



Daily Manna
October

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

Pleasant fruits, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you, my beloved.

Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain. - Of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

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? - Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. - That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Song 7:13 - Rom 12:1 - John 15:16; John 1:16 - 1 Cor 4:7; Rom 7:4 - Col 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11

*Suggested additional reading: **John 15 1-17***

Meditation

Pleasant fruits, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you, my beloved. - Song of Solomon 7:13

The spouse desires to give to Jesus all that she produces. Our heart has “*all manner of pleasant fruits,*” both “*old and new,*” and they are laid up for our Beloved. Let us examine ourselves and see what is there for Him. We have **new** fruits; inner longings for new life, new

joy, new gratitude; we long to make new resolutions and to carry them out by new labours; our heart blossoms with new prayers, and our soul is promising to make new efforts.

But we have some *old* fruits too. There is our first love: a choice fruit that! and Jesus delights in it. There is our first faith: that simple faith by which, having nothing, we became possessors of all things. There is our joy when first we knew the Lord: let us revive it. We have our old remembrances of the promises of His Word. How faithful has God been! In sickness, how lovingly He comforted us! In deep waters, how calmly He supported and kept our head above the water! In the flaming furnace, how graciously did He deliver us. Old fruits, indeed! We have many of them, for His mercies have been more than the hairs of our head. Old sins we must regret, but then we have had repentances which He has given us, by which we have wept our way to the cross, and learned the merit of His blood.

We have fruits, this morning, both new and old; but here is the point - *they are all laid up for Jesus*. Truly, those are the best and most acceptable services in which Jesus is the solitary aim of the soul, and where His glory, without any seepage towards ourselves, is the object of all our efforts. Let all our fruits be reserved only for our Beloved; let us display them when He is with us, and not hold them up before the gaze of men. Lord Jesus, we will turn the key in our garden door, and none shall enter to rob You of one good fruit from the soil which You have watered with Your bloody sweat. Our all shall be Yours, Yours only, O Jesus, our Beloved!

Prayer

Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. 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.

1 Chron. 29:10-11

Scripture readings

The hope which is laid up for you in heaven

Christ in you, the hope of glory. - If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. - "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." - When He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

A living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. - Rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. - For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Col 1:5 - Col 1:27; 1 Cor 15:19; John 17:24; 1 John 3:2 - 1 Peter 1:3-4; 1 Peter 1:13 - Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17 - 1 John 3:3

Suggested additional reading: 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8

Meditation

***The hope which is laid up for you in heaven.* - Colossians 1:5**

Our hope in Christ for the future provides the secure underlying support for all our happiness and joy in this earthly life. The more we think of heaven the more our hearts will find contentment with whatever God's providence brings to us in this present age. All that we can desire as born-again believers is promised there. Here we often feel to be at the end of our strength, worn out physically, mentally and emotionally but yonder is the land of *rest*. There the

sweat of labour will be no more and tiredness will be for ever banished. To those who are weary and spent, the word “rest” is truly a heavenly word. Here we are always in the field of battle, so tempted within and often so molested by enemy forces without that we have little or no peace in mind and spirit. In heaven we shall enjoy the *victory* our Saviour has won for us. The banner will be waved aloft in triumph, the sword sheathed and we shall hear our Captain say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Perhaps we have been suffering bereavement after bereavement, but we are going to the land of the *immortal* where graves are unknown. Here sin is a constant grief to us, but there we shall be perfectly *holy*, for there shall by no means enter into that kingdom anything which defiles. There are no poisonous weeds in the furrows of celestial fields. Oh! is it not a joy that you are not to be banished from paradise for ever, that you are not to dwell eternally in this wilderness, but shall soon inherit Canaan?

But let it never be said of us, that we are dreaming about the *future* and forgetting the *present*. Let the future so influence and sanctify the present that we may use our lives to the full. Through the Spirit of God the hope of heaven is the most potent force for the promotion of a virtuous, productive life; it is a fountain of joyful activity; it is the corner stone of cheerful holiness. The man who has this hope in him goes about his work with vigour, for the joy of the Lord is his strength. He fights against temptation with willing conviction, for the hope of the next world repels the fiery darts of the adversary. He can labour without present reward, for all he seeks is the 'Well done' of his Master in the world to come.

Prayer

You are worthy ... for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth. Rev 5:9-10

Scripture readings

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. - .A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.

You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels.

He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. - At night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out. - My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me. - There stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul.' - The beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.

The Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Heb 1:14 - 1 Kings 22:19; Dan 7:10 – Heb 13:22 - Ps 91:11-12; Acts 5:19; Dan 6:22; Acts 27:23-24; Luke 16:22 - 2 Kings 6:17

Suggested additional reading: Acts 12:1-17

Meditation

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? - Hebrews 1:14

Angels are the unseen servants of the saints of God; they bear us up in their hands, lest we dash our foot against a stone. Loyalty to their Lord leads them to take a deep interest in the children of His love. They rejoice over the return of the prodigal to his father's house

below, (*Luke 15:10*) and they welcome the arrival of each believer to the King's palace above.

In times past God's children were sometimes privileged to visibly see and talk with angels and although mostly unseen by us today, heaven is still opened, and the angels of God ascend and descend upon the Son of man, (*John 1:51*) as they visit and serve the heirs of salvation. Seraphim still fly with live coals from off the altar to touch the lips of men greatly beloved. (*Isaiah 6:6*) If our eyes could be opened, we would see horses of fire and chariots of fire about the servants of the Lord; (*2 Kings 6:17*) for we have come to an innumerable company of angels, (*Heb 12:22*) who are all watchers and protectors of the seed-royal.

What an honour is ours that the glorious courtiers of heaven should gladly serve us! What a privilege to have fellowship with these holy celestial beings as we, in a sense, work with them in serving one another! Think how thoroughly our Lord has provided for our defence with all the twenty-thousand chariots of God (*Ps 68:17*) armed for our protection! We praise and worship our Lord Jesus Christ. We owe it all to Him. It is in Him that we have been called to sit in heavenly places (*Eph 2:6*) far above principalities and powers. It is His army which camps around those that fear Him. (*Ps 34:7*) He is the true Michael (*Rev 12:7*) whose foot is upon the dragon. All hail, Jesus! You, the Angel of Jehovah's presence, to You the whole family in heaven and on earth offers its morning vows.

Prayer

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honour. Psalm 8:3-5

Scripture readings

At evening time it will be light

Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you. - The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

The Lord will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself; For the Lord will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.

God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation.

Zech 14:7 - Isa 46:4; Ps 92:12-15 - Isa 60:19-20 - Rev 21:3-4 - Luke 2:29-30

Suggested additional reading: Psalm 92

Meditation

At evening time it will be light. - Zechariah 14:7

Often it is only with anxiety that we thing ahead to our old age. Christian believer, take courage from the promise of this Scripture: “*at evening time it will be light!*” To many saints, ***the season of old age*** has proved the most blessed time in their lives. A milder air fans

the mariner's cheek as he nears the shore of immortality, fewer waves ruffle his sea, quiet reigns, deep, still and solemn. In maturity perhaps the flashes of the fire of youth are gone, but the more real flame of earnest feeling remains. John Bunyan described it as the land Beulah, a happy country, where days are as the days of heaven upon earth. Angels visit it, winds from heaven blow over it, flowers of paradise grow in it, and the air is filled with seraphic music. Some dwell here for years, and others come to it but a few hours before their departure, but it is an Eden on earth. We may well long for the time when we shall recline in its shady groves and be satisfied with hope until the time of fruition comes. The setting sun seems larger than when higher in the sky, and a splendour of glory tinges all the clouds which surround its going down. Pain fails to break the calm of the sweet twilight of age, for strength made perfect in weakness bears up with patience under it all. Ripe fruits of choice experience are gathered as the rare nourishment of life's evening, and the soul prepares itself for rest.

The Lord's people shall also enjoy light in *the hour of death*. Unbelief exclaims in sorrow; the shadows fall, the night is coming, existence is ending. Ah no, cries faith, the night is far spent, the true day is at hand. Light is come, the light of immortality, the light of a Father's countenance. Gather up your feet into your bed, see the waiting bands of spirits! Angels waft you away. Farewell, beloved one, you are gone, you wave your hand. Ah, now it is light. The pearly gates are open, the golden streets shine in the jasper light. We cover our eyes, but you see the unseen; adieu, brother, you have light at eventide, such as we have not yet experienced.

Prayer

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night. Ps 92:1-2

Scripture readings

So he arose and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights

I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen. This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise.

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. - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... 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.

My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

1 Kings 19:8 - Isa 43:20-21 - 2 Cor 9:8; Eph 2:8 - 2 Cor 1:3-4 - John 4:34; Phil 4:13

Suggested additional reading: 1 Timothy 6: 6-19

Meditation

So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights 1 Kings 19:8

All the strength which our gracious God gives us is intended for service. It is not to be used for our own selfish pleasure or as something to boast about.

When the prophet Elijah found the cake baked on the coals, and the jug of water placed at his head, as he lay under the juniper tree

he wasn't being waited on by the angel of God in order that he could lay back and relax with a satisfied stomach. Far from it, he was commissioned to go forty days and forty nights in the strength of this food as he journeyed towards Horeb, the mount of God.

When the Master invited the disciples to “Come and dine” with Him, as the feast was concluded, He said to Peter, “Feed my sheep” and added, “Follow me.”

It should be the same for us. We eat the bread of heaven, that we might use our strength in the Master’s service. Like the Israelites of old, we come to the passover and eat of the paschal lamb with loins girded and staff in hand, in order that once we have satisfied our hunger we can get down to action.

Some Christians are for living on Christ, but are not so anxious to live *for* Christ. Earth should be a preparation for heaven; and heaven is the place where saints feast most and work most. They sit down at the table of our Lord, and they serve Him day and night in His temple. They eat of heavenly food and render perfect service. Believer, in the strength you daily gain from Christ, work for Him.

Some of us have a lot to learn concerning the purpose of our Lord in giving us His grace. We are not to retain the precious grains of truth as the Egyptian mummy held the wheat for centuries without giving it an opportunity to grow. We must sow it and water it.

Why does the Lord send down the rain upon the thirsty earth, and give the genial sunshine? Isn't it that these may all enable the ground to produce food for mankind? Even so the Lord feeds and refreshes our souls that we may afterwards use our renewed strength to promote His glory.

Prayer

O Lord, You Yourself know, I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great assembly. Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord *Psalm 40:9-11 5b*

Scripture readings

Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." This He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive. - the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.

Rejoice with Jerusalem ... that you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom, that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. - My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

John 4:14 - John 7:38-39; Gal 5:22 - Jer 17:7-8 - Isa 66:10-11; Ps 63:5 - Rev 22:17

Suggested additional reading: Isaiah 55

Meditation

Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. - John 4:14

For a believer in Jesus there is a sufficiency available in his Lord to satisfy him for now and for all eternity. The believer is not someone whose days are wearisome through lack of hope and comfort or whose nights are long with no heart-cheering thoughts to raise his spirit. Rather he finds through his faith in His Lord such a

source of joy, such a spring of comfort that he is content and happy. Put him in a dungeon and he will find good company. Place him in a barren wilderness and he will eat the bread of heaven. Drive him away from friendship and he will meet the “friend that sticks closer than a brother.” Take away his normal comforts and security and he will find shelter under the Rock of Ages. Sap the foundation of his earthly hopes and his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord.

The heart is as insatiable as the grave till Jesus enters it, and then it is a cup full to overflowing. There is such a fulness in Christ that He alone is the believer’s all. The true saint, walking close to his Lord, is so completely satisfied with the all-sufficiency of Jesus that the only way he thirsts is for deeper draughts of the living fountain. It's only in this sublime way, believer, that you will find yourself thirsting. It's not a thirst of pain, but of loving desire. You will find it a pleasant type of thirst to be panting after a fuller enjoyment of Jesus’ love. Someone in a past age expressed it like this: “I have been sinking my bucket down into the well full often, but now my thirst after Jesus has become so insatiable, that I long to put the well itself to my lips, and drink right on.” Is this the feeling of your heart believer?

Many of us as Christians need to begin to find that all our desires can be satisfied in Jesus. Spend more time with Him in secret; get to know Him better as you read and meditate in the Scriptures and open your heart to Him in prayer. You will soon find that the greatest aim of your life will be to know Him more and more and to enjoy an ever closer relationship with Him. He invites us to come and take of the water of life freely. Jesus will never accuse us of being too greedy of taking more than our share! Hear and heed His words of welcome from the Old Testament: “*Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones!*” (Song 5:1)

Prayer

Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple. ... You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip with abundance. Ps 65:4,11

Scripture readings

Why have You afflicted Your servant?

Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed? Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream, as waters that fail?

I am in derision daily; everyone mocks me. ... But the Lord is with me as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper.

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.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed.

Num 11:11 - Jer 15:18 - Jer 20:7;11 - 2 Cor 12:9-10 - James 1:2-4 - 1 Peter 3:14

*Suggested additional reading: **Job 1***

Meditation

Why have You afflicted Your servant? - Numbers 11:11

Our heavenly Father sends us frequent troubles *to try our faith*. If our faith is worth anything, it will stand the test. Gilt is afraid of fire, but gold is not. The *paste* gem dreads to be touched by the diamond, but the true jewel fears no test. It is a poor faith which can

only trust God when friends are true, the body healthy and the business profitable. But that is true faith which holds on to the Lord's faithfulness when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when spirits are depressed, and the light of our Father's face is hidden. A faith which can say, in the worst trouble, "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,*" (Job 13:15) is heaven-born faith.

The Lord afflicts His servants *to glorify Himself*, for He is greatly glorified in the graces of His people, which are His own handiwork. When "*tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*" (Rom 5:3-4) the Lord is honoured by these growing virtues. We would never know the music of the harp if the strings were left untouched; nor enjoy the juice of the grape if it were not crushed in the winepress; nor discover the sweet perfume of cinnamon if it were not pressed and beaten; nor feel the warmth of fire if the coals were not completely consumed. The wisdom and power of the great Potter are revealed by the trials through which He allows His 'vessels of mercy' to pass as He prepares them for glory.

Present afflictions *tend also to increase future joy*. There must be shades of colour in the picture to bring out the beauty of the lights. Could we be so supremely blessed in heaven if we had not known the curse of sin and the sorrow of earth? Will not peace be sweeter after conflict, and rest more welcome after toil? Will not the memory of past sufferings enhance the bliss of the glorified?

There are many other comforting answers to the question of our theme text. Muse on it further during the day!

Prayer

Lord, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry. for my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave. ... Lord, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me? Ps 88:1-3; 14

Scripture readings

Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. - All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. - Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing..- He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. - For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit.

I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. - Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Luke 5:4 -Mark 16:15-16; Matt 28:18-19; Luke 14:23 -Luke 5:5; John 15:5 - Rom 1:16; 1 Thess 1:5 – John 12:32; Acts 2:41- Rom 11:36

*Suggested additional reading: **Luke 5:1-11***

Meditation

Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch. -

Luke 5:4

We learn from this narrative, ***the necessity of human agency***. The catch of fish was a miracle, yet neither the fisherman nor his boat, nor his fishing tackle were ignored by God. He used each of them as His tools to catch the fish. So in the work of saving souls,

God uses means; and so all the while this present age of grace is with us, God will be pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe. When God choses to work without human instruments, He is without doubt glorified; but He has Himself selected as His normal method the use of natural means and somehow this glorifies Him even more.

Means of themselves are utterly worthless. “*Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing.*” (Luke 5:5). What was the reason for this? Were they not fishermen practising their own profession? Certainly they were not inexperienced labourers; they understood their job. Had they gone about the job unprofessionally? No they hadn't. Had they lacked commitment? No, they had *toiled*. Had they lacked perseverance? No, they had *toiled all night*. Was there a shortage of fish in the sea? Certainly not, for as soon as the Master came, the fish swam to the net in shoals. What, then, is the reason? Jesus wanted to show that there was no power in the means used without His presence and blessing. Without Him we can do nothing. (John 15 5). But with Christ we can do all things. (Phil 4:13)

Christ's presence gives the success. Jesus sat in Peter's boat, and by a mysterious influence He attracted the fish to the net. When Jesus is lifted up in His Church, His presence is the Church's power - the shout of a king is in the midst of her. “*I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself*” (John 12:32). As we get on with our God ordained work of soul fishing, our faith can look up with joyful expectancy to the Lord of the harvest, but if our hopes are fixed on strategy, training courses and statistics, disappointment will soon overwhelm us. But with confidence in our Master let us toil till night comes and we shall not labour in vain, for He who commands us let down the net, will fill it with fish.

Prayer

Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us. Yes, establish the work of our hands.

Ps 90:17

Scripture readings

Able to keep you from stumbling

Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me. ... I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. - I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. - If God is for us, who can be against us?

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.

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. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

Jude 24 – John 17:11;15 John 10:28: - Prov 2:7-8; Rom 8:31 - Col 2:6-7 - 1 Thess 5:23-24

Suggested additional reading: Psalm 91

Meditation

Able to keep you from stumbling. - Jude 24

From the point of view of our text, the path to heaven is very safe, but in other respects ***no road is more dangerous***. It is in fact full of danger. One false step, and how easy it is to take that if grace doesn't prevent us, and down we go. Many of us know from experience what a slippery path it is! How many times have we needed to exclaim with the Psalmist, "*My feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped.*" (Ps 73:2).

If we were strong, sure-footed mountaineers, no doubt we would find it easy going, but in ourselves, *how weak we are* to walk this spiritual road! On the better surfaces we soon falter, and on the smoothest sections we quickly stumble. Our feeble knees can scarcely support our tottering weight. A small clump of grass or even a pebble can trip us up. We are mere children tremblingly taking our first steps in the walk of faith. If our heavenly Father didn't hold our arm we would soon be down and as we are kept from stumbling, how we should bless the patient power which watches over us day by day! Think, how prone we are to sin, how quick to choose danger, how strong the tendency to take the easiest option, and these reflections will make us sing more sweetly than ever before, "Glory to Him, who is able to keep us from stumbling."

We have many foes trying to push us over. The road is rough and we are weak, but in addition to this, enemies lurk in ambush and rush out when we least expect them, doing their best to trip us up, or hurl us down the nearest precipice. Only an Almighty arm can protect us from these unseen foes seeking to destroy us. But it is just such an arm which is active for our defence. He is faithful who has promised, and He is able to keep us from falling, so that with a deep sense of our utter weakness, we may hold on to a firm belief in our perfect safety, and say, with joyful confidence,

*"Against me earth and hell combine,
But on my side is power divine;
Jesus is all, and He is mine!"*

Prayer

*But my eyes are upon You, O God the Lord; in You I take refuge;
do not leave my soul destitute. Keep me from the snares they have
laid for me, and from the traps of the workers of iniquity.*

Psalm 141:8-9

Scripture readings

Faultless before the presence of His glory

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

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. - They are without fault before the throne of God. - The spirits of just men made perfect.

By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. - These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Jude 24 - Col 1:21-22 - Eph 5:25-27; Rev 14:5; Heb 12:23 - Rom 8:3-4 - Prov 4:18 – Rev 14:4-5

*Suggested additional reading: **Revelation 21***

Meditation

Faultless before the presence of His glory. - Jude 24

Turn around in your mind that wonderful word, *faultless!* We are still a long way from it here on earth but our Lord never stops short of perfection in His work of love and this verse assures us that one day we shall reach it. Our Saviour has promised to keep His

people to the end and to present them to Himself at last, “*a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*” (Eph 5:27). All the jewels in the Saviour’s crown are top quality without a single flaw. His bride will be pure and holy.

But how will Jesus make us faultless? Being washed from our sins in His own blood we are already justified and as God sees us in His dear Son He sees us as white and fair as His purest angel. But the righteousness of Jesus has not only been credited to our account, our Saviour’s purpose is that it should be absorbed into every fibre of our being and this is the work of His Holy Spirit. This righteousness will make the saint who wears it positively faultless; yes, perfect in the sight of God. We shall be unblameable and unproveable even in His eyes. His law will not only have no charge against us, but it will be magnified in us.

One day the work of the Holy Spirit within us will be fully completed. He will make us so perfectly holy, that we shall have no lingering tendency to sin. Judgment, memory, will, and every power and passion will be finally set free from the power of evil. We shall be holy even as God is holy, and in His presence we shall dwell for ever. Saints will not be out of place in heaven, their beauty will be as great as that of the place prepared for them. How glorious will be that moment when the everlasting doors are opened for us and we, having been made worthy for the inheritance, will move in with the saints in light. Sin gone, Satan shut out, temptation past for ever, and ourselves “*faultless*” before God. This will be heaven indeed!

Let us learn to express our joy now, as we rehearse the song of eternal praise which will soon roll forth in full chorus from all the blood-washed host. Let us copy David’s worship before the ark as a prelude to our ecstasies before the throne.

Prayer

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Rev 1:5-6

Scripture readings

Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven.

If you would prepare your heart, and stretch out your hands toward Him; if iniquity were in your hand, and you put it far away, and would not let wickedness dwell in your tents; Then surely you could lift up your face without spot; Yes, you could be steadfast, and not fear; Because you would forget your misery ... and your life would be brighter than noonday. Though you were dark, you would be like the morning, and you would be secure, because there is hope.

To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.

Lord, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You. To You I have cried out, O Lord, and in the morning my prayer comes before You.

Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say continually, "Let God be magnified!"

Lam 3:41 - Job 11:13-18 - Ps 25:1;2;4;5 - Ps 88:9;13 - Ps 70:4

Suggested additional reading: Psalm 86

Meditation

Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven. - Lam 3:41

The act of prayer *teaches us our unworthiness*, which is a very humbling lesson for such proud people as we are. If God were to give us blessings without expecting us to pray for them we would never realise how much we needed Him. True prayer expresses an awareness of need. We can't store up the provisions God gives us any more than the Israelites could store up manna in the wilderness. The need to pray daily expresses our total dependence on our God.

While prayer is a request for divine wealth, it is a confession of human emptiness. The most healthy state for a Christian is to be always empty in himself and constantly depending on the Lord for his supplies; to be always poor in self and rich in Jesus; weak as water personally, but mighty through God to do great exploits.

To pray in spirit and in truth is an act of worship. Praise and adoration is an essential part of prayer and this places us where we should be, namely in a state of dependence at God's feet.

Time spent in prayer is in itself a tremendous benefit to the Christian whether we receive immediate answers or not. As the runner gains strength for the race by daily exercise, so for the great race of life we gain energy through the holy discipline of concentrated prayer. Prayer exercises the wings of God's young eaglets, that they may learn to soar above the clouds. Prayer strengthens God's warriors, and sends them off to the battle with their sinews braced and their muscles firm. When an earnestly praying Christian leaves his prayer corner he is like the sun rising over the eastern hills, '*rejoicing as a strong man to run a race.*' (Psalm 19 5). Prayer is that uplifted hand of Moses which ensures the defeat of the Amalekites when the sword of Joshua alone is failing. (*Exodus 17 11*). It is the arrow shot from the chamber of the prophet ensuring the defeat to the Syrians. (*2 Kings 13:16-17*). Prayer clothes our human weakness with God's strength; turns our human foolishness into heavenly wisdom, and gives to fearful and anxious mortals the peace of God. There is nothing that prayer can't do!

Prayer

I spread out my hands to You; my soul longs for You like a thirsty land. Answer me speedily, O Lord; my spirit fails! Do not hide Your face from me, lest I be like those who go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, for in You do I trust. Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You. Ps 143:6-8

Scripture readings

I will meditate on Your precepts.

Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies ... I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.

His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. - My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word.

He who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Ps 119:15 - Ps 119:97-99 - Ps 1:2-3 - Ps 119:148 - James 1:25 - 1 Tim 4:15-16

*Suggested additional reading: **Psalm 119:41-56***

Meditation

I will meditate on Your precepts. - Psalm 119:15

There are times when solitude is better than society, and silence is wiser than speech. We should be better Christians if we were more alone, waiting upon God, and gathering through meditation on His Word spiritual strength for labour in His service. We ought to ***mull over the things of God, because only in this way can we get the real nutriment out of them.*** Truth is something like a bunch of grapes: if we want to make wine from it, we must bruise it; we must press and

squeeze it many times. Using a picture from the past: the bruisers' feet must come down joyfully upon the bunches, or else the juice won't flow; and they must well tread the grapes or else much of the precious liquid will be wasted. In a similar way we need to tread the clusters of truth by meditation, if we want to get the wine of blessing out of it.

Our bodies are not nourished by merely taking food into our mouths. The process which really supplies the muscle, and the nerve, and the sinew, and the bone, is the process of digestion. It is by digestion that the food we eat is assimilated into the inner life. Our souls are not nourished merely by listening briefly to this, and then to that, and then to the other aspect of divine truth. Hearing, reading, marking, and learning, all require inward digestion to complete their usefulness, and this inward digestion lies for the most part in meditating upon it.

Why is it that some Christians, although they hear many sermons, make very slow progress in their spiritual growth? The answer is because they neglect spending time alone with God, and they don't thoughtfully meditate on God's Word. They love the wheat, but they don't grind it. They want the corn, but they won't go out to the fields to harvest it. The fruit hangs on the tree, but they don't pick it. The water flows at their feet, but they don't stoop to drink it. Deliver us from such foolishness, O Lord! Perhaps we need to change priorities in the use of our time and make this text our prayerful resolve from today onwards "*I will meditate on Your precepts.*"

Prayer

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Ps 63:5-6

Scripture readings

Godly sorrow produces repentance

They were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. - He shall pray to God, and He will delight in him, he shall see His face with joy, for He restores to man His righteousness. Then he looks at men and says, 'I have sinned, and perverted what was right, and it did not profit me.' - Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

2 Cor 7:10 - Acts 2:37-38 - Jer 31:9 - Job 33:26-27; Ezek 18:28 - 1 John 1:5;7

Suggested additional reading: 1 John 1

Meditation

Godly sorrow produces repentance. - 2 Corinthians 7:10

Genuine, spiritual mourning for sin is ***the work of the Spirit of God***. Repentance is too exotic a flower to grow in nature's garden. Pearls grow naturally in oysters, but penitence never shows itself in sinners except divine grace works it in them. If you have one particle of real hatred for sin, God must have given it to you, for our human nature is like a thorn bush which will never produce a single fig. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*" (John 3 6)

True repentance *has a distinct reference to the Saviour*. When we repent of sin, we must have one eye upon sin and another upon the cross, or it will be better still if we fix both our eyes upon Christ and see our transgressions only, in the light of His love.

True sorrow for sin is *predominantly practical*. No man may say he hates sin, if he continues to live in it. Repentance makes us see the evil of sin, not merely as a theory but in practise - as a burnt child dreads fire. We will be as much afraid of it, as a man who has recently been mugged in the street is afraid of any form lurking in the shadows. And we will therefore shun it - shun it in everything - not only in its most obvious forms but in little things too, as men shun little vipers as well as great snakes. A sincere awareness of sin will make us very careful Christians; cautious with our tongue, lest it should say a wrong word; watchful over our daily actions, lest in anything we offend; each night we will want to close the day with painful confessions of shortcoming, and each morning our waking prayer will be that God would so uphold us during the day that we won't sin against Him.

Sincere repentance is *continual*. Believers repent until their dying day. This is like a spring in the mountains. Every other sorrow softens with time, but this dear sorrow grows with our growth, and it is so sweet a bitter, that we thank God we are allowed to enjoy and to suffer it until we enter our eternal rest.

Prayer

Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease. Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? Psalm 85:4;6

I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. Psalm 13:5

Scripture readings

I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. - Let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me.

Making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. - That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

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

Phil 3:8 - John 17:3; Jer 9:24 - Eph 1:16-17; Eph 3:17-19 - Col 2:2-3 - 2 Peter 3:18

*Suggested additional reading: **Philippians 3:7-21***

Meditation

I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. - *Philippians 3:8*

Spiritual knowledge of Christ will be a *personal* knowledge. I cannot know Jesus through another person's experience of Him. I must know Him for myself.

It will be an *intelligent* knowledge. I must know Him, not as visionary dreams of Him, but as the Word reveals Him. I must know His natures, divine and human. I must know His offices; His attributes; His works; His shame; His glory. I must meditate upon Him until I begin to “*comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.*” (Eph 3 18-19)

It will be an *affectionate* knowledge of Him. If I know Him at all, as opposed to merely knowing about Him, I will love Him. An ounce of this heart knowledge is worth a ton of knowledge about Him in my head.

Our knowledge of Him will be a *satisfying* knowledge. When I know my Saviour, my mind will be full to the brim. I shall feel that I have that which my spirit has longed for. He is that bread of which if a man eat he will never hunger. (John 6:35)

At the same time it will be an *exciting* knowledge. The more I know of my Beloved, the more I will want to know. The higher I climb the higher will be the summits which my eager feet will long to ascend. I will want more as I get more. Like the miser’s treasure, my gold will excite me to covet for more.

To conclude; this knowledge of Christ Jesus will be a most *happy* one. In fact, so uplifting, that sometimes I will feel myself to be on a totally different plain to the trials, doubts, and sorrows with which I so often have to struggle. While I am enjoying this knowledge I will realise myself to be other than “*Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble*”; (Job 14:1) for I will sense the immortality of my ever-living Saviour, and gain a foretaste of His eternal joy.

Come, my soul, sit at Jesus’s feet and learn of Him today.

Prayer

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 73:25-26

Scripture readings

Who can endure the day of His coming?

Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! For what good is the day of the Lord to you? It will be darkness, and not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! Or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him!

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. and the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the Lord of hosts, "... but to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings."

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. - The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Mal 3:2 - Amos 5:18-20 - Mal 4:1-2 - Rev 1:7; 2 Peter 3:10;13

Suggested additional reading: Psalm 2

Meditation

But who can endure the day of His coming? - Malachi 3:2

Our Lord's first coming was a quiet affair without public displays of pomp and power, and yet in truth there were few who could endure His presence on earth. Herod and all Jerusalem with him were stirred into suspicion at the news of the wondrous birth. Those who claimed to be waiting for Him, showed their hypocrisy by Him when He came. His ministry on earth was like a threshing tool

(*Luke 3 17*), which tested the great heap of professing followers of Jahwe and few survived the process.

But what will His second advent be? What sinful person can bear to seriously think about it? *“He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.”* Isa 11:4. When in his meekness, at the time of His arrest, He quietly said, *“I am He,”* the soldiers fell backward! (John 18:6). What terror will His enemies show when He reveals Himself fully as the omnipotent *“I am?”* His death shook the earth and darkened the heavens; what shall be the fearful splendour of that day when as the living Saviour, He summons the living and dead before Him? (*2 Tim 4:1*)

O that the *'terror of the Lord'* (*2 Cor. 5:11*) would persuade men to forsake their sins and *'kiss the Son lest He be angry'*!(*Psalm 2:12*) Though a lamb, He is yet the *'lion of the tribe of Judah'* (*Rev.5:5*), tearing the prey in pieces. Though He he will not *'break the bruised reed'* (*Matt. 12:20*), yet He will *'break His enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'*. (*Ps 2:9*) None of His enemies shall be able to stand before the tempest of His wrath, or hide themselves from the sweeping hail of His indignation; but His beloved blood-washed people look for His appearing with joy, and anticipate the experience of His coming without fear. To them He sits as a refiner even now, and when He has tested them they shall come forth as gold. (*Job 23:10*)

Let us search our hearts today and *'make our calling and election sure'* (*2 Peter 1:10*), so that we can wait for the coming of the Lord without fear. We need the grace of Holy Spirit to search us and throw out all hypocrisy, that He will find us sincerely in Him at the day of His appearing.

Prayer

O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You! - But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness.

Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:17

Scripture readings

Jesus said to them, "Come and eat"

Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

The bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ... Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. ... Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."

John 21:12 - Song 2:3-6 - Rev 3:20 - John 6:33; 35; 54-56

Suggested additional reading: Luke 14:15-24

Meditation

Jesus said to them, "Come and eat" - John 21:12

With these words the believer is invited to a holy nearness to Jesus. "*Come and eat*," implies the same table and the same food as our Lord and sometimes it means sitting next to Jesus and leaning our head on his shoulder, or as John knew it '*on His bosom*.' (John 13:23) It means being ushered into the royal banqueting hall and over the table is a banner with the words: "*Redeeming love*". (Song 2:4)

"Come and eat," speaks to us of a remarkable *oneness with Jesus*. The food that we feast on when we dine with Jesus is Jesus

Himself! We can imagine the alarm of the Jews when Jesus first gave this invitation and offered Himself to them! Human reason is repulsed by such words: “*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*” John 6:56. But the depth of fellowship and union described in these terms is staggering. No human relationship can be so close as that offered in this wonderful invitation.

It is also an invitation to enjoy *fellowship with one another*. Christians have different ideas about a whole variety of details in regard to their faith, but all born again believers have the same spiritual appetite. If we cannot all *feel* alike, we can all *feed* alike on the bread of life sent down from heaven. At the table of fellowship with Jesus we are one bread and one cup. As the loving cup goes round we are in effect pledging ourselves to each other in Christ. Get nearer to Jesus, and you will find yourself linked more and more in spirit to all 'the saints', who are nourished by the same heavenly manna. As we get nearer to Jesus we get nearer to each other!

We also see in these words the Christian's *source of strength*. To look to Christ in faith is to find eternal life, but for the strength to serve Him you must “come and eat.” We struggle under much unnecessary weakness because we neglect this invitation of the Master. None of us needs a low-fat diet as Christians. On the contrary, we should feast on the marrow and fatness of the gospel so that we can gain strength from it, This will equip every nerve and muscle for our Master's service.

So in conclusion, if you long for *nearness* to Jesus, *union* with Jesus, *love* to His people and *strength from Jesus*, “come and eat”. He invites you to quietly sit down with Him and as you talk to Him and read His word He will feed you with Himself.

Prayer

So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. ... 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 63:2-5

Scripture readings

David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish some day by the hand of Saul.

Go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided Myself a king among his sons. ... Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick. - Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my just claim is passed over by my God"? - "I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the son of a man who will be made like grass? And you forget the Lord your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth.

Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

1 Sam 27:1 - 1 Sam 16:1;13 -.Prov 13:12; Isa 40:27; Isa 51:12-13 - Matt 14:31 - Isa 40:31

Suggested additional reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

Meditation

And David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish some day by the hand of Saul. - 1 Samuel 27:1

This thought that arose in David's heart was ***completely false***. At God's command Samuel had anointed him King of Israel and he had no grounds for imagining that this was an empty and meaningless act. On no occasion had the Lord ever deserted Him.

He had often found himself in perilous positions but there had never been a single instance when God had not rescued him. He had had a great variety of trials but in every case He who had sent the trial had also graciously provided a way of escape. David could not put his finger on any entry in his diary and say of it, "Here is evidence that the Lord will forsake me," for every experience in his past life proved the very opposite. His human fears were so influencing his thoughts that at this moment he was no longer exercising faith or even reasoning logically from past experiences of God's faithfulness.

Isn't it exactly the same in our case when we doubt God's help? Isn't it *mistrust without a cause*? Have we ever had the shadow of a reason to doubt our Father's goodness? Haven't His lovingkindnesses been marvellous? Has He even *once* failed to justify our trust? No! our God has not left us alone in our need. We have had dark nights, but the star of love has been there shining in the blackness. We have been in severe battles, but our Protector has always held his shield over us for our defence. We have gone through many trials, but never to our detriment, always to our advantage. The conclusion from our past experience must be, that He who has been with us in six troubles, will not forsake us in the seventh. What we have known of our faithful God, proves that He will keep us to the end. Let us not, then, reason contrary to evidence. How can we ever be so ungenerous as to *doubt* our God? Lord, throw down the Jezebel of our unbelief, and let the dogs devour it.

Prayer

You are the God of my strength; Why do You cast me off? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; ... 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. Psalm 43:2-4

Scripture readings

Your paths drip with abundance

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. - All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth. - How precious is Your loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.

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.

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. - 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. .. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

Ps 65:11 - Ps 16:11; Ps 25:10; Ps 36:7-8 - Isa 55:2 - John 1:16; John 15:7;8;11

*Suggested additional reading: **Psalm 25***

Meditation

Your paths drip with abundance - Psalm 65:11

Many of “the paths of the Lord drip with abundance,” but a special one is ***the path of prayer***. No believer, who spends much time alone with His Lord in prayer will need to complain of leanness of soul. Starving souls live at a distance from the mercy-seat, and become like the dried up fields in times of drought. Spending time with God in wrestling prayer is sure to make the believer strong, if not happy. The nearest place to the gate of heaven is the throne of

heavenly grace. Much alone with Jesus and you will have much assurance; little alone with Jesus and your religion will be shallow, polluted with many doubts and fears, and not sparkling with the joy of the Lord. Since this soul-enriching path of prayer is open to the weakest believer, since no high qualifications are required and you are not invited to come on any other basis than that of childlike faith then see to it, dear reader, that you are often in the way of private devotion. Be much on your knees, for in this way Elijah drew the rain upon the famished fields of Israel.

There is another special path dripping with abundance to those who walk in it and this is *the secret walk of communion*. Oh! the delights of fellowship with Jesus! Earth has no words which can set forth the holy calm of a soul which can lean on Jesus' bosom. Few Christians understand it, they live in the lowlands and seldom climb to the top of Nebo: they live in the outer court, they seldom enter the holy place, they don't take up the privilege of priesthood. They see the sacrifice at a distance, but they don't sit down with the priest to eat it and to enjoy the fat of the burnt offering. But, reader, sit constantly under the shadow of Jesus; choose that better part that Mary chose (*Luke 10 42*); let your beloved be unto you as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, (*Song 2:3*) and you shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness (*Psalms 63:5*). O Jesus, visit us with Your salvation!

Prayer

Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus 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. Psalms 63:3-5

Scripture readings

Babes in Christ.

And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here." So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!"

But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. - You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. - Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have perfected praise.

1 Cor 3:1 - 1 Sam 16:11-13 - Luke 18:16-17 - 1 John 2:12; 1 John 4:4 - Luke 18:17; Matt 21:16

Suggested additional reading: 1 John 2:12-25

Meditation

Babes in Christ. - 1 Corinthians 3:1

Do you think of yourself as an insignificant Christian? Your faith is so easily unsettled and doubts and questions keep disturbing your peaceful trust in the Lord. You know you are loving neither God nor your neighbours and friends as you should and you sense that the life of the Holy Spirit in you is still so very weak.

The first step towards spiritual growth is to look away from yourself and to begin to praise God for what you already are. In many ways you are already *equal to the greatest and most mature Christian*. You are as much bought with the blood of Jesus as he is. You are as much an adopted child of God as any other believer. An infant is as truly a child of its parents as is the full-grown man. You are justified before God to no lesser degree than the most holy of saints. There are no degrees of justification; your little faith placed in Jesus has made you completely clean. You have as much right to all these precious things provided for in the covenant as the most advanced believers. This right is in no way linked to your spiritual growth, it lies in the covenant itself. Your faith in Jesus is not the measure, but the evidence of your inheritance in Him. Our Saviour became poor that we through his poverty might become rich, and you are as rich as the richest of saved sinners when you trust Christ. In the family register of glory the small and the great are written with the same pen. You are as dear to your Father's heart as the greatest in the family. Jesus is very tender in His loving concern for you. You are like the smoking flax; a rougher spirit would say, "put out that smoking flax, it is filling the room with an offensive smell!" but the smoking flax *He* will not quench. (Matthew 12:20) You are like a bruised reed; and any less tender hand than that of the Chief Musician would tread on you or throw you away, but He will never break the bruised reed.

Instead of being depressed by your immaturity as a Christian, you have every reason to talk positively and triumphantly with your soul: "I may feel an insignificant member of God's family, yet in Christ I am already sitting in heavenly places. (Eph 2:6). I may feel poor in faith, but in Jesus all things are mine. (1 Cor. 3:21-23). In myself I am certainly unworthy but as I trust Jesus as my Saviour I can rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation."

Prayer

Lord, You will establish peace for us, for You have also done all our works in us. O Lord our God, masters besides You have had dominion over us; but by You only we make mention of Your name.

Isa 26:12-13

Scripture readings

Grow up in all things into Him

To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. - I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon. Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall be revived like grain, and grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. - Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Eph 4:15 - Mal 4:2; Hos 14:5-7 - 1 Peter 2:2; Eph 2:20-22 - 2 Peter 3:17-18

Suggested additional reading: Hosea 14:1-9

Meditation

Grow up in all things into Him. - Ephesians 4:15

Many Christians remain stunted and dwarfed in spiritual things. Year after year there is no sign of development in their spiritual life. They show no evidence that they are growing closer to Jesus and feeling more of His love in their souls. They exist but do not “*grow up in all things into Him.*” How is it with you? Are you content to remain like the “*green blade,*” when you could be growing to

produce first an “ear,” and then eventually to ripen into the “full corn in the ear?” Are you satisfied to believe in Christ, and to say, “I am safe,” without wanting to know more of the fulness which is to be found in Him? The risen Lord Jesus warned the church at Laodicea against such apathy with strong descriptive language. (Rev. 3:16) We shouldn't let sportsmen and businessmen put us to shame. As they ambitiously give time and effort to further themselves so we should be showing even greater zeal to be enriched in the knowledge of Jesus. Our Master calls us to be faithful in serving others, our families and our churches, but not at the neglect of our own spiritual growth.

Should it always be winter time in our hearts? We need the seed time, it's true, but O for a spring time, yes, and then a summer season, giving promise of an early harvest.

If we want to ripen in grace, we must live near to Jesus. In His presence the fruit of His Spirit in us will ripen through the sunshine of His smiles. We must have precious times of closeness to Him. Don't be satisfied just seeing Him from a distance. Come near, as John did, and pillow your head on His breast; then you will soon find yourself advancing in holiness, in love, in faith, in hope and in every precious gift.

As the sun rises first on the mountain-tops and gilds them with its light, presenting a sight which never fails to thrill the most accustomed eye; so the glow of the Spirit's light on the head of a child of God provokes the attention and admiration of all who see it. Let it be our ambition to rise in spiritual stature, like Saul, above his fellows, till, like a mighty Alp, snow-capped, we reflect the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and bear the glow of His glory for all to see. The world will see it and all the glory will be to our Father in heaven.

Prayer

I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good. Ps 52:8-9

Scripture readings

The love of Christ compels us

The spirit within me compels me. Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; it is ready to burst like new wineskins. - Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. - Peter and John answered and said to them: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. ... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words;

I am testing the sincerity of your love. ... It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.

2 Cor 5:14 - Job 32:18-19; Song 8:7; Acts 4:19-20 - Matt 10:37-39 - John 14:21;23;24 - 2 Cor 8:8;10;11

Suggested additional reading: 2 Corinthians 8:1-24

Meditation

The love of Christ compels us. - 2 Corinthians 5:14

Do you ever consider how much you owe the Lord? How much He has done for you? Your sins are forgiven for His names sake. The holy God loves you and accepts you as He sees you clothed in the perfect righteousness of His Son. Your life has found stability

because He has set your feet on a rock and established your steps. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for you in glory and will come again to receive you to Himself. What God has planned for you is beyond imagination, 'eye has not seen it, nor ear heard it'.

Isn't it time you did something for Jesus, something worthy of such love. Merely to say thank you with words to the Redeemer who died for you is far too small a response. How will you feel when your Master comes if you have to confess that you *did* nothing for Him. You kept your love for Him shut up like a stagnant pool. It flowed nowhere. Your fellow Christians didn't benefit from it, neither did the work of the Gospel. Even the world scorns love which doesn't express itself in action; "open rebuke is better than secret love." says an old proverb. There is no evidence of the existence of a love which never prompts you to any single act of self-denial, of generosity, of heroism, or zeal!

Think how *He* has loved you, and given Himself for you! Do you know the power of that love? Then allow it like a rushing mighty wind to empower your soul; to sweep out the clouds of your worldliness, and clear away the mists of sin. "For Christ's sake" let it be the tongue of fire that shall sit on you: "for Christ's sake" let it be the divine delight, the heavenly inspiration to carry you up and away from an earthly mindset, the divine spirit that shall make you bold as lions and swift as eagles in your Lord's service.

Love should give wings to the feet of service, and strength to the arms of labour. Fixed on God with a constancy that is not to be shaken, resolute to honour Him with a determination that is not to be turned aside, and pressing on with an ardour never to be wearied, let us give witness to the compelling power of the love to Jesus in our souls. Finally may this love as a divine magnet attract us more and more heavenward towards itself.

Prayer

Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.

John 21:17

Scripture readings

I will love them freely

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.

The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers,

God, 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. - 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. - Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. - Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Hos 14:4 - Jer 31:3 - Deut 7:7-8 - 2 Tim 1:8-9; Eph 2:8-9; John 13:1 - 1 Cor 2:12; Rom 3:24

*Suggested additional reading: **Hosea 14***

Meditation

I will love them freely. - Hosea 14:4

This simple sentence gives us the essential message of the whole Bible in a nutshell. He who understands its meaning has already grasped the heart of biblical theology, and he who can dive into its fulness is a true 'master in Israel'. These five words summarise the whole glorious message of salvation which was delivered to us in Christ Jesus our Redeemer.

The sense hinges on the word ***“freely.”*** This is the glorious, the suitable, the divine way by which love streams from heaven to earth. Here is a spontaneous love flowing out to those who neither deserved it, purchased it, nor even looked for it. It is in fact the only way in which God can love people like us. The text is a death-blow to any idea we might have of deserving God's love: *“I will love them freely.”* If we deserved God to love us, even in any degree, then the value of the freeness of His love would be reduced accordingly. But it here it stands in our text, *“I will love you freely.”* We may hesitate to believe it: “Lord, my heart is so hard.” He answers *“I will love you freely.”* We object again, “But I don't feel my need of Christ as I know I should.” He answers “I don't love you just to the extend you feel you need me to; I love you freely.”

A softening of our spirit in love to God is not a condition for His love to us. The covenant of grace has no conditions whatsoever for us to fulfil. We may, without any fitness, trust in God's promise made to us in Christ Jesus; *“He who believes on Him is not condemned.”* (John 3:18). It's just wonderful to know that the grace of God is freely available to us at all times, without preparation, without fitness, without money, and without price!

“I will love them freely” is also an ***invitation for backsliders to return.*** In fact the text was specially written for such - *“I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely.”* Backslider! doesn't the generosity of the promise at once break your heart? Turn around, come back, the heavenly Father you have injured is waiting for you.

Prayer

We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will remember your love more than wine. Song 1:4

Scripture readings

"Do you also want to go away?"

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

He who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

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." - "No one, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God."

John 6:67 - Josh 24:15 - Matt 13:20-21 - John 8:31-32; Luke 9:62 - Ruth 1:16

Suggested additional reading: John 6:60-70

Meditation

"Do you also want to go away?" - John 6:67

Many have walked away from Jesus and given up all effort of trying to be a consistent Christian. Often their argument has been: "It's too hard, I can't do it anymore," If this is a temptation for you, either now or sometime in the future, don't act rashly, think through what you are doing very carefully!

Is there really any reason to give up on Jesus from *past experience*? Hasn't He proved Himself sufficient for you in every way? Jesus appeals to you as you read this: "Is life with me really dry, unsatisfying and boring?" When your soul has been able to simply trust Him, has He ever let you down? Haven't you found Him

to be a compassionate and generous friend, and hasn't simple faith in Him given you all the peace your spirit could want? Could you even dream of a more consistent and better friend than He has proved to be? Then shame on you for even thinking of denying Him for some new and unproven way.

Then is there anything in *the present* that compels you to leave Christ? When things in this world bring their worse to us, or when other Christians seem to be attacking us, surely the most sensible thing to do is to run to our Saviour and pour out our heart to Him. The greatest joy we can have to-day is to know that He has saved us and that we are safe in Him. What fools we would be to rob ourselves of His comfort by forsaking Him? Who would think of exchanging real gold for fake metal? or of rejecting the benefits of the sun without finding a better light? In the same way what sane person what really want to leave our Lord Jesus without having discovered a more loving and more faithful lover. There isn't one, despite anything the 'old serpent' might be telling you. Let's hold on to our best and only real friend with an immortal grasp, and seal His name with an eternal tattoo on our arm.

As for *the future*, can you honestly expect that anything could happen which would justify deserting the Captain of our Salvation. If He gives us a long life here below, He has promised always to be there for us. If we are materially poor, what better than to have Christ in whom we have real riches? If illness comes, what more do we want than Jesus by our bedside and to know His promised grace supporting us and comforting us.? When we die, isn't it written that *“neither death, nor life, ... nor things present, nor things to come, ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!”* (Rom 8:38-39) No! There is every reason to stand with Peter and to simply answer our Lord's challenging question with: *“Lord, to whom shall we go?”*

Prayer

We will not turn back from You; revive us, and we will call upon Your name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved! Ps 80:18-19

Scripture readings

The trees of the Lord are full of sap.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; ... I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. - I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; They will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses.'

God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. - He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, - You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. .. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Ps 104:16 - Ezek 36:26-27; Isa 44:3-4 - 2 Thess 2:13; Titus 3:5-6; Rom 8:9 - Gal 5:22-25

Suggested additional reading: Joel 2:21-32

Meditation

The trees of the Lord are full of sap. - Psalm 104:16

Without sap the tree cannot flourish or even exist. *Vitality* is essential to a Christian. There must be *life*, the vital principle infused into us by God the Holy Ghost, or we cannot be trees of the Lord. The mere name of being a Christian is but a dead thing, we must be filled with the Spirit of divine life.

This life is *mysterious*. We do not really understand the circulation of the sap in a tree, the forces that cause it to rise. So also the life within us is a sacred mystery. Regeneration is the result of the Holy Ghost entering into man and becoming man's life; and this divine life in a believer then feeds on the flesh and blood of Christ and finds divine nourishment in Him, but "*where it comes from and where it goes*" (John 3:8), who can explain?

What a *secret* thing the sap is! The roots go searching through the soil with their little spongioles, but we cannot see them suck out the various gases, or transmute the mineral into the vegetable; this work is done down in the dark. Our root is Christ Jesus, and our life is hid in Him; this is the secret of the Lord. The radix of the Christian life is as secret as the life itself.

How *permanently active* is the sap in the cedar! In the Christian the divine life is also always full of energy and activity, not always in fruit-bearing, but in inward operations. The various spiritual gifts in the believer are not always in constant motion but his spiritual life never ceases to palpitate within. He is not always working for God, but his heart is always living upon Him.

As the sap *shows itself in producing the foliage and fruit of the tree*, so with a truly healthy Christian, the inward grace is revealed externally through his walk and conversation. If you talk with him, he can't help but speak about Jesus and make some reference to spiritual things. If you notice his actions you will see that he has been with Jesus. The sap within is filling his conduct and conversation with the fruit of the Spirit.

Prayer

You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in His works. Ps 104:30-31

Scripture readings

Because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever

I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. - Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. - I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." - You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

He who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

2 John 2 - Jer 31:33; 1 Peter 1:23 – John 14:6; John 18:37; - 1 John 2:20-21 - 1 Cor 2:15-16 - 3 John 3-4

Suggested additional reading: 1 Cor 2:1-16

Meditation

Because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever. - 2 John 2

When God's truth once enters the human heart and begins to effectively influence that person, bringing every part of his life under its authority, no power, human or devilish can dislodge it. We entertain God's truth not as guest but as master of the house.

This fact is a ***Christian necessity***; he is no Christian who does not believe God's truth nor subject himself willingly to it. Those who have felt the vital power of the gospel, and experienced the Holy Ghost opening, applying and sealing the Lord's Word to them, would sooner be torn apart than have the Gospel of their salvation wrenched from them.

There are a thousand blessings wrapped up in the assurance of this text and the truth of it will be with us for ever. It will be our living support, our dying comfort, our rising song, our eternal glory. This is ***Christian privilege***, without it our faith has little value.

There are some aspects of truth which we outgrow and leave behind, for they are but rudiments and lessons for beginners, but we cannot think of the statement of this text in this way. It is both sweet food for young Christians and in the highest sense strong meat for men. This truth, which is in us and will be with us for ever, tells us we are sinners. This is painful but it is with us to humble and make us watchful. The happier aspect of truth assures us that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus shall be saved. This is our hope and joy and we rejoice to think that it will be with us for ever.

Divine truth teaches us that our salvation is all of God's grace. The more we learn and experience about ourselves the more meaningful and precious this aspect of truth becomes. The grounds and motives for believing it are stronger now than when we first found Christ and we expect them to become increasingly more so till in death we clasp the Saviour in our arms.

To recognise divine truth living in others draws us together in love. We will not always agree on all aspects of our understanding of this truth and we sometimes sense that it takes time for our minds to catch up with the truth that the Holy Spirit has placed in our hearts!

Finally it is good to remind ourselves that Jesus once said, "*I am the truth*". (John 14:6).

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. Ps 43:3-4

Scripture readings

"You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts.

"Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house."

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! ... in tithes and offerings. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little. You eat, but do not have enough. You drink, but you are not filled with drink. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

Honour the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine. - The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.

Hag 1:9-10 - Mal 3:8-10 - Hag 1:5-6 - Prov 3:9-10; Prov 11:25

Suggested additional reading: Isaiah 58:6-14

Meditation

"You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts.

"Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house." - Haggai 1:9

Some Christians stint their contributions to the ministry and missionary work and somehow convince themselves that such saving is good economy. They are infact impoverishing themselves. Their

excuse is that they must first look after their own families, and they forget that to neglect the house of God is the sure way to bring ruin upon their own houses.

Our God can so control things in providence that He can either cause our efforts to succeed far beyond our expectation or can defeat our plans to our confusion and dismay. By a turn of His hand He can steer our circumstances, like a boat, either in a profitable channel, or run it aground in poverty and bankruptcy. It is the teaching of Scripture that the Lord enriches the liberal and leaves the miserly to find out that *'withholding more than is right leads to poverty'* (Prov 11:24).

From my personal observation over many years I have noticed that the most generous Christians I know have always been the happiest and almost invariably the most prosperous. I have seen the generous giver rise to wealth of which he never dreamed and I have seen the mean and ungenerous descend to poverty through the very miserliness by which he thought to get rich. Men trust good stewards with larger and larger sums, and so it frequently is with the Lord; He gives by cartloads to those who give by bushels. Where He doesn't choose to give wealth the Lord makes the little appear much by the contentment which the sanctified heart feels in regard to portion out of which the tithe has been dedicated to the Lord.

Selfishness always has its eye on his own home, but godliness seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. In the long run selfishness is loss, and godliness is great gain. It needs faith to give to our God with an open hand, but surely He deserves it of us; and in reality the most we can give is a very poor acknowledgment of our amazing indebtedness to His goodness to us.

Prayer

Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. ... All things come from You, and of Your own we have given You. For we are aliens and pilgrims before You ... our days on earth are as a shadow. 1 Chron 29:13-15

Scripture readings

This is a faithful saying:

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. - "She will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. - I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. - Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. - .For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

2 Tim 2:11 - 1 Tim 1:15; Matt 1:21 - 1 Tim 4:8-9; John 10:10 – 2 Tim 2:11-12; Rom 8:17 - Titus 3:8; Eph 2:10 - Titus 1:9

Suggested additional reading: 2 Tim 2: 1-15

Meditation

It is a faithful saying. - 2 Timothy 2:11

Paul gives us four of these "*faithful sayings.*" The **first** "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" The **second** "*Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and*

*of that which is to come.” The **third** “If we endure we shall also reign with Him”; and the **fourth** “that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.”*

We may trace a connection between these faithful sayings. The first lays the foundation of our eternal salvation in the free grace of God, seen in the mission of our great Redeemer. The next assures us of the extent of the blessing of our salvation, we are blessed in time and in eternity. The third shows one of the privileges which is ours as the chosen people; we are ordained to suffer for Christ with the promise that *“if we endure we shall also reign with Him.”* The last sets forth the active aspect of being a Christian, we must *“be careful to maintain good works”* to persevere in expressing our faith in practical ways.

Thus we have the root of salvation in free grace; next, the privileges of that salvation in the life which now is, and in that which is to come; and then the two great branches of practical Christianity, suffering with Christ and serving with Christ; both of these branches should be profuse with the fruits of the Spirit.

Treasure up these faithful sayings. Let them be the guide for our life, our comfort, and our instruction. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, proved them to be faithful sayings through his own experience. They are still faithful, not one word shall fall to the ground; they are worthy of all acceptance. Let us accept them now, and prove their faithfulness. Let these four faithful sayings be written on the four corners of My house.

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. Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes. Ps 119:10-12

Scripture readings

I chose you out of the world,

You are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. - His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ... that no flesh should glory in His presence. - He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." - All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ... No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. - My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

John 15:19 - Deut 7:6; 1 Peter 2:9 - 1 Cor 1:27;29; Eph 1:4-5 - Rom 9:14-15; John 6:37;44; John 10:27

Suggested additional reading: 1 Cor 1:18-31

Meditation

I chose you out of the world. — John 15:19

Here as Jesus tells his disciples that he has selected them out of the mass of mankind for the special privilege of being with Him and serving Him, we are seeing what the theologians call 'distinguishing grace'. This is the high doctrine of election being applied in practise. Those who follow Jesus are His chosen ones. Don't be afraid to meditate on this aspect of God's word even though it baffles many.

When your mind is most heavy and your spirit depressed, you will find it a wonderful medicine. Jesus loves me and has chosen me personally by name to be His child! Let this thought thrill you and motivate you. Those who doubt the so-called doctrines of grace, or who push them to one side as too difficult to think about, miss the richest '*clusters of Eshcol*' (Num 13:23-24); they lose the '*wines on the lees well refined*', the '*fat things full of marrow*.' (Isaiah 25:6). There is no '*balm in Gilead*' (Jer 8:22) to be compared with it. If just a taste of the honey Jonathan found in the wood could bring such brightness to his eyes (1 Sam 14:27), then this is honey which will enlighten *your heart* to love and learn the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Eat, and don't be afraid of over eating. This is meat from the King's table and will bring no harm to any of His courtiers. This will enlarge your mind and soul to begin to comprehend more and more the eternal, everlasting, discriminating love of God. Don't expect to be able to answer all the objections that have been raised against it, but let your soul feed on what God Himself has said.

When you have climbed in your meditation to the heights of election, stay for a while and enjoy the view from its neighbouring peak, the 'covenant of grace'. This includes all that God has promised us in Christ. Jesus Christ as our 'surety' represents our side of this eternal covenant which was signed, sealed and settled before the world was created. "*All the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen.*" (2 Cor. 1:20)

Since Jesus undertook to bring me to glory, and since the Father promised that He would give me to His Son as part of the infinite reward for His sufferings and death; then, my soul, till God Himself shall be unfaithful, till Jesus shall cease to be the truth, you are safe.

Prayer

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth. Ps 115:1

Scripture readings

In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven, - But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.

Hallowed be Your name. - Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!

Your kingdom come. - Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. - Make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight

Give us this day our daily bread. - I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. - The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. - The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. - And all the people said, "Amen !" and praised the Lord.

Matt 6:9-13 - Isa 64:8 - Isa 6:3 - Matt 6:33 – Heb 13:21 - Ps 37:25 - 1 John 1:7 - Rom 16:20 - 1 Chron 16:36

Meditation

“In this manner, therefore, pray: ...” - Matthew 6:9

This prayer begins where all true prayer needs to begin, with the spirit of **adoption**, “*Our Father*.” No prayer is acceptable to God until we can say, “*I will arise, and go to my Father*.” (Luke 15:18). This child-like attitude soon recognizes the grandeur of the Father

“in heaven,” and develops into **devout adoration**, “*Hallowed be Your name.*” The child lisping, “*Abba, Father,*” (Rom 8:15), grows into the cherub crying, “*Holy, Holy, Holy.*” (Is. 6:3).

There is then but one step from rapturous worship to the **glowing missionary spirit**, which is a certain outgrowth of genuine filial love and reverent adoration — “*Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*”

Next follows the heartfelt **expression of dependence** upon God: “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” But further inner illumination by the Holy Spirit, makes him aware that he is not only dependent on his heavenly Father for the provisions of each day, but that he has a sinful nature and is constantly failing Him. Hence he **entreats for mercy**, “*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*”

The Gospel promises pardon to the repentant sinner and assures him of Christ's righteousness imputed to him through faith. Knowing thus his acceptance with God, the child of his heavenly Father humbly **supplicates for holy perseverance**, “*Do not lead us into temptation.*” Being really forgiven, he is anxious not to offend again; the possession of justification leads to an anxious desire for sanctification. “*Forgive us our debts,*” that is justification; “*Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,*” that is sanctification in its negative and positive forms.

Finally there follows a **triumphant ascription of praise**, “*Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.*” We rejoice that *our* King reigns in providence and shall reign in grace, “*from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.*” (Zech 9:10), and of His dominion there shall be no end. Thus this short model of prayer conducts the soul from a sense of adoption, through the experiences of daily life into fellowship with our reigning Lord,. Lord, teach us thus to pray.

Prayer

Abba, Father! Rom 8:15

Scripture readings

I will praise You, O Lord

Praise the Lord! for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the Lord with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! for He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations.

O Lord, I will praise You; though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.

Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. - "Blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

Ps 9:1; Ps 147:1 -Ps 98:1-2 - Ps 33:1-3 - Isa 12:1-2 - Heb 13:15; Rev 5:13

Suggested additional reading: Psalm 34

Meditation

I will praise You, O Lord. - Psalm 9:1

As the early morning mist rises from the ground in gratitude for the rising sun bringing it warmth, so we need to ensure that praise is always our response to answered prayer.

Has the Lord been gracious to you in listening to your prayer? Then praise Him as long as you live. Let the ripe fruit drop back on

to the fertile soil from which it found its life. Don't deny a song to Him who has answered your prayer and given you the desire of your heart.

To be silent over God's mercies is to bring upon yourself the guilt of ingratitude. It is to act as basely as the nine lepers, who after they had been cured of their leprosy made no effort to return to thank the Lord for their healing.

To forget to praise God also means that we are refusing to bring further blessing on ourselves; for praise, like prayer, is one great means of promoting the growth of spiritual life. It helps to remove our burdens, to excite our hope, to increase our faith. It is a healthful and invigorating exercise which quickens the pulse of the believer, and nerves him for fresh enterprises in his Master's service.

To bless God for the mercies He gives us is also the way to bring benefits to our fellow-men; *"the humble shall see this and be glad."* (Ps 69:32) Others who have been in like circumstances shall take comfort if we can say, *"Oh! magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together; ... this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him."* (Ps 34:3;6) Weak hearts will be strengthened, and drooping saints will be revived as they listen to our *"songs of deliverance."* (Ps 32:7) Their doubts and fears will be rebuked, as we teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. They too will *"sing in the ways of the Lord,"* (Ps 138:5) when they hear us magnify His holy name.

Praise is the most heavenly of Christian duties. There is no mention in the Scriptures of angels praying but they don't stop praising God day and night; and the redeemed, clothed in white robes, with palm-branches in their hands, never tire of singing the new song, *"Worthy is the Lamb."* (Rev 5)

Prayer

I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. Ps 145:1-3

Scripture readings

Renew a steadfast spirit within me.

I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

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, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.- And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God

Ps 51:10 - Luke 15:18-19 - Ps 51:10-12 - Titus 3:5-6 - Eph 4:22-24; Rom 12:2

Suggested additional reading: Psalm 80

Meditation

Renew a steadfast spirit within me. - Psalm 51:10

A backslider, if there is a spark of spiritual life left in him, will be groaning deep inside to be restored to the Lord. This process of renewal needs the same application of God's grace as did our original conversion. We needed repentance then; we certainly need it now. Faith was required to unite us with Christ at first; the same grace that

gave us this must again subdue all our pride and obstinacy and enable us to trust Christ afresh. We needed then the witness of the Spirit, a word from the loving lips of the Most High to end our fears. We shall soon discover, when we truly become aware of our present sinful condition, that we need it again.

No man can be renewed without as real and true a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's energy as he experienced at first. The work is as great, and our old human nature is as much a hindrance now as ever it was. Be aware of your personal weakness, O Christian, and let it bring you on your knees in prayer to your God for his help. Think of David here in our text, when he felt himself to be powerless, he didn't fold his arms or give a helpless shrug of his shoulders, but he hurried to God's mercy-seat with the prayer "*renew a steadfast spirit within me.*" Don't let the thought that you can't renew yourself without the Holy Spirit's help, make you complacent; but let it drive you with an earnestness to your Saviour. My prayer is that you might have grace to plead with God, as though you pleaded for your very life; "*Lord, renew a steadfast spirit within me.*"

He who *sincerely* prays to God to do this, will prove his honesty by using the means through which God works. Be much in prayer; live much upon the Word of God; kill the lusts which have driven your Lord from you; be careful to watch against future temptations to sin. The Lord has His own appointed ways; be there when He is blessing others. You don't wait to be better before you go to your doctor. Come to Christ afresh just as you are with David's prayer on your lips, "*Renew a steadfast spirit within me.*"

Prayer

Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; revive us, and we will call upon Your name. ... Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved! Psalm 80:14;19



Holidays and
more in the
Black Forest

Haus Barnabas

Wiesentalstr 47

79694 Utzenfeld

Germany

We provide a caring environment for physical and spiritual refreshment and are open for guests all the year round.

Come and rest a while

Christmas in Haus Barnabas

Alone at Christmas? Enjoy the warmth and blessing of Christian fellowship as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour and experience the Black Forest in its winter mantel.

For full information: www.haus-barnabas.com or
tel 01227 363857 for brochure

Further notes can be ordered through us in Haus Barnabas
or through:

Mrs Carol Lowther,
Trigfan, 7 Ty Canol, Harlech, Gwynedd LL46 2BZ, Wales
Tel: 01766 780784
Email: carol_lowther@yahoo.co.uk

Our ministry can be supported through:

Bible in Action Trust.
Treasurer: David McCann: Tel: 01489 57 1601
Email: clan.mccann@googlemail.com

Haus Barnabas im Engel
Wiesentalstr. 47, 79694 Utzenfeld, Germany
Email: len.holder@haus-barnabas.com;
Website: www.haus-barnabas.com
Tel. 0049 7673 7760

Cover picture – Schluchsee – photo by Christine Barnes