 1 John 3:8 - 2 Cor 5:20-21 - 1 Peter 2:24

*Suggested additional reading: **Romans 7:7-25***

Meditation

Sin... exceeding sinful - *Romans 7:13*

Beware of thinking lightly of sin. For many Christians at the time of their conversion, their conscience was so tender that they were afraid of the slightest sin. Young converts have a holy timidity, a godly fear lest they should offend against God. But sadly very soon the freshness of these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling

of the surrounding world. The sensitive plant of young piety and godliness often turns into a willow, too pliable, too easily yielding. It is sadly true, that even a sincere Christian may by degrees grow so morally insensitive that the sin which once startled him soon doesn't alarm him in the least. By degrees men get familiar with sin. The soldier's ear, accustomed to the boom of the cannon becomes deaf to softer sounds. At first a little sin startles us; but soon we say, "It's only a little one!" Then there comes another, larger, and then another, until by degrees we begin to regard sin as almost an insignificant thing. So much so that in unholy presumption we deny that we have fallen into sin at all. True, we tripped a little, but most of the time we stand upright. We may have uttered one unholy word, one small lie, one revengeful remark, but most of our conversation has been consistently Christlike.

So we excuse sin; we throw a cloak over it; we call it by dainty names. Christian, beware how you think lightly of sin. Be very careful lest you fall little and little.

Sin, just a little thing? Isn't it a poison? Who knows its deadliness? Sin, a little thing? Do not the little foxes spoil the grapes? Doesn't the tiny coral insect build a rock which wrecks a navy? Don't little strokes fell lofty oaks? Won't continual droppings wear away stones? Sin, a little thing? It placed a mocking crown of thorns on our Redeemer's head and pierced His heart! It made Him suffer anguish, bitterness, and separation from His holy Father. If you could weigh the smallest sin in the scales of eternity, you would fly from it as from a serpent, and you would abhor the slightest appearance of evil. Look upon all sin as the evil which crucified your Saviour, and you will see it to be "*exceeding sinful.*"

Prayer

With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Ps 119:10-11

Scripture readings

You shall love your neighbour

"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... soul ... strength and mind, and your neighbour as yourself". And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

Matt 5:43 - Luke 10:25-28 - Gal 5:13-14 - James 2:8-10 - 1 Cor 13:4-8

*Suggested additional reading: **Luke 10 25-37***

Meditation

You shall love your neighbour - *Matthew 5:43*

"*Love your neighbour.*" Perhaps he is rolling in money, and you are poor, and living in your little cottage side-by-side with his lordly mansion. Every day you see one or more of his mercedes roll by, his frequent, well-to-do guests look in disdain at your humble home and

you sense that even his gardener despises your poverty. God has given him these gifts, don't covet his wealth, and don't think hard thoughts about him and his household. Work to improve you own situation as far as you can, but be content and don't look enviously at your neighbour and wish your poverty on him. Love him, and then you won't envy him.

Maybe it's the other way round, God has blessed you with more than sufficient, and your neighbours are poor with a correspondingly different lifestyle. Don't scorn to think of them as neighbours who God wants you to love. The world would call them your inferiors but in what way are they really inferior? They have far more in common with you that you might want to acknowledge, for God *"has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth."* (Acts 17:26). It's your coat and car which are better than theirs not the essential you. They are human beings, and what are you more than that? Make the effort and take time to love your neighbour however he may dress and behave.

But, perhaps, you say, "I can't love my neighbours, for whatever I try to do they return only ingratitude and contempt." So much the more room for the heroism of love. Do you want to be a feather-bed warrior, instead of knowing the rough fight of love? He who dares the most, will win the most; and if your path of love be rough going, tread it boldly, continuing to love your neighbours through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads, and if they are hard to please, don't seek to please *them*, but to please your *Master*. Remember if *they* spurn your love, your Master hasn't spurned it, and your action is just as acceptable to Him whether they accept it or not. *"Love your neighbour"*, for in so doing you are following the footsteps of Christ.

Prayer

I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your presence. Ps 140:12-13

Scripture readings

Why are we sitting here until we die?

And behold, a leper came and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. - The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord: "O Lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!" Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. - All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. - Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

2 Kings 7:3 - Matt 8:2-3; Ps 116:3-5 - Isa 1:18-19; John 6:37 - Isa 55:7; Luke 23:42-43

Suggested additional reading: 2 Kings 7

Meditation

Why are we sitting here until we die? - 2 Kings 7:3

Although these daily meditations are intended mainly for the encouragement and edification of Christian believers there may be someone reading this today who doesn't really know Jesus. Here is something for you. Open your Bible and read the story of these lepers (*2 Kings 7*). Think firstly about their hopeless condition; they

had an incurable disease and were soon going to die anyway. Don't you see that your position is very similar. Sin will destroy you for all eternity if it's not dealt with. *"Nothing ventured, nothing gained"*, says an old proverb. The lepers took courage in both hands, left their comfort zone, which had become increasingly uncomfortable, and ventured cautiously over to the other camp. You need to follow their example. If you stay as you are you will perish, God's righteous law condemns you, so you have nothing to lose in going to Jesus. If you stay as you are in stubborn unbelief, no one will pity you when your ruin comes; but if you are taking steps to find God's mercy and forgiveness and He rejects you, you will have universal sympathy. None escape who refuse to look to Jesus; *"For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"*, (Acts 4:12), and you know that some are saved who believe in Him, for you've seen this happen for some for your family and friends. Why shouldn't it be the same for you? The Ninevites said, *"Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?"* (Jonah 3:9). Act on this same hope, and test the Lord's mercy. To perish is so awful, that when there is even a straw to catch at, the instinct of self-preservation should lead you to stretch out your hand.

Up to now we have been reasoning with you from your own unbelieving point of view but we can in fact assure you, that *"the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever"*.(1 Chron 28:9). Jesus turns away none who come unto Him. You won't perish if you trust Him; on the contrary, you will find treasure far richer than the poor lepers gathered in Syria's deserted camp. May the Holy Spirit give you the courage and grace to go at once, and you won't believe in vain.

Prayer

I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. ... You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.

Ps 32:5;7

Scripture readings

Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he.

Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples.

For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*? - And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

1 Cor 10:12 - Prov 16:18-20 - Matt 26:33-35 - 1 Cor 4:7; 8:2 - John 15:4-6

Suggested additional reading: 1 Cor 9:24 – 10:13

Meditation

Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall

1 Cor 10:12

It's a curious fact that it's possible to be proud of God's grace in your life. A man says, "I have great faith, I won't fall; poor little faith may, but I never shall." "I have fervent love," says another, "I can stand, there is no danger of my going astray." The fact is he who boasts of grace really has little grace to boast of. Most who think like this imagine that the grace they have today will continue to keep them for

ever, not realising that the source of this grace is not in themselves and that the flow must come constantly from the fountain head, or else the brook will soon run dry. If a lamp doesn't have a continuous stream of oil feeding it, although it burns brightly to-day, it will smoke to-morrow and soon give out an obnoxious smell! Be very careful that you never think boastfully about spiritual fruit in your life but always give all the glory to Christ. Your confidence for the future needs to be Him and not in yourself. Only Christ's strength can keep you from falling.

"Take heed lest you fall" - Spend much time in prayer, and ensure that adoration and worship form a significant part of your quiet time. Read the Scriptures earnestly and constantly and aim to apply what you read in your daily life. Live near to God. See Christ Himself as your great example and often challenge yourself with the question, "What would Jesus have done in this situation?" Let your lifestyle reflect your anticipation of heaven and cultivate a love and concern for your fellowmen and their eternal salvation. Living with such a vital relationship with your Lord will enable you to unconsciously reflect His character to all you meet.

When that happy day comes when the One you love will say: "Come up higher," it will then be your happiness to hear Him say, "You have fought a good fight, you have finished your course, you have kept the faith and henceforth there is laid up for you a crown of righteousness which will never fade away." (2 Tim 4:7-8). So Christian, with care and caution press on! You need to realise your own weakness but have full faith and confidence in Jesus. He is able and He alone, *"to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."* (Jude 24)

Prayer

Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope. Hold me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall observe Your statutes continually. Ps 119:116-117

Scripture readings

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus

Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel, says the Lord; and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work; for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!

He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. - Of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. - He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. - We, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

2 Tim 2:1 - Hag 2:4-5 - 2 Cor 12:9; Phil 4:13 - Col 1:10-11 - 1 Cor 1:9; John 1:16; John 6:56-57 - 2 Peter 3:18

Suggested additional reading: 2 Tim 1:1-2:1

Meditation

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. - 2 Tim 2:1

Christ is full of grace, grace without measure, but He doesn't retain it for Himself. As a reservoir empties itself into pipes and channels, so Christ pours out His grace for His people. "*Of His fulness we have all received, and grace for grace.*" (John 1 16). Grace by its very nature must be used and it seems as though Christ only has grace in

order to dispense it to us. He stands like the fountain, always flowing, but only running in order to fill the empty glasses and to satisfy the thirsty lips which are attracted to it in their need. Like a tree, He bears juicy, sweet fruit, not as ornaments to decorate its boughs, but to be picked by those who are hungry. Grace in every form that we need it, whether it's to pardon, to cleanse, to preserve, to strengthen, to enlighten, to quicken, or to restore, is always freely available and there is no form of grace which Christ hasn't given to His people.

Also, as the blood in our bodies, although flowing through the heart, belongs equally to every organ and cell, so the influences of grace are the inheritance of every individual saint united to Christ their head. In this we can begin to see the precious communion there is between Christ and His Church. Christ is the head upon which the oil is first poured; but the same oil runs to the very skirts of the garments, (*Ps 133:2*) so that the most insignificant saint receives unction from the same costly moisture which fell first on the head. This is true communion and can also be compared to the sap which flows from the stem to the branches. It's the same sap which nourishes the whole tree, the stem and the branches. Day by day we are receiving grace from Jesus, which maintains our spiritual lives, and the more we recognize that it is coming from Him, so the more we shall find joy in the awareness that He is giving of His precious self to us in fellowship. Let us therefore make daily use of the riches we have in Him, coming to Him as our very own Lord and Saviour under the terms of the covenant, taking from Him all we need with as much boldness as men take money from their own purse.

Prayer

I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; for God is my defense, my God of mercy. Ps 59:16-17

Scripture readings

Remember the poor

Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. - If someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.

Gal 2:10 - 1 John 3:17-18 - Heb 13:15-16; James 2:14-17 - 2 Cor 9:6-8 - Matt 25:40

Suggested additional reading: 2 Cor 9

Meditation

Remember the poor - Galatians 2:10

Why does God allow so many of His children to be poor? He could make them all rich if He pleased; He could lay bags of gold at their

doors; He could send them a large annual income; or He could scatter abundant supplies around their houses as he once made the quails lie in heaps round the camp of Israel, and rained bread from heaven to feed them.

There is no need for them to be poor, except that He sees it to be best. *“The cattle upon a thousand hills are His”* (Ps 50 10); He could supply them with far more than they needed; He could make the richest, the greatest, and the most influential of this world to bring all their power and riches to the feet of His children, for the hearts of all men are in His control. But He doesn't choose to do so; He allows them to suffer in need, He allows them to just scrape by, saving the pennies. Why is this? There are many reasons: one is, to **give us, who are favoured with enough, an opportunity of showing our love to Jesus**. We show our love to Christ when we sing of Him and when we pray to Him; but if there were no poverty in the world we would lose the privilege of proving our love by serving His poorer brethren. He has ordained this as a way we can show that our love is not mere empty words but a reality that we want to express in deed and in truth.

When we truly love Christ, we will care for those who are loved by Him. Those who are dear to Him will be dear to us. Let us then look upon it not as a duty but as a privilege to minister to the needs of the poor of the Lord's flock, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, *“Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it to Me.”* (Matt 25:40). Surely this assurance is sweet enough, and this motive strong enough to lead us to help others with a willing hand and a loving heart — remembering that all we do for His people is graciously accepted by Christ as having been done to Him.

Prayer

Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You. 1 Chron 29:13-14

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