

Our Daily Homily - Numbers

by F.B. Meyer

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the importance of recognizing our identity in Christ, fulfilling our God-given roles, and the significance of prayer and service in the Christian life.

Scripture: Numbers 1:18, Numbers 36:2, Isaiah 40:31, John 1:12, Romans 14:12, 1 Corinthians 3:16, Galatians 6:7-8, Ephesians 4:30, Hebrews 13:15-16, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "Spiritual Responsibility"

Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the importance of knowing our spiritual pedigree as children of God, drawing parallels from the genealogical records of Israel. He encourages believers to find comfort in their identity in Christ, regardless of their past experiences, and to recognize their appointed place in God's order. Meyer also highlights the significance of individual responsibility in serving God and the necessity of being cleansed from sin to maintain fellowship with Him. He concludes by reminding us that God's presence is with His people, and we must be careful to honor Him in our lives and actions.

Transcript

They declared their pedigrees - Numbers 1:18

It was not enough to be a true-born Israelite, a man must be able to show his descent. The genealogical tables were kept with the greatest care; and there was a holy pride in being able to vindicate the claim of having the blood of the patriarchs in the veins.

It is a blessed thing to be sure that we have passed from death unto life, and are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. True, our eternal destiny does not hinge on it. Many will doubtless be saved at last, who have spent their lives between hope and fear. But it is very needful for our comfort and growth in grace to be able to declare our pedigree, and to know that we have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

The Gospel of John was written that we might believe; the Epistle that we might know. But many seek this knowledge in the wrong way, and are exposed to endless questionings. They try to discover the date, place, or experience in the past, when they were incorporated into the Divine family; and because they cannot point to these, they imagine that they are still outside. Now for every one that has had a definite experience of the new birth, there are perhaps a score who entered the Divine family almost as a sailor passes the line of the Equator. Yet it is possible for you to know that you are born again, though you may

not be able to tell your birthday.

If you are trusting Jesus, if the Spirit witnesses with your spirit that God is your Father, if you are full of a holy fear of grieving Him, if you are becoming like Him, if you love the brethren - you may certainly declare yourself His child.

The Children of Israel shall pitch every man by his own standard - Numbers 2:2-34

Our God is a God of order; and it was needful for the order of the camp, whether at rest or on the march, that each man should know his place, and keep to it. But though there were different standards and positions, there was one centre, the ark, and one host of redeemed men.

Each believer has an appointed place in the great army of God. It is indicated by the voice of God, and by the circumstances of our life; and it should be jealously retained. Repeatedly the Apostle bade his converts abide in the calling wherein they were called. Yours may be toward the bleak north of difficulty, or the warm south of privilege - in the home, the country parish, or the difficult foreign post. But, on the whole, you should stay where you are; unless the Captain of our salvation moves you by some unmistakable indication of His will. The apostle Paul ever lived in such dependence on the Holy Spirit for guidance, and for the unfolding of the Divine purpose, that from some apparently trivial circumstance he would "gather" the movements of the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. And interval there was none between his apprehension of the Divine purpose and his endeavor to strike his tent and follow wherever it might lead (Act 16:6-7).

The main point with us all is to face the ark, to which the doors of all the tents looked, so that we may ever catch the first symptom of the movement of the cloud. On the whole, we do best to pitch and fight under our own standards. There is a closer bond of brotherhood possible between those who think alike. But whilst we are positive in what we affirm for ourselves, let us not deny that other standards represent necessary aspects of the common faith.

Take the Levites instead - Numbers 3:45

Each firstborn son was God's. On the day of the Exodus, as the firstborn of Egypt were stricken, so the firstborn of Israel were hallowed. God claimed the right of their service in His Temple, to serve there as priests and attendants. But instead of them, He accepted the whole tribe of Levi; and for the overplus of firstborn sons above the number of Levites, He accepted redemption money, which went to maintain Aaron and his family. Thus, each firstborn son was represented, either by a substitute, or by a money payment.

An Appeal to parents. - Would it not be a blessed custom if, in all our churches, the firstborn child was, in a special sense, regarded as God's, and trained for some branch of His holy service in the home and foreign field? What a blessing would rest on our homes if this were the custom! It would lead to very definite prayer, that the young soul might be truly converted and led to realize the parents' ideal.

An Appeal to firstborn Children. - Either go yourself into the service of God, at home or abroad, or send a substitute. Consider yourself under obligation to do some special work for Christ and His Church. And if you cannot, earn money to support your representative. This is laying up treasure in heaven.

An Appeal to Families. - Why should not each Christian family become a missionary society, sending one of its members forth in the name of the rest, who should bind themselves solemnly to "hold the ropes"; and

thus obey the Master's parting commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"?

Every one to his service and to his burden - Numbers 4:19

Is this what the Apostle referred to when he said that every man should bear his own burden? There are burdens which we cannot share or depute, to bear which we need special grace, and must continually seek the aid of the Divine Spirit.

The burden of our own existence. - Each of us must give an account of himself to God. We were created for a specific purpose; and our failure to fulfill it cannot be settled on another. God will require each man's soul of himself. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom 14:12). You have a charge to keep, a soul to save, and a God to glorify.

The burden of our life-work. - What makest thou in the world? The Maker of all waits for thee to enter His great workshop and become His apprentice and co-worker. To be an idler, or an absentee, will land thee in inevitable disgrace. The appointed place cannot be left vacant, and thy tools untouched, save at thy grave peril.

The burden of the souls of others. - We are our brothers' keepers, liable at any moment to be called upon to give an account of how they fare; and we cannot rid ourselves of this responsibility by annual donations or subscriptions to charitable or missionary institutions.

The burden of daily intercession. - Jesus bears the burdens of His people as He intercedes for them in heaven; and there is a sense in which we are called to bear up His hands in this holy service. We must consider the work of daily prayer for His Church, for sufferers, and for the world, as part of the burden of the Lord, allotted to us because we are members of His body.

Without the camp, in the midst whereof I dwell - Numbers 5:3

What a sublime conception! - God dwelt with His people. The Tabernacle was His tent amongst theirs; the cloudy pillar was His ensign. To attack them was to come into collision with Him. All the expense and anxiety of the march rested on His shoulders, as the care of a family of young children on a father. How needful it was that nothing should be permitted which could grieve or offend Him!

What the camp of Israel was in those long-ago days, the Church is now. It is the host of the redeemed, the representative of God, the pilgrimage of the saints. Amongst His people God still walks, and dwells, and tabernacles. Their griefs, conflicts, and experiences, are shared by their ever-present Almighty Friend.

The presence of God in the Church is by the Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1Co 3:16). He is with her and in her as the Body of which the risen Lord is Head. When the one Advocate went up, the other came down; when the Second Person in the Holy Trinity ascended to His throne, the Third Person came down to perpetuate His work in the world, through the Church. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

How careful should we be in the ordering of our church-life, as well as of our individual lives, so that there may be nothing to offend Him! "What will the Holy Spirit think of this?" should be always our first inquiry. We must walk in the paracletism of the Holy Ghost, if we would be edified and multiplied, as were the churches throughout Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria (Act 9:31).

The former days shall be void - Numbers 6:12

How solemn is the suggestion of these words! If the separation of the Nazarite were broken in upon by his sudden contact with death, he might start afresh; but all the days that preceded that untoward event would go for nothing - they would not be counted.

How many days in our life have been made void! Days in which we have learned no new lesson of God; have had no access into His presence; have done no kind and helpful act; have spoken no loving, tender word. It is all-important that even our days of rest from active engagements should be days of learning deeper lessons, of vision, and of reception from the fullness of God.

Each day comes to us fresh from God, like soft metal, waiting to be stamped with our inscription; or like a piece of yielding clay, to be moulded into some shape of beauty or use. Each morning the slate is brought for us to write on; the canvas on which we may paint. But too often we miss our opportunity, and a blurred, marred, confused result is all we have to show.

If you would avoid this, let God plan each day; follow the guidance of His Spirit; do all you touch with your might and for His glory; put away all known sin, and be separate from evil; in everything learn to submit to His dealings, and to commit yourself to His faithful keeping. Then each day will have something to keep in charge, and resemble a chalice filled to its brim with holy service. We must ever remember that "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the Day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1Co 3:13).

Moses, heard the voice speaking unto him, and He spake unto him - Numbers 7:89

The meaning of this verse seems to be that when Moses went into the Holy Place to speak with God he became conscious of the Divine voice, that opened out to him the thoughts and purposes of God in such a way that he was caught up on the current and borne back to God.

This is the true conception of prayer. We often go to God with our thoughts and desires, and having uttered them we go our way. We do not wait long enough to see the cherubim and the light of the Shekinah, or hear the Divine voice. Thus our prayers fail of their answer. We do not ask what is according to the will and mind of our Heavenly Father; and the heavens seem like brass. We have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. We must ask in faith, nothing wavering.

The true conception of prayer is that it originates in the purpose of God, and passes from the Father to the Son, who is also the Head and Representative of His people. From Jesus it is brought into our hearts by the blessed Spirit, who unites the Head with each member of the mystical body; and from the saints it returns to the source from which it came.

If, then, we would pray aright, we should wait before God until the Holy Spirit suggests what we should pray for, and indeed begins to plead within us for the saints. Silence, solitude, waiting before God; the return to God of His own thoughts; the being burdened with the weighty matters that lie heavily on the heart of Jesus - such is the noblest kind of prayer. It is those who wait upon the Lord that renew their strength, that mount up with wings as eagles; that run and are not weary, that walk and are not faint (Isa 40:31).

Aaron offered them for a wave offering - Numbers 8:11,13,21

This is interesting and instructive. The Levites were substituted for the firstborn of Israel. They were first separated from the rest of the people, cleansed, sprinkled, shaven, and finally presented to the Lord by the act of Aaron, who, according to the Hebrew word, waved them before the Lord. This waving must, of course, have been done in symbol and figure. But it was not enough that they were thus waved, they had thereafter to go in to do their service. In other words, they were called to realize actually that which was their position and standing in the sight of God.

There is a precise analogy in all this to the work which the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us all. He said, "I consecrate Myself, that they also may be consecrated." When He offered Himself without spot to God, to do His Father's will, though it cost Him the agony of Calvary, the heavenly Aaron waved us before God to be His. We were separated by His most precious death, that we should be wholly for God. But what is ours in the great deed of Christ, must become ours by our own choice and deed. We must go in to do the service for which we have been chosen and set apart by the Holy Ghost.

This can only be through the grace of the blessed Spirit. Ask Him to realize in you the purposes of God: trust Him to keep you trusting: each morning say, "Holy Spirit, I rely on Thee to keep me in the current of the Divine purpose." Then dare to go forth to do the day's duties, believing that you may be always engaged in God's holy service; that in everything, whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, you do all to the glory of God.

When the cloud tarried - Numbers 9:19

This was the supreme test of obedience. It was comparatively easy to strike the tents, when the fleecy folds of the cloud were slowly gathered from off the Tabernacle, and it floated majestically before the host. Change is always delightful; and there was excitement and interest in the route, the scenery, the locality of the next halting-place. But, ah, the tarrying! Sometimes the cloud tarried for two days, or a month, or a year; then, however uninviting and sultry the location, however trying to flesh and blood, however irksome to the impatient disposition, however perilously exposed to danger - there was no option but to remain encamped. The Psalmist says, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." And what He has done for the Old Testament saints He will do for believers throughout all ages.

Still, God often keeps us waiting. Face to face with threatening foes, in the midst of alarms, encircled by perils, beneath the impending rock. May we not go? Is it not time to strike our tent? Have we not suffered to the point of utter collapse? May we not exchange the glare and heat for green pastures and still waters? There is no answer. The cloud tarries, and we must remain, though sure of manna, rock-water, shelter, and defence. God never keeps us at a post without assuring us of His presence, and sending us daily supplies.

Wait, domestic servant, before you give notice! Young man, do not be in a hurry to make a change! Minister, remain at your post! Until the cloud clearly moves, you must tarry (8th verse). Wait, then, thy Lord's good pleasure! He will be in plenty of time!

What good soever the Lord shall do unto us, the same shall we do unto thee - Numbers 10:32

Hobab was a Gentile by race, but he was invited to fellowship with Israel in all the blessings of their covenant. Moses reckoned that Israel was called to a stewardship of the manifold blessings of their lot. Whatever good was entrusted to them, they were called upon to distribute and pass on. As the Lord did them good, they would do Hobab good; making him, Gentile though he were, a fellow heir, a fellow

member of the body, and a fellow partaker of the promises of God.

We get by giving. - If the river-bed were to hoard up its waters, they would become stagnant and noisome. It is only in parting with them that it receives constant supplies from the crystal fountain-head. So, if we keep God's good things to ourselves, we make it impossible to receive more. You cannot put more water into a full glass. But as we part with them we get more and better. Distribute five loaves, and you have twelve baskets of fragments.

We learn by teaching. - To stay in a class till you shall feel fully educated, is to miss one prime means of education. There is no way of discovering what we do not know, and getting grounded in what we do, like that of imparting what we have learned to others. Would you learn, teach. Would you grow in grace, tell of the grace which has saved you.

We keep what we give away. - Hoard your money, and you lose it. Give it away, and it is caught in bags that wax not old, and stored beyond the reach of moth or thief. "There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want" (Pro 11:24). This is folly to the worldling, but sober fact to the child of the King.

Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets! - Numbers 11:29

This one saying proves the incomparable greatness of Moses' character. Little souls are monopolists. They like to be good and gifted, because it gives them a kind of superiority to others; but they dislike to see a levelling-up process at work by which the Eldads and Medads are lifted to stand by their side.

This was the mistake of Joshua. - When he heard that Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, he said, "My lord Moses, forbid them!" But he was immature, a saint in the process of manufacture, and smitten with jealousy, for the sake of his master and friend.

This was the complaint of John's disciples, when they saw the crowds ebbing away from their great teacher.

This was the quarrel of the Pharisees, that Jesus made religion so cheap and accessible to all, that even the publicans and sinners received His priceless wares.

But when a man is really great and good, he longs that all should be as he is, and better; he takes a deep delight in the spread of vital godliness; he is glad when others are endowed with greater gifts than himself, that they may make the Gospel better known than he could ever do; he is content to decrease, if Christ may only increase; he is willing that affliction should be added to his bonds, if only Christ may be magnified; he prays that the Lord would put His Spirit on all His people. This is very unnatural to any of us; but God, the Holy Spirit, waits to baptize us even into this, and to make the glory of God the object of our life. Make haste, O blessed Paraclete, and do this for me!

My servant Moses is faithful: with him will I speak mouth to mouth - Numbers 12:8

The meekest of the men was vindicated by God Himself. He held his peace, but his Almighty Friend spoke up for him. It is thus that the meek inherit the earth and rejoice themselves in the abundance of peace. Oh, keep still, ye afflicted and tormented souls, God will not let you be trodden underfoot, if only you commit your cause to Him, and are faithful in all that He has committed to you. "That good thing keep which was committed to you: He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him."

Notice to what faithfulness leads! The vision of God is not given to great intellectual ability or mental gift; but to those who as servants are faithful in the administration of God's Household, and the performance of such duties as are entrusted to them by the Great Householder. Such are they that enjoy the face-to-face fellowship, and the mouth-to-mouth speech.

These words about Moses are quoted in Heb. 3., as though it was pleasant to the Holy Spirit to commemorate in all ages the faithfulness of His servants: and there is this further thought added, that the Household is one, and that all dispensations are included in its precincts. "Whose house are we." It is inspiring to know that we are in the same house with Moses, and may have the same blessing. Are God's dealings with you in dark speeches, in mysterious and perplexing enigmas? Be patient and faithful in well-doing: He is but testing you, and soon He will say, I have called you not servants, but friends; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but all things I have heard of the Father I have made known unto you.

We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight - Numbers 13:33

There is a good deal of talk in this chapter about giants and fenced cities. But the way of speaking about them was very different on the part of the ten, and on that of the two. The ten said: "The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan." But the two said: "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to over- come it." They saw the same spectacles in their survey of the land; but the result in the one case was panic, in the other confidence and peace. What made the difference? It lay in this, that the ten spies compared themselves with the giants, whilst the two compared the giants with God. "The Lord is with us, fear them not." Faith looks away from the greatness of her difficulty to the greatness of her God. "If considered in itself, it is clear that this difficulty is too great for me to combat; but it is nothing to my God. The wall is too solid and high for me; but before God's touch it will fall down like cardboard. These ropes are stout; but before God they are only as tow before flame. I will not consider the man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be made as grass; but will look away resolutely to my Maker, who made heaven and earth, and who can still the roaring of the sea." Do you want a fearless faith, be careful not to measure the comparative forces of yourself and others; but remember that God is working for you to will and do of His own good pleasure. If He is for you, who can be against you? When compared with Primrose Hill, Snowdon is high; but where is it when compared with the Himalayas?

The Egyptians shall hear it - Numbers 14:13

What a noble concern for the credit of God! Here was a great opportunity for Moses. God was testing him by the proposal, that, the entire nation of Israel being cut off as a judgment for their repeated shortcomings and transgressions, Moses should become the slip or stock of the Hebrew race: "I will disinherit them, and make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they." This was not the settled purpose of God; but a suggestion to test His servant, who would not entertain it for a moment. All thought of the honor to be done to himself was submerged in his great eagerness for the Divine credit. "The Egyptians shall hear it: the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able "

The Egyptians are always around us, watching and listening. They can only judge of God by our behavior and the course of our experience: and are only too ready to catch up anything which they may interpret to the discrediting of the Eternal. How careful we should be in all our life and conversation so that the ungodly may have, not lower, but loftier conceptions of our God.

When tempted to anything which is not perfectly noble and honorable; when inclined to murmur and complain of God's dealings with you; when an opportunity comes, as it did to Moses, to make gain at the expense of others; then remember the name of God, and the urgency of need that exists, to maintain it unsullied and untarnished. We should be restrained by a double fear: first, lest we should grieve God; second, lest the Egyptians should have a handle against Him, and should be prejudiced against religion.

A cord of blue - Numbers 15:38

THROUGHOUT their generations the Israelites were bidden to wear it. It is the symbol of depth, of love, of Heaven. The azure sky, the glacier-rift, the deep lake, the far horizon, the eye of the hopeful, buoyant, tender nature - all tell the same story of deep and constant love, which mirrors below God's heaven of love above. Therefore to wear this cord of blue was to be kept in mind of the eternal and unseen. No outward symbol is needed by us. The very best, after awhile, becomes tame and commonplace. We get so accustomed to it that it ceases to stir our thoughts. But if we will intrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit, He will teach us all things, and keep us always in mind. He is the blessed Remembrancer, whose mission is to bring Christ to our thought and keep Him there, the prominent object of our soul's vision.

The object of this cord of blue was to restrain the people from going about "after their own heart and their own eyes." We need to be kept from the same, that we may walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In our resolutions, our energies, our acts of consecration, our Christian activities, we are all too apt to go at the dictates of our heart and eyes. May God forgive us! It has been the source of our perpetual failure and defeat. There is a more excellent way. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to keep the blue cord of the Christ-memory ever before our gaze, that we may become utterly absorbed in His beauty and glory, in doing His will, and in executing His commands. Let us seek to be bound to our Master, who is Love, by that same cord, that we may never for a moment forget the demands of the unseen and eternal.

The Lord will show who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto Him - Numbers 16:5

It was on these words that the Psalmist founded his exclamation, "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee." This is what we all need. We often endeavor to approach unto God, but meet with many disappointments. Thomas Welsh said, on one occasion, that he had been wrestling to obtain access from six in the morning until nine! There is something better. If you are His, you may humbly count on God to cause you to come near; believing His promise: "Draw nigh to God, and God will draw nigh to you."

In your morning prayer, or at any other time which you set apart for devotion, let this be the cry of your soul: "My God, cause me to come near." When for long you have been dwelling afar off, and the distance threatens to become chronic or permanent, let this again be your petition: "Cause me to come near." And throughout the rush of daily life, let your dependence be on Him who alone can cause you to come near so that you may dwell in His courts.

But God cannot do this unless the soul is utterly surrendered to be His; for "if we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." We must be un-anchored and unbeached if the tide is to bear us on its bosom. We must be free from the touch of other hands if we are to respond to His. We must sit loosely by the things of the earth to feel the drawing of heaven. This is, in part, the meaning of holiness. "Who are His, and who is holy?" Those who have experienced separation to God and sin. Give us this, O Lord; then draw us near to Thyself, and we will run after Thee!

The man whom I shall choose, his rod shall bud - Numbers 17:5

There was deep significance in this method of indicating the man of God's choice. Too many have taken God's election as referring exclusively to their enjoyment of God's grace and their preservation to His heavenly kingdom. Here we are taught that one of its chief results will be, and must be - buds, blossoms, and fruit. "The rod of Aaron budded and bloomed, blossomed and bare ripe almonds." It would almost seem that spring, summer, and autumn; the promise, maturity, and fruit - were simultaneously present in that marvellous rod. So should it be in those who have been chosen in Christ to be holy.

The bud of spring. - There is a perennial freshness in the true saint, He may be old in years, but his leaf is green with vernal tenderness, and there are the budding promises of richer and better things than he has yet attained. The youths faint, and are weary; but he renews his strength. The outward man decayeth, but the inward renews his youth like an eagle's.

The blossom of early summer. - There is exquisite beauty in the blossom of orchard and garden. No painter has ever yet learned God's secret of mixing His colors. Such is the beauty of the character of the believer. Men say involuntarily, "How attractive, how beautiful!"

The fruit of autumn. - That we should bear fruit is the end of Christ in our redemption and discipline. We can only do it in fellowship with Himself. He must bear it through us. "From Me is thy fruit found." "I have chosen you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

I am thy Portion and thine Inheritance - Numbers 18:20

We are God's portion, and He is ours. The Lord's portion is His 'people; Israel is the lot of His inheritance; and He says to the soul, I am thy Portion and thine Inheritance. We, with all we have, for God; and God, with all He has, for us. , ' Heirs of God."

We are like settlers on the fringe of their estate. - The emigrant to the Far West has a plot of land allotted to him; but how little does he know of its contents! - There may be coal, or iron-ore, or rivers full of fish, or a rich soil; he settles on the outskirts, but every year he pushes his fences further back to take in more of the land, which is all his, but it is not yet brought into use, or under cultivation. So each year we should increase in the knowledge of what God is, and of what He is willing to be to us. Not as though we were already perfect; but we follow on to apprehend that for which we were apprehended, and to be filled full with His grace and heavenly benediction.

Our possession of God will largely depend on His possession of us. - There are some who wonder that God is so much more to others than to them. Is not the answer to be found in their withholding so much of what they might yield up to His occupation and use? If you would have all from God, you must give all to God. Your enjoyment of God will be in precise proportion to the deepening and widening consecration of your life.

Why should any of us be poor, or strengthless, or fearful, when all the Godhead is stored in Jesus, and awaits our appropriation? Go up and possess His infinite continent that flows with milk and honey; watered by the rain of heaven; and rich in treasure.

For the unclean, they shall take of the ashes - Numbers 19:17

It was very easy to become unclean without realizing it. To touch a corpse, to be in the same room as the dead, to stumble over a grave, was enough to defile the Israelite, and excommunicate him from the Tabernacle with its holy rites. Could anything more graphically set forth the contagiousness of sin? We cannot be in contact with those who are dead in trespasses and sins, or breathe air defiled by their filthy speech, or read books which contain their thoughts, without suffering in some way by it.

This is the reason why, at the end of the day we often feel unable to pray, or hold fellowship with God: we are excluded from the Most Holy Place, because of this defilement. Indeed, there is only one way of escaping it, and that is in being covered, hermetically sealed, by the Spirit of God. "In whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30, R. V.).

For this reason also, we should perpetually seek fresh cleansing in the precious blood of Christ. He is represented in this heifer without spot, slain in its prime, whose ashes were mingled in running water to testify their perpetual efficacy and freshness. If the ashes of an heifer availed for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences! Ask perpetually for the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, that you may have access with confidence into the Most Holy Place. The red heifer of Numbers answers to John 13. Let us apply the ashes and the water of purification to each other. Jesus said: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

Speak ye to the rock; and Moses smote the rock twice - Numbers 20:8-11

What a miracle of grace is here! Nothing could have been more explicit than the Divine command that Moses should, on this occasion, simply speak to the rock. We cannot fathom the deep reason; perhaps it was because the Spiritual Rock of our salvation could not be smitten by the soldier's spear twice. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Moreover, we are taught to wait on God each time we perform duties which appear similar, for the ways in which they should be performed may vary widely. It is clear, whatever the reason, that Moses was to speak, not smite.

However, he grievously disobeyed; largely, probably, because he could not believe that mere speech would suffice for the miracle. He thought that he must do something to aid God, not realizing how slight a part man's is in the Divine esteem. No flesh may glory in His presence. God must be all in all. We must believe that a word is enough; and that God will do the rest.

But, in spite of his irritation, disobedience, and unbelief, the water gushed out. The sin of the servant did not annul the love and faithfulness of God. "If we believe not, He remaineth faithful." It is a sweet lesson. We are worthless and unprofitable servants; we fail to believe and obey. But God's grace flows over the bank, and inundates the wilderness with crystal streams. The Psalmist says the waters did not trickle, they gushed out. Oh, miracle of Divine faithfulness! But Moses himself had to pay the penalty in later years. Disobedience in God's servants cannot be condoned. In proportion to the saintliness of their character is the rigor of their punishment.

Spring up, O well! - Numbers 21:17

This was a sweet song. It must have been a stirring scene, when Israel, in its thousands, sang forth this command to the waters that were under the earth, to show themselves, with the musical accompaniment of the gushing rill.

Spring up, O well, in our hearts. - Too long has the soil been arid and bare. A great drought has smitten it, and devoured every green thing. The flowers wither, the fruit falls. But Jesus promised to open in believing hearts a well, the waters of which should spring up unto eternal life. Not a stagnant pool, but a spring. Not a failing Cherith, but a perennial Siloam. Let that promise be realized in us here, and now; and if we have permitted rubbish to accumulate, or the weeds to grow rank, may we have grace to put them away, that there may be a clear course for the living water to flow through us and refresh the lives of all with whom we come in contact.

Spring up, O well, in the Church of God.-This is a petition with which we may enter the place of worship where we meet God's people. Spring up, O well, to-day! With this petition, we may plead for distant mission stations, and for the entire Church. Jesus dug the well with the staff of His cross; but we wish that the Spirit, who is as a fountain of living water, fed from eternity and returning to its source, may spring up within it with greater volume and force.

Spring up, O well, in the world. - It is weary with sorrow and sin. Too far and long have the desert sands swept their devastations. Hasten the millennial day, when springs shall break out in the desert, and wildernesses shall blossom as the rose!

The Angel of the Lord: for an adversary against him - Numbers 22:22

The Angel of Jehovah is often referred to as a very present help, and as encamping round about those that fear God; but here, as an adversary with a drawn sword. When we serve God His sword is for us, as for Joshua at Jericho; but when we turn as here from His way to our crooked paths, it is drawn against us. That which seems to be full of menace is, when we look deeper, an angel force seeking to stay our further progress toward destruction.

Look for the Angel with his drawn sword in every pain of body, anxiety of circumstance, or suffering of mind. You were intent on pursuing your own way, and obtaining the rewards of unrighteousness, when suddenly you were stayed in your course. Another step would have brought you to the edge of the precipice; but you were suddenly arrested by that which forbade advance. Do not curse the hindering obstacle. Beneath it is God's gentlest angel, endeavoring to turn you from your evil purpose; and though his sword may be drawn against you, yet he is but keeping you from taking that step which might result in lifelong regret.

Too often our eyes are holden. We fret and chafe against God's kindest providence. Our anger is kindled at the ass which sees the angel, and thrusts herself against the wall. Let this day be one of humble searching of heart. Try to learn the reason why God has frustrated your plans, and blocked your progress. Ask for the opened eyes. Be sure that there is mercy in every broken plan. He sees the end from the beginning. Bow your head, and acquiesce in His appointments. Fall on your face, and bless Him whose kindest angels sometimes assume the roughest disguise.

He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it - Numbers 23:20

Balaam would have reversed the blessing into a curse, had he been able. Large rewards were depending on his doing so. But he was restrained. The current of blessing was running too strong for him to stem: the music was too overpowering for him to alter the air. Is not this also the despair of Satan? God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, and he cannot reverse them.

The blessing of adoption. - When the soul believes in Jesus, it is adopted into the family of God; the new life begins to throb within; it is constituted an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ (Joh 1:12). This position is irreversible. We may be tempted and overthrown, we may go for a season into the far country, we may even bring the family-name into contempt; but Satan cannot untie the knot with which God has bound us to Himself.

The blessing of acceptance in the Beloved. - We are in Him, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, risen and ascended and seated in Him in the heavenlies; and as our God views us in Jesus, He cannot behold iniquity or see perverseness in Him, and He accepts and blesses us as His well-beloved. This, too, is irreversible by the arts and machinations of the great Accuser.

The blessing of the covenant. - God has taken us to be a people for His own possession. His name is named on us, His character is implicated in our ultimate deliverance from evil, and glorification. If we could be cast away, He would suffer irreparable dishonor. Therefore, though Satan do his utmost to discredit us, as he did the patriarch Job, he cannot reverse the covenant in which God and we are forever and indissolubly joined.

The Spirit of God came upon him - Numbers 24:2

This is a solemn warning for us all. Balaam saw truly, but he perished miserably. He heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty; but because he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and taught Balak to cast the stumbling-block of licentiousness before the children of Israel, he was slain in battle by the people whom he had blessed. He wished to die the death of the righteous, but was overtaken in that of the apostate. How near we may come to the gates of salvation, and yet perish miserably without!

Distinguish between unction and union. - Hooper, the greatest of English divines, says: "We are not to confuse the grace of union with the grace of unction." It is possible to be united to the Lord Jesus in regeneration, without receiving the endowment of the Holy Spirit for service; and it is possible, like Saul, to be anointed for high office, without being truly regenerate. Official position may be worthily filled, and yet the heart be all awry.

Distinguish between gift and grace. - We may be able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have the gift of prayer, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and yet be without love. The most gifted souls are by no means the most gracious. Desire earnestly the greater gifts, if you will; but be very sure that your heart is established with grace.

Distinguish between vision and realization. - To see the fair land from afar, as Balaam did, is not enough; we must place our foot down on its soil, and go into it to possess. It is not enough to have an intellectual appreciation of the blessed life and the way to enter it; not enough to extol or proclaim it. We must make it ours by humility and faith.

Israel joined himself unto Baal-Pear - Numbers 25:3

The margin of the Revised Version gives the alternative, yoked. The people were attracted by the charms of the women of Moab; but what they entered for pleasure, became clasped on them as a yoke. "Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin" (Joh 8:34, R. V.).

Sin is slavery. - The drunkard loathes his chains, vows not to yield again; but sinks deeper into the mire with every ineffectual struggle. The libertine is bound with passions, his heart is a dungeon, his conscience

a scourge. We are promised pleasure and gratification; but when once the syrens have prevailed and got us in their power, they cast off their disguise, and work their horrid will.

The only deliverance is through the anointed priest. - Phinehas interposed, and he was Aaron's grandson, on whom the anointing oil rested. And this illustrates a remarkable expression in Isa 10:27, "The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing." Is not that the anointing of the Holy Ghost? It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can be made free with the freedom of the Son of God. Where He is there is liberty. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."

We must die to the sin that enchained us. - There could be no half-measures. Phinehas took a spear. Whatever the cursed thing is which has crept in to enslave, it must be slain before the Lord. Is there some secret evil in your soul, eating out its strength? Ask the Faithful High Priest to deal with it, that your soul may cast off its bondage, and rise into the liberty of the sons of God.

There was not left a man of them - Numbers 26:65

Twice Moses numbered the people: on the first occasion Aaron was his colleague, at the beginning of the forty years; on the second occasion Eleazar, and this was at the end of the wanderings, on the threshold of Canaan. But only two had survived, Joshua and Caleb, because only they followed the Lord. God deals with a nation by dealing with individuals. He misses no one.

His love misses none. - The little sick child put her hand outside the coverlet before falling asleep, in the hope that the Good Shepherd would notice it, and not miss her, as He passed down the hospital ward. But there is no need to fear His missing us, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, bringing the light with which they see. He tasted death for every man; He seeks each missing sheep, each lost coin. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

His Spirit misses none. - If thou hast faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will attract His notice. If thou yieldest thyself to His Spirit, though thy lung be weak and diseased, He will fill it. If thou desirest to be endued with the gift of Pentecost, it will fall upon thy head, though thou art as obscure as the shepherd-psalmist of old.

Death and judgment miss none. - On each of these unbelieving men the Divine sentence was executed. One or two might linger, as autumn leaves on the topmost boughs of stripped trees; but ultimately they shared the fate of their companions. Unless Christ come first, our turn will come. In Adam all die. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Each was born alone, must die alone, and alone give an account to the King. Prepare, my soul, to meet Him!

At His word shall they go out, and at His word they shall come in - Numbers 27:21

The emphasis is on the word His. Moses had asked God to indicate a successor to lead out and bring in the people. But Jehovah drew a distinction. Joshua was to receive the Divine direction from Eleazar, the priest, who should enquire of the Lord; and at His word, i. e., God's word through Eleazar, the people were to go out and come in.

Our goings-out should be determined by the Word of God. - We never waste time when we stand before the true Priest, who has the Urim of Divine direction, especially when we are considering some call to duty. Very often we have gone out at the instigation of pride, or emulation, or fussy activity; we have gone

out because others have done so, and we were eager not to be left behind. Under these circumstances the outgoings of our mornings have not been made to rejoice; we have encountered disappointment and defeat. When we go forth at God's bidding, He becomes absolutely responsible; otherwise we pierce ourselves through with many sorrows, and bring discredit on the cause we would fain serve.

Our comings-in must be determined by the Ward of God. - When we should come in to rest, to pray, to fill again our souls with His Spirit, to suffer in secret, or to die, must be left to the determination of His will. It is easier to go out than to come in. Activity is pleasanter than passivity; the stir and rush of the world preferable to lying still to suffer. But our times are in His hand, and as soon as we recognize the decisions of the Urim in the appointments of Divine Providence, the speedier shall we be at peace. If we are fully surrendered to God, both our going-out and our coming-in shall be ordered aright by His Spirit.

My food - Numbers 28:2

God speaks as though He fed, through the sacrificial flame, on the offerings of His people. There can be no doubt that the obedience of the blessed Lord to the death of the cross was very satisfying to the hunger of the Father's heart (Eph 5:2); and there is a sense in which our prayers and praises, the offering of ourselves in consecration, the gifts we lay before Him, are, when laid upon the altar of Christ, very pleasing to God. They are His food (Heb 13:15-16).

We often speak of ourselves as hungering for God. Do we sufficiently realize that He hungers for our love, our whole-hearted devotion, our fellowship with Him? May it not sometimes act as an incentive to prayer to reflect that we may be passing from our chamber in the morning leaving God's desire unsatisfied? He was longing for the uplifting of our soul in devotion and praise which was not forthcoming. Still, as of old, in the morning the hungry Lord comes to seek fruit on His trees. Too often there is nothing but leaves. Too seldom does He have the opportunity of saying: "I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey."

If we really loved Jesus, we should be eager to give Him food in our prayers, and yearnings, and activities; and we should long with intense desire for Him to be satisfied, though we were not primarily concerned in spreading His banqueting table. It were enough for us to know that His hunger was feeding on the love of saints, or on the joy of new converts, though we were not the medium of the one or the other. Oh for this unselfish love for Jesus, which looks at things from His standpoint, altogether irrespective of ourselves!

Ye shall do no servile work - Numbers 29:1,7,12,35

There was a good deal of work to be done, but it was not servile work. Throughout the seventh month, the work centered around the Tabernacle and the service of God, rather than around the tents and occupations of Israel as at other times. The same distinction is clearly made by the Apostle; our faith and salvation are not of works, lest any man should boast; but we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph 2:9-10).

Do not work up to the Cross, but down from it. - We must come empty-handed to the Cross, and receive forgiveness and eternal life; but these will immediately begin to vindicate their presence in the fruits of righteousness. None work like those who have been saved by the grace of God - but their work is not servile work; not that of slaves, but of sons. Many confuse these, trying to work for salvation, instead of receiving it first and then working.

Do not work up to union with Christ, but from it. - We cannot unite ourselves to the true Vine by any activity of ours; our only resort is to lay ourselves at the feet of the great Husbandman, that He may graft us into living union with Jesus. When once that union is consummated, through our yielded nature, the Root begins to pour His mighty energy. Fruit-bearing is not servile work; but easy, natural, blessed.

Do not work up to Pentecost, but out from it. - We cannot win the gift of the blessed Paraclete. No tears, prayers, agonies of soul, can purchase it. It must be received by a single act of faith. But when once He is in us in His fullness, then tears, and prayers, and strivings for the salvation of men flow out without effort. But there is no servility, no strain, no restraint, save that of love.

The Lord shall forgive her - Numbers 30:5,8,12

If the father or husband disallowed the vow a woman made, it would not stand, nor would she be held responsible for its fulfillment. God would not keep her to a promise which was hindered from execution by causes over which she had no control. This is a profound principle.

You may feel that a certain step is required of you by Christ; that indeed you are bound by your allegiance to Him to take it; nay, you have already promised Him that you will take it; but, suddenly and most unexpectedly, you are prevented from taking it. The express prohibition of those who have a right to determine your action, or the verdict of the physician, or the evident call of duty in another direction, makes it needful for you to relinquish your project. What then: is God grieved and angry? Not so; He understands the whole of the case perfectly, and accepts your will for the deed, and bids you go in peace. This, however, does not affect matters in which conscience is clear in demanding or prohibiting a certain line of conduct.

Sometimes God's silence is consent. You made your solemn dedication in His holy presence: there was no answering voice, or rush of emotion, or witnessing seal; He held His peace from day to day. But in that silence He established all your vows, all your bonds.

If parents capriciously forbid their children carrying out solemn resolutions and vows, the burden of blame must rest on their shoulders. They must render their account to God, and give answer for their action. It will go hard with those who put needless hindrances and obstacles in their brothers' pathway.

Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make to go through the fire - Numbers 31:23

The great aim of this enactment was to render these articles ceremonially clean. They had been in the use of the Midianites, and required cleansing, before they could be appropriated by Israel. But the cleansing processes were to be determined by their texture. Fire for what would stand fire; water for what could not stand fire.

We must be thoroughly cleansed. - If a man will purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor, meet for the Master's use. Not cleverness, but cleanliness, is the prime condition of service. Jesus will not put throne-water into impure and polluted receptacles. What fellowship hath Christ with Belial? We shall not be passed through fire, unless we can stand it. - Our faith is too precious to God to be exposed to risk. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we are able, lest we be discouraged, and make shipwreck. If, then, you are called at this time to pass through an unusually searching ordeal, be sure that your Heavenly Father knows that you can endure it. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing

of Jesus Christ."

We must go through water, if not through fire. - The law provided also that "all that abideth not the fire, ye shall make go through the water." The one is negative, the other positive; the first appertains to John the Baptist, the second to the Holy Spirit. The latter is the best; but be thankful, if you cannot endure it, that there is a discipline more tempered and gentle, which will yet render you meet for the handling of the Holy Saviour.

Be sure your sin will find you out - Numbers 32:23

Sin is like the boomerang of the savage, it comes back on the hand that has launched it forth. The brethren accused Joseph of being a spy, and cast him into the pit; and on the same charge they were cast into prison. King David committed adultery and murder; so Absalom requited him. The Jews crucified the blessed Lord; and they were impaled around Jerusalem till room and wood for their crosses failed.

There is a Divine order in society. God has so constituted the world, that as man deals with his neighbor, so he is dealt with. The consequence does not always follow immediately. There is often a long interval between the lightning flash and the thunder-peal. The sentence against an evil work is not executed suddenly. But though God's mills grind slowly, they do grind, and to powder. It is impossible to deceive God; for it is His immutable law, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal 6:7-8).

When sin comes to find you out, like a sleuth-hound on the track of the criminal, be sure that it finds you in Jesus. "That I may be found in Him." Nothing will avail to intercept the awful execution of sin's vengeance, except the blood and righteousness of Jesus. Put Him between you and your sins, between you and your past, between you and the penalty of a broken law. Be sure that only when the blood of Jesus speaks for you through earth and heaven, there can be a cutting off of sin's terrible entail.

They journeyed from Marah, and came unto Elim: and in Him - Numbers 33:9

In his enumeration of the halting places of Israel, Moses mentions Marah and Elim. In the case of the former, he does not dwell on the murmuring of the people over the bitter stream: but in the case of Elim, he loves to dilate on the twelve springs of water, and the three-score and ten palm trees, under which they pitched. Years of weary travel had not obliterated the memory of the refreshment afforded by those seventy palms.

We should remember the blessings of the past. - God has so made us that we soon forget pain; but memory is willing to keep the fresco-pictures of sunny scenes unobliterated upon the walls of her galleries. Thus we may encourage our faith and comfort our hearts, by musing on the hand of the Lord which has been upon us for good. You have had many hard tracks of desert sand to traverse; but never forget those three-score and ten palm trees. Let their gracious shade and fruit still refresh you. And remember that God will restore them, whenever needed. If not, you can always find your palm trees and wells in Himself.

God does not remember the sins of the past. - There is no word of their murmurings, either at Marah or Rephidim. It is thus that God deals with us. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." When God forgives, He forgets. He erases the record from His book, and deals with us as though no sin had been committed. When we get to heaven and study the

way-book, we shall find all the deeds of love and self-denial carefully recorded, though we have forgotten them; and all the sins blotted out, though we remember them.

This is the land which ye shall inherit - Numbers 34:13

It is important that we should know the limits and possibilities of our lives. We must beat the bounds, first to know how far we may go; and secondly where we must stop, in our inheritance.

How far we may go. - It is our privilege to know God and the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His indwelling in our hearts, and the power of the Resurrection throbbing within us, lifting us to share the risen life of Jesus. Day by day we may be kept from yielding to known sin; day by day, though keenly conscious of temptation, we may be more than conquerors; day by day, the Holy Spirit may work in us perfect love toward God and man, to the limit of our light; day by day the Lord Jesus may be more perfectly formed within us.

Where we must stop. - We may expect to be blameless, but not faultless, till He present us to Himself: to be delivered from temptation, but not freed from its assaults: to be kept in perfect peace, but not secured from the pressure of adversity: to be dead to sin and self, but not daring to say that either is dead within us: to be delivered from this present evil world, as to spirit and temper, though still called to inhabit it as its salt and light. Take possession of every inch of God-given territory in Jesus, but beware of going beyond it.

It is a solemn question to all who have been appointed leaders in God's hosts, whether they are rightly dividing their heritage. We must hold back nothing that is profitable: nor must we shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Let our preaching and teaching include all God's provision for His children.

The Death of the High Priest - Numbers 35:25,28,32

One after another they passed away. They were not able to continue by reason of death. Their offices, and garments, and ministry, passed from each in turn, as from Aaron, whom Moses stripped with his own hands on Nebo. But their death only brings into greater prominence the encouraging contrast in the case of our blessed Lord, who ever live, h, and hath, therefore, an unchangeable priesthood.

Christ ever lives: what an encouragement to the penitent! - All that He ever was, He is; all that He ever did for others, He is willing to do for thee. The records of His earthly life, with His tenderness for those who were out of the way, are leaves and specimen pages of the diary of His life. Therefore, there need be no hesitation in applying to Him.

Christ ever lives: what a blessing to the saint! - "I am He that liveth." He bent over His fainting apostle, and said in effect, You remember what I was when you leaned on My bosom, followed Me to the shore on which I had prepared your repast, and assured you of My never-altering affection. I am all that still; through death I have come to a life which can never decay; because I live, ye shall live also. Let us rest our souls on this sweet word - from His heart there will ever stream to us rivers of incorruptible life. Let us keep all the channels of our being open toward the fountain of eternal life, that there may be no stint or restraint to our reception.

Christ ever lives: what a warning to the Church! - There is no need, therefore, of the human priest to transact matters between man and God. The Son is Priest and King in His own house, in the power of an endless life; and human mediators are no more necessary than flickering night-lights at noon.

The inheritance of Zelophehad unto his daughters - Numbers 36:2

From the earliest, the germ-principle of the emancipation of woman, and her right to stand on an equality with man, is recognized in Scripture. These women were heiresses in their own right, and might marry as they thought best. Christianity in this respect, as in so many others, is the fulfillment of the Divine thought in the older dispensation. Ruth was the prototype of Mary of Bethany; Rahab of the Syrophenician woman; Hagar of Lydia.

The inheritance of woman in the nature of Christ. - There are certain qualities in the Son of Man peculiarly adapted for the heart of woman. Tenderness for her many tears - -" Woman, why weepest thou?" Sympathy in her quest for a love that will not fail - " Mary." An answer to her many questions - "Woman, believe Me." Strength for her clinging weakness - " Forbid her not." Hope for her despair - " If thou couldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." O woman, remember Him who is the counterpart of thy need, and offers thee Himself. "The same is my sister."

The inheritance of woman in the work of Christ. - She is called to enrich men by bringing to them her inheritance. So the daughters of Zelophehad brought their land to their husbands, and the women bore the tidings of the risen Lord to the disciples. Thus women, receiving much from fellowship with Christ, come to men, steeped in materialism and sense, telling of a purer, fairer life, and summoning them to inherit it. Well is it for the home where this principle is recognized, and where the wife and mother is ever feeding her soul with noble ideals, to correct the false estimates that too much contact with men of the world are apt to induce in those she loves!

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