



THE PATHWAY TO THE STARS

LIONEL B. FLETCHER



THE PATHWAY TO THE STARS

LIFE QUEST AND CONQUEST

LIONEL B. FLETCHER

Fourth (Large) Edition

A vigorous challenge to youth: The way of Salvation, the challenge of the Christian life, the reality of victory and the power of the Spirit-filled life are set forth in these soul-stirring chapters.

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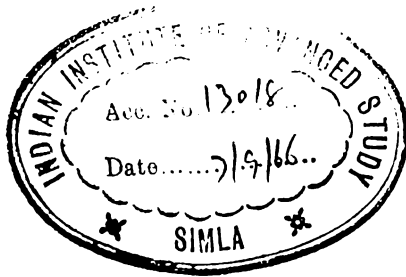
THE PATHWAY TO THE STARS

By LIONEL B. FLETCHER

Author of "Life Quest and Conquest," "Mighty Moments,"
"Effective Evangelism," "The Golden Highway,"
"Faith the Golden Link"

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LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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Third Impression, 1937

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*Printed and made in Great Britain by Hunt, Barnard & Co., Ltd.,
London and Aylesbury.*

TO
MY BROTHER

HENRY JOSEPH FLETCHER

in whose home, and under whose influence,
by the Grace of God, I found the pathway
to the stars

FOREWORD

THE chapters which follow have been compiled from addresses which have been given from time to time to Christian people. They do not deal with doctrinal matters, nor are they evangelistic addresses, but they are sent out in the hope and with the prayer that they may help those who have just begun the Christian life (as well as older Christians) to find the pathway to the stars is a road well worth travelling, along which the view becomes more glorious, and the experiences richer, as the pilgrim draws nearer to the Celestial City.

The cultivation of the soul is the daily duty of every man and woman of God. If these short chapters assist anyone in that duty and help to make it a daily delight, then I shall thank God that I was led to publish them.

Lionel S. Fletcher

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CHAPTER I

THE PATHWAY TO THE STARS

"And he made haste and came down and received Him joyfully."

—LUKE XIX. 6.

"And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved."

—MARK X. 22.

THERE was a buoyancy of action on the part of Zacchaeus which was unmistakable. There was a hanging of the head—a heaviness of heart on the part of the Rich Young Ruler which was also unmistakable.

But there was a similarity of experience here, for both men wanted to see Jesus. The one came into His presence with eagerness, sure that he had only to find the answer to his question and the whole of his perplexity would vanish and the riddle of his life would be solved.

The other had no question to ask. He was eager to see and to hear this young prophet, possibly some inward urge was being experienced and he responded.

The pathway to the stars begins in our own hearts. Each of us have our better moments, and as someone has said: "It is the whole art

and wisdom of life to know what to do with ourselves when those better moments come."

We see life strewn with tragedies. We see one every time we meet a man or woman who has been side-tracked.

I went home one night after a service with a very rich man to stay in his mansion. Sitting by his fire after supper, in a luxurious room surrounded by expensive pictures and books, I watched him as he smoked a cigar, the cost of which would have bought a meal for a poor family. Presently he turned to me and said: "As I listened to you to-night, my mind went back to the day when I dreamed of becoming a preacher and of moving the world. I wonder what would have happened if I had followed that path?" His eye wandered round his rich room—he flicked the ash off his cigar, shrugged his shoulders and sighed. His personality was such that even as he had used it to amass wealth and become a captain of industry, so I know he could have become a Captain of the Lord's Hosts. His shrug, his sigh, were sufficient to tell me that here before me was a tragedy in a gilt frame.

Jesus gave each of these men an equal chance. He said to one: "Sell whatsoever thou hast

and give to the poor . . . and come take up the cross and follow Me." To the other he said: "Make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house."

It was a request that each should make himself look ridiculous in the eyes of the world. The pathway to the stars often begins there. We are all, more or less, bound by tradition and convention. We hate to appear singular. And yet society is largely made up of imitation men and women. The fact that "It is not done" is enough to keep most of us from doing it, though it means missing the pathway to the stars.

So we become tragedies, even though we may be set in a gilt frame. Jesus said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." The fact is no one does enter except by the hard way.

The Rich Ruler to sell his possessions—to give away his money? Ridiculous! Everyone would have agreed on that.

Zacchaeus to come down and take this despised, fanatical dreamer home? Preposterous. Zacchaeus was already the butt of the countryside. He was little. He was a publican. He was a man of unsavoury reputation. Even the

village fool would guffaw at the sight of him entertaining Jesus who had said: "Blessed are the poor—blessed are the meek."

The pathway to the stars is not trodden by vulgar feet, nor can its ascent be discovered by the coarse minds of those who are worldly-wise. But Jesus said "Make haste," and it is true that when the shining pathway opens before us, and we see the stars of nobility glittering above us, if we pause to calculate, and to weigh the opinions of our friends and of the world, ere we reach it, the vision vanishes, and the door is shut. So come the tragedies.

To both these men came the opening of a new world, therefore it was a time of testing to them both. Neither of them knew himself till he met Jesus. None of us do. One thought he wanted Eternal Life more than anything else, but when he met Jesus he shuddered, for he found that he was not as sincere as he thought. His outward morality was not a reflection of his inward nobility. His dream was but a dream. There was no ready-made sainthood for him. He would have to climb with blistering feet to reach that high road, so he chose the low road, which is thronged with tragedies.

The other already trod the low road quite openly. He had sold his honour to get rich, yet when he met Jesus all things that held sway in his life seemed paltry and mean, and he made haste to set them right at great cost.

One discovered the capacity for something higher—the other discovered that he was a dreamer and not a doer.

We are complex personalities. Noble sentiments, heroic emotions sweep our souls, but not always do we do the noble, or the heroic, when the call comes. If God gives you a vision, act on it. The world and your friends will call you mad, but at least you will know the exaltation of having placed your feet in the pathway that leads to the stars. It is the pathway that Jesus trod. His loved ones thought Him mad, but He climbed right on. The end seemed to be a cross, but we know that that was only a bend in the road, for the end was heavenly glory and the Father's "well done," the song of the angels and redeemed millions.

Tragedy lies on the low road, but the stars light up the high road, even though we carry a cross as we tread it, and moreover we shall have the companionship of Christ eternally.

CHAPTER II

SUBSTITUTE CHRISTIANS

WHEN I was travelling across the American continent, I had a negro pullman-car attendant who was a philosopher in his own way. We were crossing a barren prairie when I noticed that the train was coming to a poor looking town, with many small wretched wooden houses set down in a land of clay.

My negro porter was looking out of the window and so I asked him what place it was that we were approaching.

“Oh this is a substitoot town,” he drawled languidly.

“A substitute town?” I queried. “What kind of a town is that?”

“Oh wal, you see, it’s bin tryin’ to be a town for a long time, and it can’t—it’s only a substitoot for a town.”

That town taught me something, especially when it was translated to me by the negro observer. It looked desolate and poor, and yet I

found that there were some worthy people in it, for I saw some delightful gardens—neat and fresh—sweet vegetables, bright flowers—and beds of beauty in fine order.

I said to my dark philosopher: “There are some beautiful gardens there.”

“Oh yas, sir,” he said. “Those people livin’ in those houses you are talkin’ about, wouldn’t let this yer country beat them—see? They just beat the country. It looks mean, and it is mean, but if a man gits to work and takes out the rocks, and digs up the clay and keeps on doin’ it—wal—it’ll grow sumfin’ all right. You see, sir, dere’s lots of country what people thought was good for nuffin’, is found to be good for sumfin’ when good-for-sumfin’ people gits a hold of it. These yer substitoot towns was begun by substitoot people—dat’s what’s wrong with un. But yer see, when the right sort of people come and live in these substitoot towns there gits to be patches so good, that the substitoot people kinder gets ashamed of their-selves—if they’ve got any shame about ’em, and then the town gits about as good as a substitoot town kin ever git. But it’s done by the few good-for-sumfin’ people what comes to live there

showin' what kin be done even in them yer circumstances—see ? ”

I wrote down that conversation immediately the porter was called away and have given it exactly as I then wrote it. It set me thinking—and I have thought a lot about it ever since. I hope I may travel with that porter again some day.

Jesus said :—“ Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? ” Luke's account records that Jesus said : “ Salt, therefore, is good, but if even the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned ? ”

There is the standard—SALT. There is its value—is good. That carries its own meaning. Christ is teaching us this—“ Christians are good ” and that is the standard. You do not compare salt to anything else, but other things must be compared to it—you may say, “ That is salty,” but if you say, “ That is salt,” then you are immediately understood. So Christ desires it to be with his disciples. You may say “ He is a Christian,” that conveys an express meaning. A real Christian—like real salt—is of value, not because he is like someone else, but because he

has reached the highest possible life, and is now the standard for the life of the world.

If a professing Christian is not like this, he is a substitute Christian. He is as useless as substitute salt, of which there was an abundance in Palestine in Christ's day. The salt tax made substitution very common, until the fishermen and the housewives were often caused inconvenience and serious loss. The climate demanded the use of salt to preserve the fish and other food stuffs—and what was the use of substitute salt? Jesus said some plain things as to its destination—plain when you use the word "Christian" instead of "salt," and put yourself in that sentence.

The most serious cause of the appalling helplessness of many Churches and many Christians to-day, is, that they are substitutes, and a substitute is a miserable caricature, very often.

Salt is used to season food; it is used to prevent corruption; it is used to sweeten and add value to food; it is essential to life (in spite of what some food cranks say). Jesus said "Salt is good." But not much is needed—just a pinch in your porridge and it makes all the difference—just a little rubbed into the fish and it keeps it

from decay. It permeates, and preserves. It makes all the difference between valuable food, and rotting poison which has to be thrown out.

Being a Christian, as Christ meant us to be, means that we are to occupy as unique a position in the world for the purpose of dispersing the corrupting influences of the world—we are here to sweeten society and to change its character. We will never do that by changing our character and compromising with the ways of the world, any more than our Churches will become glorious agents of soul winning by turning themselves into dance halls, or raffing institutions. Mix white dust with salt and it is fit for nothing—useless—for now its rightful place is the refuse heap to be trodden under men's feet in contempt.

Salt will make a wound smart, but it will heal by killing germs and keeping the cut clean. Only a minute particle—but it changes the great mass of food that it permeates. When you ask for salt, you want salt and nothing else—there is no substitute. Christ wants Christians—the world needs Christians—there is no substitute, there can be no compromise. You are either a Christian—a Christ's man—or you are

not. You either make the world of sin smart in its open wounds of impurity and evil and thus help to purge and purify, or you are a substitute and no one knows or feels the Christ life in you, and the world can go to its rotting doom and you will never help to preserve it, or to alter its nature.

Substitute salt is rubbish—so are substitute Christians, and it is because modern men and women have tried to take away the offence from the cross, and so at last have taken the cross from their religion—so that it would be a religion that would draw the fashionable, and not offend anyone—that to-day this substitute religion is being thrown out and trodden under foot of men. It is RUBBISH!

He who will truly serve Christ to-day—be it Church or man or woman—must be prepared to be as singular as the Christ on the cross when they heaped derision upon Him. The crowd spat on Him—the crowd jeered at Him—the crowd killed Him, but to-day He rules in more hearts and is loved in more lives than any other who was ever born of woman. And to-day in this tottering world, when old institutions, old economics, old beliefs, old nations, are tottering

to their fall as many of the old thrones have done, Christ is calling out the remnant—just a few here and a few there—and He is saying—Come, follow Me! and by that few He will save those who shall be His in that great day.

Christianity will never be popular, and the true Christian will never be popular. Salt is not popular—but it saves. Do you?

CHAPTER III

THE CRY FOR CLEANSING

"Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God."—PSALM li. 6-10

TO be hidden from observation is a severe test of character. Many do well while the eyes of friends are upon them, or when the good opinion of the public has to be considered, but sometimes the same people fail when they are in a lonely place, or in a crowded city where no one knows them, or when they are one of a crowd whose ideals are low or whose line of conduct is poor.

God demands that the hidden life shall be pure, whether it is the hidden life within, or the life of a man who is hidden away from those who know him. This is the real test of every character.

Mere external acts of religious observance God will not accept in the place of inward purity of life. The Psalmist affirms a great truth in verse 16 :—"For Thou desirest not

sacrifice else would I give it, Thou delightest not in burnt offering." Most of us know what some modern scholars infer from this verse, but the plain man who seeks devotional help from his Bible is satisfied to believe that the Psalmist is here speaking of the uselessness of an external act of worship that is divorced from the real life of the worshipper's soul.

God is not an idol to be placated by anything of an external nature that man can do. He is our Father, and He desires the surrender of a man's total personality. Mere church-going, sacrament-taking, prayer-saying, as the external acts of one living in sin, are worse than useless for they are likely to deceive the sinner into believing that he is truly religious and that no more is required of him. A religion that does not purify the thought and elevate the action of a man, is not the religion of Jesus: for though it may be named by His name it is a form of heathen superstition.

"Thou desirest truth in the inward parts," says the inspired writer. He is speaking of that part of us where we hold despotic sway, where we act in imagination as we would act outwardly if we dared. It is here that

we honour or dishonour God. The thoughts that are welcomed in our minds : the ambitions that hang like pictures on the walls of our hearts : the desires that move our natures, are a reflection of our true selves as we appear in the sight of God.

Jeremiah and other Old Testament writers constantly refer to the sins of imagination as being the condemnation of the people. Paul in 2 Corinthians x. 5, says :—“ Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

It is just here that true religion is either absent or present, and it is only here that religion really counts, for, as we are reminded in the book of Proverbs, “ As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” That is why soul culture is so essential. If we are foul within, we are foul altogether. If we are humble and contrite in our hearts, we are walking with God. Jesus said : “ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

“ Create in me a clean heart, O God.” The Psalmist knew that God alone could make the fountain of his being clean and pure, and the

Almighty does it by a fresh act of creation. "Ye must be born again," said Christ to the man whose external life was possibly very admirable. "Create," cried the Psalmist, "Create in ME . . . O God," and like an answering burst of music comes Paul's assertion:—"If any man is in Christ he is a new creation."

Has that new creation taken place in us? That question ought to be faced by every professing Christian in the privacy of the prayer chamber. Many have tried to bring about the new creation by attempting to form new habits, by making good resolutions and by trying to cultivate new desires. All this is good, for it shows that the soul is reaching out after God and goodness; but there is a better way. In fact there is only one way to lasting success and blessing, and that is God's way of the new creation. We must come with the Psalmist to the very footstool of God's throne and cry out: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." And we are on higher ground even than the Psalmist, for we can name the name of Christ who came *to lead us into living fellowship with the Father, and when we come to the Father through Him, we can be sure of that miracle of grace being*

performed in us, for "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation."

The lives of the saints have testified to this truth, and the lives of the men and women of God to-day prove it, and none of us should be satisfied with less, for nothing less will satisfy our Father which is in heaven.

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CHAPTER IV

CLEANSING AND STRENGTH

"Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—PSALM xix. 12

BRUCE BARTON in his little book *The Book Nobody Knows* places this Psalm amongst the first four that ought to be taught to our children as part of their education.

C. H. Spurgeon said that this Psalm shows three stages of sin: (a) Secret, (b) presumptuous, (c) unpardonable—"Cleanse thou me from SECRET faults, . . . keep back thy servant from PRESUMPTUOUS sins . . . then shall I be innocent from THE GREAT TRANSGRESSION."

Most of us learned to say this Psalm when we were children, but if we are to experience spiritual strength we must learn to pray its prayer now that we are older.

The Psalmist reminds us that secret faults may be ours, and that brings to us the realisation that there is a grave danger in their very secrecy. There is the danger that we shall grow accus-

tomed to them : or that we shall be comfortable in their possession, thinking that they are only small things, and not really dangerous to our spirituality. Thus we shall neglect to get rid of them.

So long as our faults are kept secret, they cannot be cleansed. If we do not confess them, we are hiding them from God, and He cannot cleanse them, and thus we are harbouring death.

One of the most inspiring things about a new convert is his passion for cleansing. In the warmth of his new-found love he desires to be utterly saved from every sin. Many older and colder Christians smile indulgently at his fervour and predict that he will settle down presently. Unfortunately their influence is such, and the Church is so full of such influence, that most young converts do settle down and become lost in the monotonous crowd of dead-level, dry-as-dust professors of religion. It is not a sign of spiritual health, for mostly it is a sign that they have settled down with their secret sins, they have become accustomed to their secret faults. Everyone else seems to have them, and everyone else seems to think it is the natural condition. Therefore why trouble ?

But the contaminating influence of secret sins is seen in the paralysis that makes so many professing Christians useless in God's work, and in the death which seems to make so many Churches tombs, instead of fortresses of our God.

But the Psalmist was not satisfied to remain in that condition. He cried out for cleansing, and his cry is a sign of spiritual health. Sins remain secret no more, if we will but confess them to God. Evil things love darkness, but sunlight kills germs. Bring your sins out into the full light of God's presence. Make confession of them. If they remain covered and hidden, they will grow and become a malignant cancer in our souls and death must follow.

Toplady cried, "Foul I to the fountain fly, Wash me Saviour or I die." Herein lies the glory of the Christian Religion. It is not a religion of outward observances, but it is a religion of inward cleansing which issues in the outward fruit of goodness. It is not a religion to get a man into heaven, so much as to get heaven into a man, until at last heaven shall be within and without him for ever and ever.

The Christian religion is not a matter of outward conformity, nor the strict observance of

rules and codes, and it is not mere morality, but it is the cleansing of the secret, hidden parts of a man's life by God's grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. All other things that are beautiful and desirable will naturally follow, but these things are the results of the inward cleansing, and they do not take the place of inward cleansing.

Spiritual strength follows cleansing, for ~~dirt~~ always breeds disease, but health goes hand in hand with cleanliness.

It is rather a disturbing fact that with the cleansing of our secret lives, there comes a fresh revelation of faults, the existence of which we never dreamed of before. This often discourages the Christian who is really seeking to cultivate his soul. But instead of being discouraged let us be encouraged at this revelation, for in reality it is a new sensitiveness to the very approach of sin, and that is a sign of health.

If I drop some dirt into the coal cellar I cannot see it, and it does not trouble anyone. If I drop that same dirt into the drawing-room there is immediate consternation and it is swept away without delay. If I drop that same dirt on to a hospital table it arouses horror, and the order is given to scour it away. But if I drop that same dirt

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on to an operating table where the surgeon uses his knife, immediately an order goes forth not only to scour the table, but to subject it to every known process of purging and disinfecting until there is not the slightest chance of the minutest germ remaining.

When we were in the coal cellar stage a little extra dirt did not matter, but now we are cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, we experience a horror of spiritual dirt. That sense of horror is an indication of health ; its absence is an indication that we are going back to our original condition of dirt. The Christians who do most for Christ are those who are glowing with spiritual health, cleansed, purified, filled with the Holy Spirit. Let us seek that condition by constant prayer and watching against evil.

CHAPTER V

THE PRICE OF DISCIPLESHIP

“Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”—MATTHEW xvi. 24

JESUS is here talking to a group of men, one of whom, voicing the belief—more or less realised—of the others, had just said: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” All true discipleship begins with that confession. Thousands have found, as John Wesley found, that until there is a personal surrender to Christ with its consequent peace of mind and cleansing of motive, there can be no real fellowship and discipleship.

The people of Christ's day were sick to death of the presentation of religion through an endless routine of forms and ceremonies, but when religion was brought to them through the noble vehicle of the pure life of Jesus, they responded gladly and exclaimed: “Never man spake like this Man.”

To-day the world is much like the world of Christ's day, and in spite of the fact that we

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are facing a return to a religion of forms and ceremonies, the ordinary individual is sick of it all. He demands the presentation of religion through the lives of those who profess to have found the truth in Christ Jesus.

The mark of the true disciple of Jesus is that he wishes to be like his Master, and if we truly desire that, then Christ tells us that it will cost us something more than the expression of a sentiment, however noble that sentiment may be.

Peter had given expression to a noble sentiment, yet he earned a severe rebuke from his Master immediately afterwards, and it happened in a way that is quite clear when we read the story. Christ told His disciples that His work of bringing salvation into the world would entail for Him suffering and death, but He must go through with it. Instantly Peter's emotional nature revolted against such a prospect, and he tried to persuade Christ that such a thing must not happen. It was this that earned the severe rebuke of his Master, and not only so, but it drew from Jesus the statement, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." If a

disciple wishes to be like his Master, he must be willing to pay the price.

Am I a true disciple of Christ? Are you? Here is the test, that we are willing to pay the price in suffering. Discipleship is something more intimate than the nearest friendship. It is akin to the marriage tie in the noblest form of that relationship. It is closer even than blood relationship. Christ said: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." We are spiritually married to Christ, and our greatest desire is to be like Him and to please Him at all costs, and we are prepared to carry that out in all circumstances.

It is well for us if in the quiet hour of soul culture we face this and discover if after all we are truly His disciples, lest haply we have been deceiving ourselves, and after all we are not prepared to pay the price.

What does the price entail? Jesus put first the denial of self. Our comforts, our lusts, our self indulgence. We must cease to live for self and live for Him, and the expression of it will be found in the fact that we are living for others.

Dan Crawford, the great African missionary,

used to tell of "The Dew-Driers," as he called them. When the Africans were setting out on a march through the tall grass in the early morning, they knew from experience that the grass was wet with the heavy dew, and whoever went first on the march would be drenched by the cold moisture which hung on the blades of growth towering above their heads. So the custom of the country was that the men took small boys with them and pushed them ahead, and these little fellows were forced to take the cold shower from the grass that the men might follow in comfort. The custom is typical of a country where the weaker must go to the wall, and are forced to serve the stronger.

Jesus showed us by His example that His way is the opposite to this. He is our "Dew-Drier." He goes ahead and takes the blows and burdens, He takes the sting out of death and the victory out of the grave, that we may follow in comfort and safety to the Father's home. He, the strong one, volunteers to do this service for the weaker ones just because He is love. But He looks into the eyes of those who are professing to be His disciples and says, "Go thou and do likewise." "Deny yourself."

Do we know someone who is weaker than we are? Do we know someone who is afraid of the path? Do we know someone who is likely to fail by the way? Then we must be their "Dew-Drier." If we shrink from this, or seek to evade our call, then surely we are only an imitation of a Christian, for we are not following our Lord's example.

Jesus reminded them also that if they meant to follow Him, the burden of the Cross was certain.

I asked a man once if he were a Christian. His reply was something like the reply that many would give if they spoke truly: "I am a bit religious. A little does no harm, you know."

It is certain that that is not what Christ meant when He was inviting men and women to be His disciples. He demands loyalty to His person, to His love, to His friendship, to His mission for the world, even if such loyalty brings as a result the Cross. He paid the price and endured the shame of the Cross, and, thank God, from then till now the roadway is strewn with the bodies of men and women who were faithful, and because of it were literally torn in pieces for

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His sake. Their blood has been the seed of the Church. On their broken bodies the Church of Jesus Christ has been built, and their spiritual triumph is our glory and inspiration.

But what about us? What about me? What about you? If we are true disciples the Cross is certain. What your Cross is, I do not know, but that there is a Cross for you and for me I do know. There is an old and wise rule: "Never go one step out of the way of duty to either take a Cross or to escape a Cross."

The burden of a Cross for every Christian is as certain as that the denial of self is imperative.

Then follows the completion—"Take up his cross, and FOLLOW ME." If we only could follow Jesus! Think of what He did and then compare it with what you are doing. It is enough to make us weep for very shame at our utter unworthiness.

I think of Livingstone trudging through the fever-infested jungle to bring Christ to Africa, and at last dying on his knees, worn out, and yet triumphant. I think of Father Damien going to his leper island and at last dying of the dread disease. I think of Paul in prison and at last a martyr crying, "I have fought a good fight—I have

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kept the faith." Then I think of Christ, saying "It is finished," and I know that I can follow Him, for He would never bid me do the impossible. "Lo, I am with you always." Yes! I can and I will! Those other men could not have done it unless He had been with them. He will be with me and with you. The salvation of the world depends largely on our faithfulness, and God helping us, we must "Follow Him," cost what it will.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL GREATNESS

"Whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister."

—MATTHEW XX. 26.

NO one can go through life alone—we go with others—they go with us—and we influence them for their good or ill, and thus we either further God's plan for men or we help to defeat it.

The insignificant bee, naturalists tell us, busy with the work of filling its hive with honey, fertilises the flowers as it does its daily task, and so helps to produce the food of humanity. It serves the world as it is serving itself, and its greater work is that which it does unknowingly, so it furthers the great plan of God while about its daily business.

We limit ourselves when we are more concerned to win a reputation for greatness, because of our personal ability, than to quietly and perhaps unconsciously add something to the lives of others. Most men will strive hard and serve

generously if they can fill their own hive with honey—only Christ-possessed men will strive still harder, if by so doing they can fill the hive of someone else who will never know or acknowledge the service.

In this story we face the Mother's ambition for her sons : " The mother of Zebedee's children . . . saith unto Him, ' Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand and the other on the left, in Thy Kingdom.' "

They were ignorant of what the Kingdom was. They thought of pomp and power, and of being leaders and Christ an earthly King. Salome was a good woman, and James and John were good men—but some good people do a great deal of harm because they misunderstand Jesus and His plans. In spite of all that Jesus had told them, they were so sure that He was about to set up a Kingdom of this world, that they persistently misunderstood His spiritual teaching. Their preconceptions warped their minds and blinded them to spiritual truths.

That is always a grave danger in our outlook. We may be so sure that we have discovered the truth, and we can quote chapter and verse for it, that all the teaching of Christ is looked at

from our view point, and there is danger lest we miss the truth when we are most sure that we have found it.

The Scribes and Pharisees did this—so did these disciples—and we may do the same to-day. Christ's Kingdom is Spiritual, and it is difficult to translate into words so that it may be comprehended and apprehended by our finite minds.

They were also ignorant of what the cost was. They asked for the places to His left and right hand. He asked if they could pay the price, and they said yes. Little did they know that a week hence their Master's throne would be a cross, and that to His left and right two poor wretches would be hanged on two other crosses, dying in fearful agony.

Jesus looked at them with sadness and said, "Ye know not what ye ask." He often says this to us. We wonder why our prayers are not answered as we ask, but if they were it would be a cross and not a throne that we would get. So in love He spares us, for He knows that we ask in ignorance.

He served to the uttermost and so He was able to save to the uttermost, but the disciples had not yet reached that spiritual development

which would carry them to that uttermost of service.

Christ had compassion towards their ignorance. He knew they would pay the price after Pentecost when the Holy Ghost had revolutionised and spiritualised them. Now they glibly said they were able to pay the price, but a few nights later, when facing the approach of danger they forsook Him and fled. But later still, after Pentecost, James went to his death for the sake of His Lord, and John bore the suffering of exile on Patmos.

Spirituality makes martyrdom or exile possible to bear, for it takes a Pentecost to fit us to pay the price of following Christ. Some think that Pentecost will mean power without pain, or an easy and effectual life, whereas it means for some spiritual preparation for physical pain and anguish, and heartbreaking service for their Master. Pentecost is not primarily for our glory or enjoyment, it is for Christ's glory through us, and for the salvation of men through us.

Jesus revealed the secret of spiritual greatness when He said : " Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant." Later on He said " If I, your Lord and Master, have washed

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your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

That act was the expression of all that was highest and noblest and greatest. He served them, and was never greater in their eyes than then. It is easier to realise greatness in others than to be great ourselves. True greatness comes when we translate feeling into action, when we express sentiment in actual deed.

The secret of Spiritual Greatness is this—that we go out to serve others for Christ's sake, doing the humble task joyfully, never seeking for place and power, but always seeking to show forth the love of Christ.

These men learned that lesson—so must we. Then pride of place will fade out of our ambition and we shall thank God that He has used us to **make His love more real to men.**

CHAPTER VII
SPOTTED CHRISTIANS

"Keep oneself unspotted."—JAMES i. 27 (R.V.)

IF we really desire to grow in grace and in holiness ; if we truly meant what we vowed at the opening of the New Year, or on our birthday ; if we want to get back to our early experiences again in sincerity and in truth, and if we earnestly desire to be possessed by the certainty of God, then let us truly work at soul culture during the coming days. If we do not, we shall simply slip again, and find ourselves in the old rut of disgust with self, and without spiritual power to climb the mountain of prayer and power which we have meant to do all our lives.

It is a pitiable sight to see a professing Christian, grey of head, and grey of life, fleshy of body and gross of soul, with the mark of approaching death stamped upon him. It is pitiable, because there must have been a time when he dreamed of being noble of life, and spiritual in mind, and

more like His Master. Now money has got him fast ; or it may be sensuality in one or other of its phases ; or possibly lethargy, so gradual in its decaying and degenerating power. Whatever it is, it is pitiable, because he still professes to be a Christian, possibly holds some Church office, possibly is quite a leading man in his denomination, and yet he has missed the mark and is going to die a spiritual failure—and there is nothing more pitiable than that.

To avoid that, let us press on in our work of soul culture, for it is work, that is why so few continue to press on. It is so easy to give up, to let go, to drift, to become like the multitude who surround us, whether in the world or in the Church. God help us, it is just as pitiable to become like the majority who surround us in the Church as it is to become like those who surround us in the world. The only difference is that the multitude in the world never began to seek soul culture, while the multitude in the Church did begin, but failed to continue.

James is telling us in this chapter what pure religion is, and his last statement is part of the whole : “ To keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

Spots are repulsive things. No one wants spotted gloves ; no one wishes to wear a spotted collar ; no one admires a spotted window ; no one sees properly through spotted glass ; no one likes to shake a spotted hand, or to kiss a spotted face.

“Keep oneself unspotted.” James here means that the kind of spots he is speaking of indicate dirt. There can be nothing more humiliating than to be thought a dirty person. The idea is repulsive. If anyone is spoken of as a person whose body is not clean ; whose home is not clean ; whose clothes are not clean—nothing further need be said. That person is repulsive to the normal individual who loves cleanliness.

And yet many are repulsive in their spiritual lack of cleanliness. They are spotted Christians. Doubtless they would be angry and horrified if they were told so, but they certainly will be told so by the great Judge at the great day, or the New Testament is a useless book to be guided by.

Nothing gives a finer word picture of a noble nature than the expression “He is a white man.” Compare such a man to the other man who has a reputation for slimness, sharpness, lying,

deceit, usury, impurity ; and unfortunately in the great business world some professing Christian men are put into classes by men who know them. As compared to the "white man," they are dirty. If they are professing Christians, then James says they are "spotted." Their uncleanness is dishonouring to themselves and more than that, it is dishonouring to God.

Christ cannot use, and God cannot honour a spotted Christian. The world sneers at them, and when men look at them they see a deformed Christian and are repelled. Unfortunately they often get a distorted view of Christ and Christianity in this way, and are for ever driven away from seeking the Christ.

In all fruit-growing countries in the world the finest scientific skill is enlisted to eliminate spots from the orchards. Sprays, paints—even fire when necessary—anything, everything possible, is done to get rid of disease and keep it out.

With us, we must have the spots destroyed, or they will destroy us. Jude has a stern word in verses 12 and 13 :—"There are spots in your love feasts . . . to whom is reserved the blackness for ever."

But here are two pieces of loving advice. In

Jude's letter, verse 23 :—"Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Add to that the words in 2 Peter iii. 14 :—"Wherefore beloved . . . be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

There is no hope for us unless we spend much time on our knees, much time in spiritual meditation, much time in pondering God's Word, that as we meditate the Holy Spirits may search us and reveal to us our SPOTS, and then we may be brought again to the foot of the Cross for cleansing.

Seeking holiness is not a popular employment even among Christians, but holiness was never more needed than to-day. We have abundant activity and machinery in our churches, but we need holiness more than all else. Every one of us should quietly seek for a nearer walk with God. Not talk about it ; not run around trying to impress others with our sanctity—just cultivate it and live it for the glory of our God. It will do its own work, and God will bless us for it in His own way, and we shall know that we are doing our best for His Glory.

CHAPTER VIII

DOUBLE-FACED CHRISTIANS

"Unite my heart to fear Thy name."—PSALM lxxxvi. 11.

ONE of the greatest hindrances to soul culture is the consciousness of a dual nature, and this is a constant source of pain and unhappiness. With one part of us we passionately desire to grow in spirituality : with the other part of us we often hanker after sinful things. If we were only as good as we sometimes feel, we would be saints. But we know that we are not, and therefore just because we want to be holy, and we know we are sinful, we become confused and sometimes imagine that we are hypocrites, and so refrain from the pursuit of the highest. We dare not say even to ourselves that we really are reaching out after holiness. We are afraid of that word hypocrite.

In a great workshop there is a huge double-faced hammer, and some years ago I discovered that some of the men called it "The Christian hammer." I asked one of them how it got its

name, and his reply was, "Because it is double-faced."

If we are jealous for our Lord and His service, such a jibe as this causes the blood to flow all over our faces, telling of the inward shame we feel at such a statement because we know that there is some unfortunate experience behind it. The term is common enough—"Double-faced Christians." It is a phrase used by the world in disgust, and therefore it is a healthy sign, because it shows that men of the world know that such people are not true followers of Christ.

At the same time, just because the phrase is used in all parts of the world, it shows that there is something wrong somewhere. Is it not a fact that there are professing Christians who are not trusted by their fellow business men? In fact they are not trusted by their fellow church-men. Are they all hypocrites who thus fall under the judgment of their fellows?

It is easy to write them off as such, but in reality, although they are bad examples of the followers of Christ, the fact remains that many of them are sincere enough, and they would be astounded to know that they were inconsistent. They are guilty of being untrue to Christ and

His teaching and requirements, and at the same time they think that they are real followers of His. That is the position, and because it is, it behoves each of us to examine ourselves and see where the fault lies, lest we become like them—or indeed lest we are already one of them.

The fact is, we have a dual nature. It is sometimes said of a man who is living in sin “He is good at heart,” and so it is admitted that although with one part of him he sins, with the other part he hates his sin. With the man who is branded as a “Double-faced Christian” the case is almost the very reverse. Such a man often allows good feeling to take the place of good doing. Here lies our gravest danger.

While we are in church joining in the worship, while we are praying, we subdue the body and the spiritual becomes dominant. We experience lofty emotions, we assent to noble ideals, we are conscious of passionate desires after holiness and Christlikeness. Then the danger is lest we imagine that we are as good as we feel.

When tears in a prayer meeting and tricks in business mark the same man, very frequently it is because that man is deceived by his emotions. He may sincerely mean well, but he is content

to stay there, or he does not realise that that is not enough, for he fails to DO well.

Christ's test is a severe one. He said to His disciples (John xiv. 21):—"He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Walt Whitman once wrote:—

"It was not I that sinned the sin,
The ruthless body dragged me in,
Though long I strove courageously
The body was too much for me."

That is the excuse that many hide behind, but it is not true, for sin cannot come in until we consent. We are lord of our own lives and no sin can defile that life until we allow it to take possession, and even if we find that we are not strong enough to resist, we have the great and gracious promises of Christ that His strength shall be sufficient for us.

It is not enough for us to feel exaltation, joy and peace to-day as we worship; we must go out to-morrow and live those experiences in our lives. We must show forth purity, love, forgiveness, mercy, righteousness, Christliness, or our emotions have betrayed us and fooled us

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and we shall bring dishonour to the One whom we profess to love and serve.

In verse 11 the Psalmist seems to realise this. He says "Teach me Thy way, O Lord: I will walk in Thy truth; unite my heart to fear Thy name, I will praise Thee O Lord my God *with my whole heart.*"

We all have the same battle to fight. We need never be ashamed of our feelings or our inclinations, for we cannot hinder the lower impulses sometimes asserting themselves, but we can refuse to consent to their evil suggestions. A double life is fatal. We can cry to God "Unite my heart to fear Thy name," and ours shall be victory, and consistency. This is the road to holiness.

CHAPTER IX
INTERRUPTED POWER

"I besought Thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not."—LUKE ix. 40

MANY earnest Christians are greatly troubled because of interrupted power.

All seems to go well with their spiritual lives for a time, and then there comes the sense of loss. The spiritual glow has gone; the power in prayer has gone; the enthusiastic desire to lead souls to Christ has died down; or in some other way they know that their walk with God is not as it once was.

It is a melancholy experience to hear Christian after Christian speaking of days when their lives glowed with power, but who at the same time admit that now it is all different. They are as powerless as a burnt-out volcano; they are as useless as an old engine rusting on a siding; they are as unlovely as a deserted ship swinging at anchor, covered with barnacles, awaiting destruction. The fact that once the fires burned, or the engines throbbed, or the journeys were

completed well, does not relieve the sense of uselessness now.

This chapter in Luke's Gospel, read in conjunction with the account given in Mark's Gospel, chapter ix, contains many lessons which should be learned in the quiet hour when we seek for soul culture.

There had been a bestowal of power on these followers of Christ. Then the narrative tells us how they exercised that power as they went preaching and healing everywhere. Their work created such a stir that Herod thought John the Baptist had risen again, and others said that Elijah had come back.

The disciples themselves felt the glow of it all, and they returned to Christ with the enthusiastic story of what they had been able to accomplish in His name, and Jesus immediately took them aside to rest and meditate, and recoup.

Then came awful failure: everyone could see it, everyone was talking about it. The case seemed simple enough. A father had brought his afflicted boy to the disciples for them to cast out a devil. They had performed such miracles before, in fact more wonderful things had been done by them in the name of Jesus. But they

failed. The words were said, the hands were uplifted, the people waited in silence, BUT NOTHING HAPPENED. The effect was painful. "I besought Thy disciples to cast him out and they could not."

Reading Mark ix. 28 it is clearly seen how humiliated the disciples felt, for they waited until they were alone with Christ before they asked Him to explain their failure. It is a good thing to be humbled spiritually if we begin to imagine that there is something superior in our personality or mentality which accounts for our times of success. It will save us from becoming intolerable religious prigs, or intolerant religious Pharisees. It will also be an invaluable experience if it makes us seek Jesus privately, to ask Him to show us the cause of our failure.

The narrative as given by Mark and Luke shows us the reasons for their failure.

Jesus told them plainly that they had neglected their spiritual culture. He said "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting." If they had been praying and fasting Jesus would not have said this. The fact was, they had been depending on the bestowal of power for some previous mission. They had been living in a

past experience instead of seeking a renewal of power for a present need.

More than that, they had become spiritually proud. Luke tells us that "There arose a reasoning among them which should be the greatest," and he also tells how John said "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us."

Christ promised His richest blessings to the childlike in heart, not to the self-seeking, pushful, ambitious office-seeker. He promised His Holy Spirit to them that love Him, not to those who rebuke and criticise those in other schools of thought, who are trying to cast out devils and enthroned sanity and peace.

Power can be, and is, interrupted by selfishness and intolerance, for these things are antagonistic to the spirit of Christ.

Listen to these men: "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them." They were talking about some Samaritans who would not allow them to pass through their village. By this question they proved how dangerous power was in their hands, and so power was taken from them until

they learned to have the lowly spirit and the pure heart.

Well might we bow our heads and pray :
“ Gracious Lord, forgive Thy servant for every self-seeking, selfish action and desire that may have grieved the Spirit of God within my soul. Forgive me, I pray Thee, for every word or attitude of intolerance towards those who do not agree with me in thought or teaching concerning Thyself. Forgive me for the pride which constantly rears its head in my imagination. Take me aside into a desert place and teach me to pray ; then shall I be prepared for the Mount of Transfiguration ; and the Mount of Sacrifice ; and the Mount of Triumph. But whatever happens, bring me lower and still lower, until I am ready to be set upon my feet again, filled with the spirit of Christ. For Thy dear name’s sake. Amen.”

CHAPTER X

FALTERING FAITH

"And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.'"—MARK ix. 24.

WE are still at the foot of the Mountain of Transfiguration, as we were in the last chapter when we talked together of "Interrupted Power."

This incident teaches us that at the foot of every mountain of exaltation of soul, there is a devil to cast out, a wrong to right, a good deed to do. The normal Christian who communes with God has periods of exaltation which are akin to the Mount of Transfiguration, but when he comes down he always finds a devil tearing and foaming, raging and defying all efforts to cast him out. On top of the mountain he thought the devil was beaten for ever, but a return to the normal life of humanity reveals the father of evil blasting the happiness of thousands.

This is one lesson to be learned. The Mountains of joy and exaltation are not for our selfish

enjoyment. They are meant to be the source of inspiration and power, so that we may come down and help the demon-possessed sufferers at the foot, who as yet have not risen above the plain.

The blessings conferred by Christ on His disciples, are not for themselves alone, but they are given to be used for others. Christianity is purely an unselfish religion, that is why it is so certain that many churches, as well as individuals, who call themselves by the holy name of Christ, do not belong to Him at all, or are at the best, but poor, sickly, followers of Jesus.

“The father of the child cried out with tears.”

His son's suffering was the cause of his sorrow. It is an awful thing to lose a child by death, but it is far worse to see him grow and become possessed by a devil. But it is questionable if this father would have ever come to Christ if he had not been stricken with sorrow. We often think suffering is unnecessary and cruel, but is it not a fact that some of us have been brought nearer to Christ in real dependence through sorrow and suffering, than through anything else?

There are many men and women to-day, who,

through luxury and comfort have gone away from the God of their fathers and mothers. The old folk toiled and saved, and in lowliness of heart they served their God. They were able to leave their children money and comfort. They have inherited it—which is a vastly different thing—and often they have forgotten the God who blessed their parents, the giver of the gifts which they now enjoy.

Luxury rarely draws a man or woman to seek soul culture. Ease rarely inspires a man or woman to come to Christ with an abandon of love and self surrender. It is not generally from the homes of the very wealthy that self-sacrificing labourers in God's harvest field are drawn. There are noble and notable exceptions, thank God, but the possession of the means to command an easy life often means the possession of the means of an easy death—spiritually.

Sorrow, disaster, suffering, are often God's angels leading us to cast ourselves upon Christ with an abandon which brings us to know His power and love, and that knowledge is more to be desired than any other thing in life.

This man had doubtless consulted the leading medical and religious authorities of his day about

his son. He had certainly consulted the disciples of Jesus, and they had failed. There was now no hope anywhere but in Jesus Himself, and so he cried to Him, "If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

It was a prayer that faltered because of doubt. "If—IF—Thou canst do anything." He had had experience of Christ's disciples and they had not inspired him with much faith in their Master. They had miserably failed. That man is like the world to-day. Cursed by drink, held in terror by the fear of war, blasted by other devils which tear it and throw it down foaming and gnashing, it looks into the eyes of Christ and cries: "If—IF—Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." God help the world, for it has come to Christ's disciples and they have failed. They have fought each other over theology, and denominational differences, over prayer books and creeds. They have cast each other out, and so they have lost the power to cast the devil out. No wonder there is a faltering note in the entreaty, "If—IF—Thou canst do anything."

But anyone who judges Christ by His disciples, will always doubt whether He can do anything

worth while. That is why you and I ought to come to Christ every day—nay, every hour of the day—that we might catch His spirit and show forth His character to the world. That is why Christ's disciples are hopeless and useless without soul culture. If we do not show forth our Master's life in our lives, then we are caricatures, and we for ever give others a wrong impression of our Saviour. We fill them with doubt and ruin their faith.

Clubs called churches, selfish, intolerant, conceited people calling themselves Christians, who neither individually, nor collectively have shown forth the spirit of their Master, have done more to keep back the coming of the Kingdom of God than all the infidel lecturers or literature that the world has ever known. That is why you and I need soul culture, so that when the world sees us it shall see Christ who dwells in us, and then it will come to our Lord and He will cast out its devils and bring in His Kingdom.

The man longed to get rid of his doubt. "Help Thou my unbelief," he cried, and Christ did, for with a word He brought his son back to sanity, and restored order in the man's troubled life and home.

Even if your faith is small, come just as you are into the presence of the Christ. Even if you are not conscious of any faith at all, still come just as you are and cry to Him. Do not allow unlovely or powerless disciples to keep you back. Come into the very presence of Christ Himself, and claim Him for yourself, and you too shall know the wonderful blessing He is waiting to give. Then follow Him, closely, humbly, faithfully, prayerfully, and the world shall find in you one like your Lord, and you will help to restore sanity and faith to a world insane and lost, demon-possessed and delirious, with fear.

CHAPTER XI
THE PLACE OF POWER.

"Go forth and stand upon the Mount before the Lord."—I KINGS xix. 11.

ELIJAH had entered a wilderness. Frightful reaction and humiliating retreat had followed the victory on Carmel. Now he was in the wilderness by himself, sitting under a juniper tree asking to die. Wildernesses are often entered after victories. The desire for death often comes after an exulting experience of life. Physically, the best remedies are sleep and food. When he awoke God saw that an Angel fed him and put him to sleep again like a tired child before He faced him with a renewing spiritual experience.

Then God called him away from his sense of defeat. It was a dangerous mood to entertain. The greatest spiritual leaders have had similarly depressing experiences, although the outside world was acclaiming them as mighty men. Outsiders never know the moods and experiences of their heroes and leaders.

At the beginning of a new period it is well to

prepare for the black and dangerous moods. They come to all intense natures. They must neither be entertained nor encouraged. They are harmful to ourselves, dishonouring to God, and disastrous to future power. Many magnificent careers have been ruined by entertaining dangerous moods and being dominated by them.

For Elijah it was an experience of great value. He was shown how the sense of defeat could be banished by a good sleep, a good meal, and a renewed spiritual view from a mountain peak.

God showed him what He would show us—that a man who gives way to discouragement is defeated before the battle is really begun. For the tired-out servant of God there is the common-sense way of recuperation by taking rest and caring for the body, and then there is the spiritual inspiration to be had by climbing the mountain, where a renewed spiritual vision may be obtained. It is the duty of all Christians at certain times to take a rest, and then to climb for the view.

As we face the future it is well to remind ourselves of these things, so that we may make the coming days times of real spiritual culture.

Take the stages in Elijah's life and apply them to your own life. God found him in despair,

overwhelmed by a sense of defeat. This mood was partly physical and partly spiritual—but it was the case of a worn-out body dominating a tired spirit.

So the Almighty recalled the Prophet to his past experiences. On the mountains he first knew God, as a lad or young man tending cattle on the rugged hills. There he had watched the eagles soaring overhead; he had listened to the roar of the mountain stream; he had gazed into the wonder of the star-strewn sky, and in it all he had the sense of the presence of God.

The person who has experienced conversion, experienced the Living Christ in the soul, rarely moves from that. That is always like a mountain peak in his past experience, and in times of doubt and depression it is well to return there, for memory will set the music and the dancing going again, and we shall be able to hear God speaking to us once more.

On the mountains in young manhood Elijah had dreamed dreams: there his eyes had grown stern with determination: there his heart had been aflame: there he was sure of God and of God's promises: there he had known that God was able to win the nation back again to Himself.

Now in more mature years the Prophet stood on the Mountain again, and all the past experiences, the visions, the vows, the confidence in the Almighty God, came back.

“Go forth and stand upon the Mount before the Lord,” and as Elijah obeyed God tore the face of nature with a hurricane of wind. He splintered the rocks with a heaving earthquake which shook the earth, and then He let loose a fire which tore down the mountain side, adding a horror to the inferno upon which the Prophet gazed.

But Elijah had known the wind from his youth; he had been on the mountains before when giant rocks were thrown about by the earthquake, and he had had to face the fire many times. He himself was a man like the wind in its swiftness and power—he himself was like to the earthquake in that he broke down and demolished all that opposed him, and like the fire he had scorched and destroyed the Prophets of Baal and the heat of his fury had reached the very throne.

Then suddenly the wind died away, the earthquake passed, the fire ceased, and there was “A sound of gentle stillness.” (As the marginal

rendering in the Revised Version so beautifully puts it), "When Elijah heard it he wrapped his face in his mantle."—God does His most wonderful works in absolute quietness—He builds the human body, and the mighty trees, in quietness. He speaks to the human soul in "A sound of gentle stillness."

From that experience Elijah went out to complete his work for God, and it is to that phase of power I call you to-day as we face the future. There is a great temptation to mistake the tearing of the wind, the crashing of the earthquake, and the roaring of the fire for the real power of God. Elijah's weakness was in mistaking external convulsions for spiritual revolutions, and to lose heart when the noise and shouting died away.

Now he found that his weakness did not limit God's strength. It was there—immovable — unchangeable — invincible — Eternal !

Come then to the place of real communion with God. It will result in "A sound of gentle stillness," and we shall have the assurance of His presence and His power, and that assurance makes possible the seemingly impossible.

CHAPTER XII

THE CHRISTIAN'S DAILY DUTY

*"Carry forth the ashes . . . The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar ;
it shall never go out."*—LEVITICUS vi. 11 13.

IF the altar fire was to be kept burning and never go out, then those who were attending the altar must perform the daily duty of cleaning out and carrying away the ashes. The plain directions given in the book of Leviticus concerning the altar fire, are applicable to the fire of devotion which we are endeavouring to keep burning on the altars of our lives.

It was a daily duty . . . "Carry forth the ashes." Regularity is a necessity in religion. Without it soul culture will fade away. The steady regularity of a devout soul assures a consistent walk with God. Some folk live in spiritual spasms. An evangelist comes to their town : they catch on fire and are busy at his meetings, give out tracts, wipe the dust off their Bibles, and start to attend meetings for prayer. For a time they burn like a bush fire, and then

go out and leave nothing but ashes to show that they were once on fire. Or they go to a Convention, or to a series of meetings for the deepening of the spiritual life, and again the fire burns and again everyone about them sees the glare and feels the heat—for a time. But again they go out, and again the ashes show that a fire burned.

But real religion is a spirit, not a spurt. It is a developing experience not spasmodic explosions.

Regularity in our devotional life means health and growth in our souls. With the altar fire to keep burning steadily, the priest performed his morning task regularly in preparation for each day's sacrifice. We must do the same. We are not priests in the Tabernacle, but we are priests to God in the inner temple of our souls, and each morning must find us preparing the altar of our devotion for the day's fire.

“Men ought always to pray and not to faint,” said Jesus (Luke xviii. 1.). The day will bring temptation, worry, perhaps a crisis. No one knows what may come to choke a half-dead fire. We must prepare every morning for the day's need. “Carry forth the ashes,” so that the fire

may blaze up with a new life, and then nothing will choke it during the day.

It was a cleansing process, for although the ashes were a sign of a past activity, nevertheless there would be no future activity until they had been cleaned out. A cleaning-up is always needed before a going-ahead is possible. A busy man's study needs regular attention otherwise his work will be retarded by the confusion into which his table and shelves have fallen. The confusion is a sign of past activity, but it will make future progress impossible unless cleared away at regular intervals. An engine has to be cleaned out and oiled at regular times otherwise it will cease to drive with power. Past activity leaves behind it expended material which must be cleaned away regularly if steady progress is to be maintained.

It is so in our spiritual lives. Every morning the jaded nerves, the tired body, the over-taxed brain, the discouraged spirit, must be brought into the quiet place of communion. There cleansing, anointing, rekindling will take place, and the fire will burn with steady glow all the day.

Ashes are unsightly and defiling. They take

up space which ought to be occupied with fuel. They block up the passages along which refreshing air should travel. They prevent heat from being generated. "Carry forth the ashes" . . . "The fire shall ever be burning."

A man loaded with conceit, proud of his gifts, inflated because of the success of work done in days that are now gone, has no room for fresh gifts of power from God. He has no channels along which fresh draughts of heavenly air may blow. He has no source of heat generation. He is smothering in the dead ashes of a burnt-out past.

Heat! Eternal, spiritual heat! Heat which glows white hot in the inner furnace of our souls! That is the need of most professing Christians. If we "Carry forth the ashes" every morning, and lay upon the fire the offering of a new day's devotion and love, then there will go up from our lives to God an odour of a sweet smell, and He will be well pleased.

In this way, and only in this way, can we hope to develop in spiritual power until all men shall know that we walk with the Christ and love Him with a passionate devotion.

The most pitiable objects in this world are

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burnt-out Christians, or Christians who have never caught fire. God give us a horror of ever being like that. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke iii. 16.). That must be our desire, our aim. "Carry forth the ashes" that the fire may burn, then all men shall know that we are His disciples.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHRISTIAN'S DAILY HABIT

"And in the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives."
—LUKE XXI. 37.

MORE books have been written about the necessity and value of prayer than on most other subjects, and yet the little time spent *in prayer by most Christians* shows that in spite of all theories held by them, they do not realize the value of the prayer life.

Prayer is work, exacting work, humbling work, self-emptying work, and very few can stand the test. Therefore very few make a daily habit of prayer.

Many "say prayers" every day, but that is ~~is~~ not necessarily praying. It may be a substitute for prayer, and so do more harm than good. It is well for Christians to examine their daily habit and see if they have fallen into the routine of "saying" their prayers instead of praying. The first is a form, the second is a force.

Jesus prayed : He prayed daily : He taught His disciples to pray : He commanded them to pray.

One of the most helpful studies in the New Testament is to follow through the Gospels all references to Christ's prayer-life. If this is done it will soon be seen how the Gospel story is punctuated by such passages as the one we are considering now.

We will begin by discovering that the Mount of Olives was Christ's favourite place for prayer, it was the place where He gathered His disciples to teach them, it was the place where He passed through His humiliation, and it was the place where He triumphed in His Ascension. Then the discovery is made that all these things follow as a natural consequence of having a place that we use for regular prayer. We cannot really pray without finding someone to whom we shall tell the wonderful spiritual truths we have discovered. We cannot grow in beauty of character and spirituality of life without passing through the valley of humiliation, because the more we learn to love Christ and the more earnestly we strive to teach others of Him, the more sensitive we shall become to the fact that "He is despised

and rejected of men." But thank God, finally we shall experience triumph—the spiritual triumph which is the right of the children of God.

Olivet is a very sacred spot. Many of the hills of Zion have a halo of memory around their summits. Sinai, Arrarat, Pisgah, Carmel, *all of them* are sacred because of association, and immediately we mention them one by one, one of the great Bible heroes comes to our mind, and all the incidents connected with that mountain come crowding upon us.

But the chain of sacred hills runs through into the New Testament, for there are Olivet and Calvary, and when we mention them, at once we think of our Saviour's place of prayer, and His place of sacrifice.

The startling thing is that He had a place of prayer: that He needed a place of prayer. We do not quite understand it all, but we know it is so, and what is more, we know that He went to His place of prayer regularly. There He breathed out His love for the Father, and there He breathed in the Father's love for Him. From that spot He came down to minister again to the world; in that spot He ministered to His own disciples.

What an awesome thing it would be to kneel—nay! to prostrate oneself beneath those Olive Trees in worship and adoration, and to know that in that very place Jesus prayed. The City slept at His feet, the stars lit the sky above His head, the hush of night wrapped the earth in rest, but the angels whispered “Behold, He prayeth.”

Was it coincidence that Jesus chose as His place of prayer the very spot where His great ancestor, David, also had a place of prayer? In 2 Samuel xv. 32. we have the statement concerning David going up Olivet, and it says: “When David was come to the top of the Mount where he worshipped God. . . .”

The fact is we know that David had his place of prayer on the same mountain, and it is quite natural to suppose that Jesus found joy in the associations of the place, and that there He loved to worship and adore, and drink in new spiritual strength.

David had his place of prayer. Jesus had His place of prayer.

Then I think of the great saints in the Bible and out of the Bible, and I cannot think of one who was not a man of prayer. There are scores

whom we think of without effort, who always seem to us models of piety and they were all men of prayer. David Brainerd, William Wilberforce, James Gilmour, Horace Bushnell, William Bramwell, Richard Cecil, Carey, George Fox, Luther, John Fletcher, John Wesley, Henry Martyn, Brother Lawrence, David Livingstone, and you will think of as many more whom you could name at once.

I think of the mighty evangelists: Jonathan Edwards, Finney, Moody, Chapman—all men of prayer.

There is no hope for us in our quest for holiness, unless we become men and women of prayer, and one great help in that direction is to have a place of prayer, your Olivet, to which you shall go regularly each day and PRAY. Begin to-day, and continue it to-morrow and every following day until the habit shall become part of your life.

CHAPTER XIV
HOW CHRIST MET A CRISIS

“ And it came to pass in those days that Jesus went out into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God.”—LUKE vi. 12.

BY reading this chapter through in Dr. Moffatt's translation, a connection of thought will be discovered, and some incidents will stand out clearly, that possibly may have been overlooked before.

In verses 10 and 11 Moffatt translates, “And glancing round at them all in anger He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He did so, and his hand was quite restored. This filled them with fury, and they discussed what they could do to Jesus.”

It is evident that a critical period in Christ's ministry had been reached. Conflicting emotions were being aroused—Christ was moved by righteous anger and the Pharisees by unrighteous fury—and our Lord met the situation by retiring for a prolonged period of prayer and quiet.

In seeking for a deep, spiritual life, it is

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important that we should learn the value of special seasons of prayer. All times of great emotion are fraught with danger, and special temptations beset us which may hurl us to the depths.

Even righteous anger may degenerate into unholy intolerance and bitterness, and it is possible for saints to descend to the level of Pharisees, hence the need for special retirement after special exhaustion.

Christ in His humanity was faced by temptation just as we are, and this particular crisis pressed Him as it would us. He at once went away from the disturbing surroundings for a prolonged season of prayer, thus showing us the way to victory.

All conflict means danger, to the side of right as well as to the side of evil, and if Jesus knew this and retired to pray, how much more ought we to guard the citadel of our soul, how much more ought we to beware of the dangers attending conflict and strong emotion! He was without sin, and yet He went away to pray. What hope have we of developing spiritually unless we do the same?

Every great crisis means a clash, and every

clash spells danger, and the way to victory when the danger approaches, is through prayer. Not necessarily petition but quietness before God and with God.

If you are a parent you instinctively know when your child is passing through a crisis. There has been a clash somewhere, or some soul-shaking disturbance. If you are wise you do not ask questions; you wait until your opportunity comes—it may be after your child has gone to bed—and then you go in quietly, perhaps in the dark, and your child feels the touch of your hand, or the comfort of your arms. You still do not ask questions, but you are giving a quiet, strong, loving assurance of sympathy. That is generally quite enough, for your child knows you, and presently there comes the rush of hot words, or the burst of stormy tears, and then you are told of some cruel treatment, or misunderstanding, or wronged affection. There is instant relief for your child, and the experience of soothing comfort and strength in your arms and love. Then at the right moment you give your advice and the crisis is passed and your child comes out stronger and more experienced, and better fitted to face the next time of trial.

Our relationship with God is like that. Christ lay in the arms of His Father all night. Gethsemane was not a solitary experience, though it was the most terrible, but there were many nights of agony along the way.

No positively good life can be lived without conflict with the powers of evil, and that is why the majority are not positive in their goodness, for they dread the conflict, and some of them do not see the necessity for it. They like the culture of Christianity, but they hate the conflict of it. They want the culture without the cross; the refinement without the rejection.

But all Christ's followers who plunge into the conflict must have their place of retirement and prayer, otherwise they will become harsh, and bitter, and as unlovely as the Pharisees whom they denounce. If a Christian has nothing but zeal, he is not likely to attract many to his Master. A Christian who withdraws for periods of uninterrupted communion with Christ, comes back into the world with a glow and a Christliness which will accomplish more than a zeal which is harsh and impatient and intolerant.

More good men fall into disaster through exhaustion than through anything else. I

recently saw a scientific man pick up a small hair with a pair of tweezers and place it on a finely balanced scale. Instantly the indicator moved and the weight of the hair was registered. That made me realise how every emotion leaves its registered mark upon our lives. Joy, anger, anxiety, care, enthusiasm, depression—friction, caused by opposition—exhaustion, caused by giving out energy. All these things lessen our power of resistance, and place us in grave danger unless we go to the source of renewed power.

Christ knew exhaustion, but He knew the source of recuperation, and He has pointed it out to us. Thus He met every crisis, and none of us can afford to neglect what He knew He needed, for how weak we are compared to Him.

Christ taught His disciples to pray before He endued them with power. Power cannot be entrusted to unbalanced lives, and power leaves our lives when the source of power is neglected.

This is a truth for the business man, as much as for the preacher; for the tired house-wife as well as for the Missionary. There are times when we must withdraw from the conflict and in utter relaxation and quietness, cast ourselves

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upon God, then we shall return to the conflict and find victory.

Bishop Westcott says:—"The mark of a saint is not perfection but consecration. A saint is not a man without faults, but a man who has given himself without reserve to God."

This is also the mark of a man who has discovered the secret of the victorious life.

CHAPTER XV

THE OUTLOOK OF THE SOUL

"And Daniel went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed."
—DANIEL VI. 10.

THOSE open windows in Daniel's house are typical of the open windows in his Spiritual life. Excavations in the East reveal the fact that the ruling classes lived in houses with rooms in the top storey which had windows opening outwards, as distinct from the rooms on the ground floor the windows of which opened into the courtyard within the house. In such a room Daniel lived, above the rush of the city, away from interruption, where the air was purer, the vision clearer and the heavens nearer than on the ground level.

Coming back from the business of the State, that room was Daniel's place of prayer, even as Olivet was our blessed Lord's spiritual haven of refuge and prayer.

It is well for the soul when we love the little

upper room. It is well when we love to keep the windows open so that we may drink in the pure air ; so that we may draw away for a time from the cares and perplexities and mad rush of the world with its exacting business, and its distracting pleasures.

Daniel loved his upper room with its open windows. He loved to commune with his soul and with heaven, and that place was where he met God face to face at regular times each day. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed."

Through those open windows came the breezes laden with the song of the birds and the sweet scent of the flowers, and even when the curtain of night was drawn across the face of the sun, it but served to reveal to him the glory of the star-strewn heavens.

In the slums of a city the windows are often nailed up. Glass is replaced by cardboard and pieces of wood. There is no incentive to open the windows, for the air is as foul without as within, and the outlook is as dreary as the inlook. The heart of man longs for the open window with its inspiring view and the sight and smell of flowers and fruit, and the beauty

of seascape or landscape. Cities extend as views become shut out, for then the city dwellers migrate to hill-side and sea-side, where the views are to be had, and where the windows can be kept open with delight.

In our physical life health suffers, and happiness also, if the windows are kept shut. But so it is in our Spiritual lives also. The soul demands the open windows, for unless we have fresh breezes from heaven, and fresh spiritual views, our soul's health will suffer. That is why so many Christians are anaemic, fretful, unlovely.

They have no open windows in the little upper room where the soul dwells; they have little communion with the soul or with God.

Daniel's windows were open toward the holiest spot on earth. That fact stands out in this statement "His windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem." And it seems to imply that they were always open night and day.

This takes us back to Solomon's prayer recorded in 1 Kings viii. 46-49. when he is speaking to God of a time when the nation might be away in captivity and he said; "If they pray unto Thee toward their land which Thou gavest unto their fathers, the City which

Thou hast chosen and the house which I have built for Thy name, then hear Thou their prayer . . . in heaven Thy dwelling place and maintain their cause."

Here Daniel was actually doing what Solomon knew some spiritual soul would be doing if ever such dire calamity came to the nation. He was kneeling in prayer with his windows open toward the holiest spot on earth. Babylon was at his feet with its money, its honours, its gaiety and its worldly position and power. But Jerusalem for his soul was "Home, Sweet Home." The money of Babylon, its honours, its gaiety, its worldly position and power could not give what Jerusalem stood for. Babylon stood for captivity. Jerusalem meant home and liberty.

It is so with us. If we spend our lives in the Babylon of the world, and neglect our upper chamber and our open windows, we may get what Babylon offers—riches, pleasure, position, power—but we shall miss what Jerusalem offers—Home and spiritual liberty. There can never be peace in Babylon, for it stands for captivity, and we know it.

We must have a spot that is holiest of all to

our souls, and we must keep the view clear, and there we must commune with God at regular times, or our spiritual lives will degenerate and at last die.

There was a spiritual vision in Daniel's life. It took him away and beyond the present, beyond the discomforts and temptations of captivity, and made him victorious over the sins which presented themselves to him in alluring guises.

So he comes to us as one of the most attractive personalities in the Bible. We think of him as noble in life, strong in character, brave in face of danger, victorious by the power of God.

Every real Christian desires nobility of character, and strength and victory in the spiritual life. These things do not come of themselves. They come to us, as they came to Daniel, by cultivation. Jesus was a man of prayer. Jesus had His upper room and the open windows toward heaven where He communed with the Father at regular intervals. Jesus had a spiritual vision which never left Him. Jesus was in the world, but He was not of the world.

It must be so with us. Experience shows that not all—not the majority—but thank God *some* of every generation keep a sacred upper

room with its open windows toward Jerusalem, where they go regularly and kneel before their God in secret communion. History shows that these are the spiritual leaders of their generation. Sometimes, it is true, that generation passes away before their leadership is detected. But these are "The salt of the earth." These are those upon whom Christ can depend.

Are you one of these? Am I? If not, let us begin now. Have your upper room.

Fling the windows wide open. Set your face toward the holiest spot you know.

Invite the Christ in to commune with your soul, and thus cultivate your spiritual life while Babylon rushes and roars at your feet. In its streets you must live your life, but you are not of its life, your life is hid with Christ in God. So may you find the secret that Daniel found, and like him serve your God faithfully, and eventually come to be with Christ in that endless communion of Eternity

CHAPTER XVI

UNCONSCIOUS ACHIEVEMENTS

"They brought forth the sick into the streets . . . that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."—ACTS v. 15.

THE unconscious achievements of our lives are greater than we can estimate, and they are reflections of our true character. Peter was a strong personality, and after the refining influences of years of training and moulding had done their work, he became a mighty man of God. Christ's influence refined him, and the severe lessons of his own backsliding humbled him; and then came the Baptism of the Holy Ghost which inspired him.

A man who has come into living touch with Christ, and has learned a great humility, can be trusted with spiritual power. Such a personality is generally dominated by a conscious purpose—which after all is always the mark of a strong life—and yet often such a life does more by its unconscious achievements than by what is known as "its life's work."

Take David Brainerd labouring a few short years to convert the Indians in the American forest. He did lead some of these men and women into the love of Christ, but unconsciously he spread through the world a passion for the prayer-filled life, and that influence is greater to-day than on the day of his death (October 9th, 1747). Who can say how many thousands have been converted or how many saintly lives have resulted from his unconscious influence?

We have only to think of this, and at once we see that it applies to countless other men such as Wesley, Knox, Chalmers, Spurgeon, Moody, Sylvester Horne and others.

Peter was consciously doing good, but as he passed down the street he was unconsciously healing and saving. He was so filled with the indwelling presence of God, that unconsciously he was the vehicle of gracious power.

One of the saddest and most disappointing things in life is to find that some who are consciously trying to do good, are unconsciously leaving behind them a disturbing and ungracious effect upon the lives of others. In fact, so common is this, that in many public institutions the consciously good are shunned and disliked.

They are very consciously trying to save souls, but often unconsciously they are driving souls away from their Master. They do, now and again, succeed in bringing someone else to accept their doctrine about Christ, and possibly even to a saving knowledge of Christ, but that is unfortunately overshadowed by the pernicious unconscious work that is being done by their shadow.

There was a time when Peter's shadow meant nothing of good. His touch healed nothing—he could not heal his own wife's mother—but at the time of this narrative he was healing even when he did not know it. That revealed a wonderful power and development in his life.

A few years before this his brother fishermen did not suspect that one day he would bring both bodily and spiritual health to broken lives and stricken souls. Back there in the Hall of Judgment as with flushed face and flashing eyes he cursed and swore and denied his Master, no human being would have picked him as a mighty evangelist or a gracious healer of ruined lives, or a lion in courage. The development of unthought-of-power comes with the re-birth of the soul. It is a mighty miracle when an ordinary man is made extraordinary by the power of God.

To pass through the world leaving healed lives behind you is the noblest of all achievements.

The Apostle going on a message of healing, brought blessing as he passed along. He was going to heal, but he healed as he was going, and knew it not. He was going to a conscious work, but he was doing an unconscious work which, perhaps, was the greater of the two.

The work of the cloud—we might almost say, its conscious work—is to carry the shower and pour it down on the thirsty earth. But as it passes over the face of the sun it casts a shadow, and yonder weary, sweating labourer pauses to wipe his face, glad of the cool rest ere he once more toils on. So before it gives him drink, the cloud cools and revives him.

A tree casts its shadow before it bears its fruit, and under its shade the tired beasts lie, and in its branches the little birds sleep safely. It was planted to bear fruit, but it brought other blessings which were not counted.

You and your shadow will pass: what will remain? Whatever it may be, it will be your contribution to life, to God and to men. It will be an enrichment or an impoverishment of the lives of others.

How essential it is that we should cultivate our souls. How humbly we should come before God daily that by prayer and meditation we may learn of Him and drink in of His Spirit. Our profession may be orthodox, but our shadow may bring poisonous influences to those we touch as we pass by.

As Jesus passed by, the blind found sight, the poor stricken woman found health, the widow found her son again, the children smiled and the harlot was cleansed.

What happens when we pass by? God help us to remember the invitation of the Christ, "Learn of me . . . for I am meek and lowly in heart."

Some men who have been written down as failures by the world, will have many to welcome them home on the other side of the Shadows—and many who to-day are counted among the great of the earth will know the loneliness of remorse. They will be childless in Eternity.

CHAPTER XVII

WALKING BY THE SPIRIT.

“Walk by the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh . . . If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit also let us walk.”—GALATIANS 7. 16 and 25.

WHEN we read these passages we see at once the reason why there are two distinct classes of Christians. Many are puzzled by the fact that some Christians glow with religious fervour, and seem possessed by a glorious and unquenchable enthusiasm, while others are worldly, spiritually cold, formal and apparently content with their unsatisfactory existence.

In fact, the amazing thing is, that the unsatisfactory Christians often exude a superior air. They look upon themselves as “Intellectual,” and look down upon others as “Emotional.” This class of people are often spoken of as “The cream” of the Churches, while others may think of them as “The ice-cream.”

It is quite true that the expression of our religious sentiment is largely regulated by our different types of nature, and therefore we must

give each other credit for sincerity and thank God that the appeal of Christ attracts people of such varying types. At the same time contentment must never be allowed to find place in our spiritual lives. A divine discontent within us, is a sign of health; a smug complacency is a sign of death, or at least of decay.

That there are two distinct classes of Christians no one can deny, and it would be well if both classes would turn again and read such passages of the New Testament as those set out above.

What is meant by "The flesh"? The expression is used in various parts of Scripture. In Genesis vi. 3: "Man also is flesh." Mark xxiv. 38:—"The Spirit truly is ready but the flesh is weak." Romans viii. 3: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . condemned sin in the flesh." Hebrews ix. 13: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats . . . sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" 1 Peter ii. 11: "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." Romans viii. 7 (revised version): "Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God."

It is easy to draw your own conclusions from these passages. "Flesh" and "Sin" seem to be bracketed throughout Scripture. "The flesh" stands for the animal part of our nature. It is the carnal, the lower nature which craves for sensual gratification. Often as we look at a certain type of gross sinner we say that he is "An animal." We mean that the flesh rules him.

But we should never forget that the term applies not only to the grossly sensual, but it applies to all those things which lead us away from God. Some are dominated by conceit, or pride, or a love of show, or love of praise, or a love of prominence. Some professing Christians love money more than anything else in the world; some are hard and harsh in their business relationships; some are charged with deceit; and some are not trusted by their fellow men.

This ought not to be. But here is the reason: "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." Our first need is to admit to ourselves that two natures are warring within us—the fleshly and the spiritual—and it should be the business of the Christian to cultivate his spiritual life and to welcome all instruction which will lead him

into the rich fulness of that life which Christ revealed to us. If a professing Christian does not desire such a spiritual life, then he may well doubt the reality of his conversion.

What is meant by "Living" as distinct from "Walking" by the Spirit? Here is the reason why so many professing Christians live such unsatisfactory lives, and here again we can find the source of power to overcome the natural tendency of our sinful natures.

There is as much difference between some Christians and others, as between a weak infant and a great strong man. They both live, but the one depends on another to be carried, while the other can walk and run with strength and joy. One has developed and the other has not, yet they both live. The saddest thing in any home is a child who remains a child in spite of the passing years. The parents carry a cross which remains throughout their lives as they look on that one who will never grow up. He may be quite satisfied with himself because he knows no better. In his undeveloped mind he may even imagine himself superior to his brothers and sisters who are making normal progress. But his very satisfaction is an evidence of his lack of development. His normal relatives take

exercise, go to work, read and study, so that their development and health may progress. He cannot read, and he knows nothing about development, and he cannot comprehend the things which give the others joy and satisfaction.

How must the gracious Heavenly Father feel about His spiritually sub-normal children who "Live" but never "Walk"?

We all live by the Spirit, for without His operation in our lives there can be no life, for by nature we are all dead in trespasses and sin. But why stop there? If we do stop there we grieve the Father's heart and we hurt religion, for the man of the world cannot distinguish between real Christianity and undeveloped Christianity, any more than a heathen can. For a man to have a white skin is for him to be classed as a "Christian" by coloured peoples, and for a man to go to Church is enough for him to be classed as a professing Christian by people of the world, and the one is as true (or false) as the other.

The true Christian life is the product of the operation of the Spirit of God in a man's soul, and if there has been no work of the Spirit there, then in spite of all profession there is no real life. But though there may be real spiritual life—as in the case of an undeveloped physical life

—it does not necessarily follow that there is abounding spiritual life. Christ said, “I came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

It is that abundant life which so many lack, for it can only come by a full surrender to God’s will. Our question then must be, “Have I made a full surrender to the Holy Spirit?”

When men discover that they have not made that full surrender, and then set to work to yield their lives unreservedly to God, revival comes as naturally as the glorious sunshine after the clouds have rolled away.

Those who do not desire revival, are sub-normal, and their antagonism to a mighty work of Grace is the antagonism of puling infants who have not the mind to comprehend the meaning of developed life.

Revivals are the result of Christians “Walking by the Spirit.” They should not come at intervals, but every healthy Church should be experiencing one constant revival, and every healthy Christian should be conquering sinfulness in the flesh, and enjoying a daily walk with God, and power with both God and man.

In Wales when professing Christians awoke

to the unsatisfactory state of their spirituality and men acknowledged their debts, and people set out to forgive wrongs and receive forgiveness for past misdeeds, the obstacles to spiritual blessings were removed, and revival swept like a rising tide all through the land. In those days families were reunited, wrongs were set right, law courts were shut, policemen had nothing to do but control traffic, public-house bars and dance halls were empty, and the people enjoyed a foretaste of heaven. There was no talk of empty Churches, for every place of worship was crowded night and day, and the busiest people in the land were the preachers of the Gospel.

God's intention for His people and His Church is not that we should crawl through life. Surely that is a travesty, and yet most Christians seem content to crawl all their days. But He has provided the way to the victorious life, in that He has given us of His Spirit, and that gift is an overflowing one. If we are willing to give ourselves to Him in a complete surrender, then He will give Himself to us in a complete filling, and we shall "Walk," and "We shall run and not grow weary."

CHAPTER XVIII
THE ANGELS' SONG.

"Glory to God in the Highest and on Earth Peace, Goodwill toward men."

—LUKE ii. 14.

IMMORTAL words, first given set to heavenly music, sung by an Angelic choir, heard by a band of poor, simple, believing shepherds.

The strains of that music we have never heard, but the music of the message haunts the hearts of men throughout the world. It represents the quest of mankind. To know God, to glorify Him, to enjoy peace on earth, to bring in goodwill amongst men is the aim of all in whom the spiritual is dominant.

This was why Christ was born; this is why man was created; the accomplishment of this will bring in the Kingdom of Heaven.

And yet this marvellous revelation was first made to simple, common people. The aristocrats, the learned, and the leaders, were all passed by. The religious classes slept, while the heavenly choir sang its carol, but the message

came to those who were most likely to receive it gladly and to believe it utterly. They were awake physically and spiritually.

There was no haphazard revelation here. These men were unquestionably devout as well as child-like in their faith.

No matter how we view it, it is to such that God reveals His choicest secrets. The gates of the Eternal do not yield to force. There is no key of learning so cunningly contrived that it can open the door to the spiritual realm. There is no class so powerful that it can successfully demand of God His revelation.

He put His Son into the arms of a working-man's wife; He told His wonderful secret to a band of shepherds; He hung His star in the sky for a group of wise men; He unfolded the inner secrets of the Kingdom to a group consisting mostly of fishermen and the like. And the reason of the choice in each instance was that those to whom the message of heaven came were devout and child-like in their faith.

These shepherds were too simple to observe the proprieties, so they glorified and praised God for all the things they had heard and seen. The Pharisees would sneer at them, and speak

to each other about the ignorant people being accursed, but that could not alter the fact that they had seen the Angels, and heard the music, and believed the message and worshipped the child Jesus.

Simeon in the Temple was a simple old watcher, too. Child-like and devout, with heart and mind clear and full of faith. Doubtless many learned Pharisees had sneered at him, but he took Jesus into his arms and into his heart also, and that was all that mattered. Anna was another. No doubt many thought she was mad, and they pitied her. But she saw Jesus and the Kingdom dawned on her soul.

Nathaniel was still another. A cultured man who had never lost the habit of spiritual intercourse; questioning, and yet he had never lost the child-like heart. He too saw Jesus and cried: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel."

All these heard the heavenly music: all these saw the heavenly vision: all these praised and glorified God: all these were beyond the influence of sneering Pharisee or mocking worldling—for them the birth of Jesus was a gladsome reality.

The whole of Christendom on Christmas Day stops and gazes back on the fact of the birth of Christ. It is the centre around which everything in the year revolves. Rejoicing and reunion mark that special season. Men's hearts are tender then ; home circles are full of happiness then ; even the felon in his cell is given special privileges then—and all because we then celebrate the birth of Jesus.

And yet—and yet—only the few hear the heavenly music or see the heavenly vision, because only the few cultivate the child-like heart and the devout faith. But the Angels' Song is for us, if we will listen and believe—the rejoicing and gladness are for us if we will but accept God's revelation and abandon our own wilfulness, and our choice of the things of the world.

Shall we not then pray as this glad season dawns once more, that we may be stripped of all Pharisaic pride, and self-righteousness, so that with the hearts and minds of little children we may gaze into the cradle-manger and worship our Saviour. Then shall the Peace of God which passeth knowledge take possession of us, and the New Year will dawn with new meaning

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for us, and our lives will be engrossed with the new and mighty purpose to bring in the Kingdom of our God and His Christ.

“Angels from the realm of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth;
Come and worship;
Worship Christ, the new-born King.”

CHAPTER XIX

VICTORY FOR THE NEW YEAR.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—ROMANS vii. 24.

THE beginning of a New Year presents a splendid opportunity for us to take stock, and to come again to God with a fresh dedication of our life to Him. It is certainly a sign of deterioration if we have no desire to enter this new chapter in our history in living touch with the living Christ. It is a mark of a dying soul when there is no passionate pleading with God that the New Year may be better than any previous year.

In Chapter 7 of this wonderful Epistle, Paul describes the constant warfare which goes on within each one of us when we are anxious to attain holiness of life. He had experienced the conflict, and the sharp, heart-deep cry of verse 24 tells us that he is conscious of a repulsive presence in his life which he would fain get rid of.

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It is a cry of distress because of the consciousness of sin within. If Paul experienced such distress because of the constant insinuation of sin, warring against his soul, we need not despair because we too have been torn by the conflict, and distressed by the repulsive presence of evil within.

When craving for a closer walk with God, Paul was conscious of the presence of evil, seeking to drag him down. So are we. Under all conditions evil raises its repulsive head and leers at us, and threatens to overthrow us, and sometimes we are tempted to think that we are as vile as the suggestions which come to us. It is distressing. But every saint has had a similar experience.

It is said that one form of punishment adopted by the Romans, was to tie a dead man on the back of a prisoner, and force him to carry the rotting carcase about with him. The ghastly burden made his flesh creep with horror, and his whole nature revolted against living in constant contact with repulsive death.

If this is true, then Paul had seen this disgusting sight many times, and in his spiritual thought he uses it to describe his own condition of soul.

Living, and yet carrying with him the repulsive body of sin which he loathed and longed to cast off.

But he cried in his distress to God. He would not give up, but he would be free. Surely God in heaven did not intend that His child should be thus afflicted?

It was a cry of discontent, and therefore it was a healthy cry. It reveals the fact that he hated the presence of death, and demanded the radiance of conquering life.

It is only the consciousness of life which reveals the presence of death. People living in sin which they have deliberately chosen, are apparently content. No cry rings through the heavens from them. The New Year brings them no thought of holiness, no longings for purity and power. They are "Dead in trespasses and sin," therefore the presence of death is not abhorrent, for they are not conscious of it. Deluded, and deceived, they imagine that they alone are alive, whereas they are dead.

People whose religion consists of nothing more than barren forms and ceremonies, cry out, "I have need of nothing." No heart-searching ever disturbs them; no longings for

holiness ever reveal the inward wrong which must be set right. They look with pity and contempt on those who, like Bunyan, enter the Holy War and seek the Celestial City.

Cleanliness abhors dirt. Health shrinks from the touch of disease. Life shrinks from death. It is only the living who cry "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Therefore this cry foreshadows victory. Paul is distressed and discontented. He knows his state and he seeks deliverance, and so he can say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Right now, then, at the beginning of the New Year, let us examine ourselves, and as with discontent we see our imperfections and failures, let us thank God for every longing in our souls for liberty and holiness. (Well may we cry out in distress if these longings are absent.) The source of our victory is "Christ in you the hope of glory." The source of our assurance is "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Begin the year in absolute dependence on Him. Begin it with absolute surrender to Him.

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He will deliver us from the body of death, as Paul describes in Chapter 8, verse 21, "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption unto the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Over yonder hills which fill the valley with shadow, the Sun of Righteousness is arising with healing in His wings. Believe that, and act upon it. It is not His will that we shall remain in bondage, and we do not glorify Him by moaning over our sins. Let us triumph in His might and power, and with that as the source of our hope, press on into the New Year to cultivate our souls in all holiness and purity, to the glory of His name.

"I bring my sins to Thee,
The sins I cannot count,
That all may cleansed be
In Thy once opened fount;
I bring them, Saviour, all to Thee,
The burden is too great for me."

CHAPTER XX
*THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE
INSIGNIFICANT.*

"The Lord hath need of him."—LUKE xix. 31.

MANY humble Christians worry because they imagine that their gifts are too insignificant to be of any use to God. In fact it may safely be said that one of the great stumbling blocks to service is the thought that nothing we possess is essential to the work of the Kingdom.

But it is wonderful the small things Christ needs. It is almost beyond our power of imagination to realise that He, the Lord of creation, should have need of an ass. His instructions to His disciples included His message to the owner of the despised animal, "The Lord hath need of him."

Then we turn to His life and notice the insignificant things He needed—The companionship of sinful men; a fishing boat to carry Him; a pillow to rest Him; a home to be

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invited to ; a coin to pay the tax ; an ass to ride on.

And He used these insignificant things very wonderfully. Think of the fact that He used a sinful woman to tell the men in Samaria about Him ; He used the Magdalene to announce His resurrection ; He used a wooden cross to help save the world ; He used a common tomb to hold His sacred body ; He used a sparrow to illustrate His sermon ; He used a boy's lunch to perform a great miracle.

So we could go on ; and gradually we realise that none of us are too small to be needed by Christ ; none of us are too insignificant to be used by Him ; none of us are too sinful to be messengers of His.

Then we notice that although it was only an ass, yet the owner lent it to Christ. Most likely he was a poor man. The poor were Christ's friends, and moreover, many rich folk would have resented Christ's disciples taking their ass, but the poor are very kind to their fellow poor. Christ was poor—He did not even own an ass, and so another poor man gladly lent Him one.

There is no record that the owner asked any

questions, and he asked no hire, and he asked no guarantee of safety. He had very little of this world's goods, but he had this ass and the Lord needed it, so he lovingly gave it.

That teaches us—you and me—that the Lord hath need of what little we can give Him to use in His work of bringing in the Kingdom. Our little coin; our half-hour after a busy day; our afternoon on Sunday; our souls; our word of cheer; whatever we have that we will contribute towards the joy and salvation of the world.—“The Lord hath need of it.”

Christ always glorifies what we lend Him. I have read somewhere an attempt to describe the return of that colt to his owner. He had to go on using him because he was poor, but to him that beast was different to all the rest of his animals after that. Possibly after the Resurrection he rode him out to the Mountain and saw the Ascension; but this is certain that a special affection was lavished on that animal ever after.

Everything Christ uses He glorifies. A voice! It is just a sound, and yet it is sometimes used to help Christ make a triumphal entry into some one's heart! A servant girl's half-hour;

and yet through it some child in a Sunday School Class is led into the Kingdom and becomes a mighty man or woman of God. A poor working man's spare evening training boys, and a stream of splendid men go into the world to ennoble its life and purify its thought.

What humble instruments Christ uses ! Man's conception of the coming of the Messiah was associated with pomp and power, trumpets and armies, angels, amazement, nations bowing before Him, and even Nature being convulsed.

The reality was the Son of God lying as a babe in the arms of the wife of a working man, surrounded by cattle and adored by humble shepherds. The Son of God riding on a young ass while the common people shouted and the aristocrats sneered.

An ass could carry Him as well as a chariot and it served His purpose better. Christ did not go to kings and princes for help—He took fishermen to be His preachers ; he had a black man to carry His Cross ; He asked an unknown peasant for his ass.

So He comes to-day to you and me—humble folk ; perhaps uneducated, hard-working unknown people—and He uses us to bring His

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Kingdom into the hearts of men, women and children. He hath need of us! If we refuse His call, we shall miss the glory of the music and the triumph of His entry into the city of the souls of men, for He will pass on and find some one else who is willing to lend himself and all that he hath unto the Lord.

CHAPTER XXI

“A RADIANT SHORE.”

“Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.”

—JOHN XXI. 4.

AGAIN we face the dawning of a New Year, and there are very few who are in a normal state of mind, who do not desire the new chapter that is about to be compiled in life, to be better than any previous chapter in their history. Certainly every Christian should test his spiritual condition by the presence or absence of a deep desire to achieve nobler things for Christ during the coming year.

We are stepping out on to the shore, as the New Year dawns, and whether it is to be a radiant shore, or not, depends upon ourselves. We are in a sad position if the glow of earnest desire is not found in our souls at this time. Let us therefore take heed and enter the New Year on our knees before the Son of God, waiting His word to our lives.

In this story we are told that “Jesus stood on the shore.” To the disciples it was the

shore of their vain attempt. They had seen the risen Christ, but they had not yet received any orders, except that they were to go to Galilee, and this command they had obeyed and were now waiting the development of events.

They had left all for Jesus, but the time had come when they must earn money. Moreover, they were disturbed, and perturbed, and overwrought. They had been at the Cross, at the empty tomb, at the gatherings where Jesus had appeared in His glorified body, but the Holy Ghost was not yet given, and to some extent they were at sea spiritually. Naturally in these unsettled days they turned to their boyhood's playground, their manhood's environment, their familiar calling, and they went fishing.

The sea draws its lovers with a fascination that takes no refusal. Its moods are so like their own. The spray of this sea had wet the baby faces of these men : its waters had bathed their boyish bodies : its waves had developed their youthful muscles : its starlight and sunlight had been their regular illumination, and on this stretch of water their bodies had become hardened to resist the cold and heat alike.

They went fishing. They wanted to get their minds off things, to find occupation and excitement. They longed to feel the net tugging in their hands and to watch the water boiling with the enmeshed fish, and to hear the thuds of flapping tails and springing bodies on the deck of their boat.

But it was a vain attempt. They were tired and wet and more miserable than when they began. There is no misery of its kind worse than a cold, comfortless night, trying to catch fish that are not there.

They wanted success and did not find it. They sought for pleasure and did not get it. What they searched after eluded them. The fact is they thought they wanted diversion, when in reality they wanted Christ.

Those men remind us of thousands to-day. We are living in disturbed and disturbing days. The result is highly-strung nerves, feverish minds, overwrought bodies. Like Peter, some people are saying: "I go fishing" and scores reply: "I go with thee," and they go fishing after diversion, new excitement, fresh sensations, novel occupations. But that cannot last for ever. No one, no set, no nation, no generation

His farewell before Calvary was at a meal. His welcome now, after His resurrection, was at a meal. This was just a picnic meal, but it was just what they needed at that time, as the solemnity of the last supper was just what they needed then.

Some of us have been in the dark, at sea, tossed about, catching nothing, but here on the shore of this New Year is Jesus with a welcome and a meal. "Come and dine," He says with eyes shining with loving welcome, and if we will but accept His invitation He will satisfy us with complete renewal and complete satisfaction. Then, if like Peter and those others, we have failed Him, He will say, "Lovest thou Me?" and we shall reply: "Lord Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Then He will stretch out His hand and take ours in His, and as we feel the mark of the cruel scar pressing against our palm we will understand what He has done for us, and we will quiver with joy as we shall hear Him say: "Feed My Lambs—feed My Sheep," for we shall know that He has our life's work ready for us on that shore, and it will be a radiant shore for us.

Love, forgiveness, restoration, and work—

and a King to lead and inspire us. What more can we need? What more can we ask for? This is the shore of spiritual satisfaction. Will you meet Him on that radiant shore at this New Year time? If so, then it will be indeed a happy New Year—the happiest you have ever known.

Amkhan
25.8. '44.

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