

Christian Character

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes the importance of character development, joy, and living out true Christian principles in daily life.

Scripture: John 14:15, Romans 8:28, Romans 14:19, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 2 Corinthians 7:4, Ephesians 5:15-16, Philippians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 1 Peter 3:4, 1 John 3:2

Topics: "Christian Character", "Practical Faith"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of Christian character, distinguishing it from reputation, and highlighting that true character is built through consistent habits and actions over time. He encourages believers to cultivate a joyful heart and a thankful spirit, which can transform their perspective on life. Miller also discusses the importance of using time wisely, being mindful of our influence on others, and the necessity of personal surrender to God's will. He reminds us that our character is what we carry into eternity, and that true religion is practical, requiring us to live out our faith in everyday life.

Transcript

Character

Reputation is what a man's neighbors and friends think of him.

Character is what the man IS.

Character is personal. It is not a possession we can share with someone else. We can give a hungry person part of our loaf of bread; we can divide our money with one who needs it; but character is something we cannot give away or transmit. The brave soldier cannot share his courage with the trembling recruit who fights by his side in the battle. The pure, gentle woman cannot give part of her purity and gentleness, to the defiled and hardened woman she meets.

Character is our own -- a part of our very being. It grows in us over the years. Acts repeated become habits, and character is made up in the long run, of those habits which have been repeated so often, that they become a permanent part of our lives.

Sow a thought -- and you will reap an act;

sow an act -- and you will reap a habit;

sow a habit -- and you will reap a character;

sow character -- and you will reap a destiny!

As the tree falls -- so must it lie;

As the man lives -- so must he die!

As a man dies -- such must he be;

All through the ages of eternity!

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Two men look at the same scene:

"Be joyful always!" 1 Thessalonians 5:16

"In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy!" 2 Corinthians 7:4

Thankfulness or unthankfulness is largely a matter of the attitude of our heart.

Two men look at the same scene:

one sees the defects and the imperfections;

the other sees the beauty and the brightness.

If you cannot find things to be thankful for today, and every day -- the fault is in yourself, and you ought to pray for a changed heart -- a heart to see God's goodness and to praise Him.

A joyful heart transfigures all the world around us! It finds something to be thankful for in the barest circumstances, even in the dark night of the soul. Let us train ourselves to see the beauty and the goodness in God's world, and in our own circumstances -- and then we shall stop grumbling, and be content and thankful in all situations.

"A happy heart makes the face cheerful!" Proverbs 15:13

"The cheerful heart has a continual feast!" Proverbs 15:15

"A cheerful heart is good medicine -- but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22

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What are you doing with your time?

"Be very careful, then, how you live -- not as unwise but as wise -- making the most of the time" Ephesians 5:15-16

Our days, as God gives them to us -- are like beautiful summer fields.

The hours are like trees with their rich fruit, or vines with their blossoms of purple clusters.

The minutes are like blooming flowers, or stalks of wheat with their golden grains.

Oh the endless, blessed possibilities of our days and hours and minutes -- as they come to us from God's hands!

But what did you do with yesterday? How does the little acre of that one day look to you now?

What are you doing with your time? Every moment God gives you, has in it a possibility of beauty or usefulness -- as well as something to be accounted for.

Are you using your time for God?

"Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life!" Psalm 39:4

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Christian liberty

We should keep watch over our words and deeds, not only in their intent and purpose -- but also in their possible influence over others. There may be liberties which lead to no danger for us -- but which to others with less stable character, and less wholesome environments -- would be full of peril. It is part of our duty to think of these weaker ones, and of the influence of our example upon them. We may not do anything in our liberty, which might possibly harm others. We must be willing to sacrifice our liberty -- if by its exercise, we endanger another's soul. This is the teaching of holy Scripture:

"Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." Romans 14:19

"Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall." Romans 14:20-21

"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience -- you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall." 1 Corinthians 8:9-13

"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others." 1 Corinthians 10:23-24

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Black seeds without beauty

"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Luke 22:42

"Lord, what do You want me to do?" Acts 9:6

The first condition of consecration, must always be entire readiness to accept God's will for our life. It is not enough to be willing to do Christian work. There are many people who are quite ready to do certain things in the service of Christ, who are not ready to do anything He might want them to do.

God does not send us two classes of providences -- one good, and one evil. All are good. Affliction is God's goodness in the seed. It takes time for a seed to grow and to develop into fruitfulness. Many of the best things of our lives -- come to us first as pain, suffering, earthly loss or disappointment -- black seeds without beauty -- but afterward they grow into the rich harvest of righteousness!

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11

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Think about such things!

"The cheerful heart has a continual feast!" Proverbs 15:15

We pretty much see just what we are looking for. If our mind has become trained to look for troubles, difficulties, problems, and all gloomy and dreary things -- then we shall find just what we seek. On the other hand, it is quite as easy to form the habit of looking always for beauty, for good, for happiness, for gladness -- and here too we shall find precisely what we seek.

It has been said that the habit of always seeing the bright side in life, is worth a large income to a man. It makes life a great deal easier.

None of us are naturally drawn to a gloomy person, who everywhere finds something to complain about -- but we are all attracted to one who sees some beauty in everything. Joy is a transfiguring quality. Its secret is a glad heart.

"Finally, brothers,

whatever is true,

whatever is noble,

whatever is right,

whatever is pure,

whatever is lovely,

whatever is admirable --

if anything is excellent or praiseworthy --

think about such things!" Philippians 4:8

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Our plans and dreams

"In his heart a man plans his course -- but the LORD determines his steps." Proverbs 16:9

"Many are the plans in a man's heart -- but it is the LORD's purpose which prevails." Proverbs 19:21

There are few entirely unbroken lives in this world; there are few men who fulfill their own hopes and plans, without thwarting or interruption at some point. Now and then, there is one who in early youth marks out a course for himself -- and then moves straight on in it to its goal.

But most people's lives turn out very different from their own early dreams. Many find at the close of their life, that in scarcely one particular, have they realized their own life-dreams; at every point God has simply set aside their plans -- and substituted His own. There are some people whose plans are so completely thwarted, that their story is most pathetic. Yet we have but to follow it through to the end, to see that the broken life was better and more effective, than if their own plans had been carried out.

"We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose!" Romans 8:28

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Our best striving

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on" Philippians 3:12

The highest reaches of holiness which we can attain here on earth, are but broken fragments of the full Divine beauty. At the best, we can only become dimly transfigured; only faintly does the beauty of the Lord appear in us.

The last design made by the great painter, Albert Diirer, was a painting showing Christ on His cross. It was all completed, except the face of the Divine Sufferer, when the artist was summoned away by death.

Just so, at the end of the longest and holiest life -- we shall have but a part of the picture of Christ wrought upon our soul. Our best striving shall attain but a fragment of His matchless beauty. We cannot reproduce the glory of that incomparable Face. But when we depart from our little fragment of transfiguration, we shall look a moment afterward upon the Divine features, and, seeing Jesus -- we shall transformed into His lovely image!

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is!" 1 John 3:2

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We are not saved by believing a creed

"Do not be amazed that I said to you: You must be born again!" John 3:7

That which makes one a Christian, is not . . .

the agreeing with Christ's teachings,

the uniting with His Church,

the adoption of His morals,

the espousing of His cause --

but the receiving of Him as our personal Lord and Savior, and entering into a covenant of eternal friendship with Him. We are not saved by believing a creed which gathers up in a few golden sentences, the essence of the truth about Christ's person and work -- we must have the Christ Himself, whom the creed holds forth, in His radiant beauty and grace!

Many people think that being a Christian is . . .

to pray a few moments morning and evening,

to read a daily chapter or two in the Bible,

and to attend church on Sundays.

These duties are important as means of grace -- but they are not true religion. Real religion is living out the principles of Christianity in one's ordinary week-day life. It is getting the Bible and the prayers and the services -- into our thoughts and acts and character.

We must not cut our lives in two, and call one part secular, governing it by one set of principles -- and regarding the other part as sacred, to be controlled by another set of rules. All of life is to be made sacred in the sense that everything is to be done in such a way as to please God, under the direction of His counsel. We have just as much true religion as we get into our week-day life, and not a whit more!

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What a man IS

There are virtues, fruits of character, treasures, spoils of moral conquests -- which men carry with them out of this world. Someone says, "The only thing that walks back from the tomb with the mourners and refuses to be buried, is character." This is true. What a man IS -- survives him. It never can be buried. His character lingers about his home, when his footsteps come there no more. It lives in the community where he was known. And that same thing -- what a man IS -- he carries with him into the next life. Money and rank and circumstances and earthly gains, he leaves behind him -- but his character, he takes with him into eternity!

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True religion is intensely practical

A little girl, when asked what it was to be a Christian, replied, "For me to be a Christian is to live and behave just as Jesus would live and behave -- if He were a little girl and lived at our house."

No better definition of practical religion could be given. Each one of us is to live just as Jesus would, if He were living out our little life in the midst of its actual environment, mingling with the same people with whom we must mingle, and exposed to the very annoyances, trials, and temptations to which we are exposed. We need to live a life that will please God, and which will witness to the genuineness of our piety.

True religion is intensely practical. Only so far as it dominates one's life, is it real. We must get the commandments down from the Sinaitic glory amid which they were first engraved on stone by the finger of God -- and give them a place in the hard, dusty paths of our earthly toil and struggle. We must get them off the tables of stone -- and have them written on the walls of our own hearts. We must bring the Golden Rule down from its bright setting in our Lord's 'Sermon on the Mount' -- and get it wrought into our daily actual life!

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Work out your own salvation

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" Philippians 2:12

Each one's battle must be a personal one. We may decline the struggle -- but it will also be declining the joy of victory. No one can reach the summit -- without arduously climbing the steep mountain. We cannot be carried up on another's shoulder.

God does not put virtues and graces into our lives -- as the jeweler sets gems in a ring. God does not automatically remove and replace our unholy and sinful elements -- with holy ones. Through personal efforts, each must win his way through temptations, struggles and difficulties -- to all noble attainments. The help of God is given in cooperation with our aspiration and energy. While God works in us -- we are to work out our own salvation.

"To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me!" Colossians 1:29

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Family devotions

Hearts that are drawn together at God's feet every day in family devotions -- cannot drift very far away from each other. The domestic frictions of the day are forgotten -- when all voices mingle in the same heavenly song. As the tender words of Scripture fall with their gracious counsels -- all feeling of unkindness melts away. The family altar in the midst -- wondrously hallows and sweetens the whole home. Besides, the family altar . . .

puts new strength into every heart,

comforts all sorrows,

is a shield against temptation,

smoothes out the wrinkles of care,

inspires strength for burden-bearing,

quicken every holy sentiment, and

keeps the fires of devotion burning on every heart's altar.

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Life comes to us in such little bits

"Give us this day our daily bread." Matthew 6:11

"As your days -- so shall your strength be." Deuteronomy 33:25

We should be thankful that life comes to us in such little bits.

We can always live one day well enough.

We can always carry one day's burdens.

We can always do one day's duties.

We can always endure one day's sorrows.

It is a blessing that one day is all that God ever gives us at a time. We should be thankful for the nights that cut off our tomorrows from our view, so that we cannot even see them until they dawn. The little days, nestling between the nights like quiet valleys between the hills, then seem so safe and peaceful.

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own!" Matthew 6:34

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The questions should rather be

"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows." John 16:33

True victory is not found in escaping or evading trials -- but in rightly meeting and enduring them. The questions should not be, "How can I get out of these worries? How can I get into a place where there shall be no irritations, nothing to try my temper, or put my patience to the test? How can I avoid the troubles which continually harass me?" There is nothing noble in such living. The soldier who flees when the battle approaches, is no hero; he is a coward.

The questions should rather be, "How can I pass through these trying experiences -- and not fail as a Christian? How can I endure these struggles -- and not suffer defeat? How can I live amid these provocations, these reproaches and testings of my temper -- and yet live sweetly, not speaking unadvisedly, bearing injuries meekly, returning gentle answers to insulting words?"

"He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son!" Revelation 21:7

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God has three axes!

God has three axes! One He uses in pruning His trees, that the fruitful branches may bring forth more fruit. The work of this axe is not judgment or destruction -- but mercy and blessing. It is the good, the fruitful tree -- which feels its keen edge. "Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, so that it will be even more fruitful." John 15:2

Then God has another axe, which He uses only in judgment in cutting down those trees which after all His culture of them, bring forth no fruit. "The axe already lies at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit, will be cut down and thrown into the fire!" Matthew 3:10. The picture is very suggestive. The axe at the tree's root, or raised in the woodman's hand to strike -- shows that judgment impends, hangs ready to fall. At any moment, the tree may be cut down! "Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil!" Luke 13:7

The axe of death really lies all the while, at the root of every life. There is not a moment when it is not true -- that there is but a step between us and death! Life is all very critical. There is not a moment in any day, on which may not turn all the destinies of eternity. It certainly is an infinitely perilous thing, for an immortal soul to rest an hour with the axe of judgment waiting to strike the blow which will end the day of mercy forever! Only supremest folly can be blind men to such vital interests!

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An ox stands between an altar and a plough

It is always a solemn hour when anyone stands before God and men, to make a public profession of Christ. The act is nothing less than the consecration of a human soul to Christ's service, for life or for death.

On the seal of an old missionary society, an ox stands between an altar and a plough, and written below is the motto, "READY FOR EITHER!" That is, ready for sacrifice or for service.

This should be the heart-motto in every public profession; it should be . . .

a solemn devotement to Christ,

an entire surrender to Him for obedience, duty and sacrifice;

a consecration of the whole life to Christ and His service.

Such consecration all have made, who have publicly given themselves to Christ.

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A time to laugh!

"A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit." Proverbs 15:13

"All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast!" Proverbs 15:15

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22

"I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live." Ecclesiastes 3:12

"There is a time to weep -- and a time to laugh; a time to mourn -- and a time to dance" Ecclesiastes 3:4

There is no inconsistency between holiness and laughter. It is no sin to smile. Indeed, a somber religion is unnatural. Gloom is morbidity. Our lives should be sunny and songful. Christ's religion is joyous, even

amid sorrows. We hear songs in the night.

There is a flower which is most fragrant after the sun has set, and in the darkness pours its richest aroma on the air. Just so, true religion grows in sweetness -- as the shadows deepen. He misrepresents Christianity and the likeness of the Master -- whose piety is cold, dreary, cheerless, joyless, or who frowns upon innocent gladness and pure pleasures.

Sanctified wit has a blessed mission. Life is so hard, so stern, with so many burdens and struggles -- that there is need for all the bright words we can speak. The most wretched people in the world are those who go about in sackcloth, carrying all their griefs in their faces and casting dark shadows everywhere. Every Christian should be a happiness-maker. We need a thousand times more joy in our lives, than most of us get. We would be better men and women, if we were happier.

"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones." Proverbs 15:30

"An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up." Proverbs 12:25

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The grace of forbearance

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Matthew 5:38-39

There are at least two motives which should be sufficient to lead us to cultivate the grace of forbearance. One is that no insult can do us harm -- unless we allow it to irritate us. If we endure even the sorest words, as Jesus endured His wrongs and revilings -- they will not leave one trace of injury upon us. They can harm us only when we allow ourselves to become impatient or angry. We can get the victory over them and utterly disarm them of power to do us injury -- by holding ourselves superior to them. The feeling of resentment will change to pity -- when we remember that not he who is wronged -- but he who does the wrong, is the one who suffers.

And to help in bearing with disagreeable people or those with unamiable qualities, there is nothing better than a sincere wish to do them good.

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13

"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." 1 Peter 3:8-9

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This is a wonderful secret which all of us ought to learn!

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame!" Hebrews 12:2

"In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice. In the morning I will order my prayer to You and look up!" Psalm 5:3

This is a wonderful secret which all of us ought to learn: We should not think so much about the toil and hardness of the way -- but to look beyond to the brightness of the end! It does not matter how rough the road is -- if only it brings us HOME at last!

Many of us go worrying all through this life, keeping our eyes always downcast on the path we are treading. We see all the troubles, the difficulties, and discouragements -- but we never raise our eyes to see the joys and the eternal blessings which are waiting for us. We ought to learn this life-secret, which made Christ look past the shame and sorrow of His cross -- and see the glory beyond. Learn to look up toward Heaven! Think of its joys and its blessedness -- until earth's trials shall melt away in the brightness, and its griefs and losses are forgotten in the hopes of eternal glory!

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!" 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

"For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humble condition -- into the likeness of His glorious body!" Philippians 3:20-21

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We might find it filled with sharp thorns under the flowers!

"Then He said to them all: If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23

It is our own cross, and not some other man's -- which we are to take up. It is the particular cross that God lays at our own feet, which we are to bear. We are never to make crosses for ourselves -- but we are always to accept those which our heavenly Father has allotted to us. Each one's own cross -- is the best for him.

Sometimes we think that our circumstances are peculiarly hard, and we compare it with the circumstances of this or that other person, and wish we had his cross instead of our own. But we do not know what other people's crosses really are. If we did, we might not want to exchange. If we put that cross which seems woven of flowers on our shoulders -- we might find it filled with sharp thorns under the flowers! That cross of gold which seems so bright -- we would find so heavy that it would crush us!

The easiest cross for each one of us to bear, is our own!

"Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation which God called him to!" 1 Corinthians 7:24

"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in poverty. I can do everything through Christ who gives me

strength!" Philippians 4:11-13

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Our own imperfections unfit us for judging fairly

"Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law." James 4:11

"And why do you look at the mote in your brother's eye, but do not consider the beam in your own eye?" Matthew 7:3

Our own imperfections unfit us for judging fairly. With beams in our own eyes -- we cannot see clearly to pick motes out of our brother's eye.

One of the qualities which make us incapable of impartial judgment of others, is envy. There are few of us who can see our neighbor's life, work, and disposition -- without some warping and distortion of the picture. Envy has a strange effect on our moral vision. It shows the beautiful things in others, with the beauty dimmed. It shows the blemishes and faults in them, exaggerated.

Then, the lack of personal experience in struggle and pain, makes many people incapable of sympathy with sorely afflicted ones. Those who have never known a care, nor felt the pinching of poverty -- cannot understand the experiences of the poor.

Thus in very many ways, we are unfitted to be judges of others.

"Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls." Romans 14:4

"You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother?" Romans 14:10

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The subtle beginnings of self-indulgence!

We do many things which to our own eyes appear innocent and harmless -- but which have in them a hidden evil which we cannot see.

We indulge ourselves in many things which do not appear sinful to us -- but which leave on our soul a touch of blight, and a soiling of purity -- of which we do not dream!

We permit ourselves many little habits in which we see no danger -- but which are silently entwining their invisible threads into a strong cable which may some day bind us hand and foot!

We spare ourselves self-denials and sacrifices, thinking there is no reason why we should make them, unaware that we are lowering our standard of holy living, and permitting the subtle beginnings of self-indulgence to creep into our hearts!

"Blessed is the man who does not . . .

walk in the counsel of the wicked,

or stand in the way of sinners,

or sit in the seat of mockers!"

Psalm 1:1

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Do it!

"Whatever He says to you -- do it!" John 2:5

How can we know what Jesus says? We cannot hear His voice as the servants at the wedding heard it.

He speaks now to us in His Word, and the reverent heart may always hear what He says as the sacred pages are prayerfully pondered.

He speaks in the conscience that is kept tender by loyal obeying.

He speaks in the providence which brings the present duty to our hand.

There never is any real uncertainty as to what He says, if we are truly intent on knowing His will.

"Whatever He says to you -- do it!!" It is the doing which is important. We should never ask questions nor make suggestions, when Jesus has spoken -- the one thing for us is obedience. We should never ask what the consequences may be, or what it may cost us -- we are simply to obey. Jesus knows why He wants us to do the thing -- and that should be reason enough for us.

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15

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We could not make the angels happy

"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken Me, the spring of living water -- and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water!" Jeremiah 2:13

The human soul cannot be satisfied with any of earth's good things. This is not the fault of the things of earth -- they are good and beautiful, in their own way and in their own place. But the soul is spiritual and immortal. Money and fame and power -- can never be food for a soul made in the Divine image; nothing less than God Himself can answer its cravings.

We could not make the angels happy by giving them gold and diamonds, and building them fine marble palaces to live in, and putting crowns and fine clothes on them. No more can we satisfy our own souls with such things. Men try to do so -- but their thirst is only momentarily quenched -- and soon they must drink again. Gratification only intensifies desire.

"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again -- but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life!" John 4:13-14

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The little book told the whole story of his life!

A quaint old man used to carry a little book which he took very often from his pocket, and which he called his "biography." It had only three pages, and there was not a word written on any of them; yet he said the little book told the whole story of his life!

The first page was black -- that was his sin, which was his condition by nature. He would shudder whenever he looked at it.

The second page was red -- that was the blood of Christ, and his face glowed when he gazed upon it.

The third page was white -- that was himself washed in Christ's blood, made whiter than snow.

His book told the whole story of every redeemed life. Between the black of our sins, and the white of redemption -- must always come the red of Christ's blood.

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin!" 1 John 1:7

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How shall we endure the things which hurt and wound us?

"When they hurled their insults at Him -- He did not retaliate; when He suffered -- He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly." 1 Peter 2:23

None of us can live long in the thick of life -- and not sometimes be touched rudely, perhaps even cruelly, by others. How shall we endure the things which hurt and wound us? We know what Jesus would do, what He actually did. "When they hurled their insults at Him -- He did not retaliate; when He suffered -- He made no threats." They drove the nails into His gentle hands, and as the iron went crashing through His tender flesh He prayed, "Father, forgive them!" They hung Him on the cross -- but in answer to that cruelty, instead of a withering curse upon the world, He wrought salvation there for men!

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13

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He will sustain you!

"Cast your burden upon the LORD -- and He will sustain you." Psalm 55:22

The promise is not that the Lord will remove the load we cast upon Him, nor that He will carry it for us -- but that He will sustain us so that we may carry it.

He does not free us from the duty -- but He strengthens us for it.

He does not deliver us from the conflict -- but He enables us to overcome.

He does not withhold or withdraw the trial from us -- but He helps us in trial to be submissive and victorious, and makes it a blessing to us.

He does not mitigate the hardness or severity of our circumstances, taking away the difficult elements, removing the thorns, making life easy for us -- but He puts Divine grace into our hearts, so that we can live

sweetly in all the hard, adverse circumstances.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" Philippians 4:13

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The rough stalk of suffering

"These are those who have come out of the great tribulation!" Revelation 7:14

Much of the most beautiful Christian living in this world, comes out of sorrow. As "fair flowers bloom upon rough stalks" -- so many of the fairest flowers of human life, grow upon the rough stalk of suffering.

We take our place with the beloved disciple John on the other side, and we see that those who in Heaven wear the whitest robes, and sing the loudest songs of victory -- are those who have come out of "great tribulation". Heaven's highest places are filling, not from earth's homes of glad festivity and tearless joy -- but from . . .

its chambers of pain,

its valleys of struggle where the battle is hard, and

its scenes of sorrow, where pale cheeks are wet with tears, and where hearts are broken.

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all!" 2 Corinthians 4:17

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He always lives to make intercession for them!

"Therefore He is able also to save forever, those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them!" Hebrews 7:25

If we would pray acceptably, it must be in dependence on Jesus Christ, our High Priest in Heaven, who shall take the petitions from our stained and unholy lips, cleanse them of their sin and fault and defilement -- and then add to them the pure incense of His own holy offering and intercession, and present them to the Father! That is what praying in the name of Christ means. Praying thus, our prayers are sweet fragrances to God. The thoughts and words which leave our hearts and lips spotted and unholy, without any beauty or sweetness -- when they come up before God, have become precious perfumes!

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Until His image burns itself upon the soul

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image!" 2 Corinthians 3:18

It is not merely a brief glance now and then, which is here implied; not the turning of the eye toward Him for a few hurried moments in the early morning or in the late evening -- but a constant, loving, and reverent

beholding of Him through days and years, until His image burns itself upon the soul. If we thus train our heart's eyes to look at Christ, we shall be transformed into His image. And even though but little seems to come from our yearnings and struggles after Christ-likeness, God honors the yearning and striving, and while we sit in the shadows of weariness, disheartened with our failures -- He carries on the work within us, and with His own hands produces the Divine beauty in our souls!

"We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!" 1 John 3:2

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Ladder-rungs

All base desires, all bad habits, all longings for ignoble things -- which we vanquish and trample down -- become ladder-rungs on which we climb upward out of earthliness and sinfulness -- into purer and Christlier character. There really is no other way by which we can rise upward. If we are not living victoriously in our little common days -- we surely are not making any progress. Only those who climb, are mounting toward the stars. Heaven itself at last, and the heavenly life here on earth -- are for those only who overcome.

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne!" Revelation 3:21

"He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son!" Revelation 21:7

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Some day I shall be like that!

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son!" Romans 8:29

No sooner do we begin to behold the fair face which looks out at us from the gospel chapters, than a great hope springs up in our hearts -- we can become like Jesus! Indeed, if we are God's children, we shall become like Him. We are predestined to be conformed to His image! It matters not how faintly the Divine beauty glimmers now in our soiled and imperfect lives -- some day we shall be like Him! As we struggle here with imperfections and infirmities, with scarcely a trace of Christlikeness yet apparent in our life, we still may say, when we catch glimpses of the glorious loveliness of Christ, "Some day I shall be like that!"

"We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!" 1 John 3:2

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Every word is practical

We must not merely read the Bible -- but strive that we may obey it. If the Bible is not the guide of our life -- it is nothing to us. Its truths are to be applied. If we read the Beatitudes, we are to compare ourselves with their Divine requirements -- and seek to be conformed to them. If we come upon a Scripture which rebukes any sinful habit or attitude of ours -- we are immediately to make the needed amendment. We are to accept its promises, believe them, and act upon them. We are to allow its comforts to enter our hearts, and support us in sorrow.

There is nothing written in the Bible, merely for ornament or beauty. Every word is practical. There is no truth in it which has not some bearing upon actual living. When we come to it eager to know how to live, and ready to obey its precepts -- we shall find it opening its inmost meaning to us.

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15

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Only as Christ dwells in our hearts

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18

Only as Christ dwells in our hearts by His Spirit, shall we reach the true ideal of Christian life and experience. Then shall we do right, not by direction of written rule -- but by the promptings of the indwelling Christ. Then shall our dull lives be transfigured by Christ in our hearts, as He slowly changes all the earthliness to Heavenliness. Then shall the features of the Divine image come out, little by little, as the new life within forces itself through the dull crust of the old nature -- until at length the full beauty of Christ shines, where once only sin's marred visage was seen!

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son!" Romans 8:29

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All wrongs will then be righted

There are wrongs which are not righted here on earth. There are godly people misunderstood, maligned, misrepresented, bearing the odium of false accusation all their days, suffering for the sins of others, waiting all their years for vindication which never comes, and at last dying with a dark shadow upon their name.

If there were no life beyond death, we could not always say that God's ways are just. But life goes on, on the other side of the grave, and there will be time enough there for the fullest outworking of all earth's unfinished providences. All wrongs will then be righted -- and all perplexities solved. The shadows of injustice which have hung over godly people in this world, will vanish; and the names bearing reproach here without cause, will shine forth like the stars.

"This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares." Romans 2:16

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The only thing that concerns us

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Is not God wise enough to manage the complications of our lives -- and to bring order and beauty out of them? Has He not skill enough? Is He not our Father? and will He not always do the very best and wisest

thing for us? Should we not trust Him? and cease to be anxious about anything that we have committed to Him? Is not anxiety, doubt? and is not doubt, sin? We are simply to commit our way to the Lord, trust Him, and be at peace.

The only thing that concerns us, is our DUTY. God will weave the complicated web of our lives, into patterns of beauty -- unless we mar it by our follies and sins. But His plans are sometimes very long, and our impatience may mar them, as well as our sins. The buds of His purposes, must not be torn open. We must wait until His fingers unfold them.

"Commit your way to the LORD. Trust also in Him -- and He shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5

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And why should we?

"As your days -- so shall your strength be!" Deuteronomy 33:25

God's storehouses of grace are never opened to us -- until we really need their blessing. They are placed, so to speak, along our life-path -- the right supply, at the right point. By the plan of God for His children . . .

in every desert -- there are oases;

at the foot of each sharp, steep hill -- there are staffs for climbing;

in every dark gorge -- there are lighted lamps;

at every stream -- there is a bridge.

But we find none of these -- until we come to the place where we need them. And why should we?

Will it not be soon enough to see the bridge -- when we stand by the stream?

Will it not be soon enough, when it grows dark -- for the lamps to shine out?

Will it not be soon enough, when the cupboard is empty -- for God to send bread?

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

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There are always more rungs of the ladder to climb

"But just as He who called you is holy -- so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16

Every step of the heavenly way is uphill -- and steep at that. Heavenly life always keeps above us, no matter how far we climb toward it. We never in this world, get to a point where we may regard ourselves as having reached life's goal, as, having attained the loftiest height within our reach -- there are always more rungs of the ladder to climb. The noblest life ever lived on earth, is but beginning its growth and attainment.

Mozart, just before his death, said, "Now I begin to see what might be done in music." That is all which the saintliest man ever learns in this world about living -- he just begins to see what might be done in living. It is a comfort to know that that really is the whole of our earthly mission -- just to learn how to live, and that the true living is to be beyond this world.

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12-14

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Is Jesus like anybody I know?

A little child was thinking about the unseen Christ to whom she prayed, and came to her mother with the question, "Is Jesus like anybody I know?"

The question was not an unreasonable one -- it was one to which the child should have received the answer of "Yes." Every true disciple of Christ ought to be an answer -- in some sense, at least -- to the child's inquiry. Every little one ought to see Christ's beauty mirrored in its Christian mother's face. Every Sunday-school teacher's character, should reflect some tracings of the Eternal Love on which the scholars may gaze. Whoever looks upon the life of any Christian, should see in it at once the reflection of the beauty of Christ.

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory" 2 Corinthians 3:18

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Much of our best work

We cannot measure spiritual results, as we can those that are physical.

The artist sees the picture growing upon his canvas as he works day by day.

The builder sees the wall rising as he lays stone upon stone.

But the spiritual builder is working with invisible blocks, is rearing a fabric whose walls he cannot see. The spiritual artist is painting away in the unseen. His eyes cannot behold the impressions, the touches of beauty He makes.

Sometimes the results of our work may be seen . . .

in the conversation of the ungodly,

in the comforting of sorrow,

in the uplifting and ennobling of the degraded.

Yet much of our best work must be done in simple faith; and perhaps in Heaven it will be seen that the best results of our lives have been from their unconscious influences, and our most fruitful efforts were

those we considered in vain.

"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain!" 1 Corinthians 15:58

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The best we can bring

"Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water'; so they filled them to the brim." John 2:7

"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish -- but how far will they go among so many?" John 6:9

Our Lord calls His people always to be His helpers in blessing the world. We cannot do much. The best we can bring is a little of the common water; but if we bring that to Him -- He can change it into the rich wine of Heaven, which will bless weary and fainting ones. If we take simply what we have, and use it as He commands, it will do good. Moses had only a rod in his hand -- but with this he wrought great wonders. The disciples had only five barley loaves -- but these, touched by Christ's hand, made a feast for thousands. So the common water, carried by the servants, under the Master's blessing became wine for the wedding.

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First there comes bitterness

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus . . . who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God!" Hebrews 12:2

Christ Himself had humiliation, darkness, and the shame of the cross -- and then exaltation, power, glory. In Christian life, the same law holds.

First there comes bitterness -- but out of the bitterness, sweetness flows.

There is the deep sorrow of penitence -- but this gives way to the blessed joy of forgiveness.

First there are self-denial and cross-bearing -- but out of these experiences comes a holy peace that fills all the heart.

Sorrows are to be endured -- but the good wine of comfort is poured into the empty cup.

There is also a constant progression in the blessings of the Divine life. We never get to the end of them; indeed, we never get to the best. There is always something better yet to come. Heaven will make amends for all!

"Weeping may endure for a night -- but joy comes in the morning." Psalm 30:5

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Let us remember this picture

"Jesus, tired as He was from the journey, sat down by the well." John 4:6

Do we get all the blessings we might get, from the truth of our Lord's actual human experiences? When we have been working hard all day and are weary and faint, let us remember this picture -- Jesus, footsore and dust-covered, sinking down in sheer exhaustion on the stone curb of Jacob's well.

He has not forgotten even now in His glory, how He felt that day; and as He sees us in our weariness -- His heart feels tenderly for us. He looks down upon us in compassion, and sends us a blessing of strength and cheer. Let all Christians whose work is hard, and who oftentimes are very tired, frame this picture in their memory, and keep it always hanging up on the wall of their heart.

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are" Hebrews 4:15

"He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust." Psalm 103:14

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The faith which the gospel requires

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me!" Matthew 16:24

Christ asks for absolute surrender to Him. He wants us to trust Him, while we obey Him unquestioningly.

The faith which the gospel requires, is the utter unreserved devotement of the whole life to Christ, and the unquestioning committal of every interest and hope to Him, for time and for eternity!

The question what He will do with us or for us, how He will provide for us -- should not for an instant be raised. There must be no conditions in the following and the consecration to Christ. We may not bargain with Him for an easy, comfortable life -- but should simply give ourselves to Him absolutely and forever, to follow where and to whatever He may lead us.

"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:27

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We may take easy work if we will

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." Luke 9:24

Work for others which costs nothing, is scarcely worth doing. At least, it takes heart's blood to heal hearts. Too many of us are ready to work for Christ and to do good to our fellow men -- only so long as it is easy and requires no sacrifice or self-denial; but, if we stop there, we stop just where our service is likely to become of use. This saving of our own life proves, in the end, the losing of it.

It is those who sow in tears -- who shall reap in joy. It is he who goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed -- who shall come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

We may take easy work if we will -- work which costs us nothing, which involves no pain or self-denial -- but we must not then be surprised if our hands are empty in the great harvest-time.

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The Master adds some new touch of loveliness to the picture

"I have tried you in the furnace of affliction!" Isaiah 48:10

Many a Christian enters a sore trial, cold, worldly, unspiritual -- with all the better and more tender qualities of his nature locked up in his heart, like the beauty and fragrance in the bare and jagged tree in January. But he comes out of it with gentle spirit, mellowed, richened, and sweetened, and with all the fragrant graces pouring their perfume about him.

The photographer carries his picture back into a darkened room -- that he may bring out its features. The light would mar his delicate work.

Just so, God brings out in many a soul its loveliest beauties -- while the curtain is drawn and the light of day shut out. The darkness does not tell of God's anger; it is only the shadow of the wing of Divine love, folded close over us for a little -- while the Master adds some new touch of loveliness to the picture which He is bringing out in our souls.

"When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold!" Job 23:10

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All of life's aiming and striving

"He who says he abides in Him, ought himself also to walk just as He walked." 1 John 2:6

Character grows as the baby matures into manhood. Every day something is written here -- some mark made.

The mother writes something;

the teacher writes something;

every day's experiences write some words;

every touch or influence of other lives, leaves some mark;

temptation and struggle, do their part in filling the page;

books, education, sorrow, joy, companions, friends --

all of life touches and paints some line of beauty -- or scratches some mark of marring.

Our final character, is the result of all these influences which work and co-work upon our life. In the end, we are to be altogether like Jesus; hence all of life's aiming and striving should be towards His blessed beauty.

"For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son!" Romans 8:29

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Then He will tell us these other things

"I still have many things to say to you -- but you cannot bear them now." John 16:12

God cannot show us the stars, while the sun shines in the Heavens; and He cannot make known to us the precious things of love that He has prepared for our nights, while it is yet day about us.

Christ says to us then, "I still have many things to say to you -- but you cannot bear them now." We could not understand them now. But by and by, when we come into places of need, of sorrow, of weakness, of human failure, of loneliness, of sickness, of old age -- then He will tell us these other things, and they will be full of joy for our hearts. When night comes, He will show us the stars.

There is a very large part of the Bible which can be received by us -- only when we come into the places for which the words were given.

There are promises for weakness which we can never get -- while we are strong.

There are words for times of danger which we can never know -- while we need no protection.

There are consolations for sickness whose comfort we can never get -- while we are in robust health.

There are promises for times of loneliness, when men walk in solitary ways, which never can come with real meaning to us -- while loving companions are by our side.

There are words for old age which we never can appropriate for ourselves along the years of youth -- while the arm is strong, the blood warm, and the heart brave.

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Your weakness

"When I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Corinthians 12:10

You may think that your weakness unfits you for noble, strong, beautiful living -- or for sweet, gentle, helpful serving. You wish you could get rid of it.

Your weakness seems a burden to you, an ugly deformity. But really, it is something which, if you give it to Christ, He can transform into a blessing, a source of power. The friend by your side, whom you envy because he seems so much stronger than you are, does not get as much of Christ's strength as you do. You are weaker than he; but your weakness draws to you Christ's power, and makes you strong.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" Philippians 4:13

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This lesson makes life easy and simple

We have nothing to do with life in the aggregate -- that great bulk of duties, responsibilities, struggles, and trials which belong to a course of years. We really have nothing to do even with the nearest of the days before us -- tomorrow. Our sole business is with the one little day, now passing. Its burdens will not crush

us -- we can easily carry them until the sun goes down. We can always get along for one short day -- it is the projection of life into the long future, which dismays and appalls us.

Each day is, in a certain sense, a complete life by itself. It has its own duties, its own trials, its own burdens, and its own needs. The very best we can do for the perfecting of our life as a whole, is to live the one day well.

We should put all our thought and energy and skill into the duty of each day, wasting no strength, either in grieving over yesterday's failures or in anxiety about tomorrow's responsibilities.

This lesson makes life easy and simple.

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Matthew 6:34

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Longing

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God!" Psalm 42:1-2

Longing is the very soul of all true prayer. Longing is . . .

the empty hand reached out to receive new gifts from Heaven;

the heart's cry which God hears with acceptance;

the ascending angel that climbs the starry ladder to return on the same radiant stairway with blessings from God's very throne;

the key that unlocks new storehouses of Divine goodness and enrichment.

Spiritual longing is, indeed, nothing less than the very life of God in the human soul, struggling to grow up in us into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

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The unconscious unpurposed influences

It is not what a man does or says purposely and with direct intention, which leaves the deepest mark in the world and in other lives. But it is the unconscious unpurposed influences which go out from him like the perfumes from a garden, whether he wakes or sleeps, whether he is present or absent.

God seems to blight the things which we are proud of, and to make them come to nothing. Then, when we are not intending to do anything grand, He uses us for noble purposes, and to make lasting impressions on the hearts and lives of others.

In all true living, while men execute their greater plans -- they are ever unintentionally performing a series of secondary acts which often yield most beneficent and far-reaching results. There is a wayside ministry, for instance, made up of countless little courtesies, gentle words, mere passing touches on the lives of

those we meet casually, influences flowing indirectly from the things we do and the words we speak -- a ministry undesigned, unplanned, unnoted, merely incidental -- and yet it is impossible to measure the results of these unconscious influences.

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Repulsive, blotched, and stained by sin

A piece of canvas is a trifling thing. You can buy it for a few pennies. You would scarcely think it worth picking up, if you saw it lying in the street. But an artist takes it and draws a few lines and figures on it, and then with his brush touches in certain colors, and the canvas is sold for hundreds of dollars.

Just so, Christ takes up a ruined, worthless human life which has no beauty, no attractiveness -- but is repulsive, blotched, and stained by sin. Then the fingers of His love add touches of beauty, painting the Divine image upon it, and it becomes precious, glorious, immortal!

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

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If we met ourselves one day on the street

We are very charitable towards our own shortcomings. We make all kinds of allowances for our own faults, and are wonderfully patient with our own infirmities. We see our good things magnified -- and our blemishes in a light which makes them seem almost virtues. So true is this, that if we met ourselves some day on the street, the self which God sees, even the self which our neighbor sees -- we probably would not recognize it as really ourselves! Our own judgment of our life is not conclusive. There is a large part of us, which we do not see at all.

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Sparing them struggles, self-denials, and hardships

Our best friends are not those who make life easy for us; our best friends are those who put courage, energy, and resolution into our hearts. There are thousands of lives dwarfed and hurt irreparably, by pampering. Parents oftentimes, in the very warmth and eagerness of their love, do sad harm to their children's lives, by over-helping them; by doing things for them which it were better to teach them to do for themselves; by sparing them struggles, self-denials, and hardships -- which it were far better for the children to meet.

Friendship is in constant danger of over-helping. When one we love comes to us with a difficulty -- it is love's first impulse to solve it for him; whereas it would be a thousand times better kindness, if we put him in the way of solving it for himself.

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The lesson may be hard for many of us

True Christian faith gives a quietness which in itself is one of life's holiest blessings. It gives the quietness of peace -- a quietness which the wildest storms cannot disturb, which is a richer possession than all the world's wealth or power.

"Study to be quiet." The lesson may be hard for many of us -- but it is well worth all the cost of learning. It brings strength and peace to the heart.

Speech is good -- but oftentimes silence is better. He who has learned to hold his tongue is a greater conqueror than the warrior who subdues an empire. The ability to be silent under provocation and wrongs -- is one of life's noblest achievements.

"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life" 1 Thessalonians 4:11

"That we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." 1 Timothy 2:2

"The unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." 1 Peter 3:4

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If we see life with the veil torn away!

"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed -- we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands!" 2 Corinthians 5:1

If we see life only as a narrow stage bounded by the curtain that falls at death, ending there forever -- how poor and little and limited does existence appear! We may cherish no joys which will reach over into the life hereafter. We may sow no seeds which will come to harvest on the other side of the grave. Our souls may be thrilled by no aspirations and hopes which have their goal beyond the shadows of death.

But how different if we see life with the veil torn away! The future is as much in our vision and as real, as the little present. We may scatter seeds which we know shall not come to harvest for long ages. We may cherish hopes and aspirations whose goals lie far away in the life to come.

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!" 2 Corinthians 4:18

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God's most effective ministry in this world

"For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life!" 1 Thessalonians 4:7

It is life itself -- a holy life, which is God's most effective ministry in this world -- a pure, sweet, patient, earnest, unselfish, loving life. It is not so much what we DO in this world, as what we ARE. A good and holy life is like a flower, which, though it neither toils nor spins -- yet ever pours out a rich perfume, and thus performs a holy ministry.

"God has saved us, and called us to a holy life" 2 Timothy 1:9

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Leaving the ordering and outcome of it to His wisdom

"Casting all your care upon Him, fo

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