

F.B. Meyer:

Thou man of God! 2 Kings 1:9,11,13

OH that thou and I might so live before God and men, that they should recognize us as men of God, as God's men! See how these ungodly captains at once recognized this, in the case of Elijah. They fretted and chafed against his holiness; but they were forced to admit it. They tried to impose their orders, or those of their king; but they realized that Elijah was the servant of Him whom they set at nought, so far as their own lives were concerned.

If we are really men of God, we shall be the last to assume the title. Notice that Elijah puts an if before the title with which he was saluted: "If I be a man of God." Paul counted himself the least of all saints.

We must be of God. All our goodness must originate in Him. We can no more boast of goodness than a chamber can boast of the light which irradiates each corner of its space. The faith that takes his grace, as well as the grace it takes, is his. We are absolutely his debtors; and happy are they who love to have it so, and lie always at the Beautiful Gate of God's heart, expecting to receive alms at his hand.

We must be for God. This is the only cure for self-consciousness, for that perpetual obtrusion of the self-life which is our bane and curse. Ask that the Holy Spirit may fill you with so absorbing a passion for the glory of Jesus, that there may be no room to think of your own reputation or emolument.

We must be in God, and God in us. This is possible, when we love perfectly. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Oh, sea of light, may we lie spread out in thy translucent waves, as the sponges in southern sapphire seas, till every fiber of our being be permeated and infilled!

Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee. 2 Kings 2:2,4,6

THRICE Elijah spoke thus to his friend and disciple, to test him. Perseverance, tenacity of purpose, a refusal to be content with anything short of the best, are indispensable conditions for the attainment of the highest possibilities of experience and service. And perpetually in our life's discipline these words come back on us, Tarry here! Not that God desires us to tarry, but because He desires each onward step to be the choice and act of our own will.

Tarry here in Consecration. "You have given so much; is it not time that you refrained from further sacrifices? Ungird your loins, sit down and rest, forbear from this strenuous following after. Spare thyself; this shall not come to thee."

Tarry here in the Life of Prayer. "It is waste time to spend so much time at the footstool of God. You have done more than most, desist from further intercession and supplication."

Tarry here in the attainment of the likeness of Christ. "It will cost you so much, if all that is not Christ-like is to pass away from your life."

Such voices are perpetually speaking to us all. And if we heed them, we are at once shut out of that crossing the Jordan, that rapturous intercourse with heaven, that reception of the double portion of the Spirit, which await those who have successfully stood the test. The law of the Christian life is always Advance; always leaving that which is behind; always reckoning that you have not attained; always following on to know the Lord, growing in grace and in the knowledge of the blessed Saviour, and saying to the Spirit of God, as Elisha to Elijah, I will not leave thee.

Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled. 2 Kings 3:17

THIS is God's way of fulfilling the desire of them that fear Him. We like to see the clouds blown forward through the sky, and hear the moan of the rising wind; in other words, we like to see God's gifts on their way, or to have the sensible emotion of receiving them. Sometimes we have symptoms and signs that fill us with rapture; at other times, these are lacking, and we surrender ourselves to despair. Yet when we see neither wind nor rain, God may be most mightily at work.

It is so in Church work. How often we make our valleys full of ditches! Our machinery is complicated and

perfect; we have spared neither pains nor care. Then we ardently desire the signs of a powerful revival, and break our hearts if they are not apparent; while, all the time, if we only knew it, the Divine blessing is welling up in the ditches, doing more than would be the case if our highest wishes were gratified. Here and there tears are falling silently, hearts are being cleansed, lives are becoming yielded to God.

It is so in Christian experience. We expect to have our Pentecost as the early Church received hers. We desire to see wind and rain, and to know that God is baptizing us; but this is not granted. There is no footfall of hurrying clouds, no coronet of flame, no gift of tongues. But, deep down, the ditches are being filled up, yearnings are being satisfied, the capacity for God within us is being met, though it grows apace. God be praised that the success of his work is not gauged by outward signs!

A well may be filled as completely by the percolation of water, a drop at a time, as by turning a river into it.

And the oil stayed. 2 Kings 4:6

WHAT a sorrowful confession! There was no reason why it should stay. There was as much oil as ever, and the power which had made so much could have gone on without limit or exhaustion. The only reason for the ceasing of the oil was in the failure of the vessels. The widow and her sons had secured only a limited number of vessels, and therefore there was only a limited supply of the precious oil.

This is why so many of God's promises are unfulfilled in your experience. In former days you kept claiming their fulfillment; frequently you brought God's promises to Him and said, "Do as Thou hast said." Vessel after vessel of need was brought empty and taken away full. But of late years you have refrained, you have rested on your oars, you have ceased to bring the vessels of your need. Hence the dwindling supply.

This is why your life is not so productive of blessing as it might be. You do not bring vessels enough. You think that God has wrought as much through you as He can or will. You do not expect Him to fill the latter years of your life as He did the former. You can trust Him for two sermons a week, but not for five or six.

This is why the blessing of a revival stays in its course. As long as the missionary remains with us, we call look for the continuance of blessing. But after awhile we say, Let the services stop; they have run their course, and fulfilled their end. And forthwith the blessing stops in mid-flow. Let us go on pleading with the unsaved, and bringing the empty vessels of our poor effort for God to fill them up to the full measure of their capacity.

Like unto the flesh of a little child. 2 Kings 5:14

IS there any fabric woven on the loom of time to be compared in perfect beauty to the flesh of a little child, on which, as yet, no scar or blemish can be traced? So sweet, so pure, so clean. It was a wonderful combination, that the strong muscles and make of the mighty man of war should blend with the flesh of a child. But this may be ours also, if we will let the hand of Jesus pass over our leprous-smitten souls. At this moment, if you let Him, He will touch you and say, "Be clean," and immediately the leprosy will depart, and you will return to the days of your youth not forgiven only, but cleansed; not pardoned only, but clad in the beauty of the Lord your God, which He will put on you.

We do not count a little child to be free from the taint of sin. It is conceived in sin, and inherits the evil tendencies of our fallen race. Its innocence of evil is not holiness. Jesus gives us more than innocence, He makes us pure and holy. But there are other childlike qualities which our Saviour gives. The humility of a little child, who is unconscious of itself, and who is not perpetually looking for admiration. The unselfishness of a little child, who seeks its companion to share its luxuries and games. The trust of a little child, which so naturally clings to a strong and loving heart, willing to follow anywhere, to believe in anything. The love of a little child, who responds to every endearment with sunny laughter and soft caresses.

There is a great difference between childish and childlike. The former is put away, as we grow up into Christ: the latter we grow into, as we become more like our Lord. The oldest angels are the youngest: the ripest saints are the most childlike.

Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. 2 Kings 6:17

SO it is with each of God's saints. We cannot see, because of the imperfection of mortal vision, the harnessed squadrons of fire and light; but the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. If our eyes were opened, we should see the angel-hosts as an encircling fence of fire; but whether we

see them or not, they are certainly there.

God is between us and temptation. "However strong the foe, God is stronger. However swift the descending blow, God is swifter to catch and ward off. However weak we are, through long habits of yielding, God is greater than our hearts, and can keep in perfect peace. "Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages."

God is between us and the hate of man. "Dare to believe that there is an invisible wall of protection between you and all that men devise against you. What though the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing! No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise in judgment shall be condemned.

God is between you and the deluge of care. "What thousands are beset with that dark specter! They have no rest or peace either day or night, saying, "Where will the next rent, the next meal, come from? " How different the life of birds, and flowers, of children, of Jesus, and all holy souls. Oh, rest in the Lord, and put Him between you and black care.

God is between you and the pursuit of your past. "He is your reward; and as He intercepted the pursuit of Pharaoh, so He stands at Calvary between your past and you. The assayer of retribution is arrested by that Divine Victim " what more can we ask!

This day is a day of good tidings. 2 Kings 7:9

IT was indeed. The enemy that had so long hemmed them in had dispersed, leaving a great spoil behind. The famine which had driven the people to awful straits was at an end, and there was now plenty of everything. It was inhuman for these four lepers to be content with eating and drinking, and sharing out the spoil, when hard by a city was in agony. Common humanity bade them give information of what had happened.

Let us take care lest some mischief befall us, if we withhold the blessed Gospel from a dying world. We know that Jesus has died and risen again, and that his unsearchable riches wait for appropriation. We have availed ourselves of the offer; but let us see to it that so far as we can, we are making known that the wine and milk may be obtained without money and without price.

Mischief always overtakes a selfish policy; whereas those who dare to share with others what they have received, not only keep what they have, but find the fragments enough for many days afterwards.

Let us tell men that the Saviour has overcome our foes, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who believe. Let us speak from a full heart of all that He has proved to be. Let us invite men to share with us the grace which hath neither shore nor bound.

One ounce of testimony is worth a ton weight of argument, and overpowers all objection. The Lord, on whom the king leaned, derided the possibility of the prophet's prediction; and no doubt had plenty of adherents. But the leper's report swept all his words to the winds. They had known, tasted, and handled. Let us remember that we are called to be witnesses of what God hath done for us.

And the Man of God wept. 2 Kings 8:11

ELISHA foresaw all the evil that Hazael would inflict on Israel, and it moved him to tears. Though he was a strong man, able to move kingdoms by his message and prayer, yet he was of a tender and compassionate disposition. This was he who one moment upbraided the king of Israel for his crimes, and the next called for a minstrel to calm his perturbed spirit with strains of music. The men that can move others are themselves very susceptible and easily moved.

The nearer we live to God, the more we deserve to be known as men and women of God, the more will our tears flow for the slain of the daughters of our people. Consider the ravages that drink, and impurity, and gambling, are making among our people; enumerate the homes that are desolate, the young life that is wrecked as it is leaving the harbor, the awful dishonour done to woman; and surely there must come times when tears well up for very humanity's sake, to say nothing of the pity which they acquire who look at things from God's standpoint.

Jesus beheld the city and wept over it. Give us this day, O Son of Man, thy compassion, thy love, thy tears, that

we may speak of thy grace graciously, of thy love tenderly, and even of thy judgments with brimming, eyes.

"A broken heart, a fount of tears:

Ask, and it shall not be denied.'

Wouldst thou avert such issues; begin with the cradled babes of your homes. Win them for God; teach them how to curb passion and subdue themselves. Tenderness and wisdom may arrest the making of Benâ€™hadads.

Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace? 2 Kings 9:22.

WE all want peace. Of every telegraph messenger, as he puts the buffâ€™colored envelope into our hands, we ask almost instinctively, Is it peace? If there is a rumor of war, a depression in trade, a bad harvest, a sudden calamity in our neighborhood, we instantly consider the effect it may have on the tranquility and prosperity of our life.

By peace we too often mean the absence of the disagreeable, the unbroken routine of outward prosperity, the serene passage of the years: not always eager for anything deeper. And if other and profounder questions intrude themselves, we instantly stifle or evade them. Like Herod, we shut up the Baptist in the dungeon. Like the Roman general, we make a desert and call it peace. Men will flee from a Gospel ministry which pursues them into close quarters, and arouses unwelcome questions that break the peace.

There cannot be true peace so long as we permit the infidelities and charms of some Jezebel of the soulâ€™life to attract and affect us. Jezebel may stand for the painted world, with its wiles and snares, or for the flesh, or for some unholy association of the past life, like that which clung to Augustine. But there must be no quarter given to the unhallowed rival of our Lord. Whatever its charms, it must be flung out of the window before we can be at peace.

"Then, and not till then, we shall see Thee as Thou art;

Then, and not till then, in thy glory bear a part;

Then, and not till then, Thou wilt satisfy each heart."

If you are entirely surrendered to the Lord, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel. 2 Kings 10:31

JEHU was the Cromwell of his time. He swept away the symbols of idolatry with ruthless destruction. Nothing could withstand his iconoclastic enthusiasm. But he failed to keep his own heart, and therefore his dynasty lasted for but one generation. It is a deep lesson for us all.

We may keep other people's vineyards, and neglect our own. We may give good advice to our friends, but into the very faults against which we warn them. We may pose as infallible guides, but fall into the crevasses and precipices from which we had carefully warned our companions. Jehu avenged the idolatries of Ahab, but he departed not from Jeroboam's calves.

Before you rebuke another, be sure that you are free from the faults that you detect in him. When you hear of the failings of some erring brother, ask yourself whether you are perfectly free from them. And never attempt to cast out the mote from your neighborâ€™s eye till you are sure that the beam has been taken from your own.

Take heed to your heart. Its complexion colors all the issues of life. Do not be content to be strong against evil; be eagerly ambitious of good. It is easier to be vehement against the abominations of others than to judge and put away your own secret sins. But while we keep our heart with all diligence, we cannot afford to be independent of the keeping power of God. We must yield ourselves to Him, reserving nothing. The King must have all. The light of his face must fill every nook and corner of the soul. And every power that opposes itself to his dominion, must be dragged beyond the barriers and ruthlessly slain.

They made him king, and anointed him. 2 Kings 11:12

THIS dexterous overthrow of Athaliah by the bringing of the youthful king, who had been hidden in the secret chambers of the Temple, accommodates itself so obviously to a reference to the inner life, that we must be pardoned for making it.

Is not the spiritual condition of too many children of God represented by the condition of the Temple, during the early years of the life of Joash? The king was within its precincts, the rightful heir of the crown and defender of the worship of Jehovah: but, as a matter of fact, the crown was on the head of the usurper Athaliah, who was exercising a cruel and sanguinary tyranny. The king was limited to a chamber, and the majority of the priests, with all the people, had not even heard of his existence. So, unless we are reprobates, Jesus is within the spirit, which has been regenerated by the Holy Ghost; but in too many cases He is limited to a very small corner of our nature, and exercises but a limited power over our life.

There needs to be an anointing, an enthroning, a determination that He shall exercise his power over the entire Temple of our Being; the spirit, which stands for the Holy of Holies; the soul, for the Holy Place ; the body, for the outer court.

Holiness or Sanctification is not a quality or attribute which can be attributed to us apart from the indwelling of the Holy One. If we would be holy, we must be indwelt by Him who is holy. If we would have holiness, we must be infilled by the Holy One. But there must be no limiting of his power, no barrier to his control, no veiling or curtaining of his light. The veil, if such there be, must be rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

The money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the Lord. 2 Kings 12:4

THE margin suggests that the thought of giving for God's house would ascend in a man's heart, till it became the royal and predominant thought, swaying the whole man to obedience. It is a beautiful conception !

For the reconstruction of the Temple there were two classes of revenue: the tribute money which each Israelite was bound to give, and the money which a man might feel prompted to give. Surely the latter was the more precious in the eye of God.

Does it ever come into your heart to bring some money into the house of God? Perhaps the suggestion comes, but you put it away, and refuse to consider it. The thought begins to ascend in your heart, but you thrust it down and back, saying, why should I part with what has cost me so much to get! Beware of stifling these generous promptings. To yield to them would bring untold blessing into heart and life. Besides, the money is only yours as a stewardship; and the thought to give it to God is only the Master's request for his own.

The great mistake with us all is, that we do not hold all our property at God's disposal, seeking his directions for its administration; and that we forget how freely we have received that we may resemble our Father in heaven, and freely give. Too many, alas! are anxious to hoard up and keep for themselves that which God has given them, instead of counting themselves and all they have as purchased property, and using all things as his representatives and trustees. Let us make a complete surrender to our Lord, and from the heart sing,

"Take my silver and my gold,

Not a mite would I withhold.

He smote thrice and stayed. 2 Kings 13:18

A STRIKING spectacle. The dying prophet, with his thin hands on the muscular hands of the young king, as he shoots his arrow through the eastern window; the exhortation to smite the remaining arrows on the ground; the bitter chiding that the king had struck thrice only, instead of five or six times. What lessons are here! The Lord Jesus put his hands upon ours. Here is the reverse to the incident referred to. Ours are weak, his are strong; ours would miss the mark, his will direct the arrows, if only we will allow Him, with unerring precision. We shoot, but the Lord directs the arrow's flight to the heart of his foes.

Our success is commensurate with our faith. If we strike but thrice, we conquer but thrice. If we strike seven times, we attain a perfect victory over the adversary. Is not this the cause of comparative failure in Gospel effort? Souls are not saved because we do not expect them to be saved. A few are saved, because we only believe for a few. It is one of the most radical laws in the universe of God, and one which our Lord repeatedly emphasized, that our faith determines the less or more in our own growth, and in the victories we win for Christ. Do not stay, O soul!—winner, but smite again and yet again in the secret of thy chamber, that thou mayest

smite Satan, and compel him to acknowledge thy might.

Let us not stay, though the energy of earlier days may be ebbing fast. The sanctified spirit waxes only stronger and more heroic, as Elisha's and Paul's did, amid the decay of mortal power. The Lord will say to us, as He did to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Every man shall be put to death for his own sin. 2 Kings 14:6

SO ran the law of Moses. It forbade the imposition of punishment on the relatives of the wrongdoer, but it had no mercy on him. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," was the succinct and conclusive verdict of the older law, in this reflecting the spirit and letter of one yet older, which ran, "The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

First, we were dead in our sins. Eph. ii. 5 puts this beyond all doubt. In the sight of God, all who walk according to the course of this world, and obey the prince that now worketh in the children of this world, are dead in trespasses and sins. However much they may be alive as to their souls, they are dead as to their spirits, entirely destitute of the life of God.

Second, we have died for our sins. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15 (R.V.) establishes this fact, and shows that in Jesus, we who believe in Him, are reckoned to have died in Him when He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. In God's estimate, his death is imputed to us; so that we are reckoned as having satisfied, in Jesus, the demands of a broken law. It has no more to ask.

Third, we must die to our sin. Rom. vi. 11. Reckon that you have died, and whenever sin arises, to menace or allure you, point back to the grave, and argue that since you died in Christ, you have passed altogether beyond its jurisdiction, for you have yielded your members as weapons of righteousness unto God. And having been crucified with Christ, you now no longer live, but Christ liveth in you. Let it become your daily habit to place the grave of Jesus between yourself and all allurements of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 2 Kings 15:9,18,24,28.

THIS chapter anticipates the final overthrow of the kingdom of the tribes. It describes the corruption and disorganization of the people which made them the easy prey of Assyria. One puppetking after another was set upon the throne to fall after a brief space of rule, and four times over it is said that they followed in the steps of Jeroboam, "who made Israel to sin." The seed sown two hundred years before had at last come to maturity, issuing in the ruin of the nation. "What a comment on the inspired words, "Sin, when it is finished, bridgeth forth death."

Twelve times in the story of the kingdom of Israel we are told that Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin. The institution of the calves on his part seemed to be a piece of political wisdom, but it was an infraction of the Divine law; and what is morally wrong can never be politically right. The house cannot stand unless the foundation can bear the test of the Divine plummet. The kingdom of Israel fell, to prove to all aftertime that the disregard of God's law is a foundation of sand, which can never resist the test of time.

Why is Jeroboam so frequently called "the son of Nebat"? Why should the father be for ever pilloried with the son, except that he was in some way responsible for, and implicated in, his sins? There was a time when perhaps Nebat might have restrained the growing boy, or led him to the true worship of God; or perhaps his parental influence and example were deadly in their effect. How important that parents should leave no stone unturned to promote the godliness of their children, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

King Ahaz sent to Urijah the fashion of the alter and the pattern of it. 2 Kings 16:10

THE fashion of this world passeth away like a fleeting dream; or like the panorama of clouds that constitutes a pavilion of the setting sun, but which, whilst we gaze, tumbles into a mass of red ruin. And yet we are always so prone to imitate King Ahaz, and visit Damascus with the intention of procuring the latest design, and introducing it, even into the service of the sanctuary.

Man naturally imitates. He must get the pattern of his work from above, or beneath; from God or the devil: hence, the repeated injunction to us all, to make all things after the pattern shown on the mount. If we would be rid of the influence of worldly fashion, we must conform ourselves to the heavenly and divine. The pattern of

the Body of Christ ' of the position of each individual believer among its members, and of the work which each should accomplish ' was fixed before the worlds were made. The best cure for worldliness is not unworldliness, but otherworldliness. The best way of resisting the trend of people around us is to cultivate the speech, thought, and behavior of that celestial world to which we are bound by the most sacred ties, and whither we are traveling at every heartthrob.

This introduction of the altar of a heathen shrine into the holy temple of Jerusalem, reminds us of the many rites in modern religious observances which have been borrowed from paganism, and warns us that the Church has no right to go to the world for its methods and principles. Let the world do as it may in its discussions about truth, its efforts to attract attention, and its organizations; our course is clear ' not to build altars after its fashion, nor model our life on its maxims.

These nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images. 2 Kings 17:41

IT was a curious mixture. These people had come from Babylon, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and were settled in the land from which Israel was deported. In their desire to propitiate the God of the country, they added his worship to that of their own gods (ver. 32), though they did not really fear Him (ver. 34). There was an outward recognition of the God of Israel, which was worse than useless. Are you sure this is not a true description of your own position? You pay an outward deference to God by attending his house, and acknowledging his day, whilst you are really prostrating yourself before other shrines. The one originates in a superstitious fear, a desire to stand well with your fellows; but it is in the direction of the other that your heart really goes. You come as his people come, sit as his people sit, kneel as his people kneel; but your heart is far apart, and you only do as you do that you may follow your own evil ways with less fear of discovery.

With all of us there is too much of this double worship; but let it be clearly understood that it is only apparent, not real. No man ever really serves two masters, or worships two gods. Whatever conflicts with God in heart or life is our chosen god. Whatever appears to share our heart with God really holds our heart. God will never be in competition with another. He must either be all or none.

The soul that endeavors to divide its service between Jehovah on the first day, and its graven images all the other days of the week, might as well discontinue its religious observances, for they count for nothing: except to blind it to its true condition.

Now on whom dost thou trust? 2 Kings 18:20

IT was no small thing for Hezekiah to rebel against the proud king of Assyria. Hamath and Arpad, Samaria and Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivah, reduced to heaps of stones, were sufficient proofs of the might of his ruthless soldiers. How could Jerusalem hope to withstand? Rabshakeh could not comprehend the secret source of Hezekiah's confidence. It was of no use for him to turn to Egypt. Pharaoh was a bruised reed. And as for Jehovah! Was there any likelihood that He could do for Israel more, than the gods of the other nations had done for them? Not infrequently does the puzzled world ask the Church, "In whom dost thou trust? "

Our life must to a large extent be a mystery, our peace pass understanding, and our motives be hidden. The sources of our supply, the ground of our confidence, the reasons for our actions, must evade the most searching scrutiny of those who stand outside the charmed circle of the face of God; as it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard what God hath prepared."

We all ought to have the secrets which the world cannot penetrate. Doubt your religion if it all lies on the surface, and if men are able to calculate to a nicety the considerations by which you are actuated. We must be prepared to be misunderstood and criticized, because our behavior is determined by facts which the princes of this world know not. We do not look up to the hills, because we look beyond them to God; we do not trust in silver or gold, or human resource, because God is our confidence. We cannot but seem eccentric to this world, because we have found another center, and are concentric with the Eternal Throne.

And Hezekiah spread it before the Lord. 2 Kings 19:14

AMID the panic that reigned in Jerusalem, the king and the prophet alone kept level heads, for they alone had quiet, trustful hearts. We hardly realize the crisis unless we compare it with the march of 200,000 Kurds or Turkish soldiers upon some peaceful Armenian community. Israel had no earthly allies. Her only reinforcements could reach her from heaven, and it was the care of these two saintly men to implicate their cause with that of the living God (ver. 4). This is the faith that overcomes the world, which realizes that God

lives here and now in our home and life and circumstances. His cause is implicated in our deliverance; his name will be disgraced if we are overwhelmed, and honored, if preserved. He is our Judge, Lawgiver, and King, and is therefore bound by the most solemn obligations to save us, or his name will be tarnished.

When therefore letters come to you, anonymous or otherwise, full of bitter reproach; when unkind and malignant stories are set on foot with respect to you; when all hope from man has perished, then take your complaint â€” the letter, the article, the speech, the rumor â€” and lay it before God. Let your requests be made known unto Him. Tell Him how absolutely you trust. Then malice and fear will pass from your heart, whilst peace and love will take their place: and presently there will come a swift message of comfort, like that which Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent to Hezekiah, saying on the behalf of God, "That which thou hast prayed to Me, I have heard."

God knew the contents of the missive before you did; but He likes to read it again in the company of his child.

Let the shadow return backward ten degrees. 2 Kings 20:10

IT is impossible for us to understand how this could be. The shadow of the declining day waxes ever longer, and only a miracle could change its appearance on the dial. It may suggest some significant thoughts about shadows that may still go back.

The shadow of a wasted life. â€” Of course, there is a sense in which the wasted years will never come again; they have passed beyond recall. But the shadow may go back on the dial of our life when we truly repent, and turn again to God, for He hath promised: "I will never leave thee, neither forsake thee." And "I will give back the years that the canker worm and caterpillar have eaten."

The shadow of happier days. â€” These seem to have gone. For long you have noticed the growing twilight, and it has seemed impossible ever again to have the lightsomeness and spring of one or two decades back. But be of good cheer, for when a man comes into that fellowship with God which sorrow and temptation teach, when with growing years he attains added grace, we are told that he shall return to the days of his youth.

The shadow of early affection. â€” Have you lost loved ones, so that your life is like a house the windows of which, one after another, have become shuttered and dark? But love is not forfeited for ever. Those who forsake all for Christ's sake shall get all back again in Him. His love comprehends all human love. The relationships of his kingdom surpass in tenderness and tenacity those of the warmest earthly ties. Thy brother shall rise again, and thou shalt hear him call thy name, and shalt sit with him in the Home of Life.

And his mother's name was Hephzibah. 2 Kings 21:1

HEPHZIâ€”BAH means, "My delight is in her" (Isa. lxii. 4). How strange, supposing that her name was any indication of her character, that such a woman should have borne such a son; for "Manasseh did wickedly above all the Amorites did which were before him." A godly ancestry, however, does not guarantee a holy seed. Hezekiahs and Hephzibahs may be the parents of manassehs. That this may not be so: â€”

Let us guard against the inconsistencies of our private life. â€” The child of religious parents becomes habituated to their use of expressions in public which betoken the highest degree of holiness, and is therefore quicker to notice any inconsistency in temper or walk. Is there not a subtle temptation also for those who work much for God in public to feel that a certain laxity is permissible in the home? Will not late afterâ€”meetings at night compensate for indolence in the morning; and will not protracted services be the equivalent for private prayer? May not irritability to servants or children be accounted for by the overstrain of our great work? Hence, inconsistency and failure to realize our lofty aims, which are quickly noticed, beget distaste for our religion.

Let us guard against absorption in public religious duty to the neglect of the home. â€” Does it never happen that the children of religious parents are put to bed by nurses who are heedless of their prayers, because their mothers have undertaken a mission? Do not boys sometimes grow up without the correcting influence of the father's character, because he, good man, is so taken up with committees?

Let us guard against an austerity of manner, which prevents us being the companions, playâ€”fellows, and associates of our children.

Thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace. 2 Kings 22:20

AS a matter of fact, Josiah's death was not a peaceful one. He persisted in going into conflict with Pharaoh's "necho, king of Egypt, against the latter's earnest remonstrance (see 2 Chronicles xxxv. 20-22); and, in consequence of his hardihood, met his death. His servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo (ch. xxiii. 30). Is there, then, any real contradiction between the prophet's prediction and this sad event?

Certainly not! The one tells us what God was prepared to do for his servant; the other what he brought on himself by his own folly. There are many instances of this change of purpose in the Word of God. One of them is known as "his breach of promise," or "altering of purpose " (Num. xiv. 34, marg.) He would have saved his people from the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, but they made Him to serve with their sins, and wearied Him with their iniquities. He would have gathered Jerusalem as a hen gathers her brood, but she would not.

Let us beware lest, a promise being left us, we should seem to come short of it; lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, and frustrating some blessed purpose of his heart. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him "; but we may limit the Holy One of Israel, and so restrain Him by our unbelief as to stay the mighty works which are in his plan for us. He may desire for us a prosperous life and a peaceful death; but we may close our dying eyes amid disaster and defeat, because we willfully chose our own way.

Like unto Josiah was there no king before him. 2 Kings 23:25

THIS chapter is a marvelous record of cleansing and purging. We are led from one item to another of drastic reform. Nothing was spared that savored of idolatry. Priests and altars, buildings and groves, came under the searching scrutiny of this true-hearted monarch; and, as the result, it was possible to keep such a Passover as had not been observed during the days of the judges or the kings (ver. 22).

How much our enjoyment of the solemn feast depends upon our previous efforts to put away from our lives all that is inconsistent with the law of God. We hardly realize how insidiously evils creep in. Before we are aware, we have fallen beneath God's ideal, and adopted the customs of our neighbors, or of those with whom we come into daily contact. All such declension hinders our joy in keeping the Passover. It is needful, therefore, that there should be times when we turn to God with fresh devotion, and in the light of his holy truth pass the various departments of our life under review, testing everything by the Book of the Law. In Josiah's case, the sacred volume was recovered from long neglect; in our case it needs to be re-read in the light of higher resolves. This would be like a new discovery. Our ultimate rule must always be the will of God, appreciated with growing clearness, and used as a standard by which to judge the habits and tenets of our life. We read the Bible for purposes of a truer knowledge of God and his ways, and for spiritual quickening; but let us also use it more frequently as the bath of the spirit. Let us bathe in it. Let us revel in it as the grimy children of the slums in the laughing wavelets of river and sea.

He carried out thence all the treasures of the House of the Lord. 2 Kings 24:13

AMONGST these deported treasures must have been much of the sacred furniture of the Temple, and the holy vessels; because, in the days of Belshazzar, find them brought out to grace the royal banquet. Belshazzar drank wine from them with his lords, wives, and concubines, whilst they praised the gods of Babylon, who had given them victory over their foes. Amongst the rest was the golden candlestick, whose flame afterwards illuminated the inscription of doom, written by God's hand upon the palace wall. By the command of Cyrus these precious vessels were finally restored (Ezra v. 14), and carried back to Jerusalem, by a faithful band of priests (viii. 33).

The whole story of the captivity is full of solemn lessons. The Church of God must make her choice between one of two courses: either she must keep from all entangling alliances, and from vying for temporal power; or she must face the liability of being brought under the power with which she would fain assimilate. Israel wanted to be as the other nations around her, imitating their organization, and allying herself now with one, and then with another; in consequence she was swept into captivity to the very nation whose fashions she most affected (Isa. xxxviii.).

Have we never tasted the bitters of captivity? Borne away from our happy early homes to live among strangers, set to repugnant tasks, removed from all that made life worth living, we have known the exile's lot. Alas! if it be so; yet, even in our captivity, where the Lord's song is silenced, and our harps hang from the willows, if we repent, and put away our sins, and turn again to the Lord, He will not only have mercy, but abundantly pardon, and bring us again that we may be as we were in times past.

Every day a portion, all the days of his life. 2 Kings 25:30 (R.V.).

IS it to be supposed that the king of Babylon took more care of Jehoiachin than God will take of us? Jehoiachin had resisted his suzerain, and cost him a great expenditure of men and treasure; but nothing which had transpired in the past hindered this provision of a daily supply. Will God do less for you, his child? Would it not come as a relief if you were to be told that, from this moment till you die, you could always have a sufficient provision of all the necessaries of life? But if you are a child of God, that promise has already been made! Do not be anxious. but believe that God's word is at least as sure and as efficient as man's.

The allowance was continual. 'It did not begin with plenty, and gradually dwindle to scraps. The supply was maintained year after year. Will God drop off your supplies, think you, because He forgets, or because his power is exhausted? You know that each supposition is alike untenable. What He has done, He will do. The storehouses of nature open to his key. His are the cattle on a thousand hills.

Every day a portion. 'Jehoiachin had not the provisions of a year or a month put down at his door; but as each day broke he was sure of the day's portion. It may be that God is dealing thus with you. Only manna for the day: daily strength for daily need.

All the days of his life. 'Jesus is with us "all the days"; and He is the Bread of God, in whom is every property necessary for life. All the days are included in God's care for us, of birth and death, of sunshine and shadow. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever.