

In Green Pastures - January, February, March

by J.R. Miller

This sermon emphasizes the importance of trust in God's provision, living a life of growth and character development, finding and fulfilling our mission, and the power of love and forgiveness.

Scripture: Psalm 23:1

Topics: "God's Provision", "Living a Life of Service"

Description

J.R. Miller's sermon 'In Green Pastures - January, February, March' emphasizes the profound care and provision of God as our shepherd, encouraging believers to trust in His guidance through life's uncertainties. He highlights the importance of living a life of service, love, and faithfulness, reminding us that true greatness in God's eyes comes from fulfilling our daily duties with love and humility. Miller also stresses the significance of personal growth through trials, the necessity of prayer, and the power of kindness and sympathy in our interactions with others. Ultimately, he calls for a life that reflects Christ's love and character, urging us to be vessels of His grace in the world.

Transcript

In Green Pastures

by J. R. Miller, 1890

"Handfuls of Grass for the Lord's Hungry Sheep"

Daily readings for every day in the year

"The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters." Psalm 23:1-2

JANUARY

January 1

The Lord will Provide

Write deep in your heart this New-Year's day, this word of sublime confidence, JEHOVAH-JIREH. It tells you that you can trust God always; that no promise of his ever fails; that he does all things well; that out of all seeming loss and destruction of human hopes--he brings blessing. You have not passed this way before. There will be sorrows and joys, failures and successes, this year, just as there were last year. You cannot forecast individual experiences. You cannot see a step before your feet. Yet Jehovah-Jireh calls you to enter the new year with calm trust. It bids you put away all anxieties and forebodings--"The Lord will provide."

Christ Our Biographer

We need not trouble to keep diaries of our good deeds or sacrifices, or to write autobiographies with pages of record for the good things we have done. We may safely let our life write its own record, or let Christ be our biographer. He will never forget anything we do, and the judgment-day will reveal everything. The lowliest services and the obscurest deeds will then be manifested.

January 2

True Living

Life means far more than many of us ever dream of. It is not merely passing through the world with a fair measure of comforts, with enough bread for our hunger, with enough clothing to keep us warm. Life means growth into the image of Christ himself, into strength of virtue, into well-rounded character, into disciplined manhood and womanhood, into the blessed peace of God. The peace into which he guides us--is victory over all the trials, a quietness and confidence which no external circumstances can break.

January 3

Scripture Truth

Character never can be strong, noble, and beautiful; nor can conduct be worthy of intelligent beings bearing God's image--if Scripture truth is not wrought into the very soul by personal search and meditation. Let us not stay forever in the primer of religious knowledge, amid the easy things that we learned at our mother's knee. There are glorious things beyond these--let us go on to learn them. The word of Christ can get into your heart to dwell in you and transform you--only through intelligent meditation and pondering of Scriptural truth.

January 4

Finding our Mission

We need never be anxious about our mission. We need never perplex ourselves in the least in trying to know what God wants us to do--what place he wants us to fill. Our whole duty is to do well, the work of the present hour. There are some people who waste entire years wondering what God would have them do--and expecting to have their life-work pointed out to them. But that is not the divine way. If you want to know God's plan for you--do God's will each day; that is God's plan for you today. If he has a wider sphere--a larger place for you--he will bring you to it at the right time, and then that will be God's plan for you and your mission.

"Our lives we cut on a curious plan,

Shaping them, as it were, for man;
But God, with better art than we,
Shapes them for eternity."

January 5

Prayer in Busy Days

It is in prayer that God shows his face to his children, that they have visions of his beauty and glory, that the sweet things of his love come down as gifts into their hearts, and that they are transformed into his likeness. If you would be blessed, get many seasons of prayer into your busy, harassed, tempted, struggling life. It is in these quiet moments, that you really grow. Somewhere in every vexed, feverish day--get a little "silent time" for prayer. It will bring heaven down into your heart, and make you strong for service.

January 6

The Sympathy of Christ

Unless words mean nothing, unless the Scriptures cheat us with poetical images and illusions, Christ feels our every grief and every struggle, and sympathizes with us in each one. Remember how his heart responded when he was on earth to all human need. Sorrow stirred his compassion. Every cry of distress went to the depths of his soul. That heart is still the same. When angels are thronging about him, and a poor weary sufferer in some lowly home on earth, or a stricken penitent crouching in some darkness, reaches out a trembling finger-tip of faith and touches the hem of his garment--he turns about with loving look and asks, "Who touched me?"

January 7

Yes and No

There is tremendous power in the little monosyllable "No!" when it is spoken resolutely and courageously. It has often been like a giant rock by the sea as it has encountered and hurled back the mighty waves of temptation. It is a majestic power the power to say "No" to everything that is not right. But it is just as important to learn to say "Yes." There come to us offers and solicitations we must not reject, and opportunities we must not thrust away. Life is not all resistance and defense. Whatever is wrong we must meet with a firm, strong uncompromising "No!" but whatever is right we should welcome into our life with a hearty, cheerful "Yes!"

January 8

The Discipline of Drudgery

There is nothing like life's drudgery to make men and women of us. You chafe under it. You sigh for leisure, to be freed from bondage to hours, to duties, to tasks, to appointments, to rules, to the treadmill round. Yet this is God's school for you. It may be a cross. Yes--but all true blessing comes to us hidden under the ruggedness and the heaviness of a cross. We do not grow most in the easiest life. Accept your treadmill round, your plodding, your dull task-work, and do all well--do always your best--and you will grow

into strong, noble character.

January 9

God's Giving

God does not dole out help by little grains. He pours out blessings until there is no more room to receive. He gives until our emptiness is altogether filled. He is never done giving when you cease receiving--he could give far more. Nothing limits the supplies we get from God--but our capacity to take. He would give infinitely if we had room to receive infinitely, and the only reason we are not supplied in this glorious way, according to God's riches, is because we will not take all that God would give. The only thing which stands in the way of our being blessed to the full--is the smallness of our faith.

January 10

Our Clumsy Hands

Most of us are awkward in doing even our most loving deeds. We must learn to be patient, therefore, with people's awkwardness and clumsiness. Their hearts may be gentler than their hands. Do not misinterpret their actions, finding enmity where purest love is; or indifference where affection is warmest; or slights where honor was meant. Away with your petty suspicions! Be patient even with people's faults. Let us train ourselves to find the best we can in every act of others, to believe the best always of people and their actions, and to find some beauty in everything.

January 11

God's Better Answers

God many times answers our prayers--not by bringing down his will to ours--but by lifting us up to himself. We grow strong, so as to need no longer to cry for relief. We can bear the heavy load without asking to have it lightened. We can keep the sorrow now and endure it. We can go on in quiet peace without the new blessing which we thought so necessary. We have not been saved from the battle we shrank so from entering--but we have fought it through and have gained the victory. Is not victoriousness in conflict, better than being freed from the conflict? Is not peace in the midst of the storm and the strife--better than to be lifted altogether over the strife?

January 12

Touching Others

There are some good people who seem to want to be your friends and to do you good--but they stay at a distance, and never come near you. Then there are others who draw close to you, and look into your eyes and touch you with their hands. You know the difference between these two ways of helping. The former people give you only cold help, with no part of themselves, no tender sympathy; the latter may give you really less of material help--but they pour a portion of their own warm life into your soul. Christ never withheld his touch; he always gave part of himself. We should be the touch of Christ to others. His love should tingle in our very fingers when they touch others.

January 13

Fidelity to Duty

Too often we want to know how duty is going to come out, before we are ready to accept it and do it. But that is wrong, for we have nothing whatever to do with the cost or with the outcome of duty; we have to know only that it is duty--and then go right on and do it. The true way to live--is to bring to each duty that comes to our hand--our wisest thought and our best skill, doing what appears to us at the time to be the right thing to do, and then leaving it, never regretting nor fretting about results. God has promised to guide us, and if we are living in true relations to him, we may expect guidance moment by moment as we go on.

January 14

Having - Giving

It is not having which makes men great. A man may have the largest abundance of God's gifts--of money, of mental acquirements, of power, of heart-possession and qualities--yet if he only holds and hoards what he has for himself, he is not great. Men are great, only in the measure in which they use what they have to bless others. We are God's stewards, and the gifts that come to us are his, not ours--and are to be used for him as he would use them. When we come to Christ's feet in consecration, we lay all we have before him. He accepts our gifts; and then putting them back into our hands he says, "Go now and use them in my name among the people."

January 15

An Eye for Motes

We ought not to expend all our keen-sightedness in discovering our neighbor's little faults. By some strange perverseness in human nature, we have far keener eyes for flaws and blemishes in others--than for the lovely things that are in them. Few of us go about talking to everyone we meet about our neighbor's good points, and praising the lovely things in him. Many of us, however, can tell of the faults in our neighbors. Would it not be well to change this, and begin gossiping about the good and beautiful things in others?

January 16

Silence That is Not Golden

Is any miserliness so base, as that which holds loving and gentle words in the heart unspoken, when dear lives are starving close beside us which our words would save and feed? Use your gift of speech to give comfort, joy, cheer, and hope to all about you. Use it to encourage the weary and disheartened, to warn those who are treading in paths of danger, to inspire the lethargic and indolent with high and holy motives, to kindle the fires of heavenly aspiration on cold heart-altars.

January 17

Christ in Us

We should not be satisfied with any small measures of attainment. If Christ dwells in each Christian, we should all be new incarnations. Christ himself was the incarnation of God. He said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." If we are Christians, we are new incarnations of Christ. We should be able to say to men: "Look at me, and see what Christ is like." The beauties of Christ should be seen in us. This will

become true just in the measure in which the Christ in us is allowed to rule us and transform our lives. It should be our aim and prayer, that the divine abiding in us may be without hindrance, and that no part of our life shall remain unfilled.

January 18

Practical Kindness

Kindness must be practical, not merely emotional and sentimental. It should not be satisfied with good wishes, sympathetic words, or even with prayers; it should put itself into some form which will do good. There are times when even prayer is a mockery. It is sometimes our duty to answer our own requests, to be ourselves the messengers, which we ask God to send to help others. We are God's angels when we find ourselves in the presence of human needs and sorrows which we can supply or comfort. Expressions of pity or sympathy are mockeries--when we do nothing to relieve the distress.

January 19

Being--Doing

There is a silent personal influence, like a shadow, which goes out from everyone, and this influence is always leaving results and impressions wherever it touches. You cannot live a day--and not touch some other life. Wherever you go your shadow falls on others, and they are either better or worse for your presence. Our influence depends upon what we are--more than upon what we do. It is by living a beautiful life that we bless the world. I do not under-estimate holy activities. Good deeds must characterize every true life. Our hands must do mighty works. But if the life itself is noble, beautiful, holy, Christ-like, one that is itself a blessing, an inspiration, the worth of the influence is many times multiplied.

January 20

Preaching by Shining

Every Christian can preach sermons every day, at home and among neighbors and friends--by the beauty of holiness in his own common life. Wherever a true Christian goes, his life ought to be an inspiration. Our silent influence ought to touch other lives with blessing. People ought to feel stronger, happier, more earnest after meeting us. Our very faces ought to shed light, shining like holy lamps into sad and weary hearts. Our lives ought to be blessings to human sorrow and need all about us.

January 21

Too Late After-Thoughts

There is a time for the doing of the duties which are assigned to us. If we will do them in their own time, there will be a blessing in them. If, however, we do not perform them at the right moment, we need scarcely trouble ourselves to do them at all. The time to show interest and affection to any sufferer--is while the suffering is being endured, not next day, when it is all over, when the person is well again or--dead. Oh, there are so many of us whose best and truest thoughts are always after-thoughts, too late to be of any use! We see when all is over, what noble things we might have done--if we had only thought.

January 22

Serving in Love

Work in Christ's vineyard, gifts to missions, charities dispensed to the poor, money given to good causes, ministries among the sick and the needy--these things please Christ, only when there is in them all--love for him, when they are done truly for him, in his name. We need to look honestly into our hearts while we crowd our days with Christian activity, to know what the spirit is which prompts it all. "Do you love me?" is the Master's question as each piece of service is rendered, as each piece of work is done. There is no other true motive.

January 23

The Hiding Away of Self

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." Matthew 6:1. No grace shines more brightly in a Christian, than humility. Wherever SELF comes in--it mars the beauty of the work we are doing. Seek to do your work noiselessly. Do not try to draw attention to yourself, to make men know that you did this beautiful thing. Be content to pour your rich life into other wasted, weary lives, and see them blessed and made more beautiful, and then hide away and let Christ have the honor. Work for God's eye--and even then, do not think much about reward. Seek to be a blessing, and never think of self-advancement. Do not worry about credit for your work, or about monuments; be content to do good in Christ's name. "Then Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:4

January 24

Not as I Will

We may pray earnestly, pressing our very heart into the heavens--but it is for the doing of our own will that we ask, not for the doing of God's will. Is it the true child-like spirit for us--to insist on having our way with God, to press our will without regard to his? Are we not God's children? Is it not ours to learn obedience and submission in all things to him? No prayer is acceptable to God which, after all its intensity and importunity, is not still referred to God, and left to his superior wisdom. Who but he--knows what is best for us?

January 25

Spiritual Greatness

Spiritual greatness--sanctified character, beauty of soul, the likeness of God upon the life, heart-qualities -- shall endure forever. Into this true spiritual greatness, God wants to train every one of us. Many Christians grow sadly disheartened, because they seem never to become any better. Year after year the struggle goes on with the old tempers and ugly dispositions, the old selfishness, pride, and hatefulness, and they appear never to be growing victorious. Yet Christ is a most patient teacher. He never wearies of our slowness and dullness as scholars. He will teach the same lesson over and over until we have learned it. If we only persevere, he will never tire of us, and his gentleness will make us great.

January 26

Patient Love

"As I have loved you" means love that is sweet, fragrant, and gentle to those who have many rudenesses and crudenesses, who are selfish and faulty, with sharp corners and but partially sanctified lives and very vexing ways. If all Christian people were angelic, and you were too--it would not be hard to love all. But as many other people are not yet angelic--you will still have need of patience, even if you are angelic yourself, which probably you are not.

January 27

Control of Temper

The worst-tempered people may be made gentle and loving in all speech, actions, and disposition--by the renewing and transforming power of divine grace. God can take the jangled keys and put them in tune--if we will but put them into his hand. But we must strive ourselves to be sweet-tempered. We must watch the rising anger and quickly choke it back. We must keep down the ugly dispositions. We must learn to control ourselves, our tempers, our feelings, our passions, our tongues. We must seek to develop the gentle things--and crowd out the nettles. The discipline is not easy--but the lesson can be mastered.

January 28

"As we forgive others"

In the model prayer which Christ gave to his disciples, he linked together the divine and the human forgiveness. While we pray to God to forgive our countless and enormous sins--we are taught to extend to others who harm us in little ways--the same forgiveness which we ask for ourselves. Let us keep no bitterness in our hearts for a moment. Let us put away all grudges and all ill-feelings. Let us remember the good things others do to us--and forget the evil things. Then we can pray sincerely, "Forgive us--as we forgive others." If we cannot do this, I do not know how we are going to pray at all for forgiveness.

January 29

The Test of Love

There is a great difference between love for people you never saw and never shall see--and for those with whom you mingle in close relations. There are some people whose souls glow with compassionate affection for the Chinese, the Hindus, the Japanese, who yet utterly fail in loving their nearest neighbors, those who jostle against them every day in business, in pew, in church-aisle, in society. The test of Christian love, is that it does not fail even when brought into closest contact, and into the severest frictions of actual living.

January 30

Winning Souls

We must love those whom we seek to save--but we must love Christ more; we must love them because we love Christ, because he loves them, because he gave himself for them. We must strive to win souls, not for ourselves--but for Christ. It is not enough to get people to love us; we must get them to love our Savior, to trust in him, and to commit their lives to him. We must hide ourselves away out of sight. He who is thinking of his own honor as he engages in any Christian service, is not a vessel ready to be used by Christ. We need to take care that no shadows of ourselves, of our pride, our ambition, our self-seeking, fall

upon our work for Christ

January 31

Blessings of Tribulation

When you have passed through a season of suffering and stand beyond it--there ought to be a new light in your eye, a new glow in your face, a new gentleness in your touch, a new sweetness in your voice, a new hope in your heart, and a new consecration in your life. You ought not to stay in the shadows of the sorrow--but to come again out of them, radiant with the light of victory and peace, into the place of service and duty. The comfort which God gives, puts deep new joy into the heart, and anoints the mourner or the sufferer with a new baptism of love and power.

FEBRUARY

February 1

Contentment--Not Satisfaction

We must distinguish between contentment and satisfaction. We are to strive to be content in any state; we are never to be satisfied in this world, whether our circumstances are prosperous or adverse. Satisfaction can come only when we awake in Christ's likeness, in the world of eternal blessedness. We are not to seek contentment by restraining or crushing the infinite cravings and longings of our souls. Yet we are meant as Christians, to live amid all circumstances, in quiet calmness and unbroken peace, in sweet restfulness of soul, wholly independent of the strifes and storms about us, and undisturbed by them. Content in whatever state--yet never satisfied--that is the ideal life for every Christian.

February 2

Serving Christ at Home

Many people think that work for Christ must be something outside, something great or public. They imagine that to minister to Christ, they must teach a Sunday-school class or join a missionary society, or go out to visit sick people, or go into hospitals or prisons on missions of mercy. These are all beautiful and important ministries, and Christ wants some of you to do just these things too; but the very first place you are to serve him is in your own home. Let the blessed light of your life, first be shed abroad in that most sacred of all spots. Brightening that little place, you will be the more ready to be a blessing outside. Those who are the best Christians at home--are the best everywhere else.

February 3

Keeping our Promises

Many people promise anything you ask of them--but make a small matter of keeping their promises. They enter into engagements with you to do this or that, to meet you or call on you at a certain time or to do some favor for you--but utterly fail to fulfill their engagements. This is a very serious matter--this lack of fidelity to promises and engagements. Surely we ought to keep sedulous watch over ourselves in this regard. We ought to be faithful to the promises we make--cost what it may. It is a noble thing when we find one whose promises we are as sure of, as of the rising of the sun; whose simplest word is as good as his oath; who does just what he says he will do--at the moment he says he will do it. That is the kind of

faithfulness God wants.

February 4

Love--as Well as Service

We may carry too far, our idea that all our service of Christ, our acts of love for him, must be also in some way acts of practical beneficence and help to our fellow-men. We may not call all deeds and gifts wasted, which do not feed the hungry or clothe the naked. In secret we may pour our broken heart's love upon Christ, bathing his feet with penitential tears, even though we do nothing in these acts for any human life. In our worship we may adore him and love him, though we comfort no sad heart and help no weary one. Nothing is so grateful to the heart of Christ, as love; and surely we ought sometimes just to love Christ, forgetting every other being in the ecstasy of our heart's adoring.

February 5

God's Plan for our Lives

God does not merely make souls and send them into this world to take bodies and grow up amid crowds of other souls with bodies, to take their chances and make what they can of their destinies. He plans specifically for each life. He deals with us as individuals. He knows us by name, and loves us each one with a love as distinct and personal, as if each was the only child he had on this earth. He has a definite plan for each life. It is always a beautiful plan too, for he never designs marring and ruin for a life. He never made a human soul for the express purpose of being lost. God's design for each life is that it shall reach a holy character, do good work in the world, fill a worthy place, however humble, and fill it well, so as to honor God and bless the world.

February 6

The Habit of Sympathy

The gentle ministries of love, which you take time to perform as you hurry from task to task in your busy days, will give you the sweetest joy as you remember them in the after-days. What these ministries are to those who receive them--you never can know until your own heart is sad and lonely and one comes to you in turn with the true comfort of love. Train yourself to the habit of sympathy. Be ready any hour to speak the full rich word of love which shall lighten the burden of the one you meet. Everywhere are hearts that need and hunger for what you have to give--and God has given love to you, for the very purpose of blessing those whom he sends to you day by day.

February 7

Use Your One Talent

Use your one talent for God's glory, and he will give you more to use. Do the little duties faithfully, and you will grow in skill and ability and be able for greater. No duties are small or unimportant. There are many who grow discouraged, because they are kept all their life at little tasks. Men praise grand and heroic deeds, and little notice is taken of the common heroisms of daily duty. But you remember what one said--that if God sent two angels to earth, one to rule an empire and the other to clean a street, they would each regard their employment as equally distinguished. True faithfulness regards nothing as small or

unimportant.

February 8

The Cost of Being Good

We can never bless the world by merely having a good time in it. We must suffer, give, and sacrifice, if we would do good to others. It costs, even to be good. Some of us know what self-repression, what self-restraint, what self-crucifixion, and what long, severe discipline lie behind calmness, peacefulness, sweetness of disposition, good-temper, kindly feelings, and habitual thoughtfulness. Most of us have lived long enough, to know that these qualities do not come naturally. We have to learn to be good-tempered, thoughtful, gentle, even to be courteous, and the learning is always hard. Indeed we attain nothing good or beautiful in spiritual life--without cost.

February 9

As I have Loved You

"Love one another--as I have loved you." How did Christ love his disciples? How did he manifest his love to them? Was it not, among other ways--in wondrous patience with them, with their faults, their ignorance, their unfaithfulness? Was it not in considerate kindness, in ever-watchful thoughtfulness, in compassionate gentleness? Was it not in ministering to them in all possible ways? What is it, then, to love one another--as he loves us? Is it not to take his example for our pattern? But how slowly we learn it! How hard it is to be gentle; patient, kindly, thoughtful, even perfectly true and just, one to another! Still, there the lesson stands and waits for us, and we must never falter in learning it.

February 10

Soul-Hunger

A religion which is satisfied with any ordinary attainments--indeed, that is ever satisfied at all--is not a living religion. The Master's blessing is upon those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is the longing soul which grows. There are better things before you, than what you have attained. Strive to reach them. It is not easy to rise Christward, heavenward, to advance in the Christian life, to grow godly. It is hard, costly, and painful. Many people are discouraged because they do not appear to themselves, to be any better, to be any more like Christ today, than they were yesterday. But even true longing is growth. It is the soul's reaching Godward.

"The thing we long for--that we are,

For one transcendent moment."

February 11

God and Nature

We talk about laws of nature, and we say they are fixed and unchanging. Yes--but God is behind the laws of nature. They are merely his ways of working. They do not work and grind, like a great heartless machine; there is a heart of love, a Father's heart, at the center of all this vast mechanism which we call nature. All things work together for good--to everyone who loves God. You are the center of the universe,

in a sense that is wondrously true. All things revolve around you; all things minister to your good. If only you keep your trust fixed upon God, and are obedient and submissive, even nature's tremendous energies will never harm your true life.

February 12

The Splendor of Common Duty

Every common walk of life, is glorious with God's presence--if we could but see the glory. We are always under commission from Christ. We have sealed orders from him every morning, which are opened as the day's events come. Every opportunity for duty or for heroism, is a divine call. Be loyal to duty, no matter where you may hear its call, nor to what service it may bid you. Duty is duty, however humble it may be; and duty is always noble, because it is what God himself allots. The work which the day brings to us is always his will--and the sweetest thing in all this world to a loving loyal heart, always is God's will. The service of angels in heaven's brightness is no more radiant than the faithful duty-doing of the lowliest saint on earth.

February 13

The Losing that is Saving

The way to make nothing of our life, is to be very careful of it, to hold it back from perilous duty, from costly service, to save it from the waste of self-denial and sacrifice. The way make our life an eternal success, is to do with it what Jesus did with his--present it a living sacrifice to God, to be used wholly for him. Men said he threw his life away, and so it certainly seemed--up to the morning of his resurrection. But no one would say that now of Christ. His was the throwing away of life which led to its glorifying. In no other way can we make anything worthy and eternal of our life. Saving is losing. It is losing it in devotion to Christ and his service--which saves a life for heavenly honor and glory.

February 14

The Value of the Reserve

There is a wide difference between worrying about a possible future of trial--and being ready for it, if it should come. The former we should never be; the latter we should always seek to be. It is he who is always prepared for emergencies, for the hard pinches, the steep climbing, the sore struggle--who gets through life victoriously. In moral and spiritual things, it is the same. It is the reserve which saves us in all final tests--the strength which lies behind what we need in ordinary experiences. Those who daily commune with God, breathing his life into their souls, become strong with that secret, hidden strength, which preserves them from falling in the day of trial. They have a "vessel" from which to refill the lamp, when its little cup of oil is exhausted.

February 15

Finding Your Mission

To find your mission, you have but to be faithful wherever God puts you for the present. The humbler things he gives in the earlier years are for your training, that you may be ready at length for the larger and particular service for which you were born. Do these smaller, humbler things well, and they will prove

steps in the stairs up to the loftier height where your "mission" waits. To spurn these plainer duties and tasks, and to neglect them, is to miss your mission itself in the end, for there is no way to get to it, but by these ladder-rounds of commonplace things which you disdain. You must build your own ladder day by day, in the common fidelities.

February 16

Sorrow's Compensation

Beyond the river of sorrow, there is a promised land. No grief for the present seems joyous--yet afterward it leads to blessing. There is a rich possible good, beyond every pain and trial. There are green fields beyond sorrow's Jordans. God never means harm to our lives, when he sends afflictions to us. Our disappointments are God's appointments, and bring rich compensation. Our losses are designed to become gains to us--as God plans for us. There is nothing really evil in the experiences of a Christian, if only God is allowed to work out the outcome. Our Father sends us nothing--but good. No matter about the drapery, be it somber or mirthful--it enfolds a gift of love.

February 17

A Time to be Death

In gossip or slander, the listener is almost, if not quite, as bad as the speaker. The only true thing is to shut your ears, the moment you begin to hear from anyone an evil report of another. The person has no right to tell it to you--and you have no right to hear it. If you refuse to listen, he will not be able to go on with his narration. Ears are made to hear with--but on occasion it is well to be deaf. We all aim at courtesy, and courtesy requires that we be patient listeners, even to dull and prosy talkers; but even courtesy may not require us to listen to evil reports about a neighbor. Ear-gate should be trained to shut instinctively, when the breath of aspersion touches it, just as eye-gate shuts at slightest approach of harm.

February 18

Personal Influence

Every human life, is a force in this world. On every side--our influence pours perpetually. If our lives are true and good, this influence is a blessing to other lives. Let us never set agoing, any influence which we shall ever want to have gathered up and buried with us. When we think of our personal influence, unconscious, perpetual, pervading, and immortal, can we but cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" How can we command this outflow from our lives--that it shall always be blessed? Let us be faithful in all duties, in all obligations and responsibilities, in all obediences, in act, word, and disposition, all the days, in whatever makes influence. In no other way can we meet the responsibility of living.

February 19

The Human Part

Work of seeking, winning, and gathering perishing souls, Christ has committed to his disciples. The redemption is divine--but the mediation of it is human. So far as we know, no lost sinner is brought to repentance and faith--but through one who already believes. It is the Holy Spirit who draws souls to Christ--yet the Spirit works through believers on unbelievers. We see thus a hint of our responsibility for

the saving of lost souls. There are those who will never be saved, unless we do our part to save them. Our responsibility is commensurate with our opportunity. Christ wants daily to pour his grace through us to other lives, and we are ready for this most sacred of all ministries, only when we are content to be nothing that Christ may be all in all; vessels emptied that he may fill them; channels through which his grace may flow.

February 20

The True Ministry of Pain

There is a Christian art of enduring pain, which we should seek to learn. The real goal is not just to endure the suffering which falls into our life, to bear it bravely, without wincing, to pass through it patiently, even rejoicingly. Pain has a higher mission to us, than to teach us heroism. We should endure it in such a way as to get something of blessing out of it. It brings to us some message from God, which we should not fail to hear. It lifts for us the veil which hides God's face, and we should get some new glimpses of his beauty, every time we are called to suffer. Pain is furnace-fire, and we should come out of it always with the gold of our character gleaming a little more brightly. Every experience of suffering ought in some way to lift us nearer God, to make us more gentle and loving, and to leave the image of Christ shining a little clearer in our lives.

February 21

Fault-Finding

It is strange how oblivious we can be of our own faults and of the blemishes in our own character--and how clearly we can see the faults and blemishes of other people. Finding so much wrong in others, is not a flattering indication of what our hearts contain. We ought to be very quiet and modest in criticizing others, for in most cases we are just telling the world what our own faults are. Before we turn our microscopes on others, to search out the unlovely things in them--we had better look in our mirrors to see whether or not we are free ourselves from the blemishes we would reprove in our neighbor. There is a wise bit of Scripture which bids us get clear of the beams in our own eyes, that we may see well to pick the motes out of the eyes of others.

February 22

Making Sweet Memories

We are all making memories in our todays for our tomorrows. The back log in the old-fashioned fireplace sings as it burns, and one with poetic fancy says that the music is the bird-songs of past years--that when the tree was growing in the forest the birds sang in its branches, and the music sank into the tree and was held there, until now in the winter fire it is set free. This is only a beautiful imagination--but there is an analogy in life which is actual. Along the days of childhood and youth, the bird-notes of gladness sing about us. They sink away into the heart and hide there. In the busy days of toil and care which follow, they oftentimes seem to be lost and forgotten. Then, in still later days, the fires of trial come and kindle about the life, and in the flames the long-imprisoned music is set free and flows out. Many an old age is brightened and sweetened, by the memories of early years. They are wise who in their happy youth-time fill their hearts with pure, pleasant things; they are laying up blessings for old age.

February 23

In All Your Ways

Do we make much of God in our lives? Is God really much to us in conscious personal experience? Do we not go on making plans and carrying them out, without once consulting him? We talk to him about our souls and about our spiritual affairs; but we do not speak to him about our daily work, our trials, our perplexities, our week-day, work-day life. We are to shut God out of no part of our life. We must have his assistance, if we would be ready for all that lies before us. We must get our little lives so attached to God's life, that we can draw from his fullness in every time of need.

February 24

The Blessing of Temptation

We sometimes wish there were no temptation, no sore trial in life, nothing to make it hard to be good, to be true, to be noble, to be pure. But did you ever think that these great qualities can never be gotten easily, without struggle, without self-denial, without toil? Every promised land in life lies beyond a deep, turbulent river, which must be crossed before the beautiful land can be entered. Not to be able to cross the stream is not to enter the blessed country. Every temptation is therefore a path which leads to something noble and good. If we endure the temptation and are victorious, we shall find ourselves within the gates of a new paradise. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation: for when he has been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to those who love him."

February 25

Fidelity in Trifles

There will be eternal honors for those who have filled important places of trust and responsibility in this world and have proved faithful in great things. There will be crowns of glory for the martyrs who, along the ages, have died rather than deny Christ. But there will be rewards just as brilliant and diadems just as splendid for those who, in lives of lowly service and self-denial and in patient endurance and humble devotion, have been faithful in the things that are least. God does not overlook the lowly, nor does he forget the little things. If only we are faithful in the place to which he assigns us and in the duties he gives us--we shall have our reward, whether the world praises, or whether our lives and our deeds are unknown and unpraised among men. Faithful! that is the approval which brings glory.

February 26

Power and responsibility

Power makes responsibility. You are not responsible merely for what you are trying to do--but for what God has given you power to do. Wake up those slumbering possibilities in your soul; you are responsible for all these. Stir up the unused, inactive gifts that are in you; you are responsible for these. The things you can do, or can learn to do, are the things which Christ is calling you to do, and the things he will require at your hand when he comes again. It is time we were understanding life's meaning. God gives us seeds--but he will require more than seeds at our hand; he will require all the harvest of beauty and blessing that the best tillage can bring out of the seeds.

February 27

The Ministry of Sympathy

No ministry in this world is more beautiful or more helpful, than that of those who have become familiar with life's paths, and have learned life's secrets in the school of experience, and then go about inspiring, strengthening, and guiding younger souls who come after them. Nothing in Christ is more precious than this knowledge of life's ways, gained by his own actual experience in human paths. He has not forgotten what life was to him. He remembers how he felt when he was hungry, or weary, or in struggle with the tempter, or forsaken by his friends. And it is because he passed through all these experiences, that now in heaven he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and can give us sympathy, help, and guidance.

Growing Through Habits

One whose daily life is careless, is always weak; but one who habitually walks in the paths of uprightness and obedience, grows strong in character. Exercise develops all the powers of his being. Doing good, continually adds to one's capacity for doing good. Victoriousness in trial or trouble, puts ever new strength into the heart. The habit of faith in the darkness, prepares for stronger faith. Habits of obedience make one immovable in one's loyalty to duty. We can never over-estimate the importance of life's habits; they lead our growth of character in whatever way they tend.

February 29

Your Will be Done

God's will for us leads on earth to the noblest, truest, most Christ-like character, and then beyond this world to glory and eternal life. For you, whatever your experiences, however hard and painful life may seem to you--God's will is the very hand of divine love to lead you on toward all that is good and beautiful and blessed. Never doubt it, even in the darkest hour, or when the pain is sorest, or when the cross is heaviest. God's will holds you ever close to God, and leads you ever toward and into God's sweetest rest. It brings peace to the heart--a peace that never can come in any way of our own choosing--to be able always to say, "Your will be done."

MARCH

March 1

Love's Ministry

Quality is measured by what it will do, give, and what it will suffer. God so loved the world that he gave--gave his only-begotten son, gave all, withheld nothing. That is the measure of the divine love for us--it loves to the uttermost. If you are Christ's, every energy of your mind, every affection of your heart, every power of your soul, every fibre of your body, every particle of your influence, every penny of your money, is Christ's, and all of these are to be used to bless your fellow-men and to make the world better and happier. If we love, we will give, we will suffer, we will sacrifice. If we would be like God, we must live to minister, giving our life, without reserve, to service in Christ's name.

March 2

Before the Sun Goes Down

Estrangements between friends should not be permitted continue over night. It is a scriptural counsel, that we should not let the sun go down upon our anger. Why? Because there may not be another day in which to get the wound healed, and the estrangement removed. "But it was not my fault," you say. Noble souls, inspired by the love of Christ, must not ask whose fault it was, that the estrangement began, nor whose place it is first to seek restoration. If it was not your fault, you are the better one to begin the reconciliation. It is Christ-like for the one who is not to blame to take the first step toward the healing of the breach. That is the way he did--and always does with us. Do not delay too long. What time is it? Is the sun moving toward his setting? Hasten, and before the shadows of evening come on, be reconciled with your friend. Do not let the stars look down on two hearts sundered by anger or misunderstanding.

March 3

Greatness in God's Sight

The greatest men are but fractions of men. No one is endowed with all gifts. Everyone has his own particular excellence or ability. No two have precisely the same gifts, and no two are called to fill precisely the same place in life. The lowliest and the humblest in endowments, is just as important in his place as the most brilliantly gifted. The great life in God's sight, is not the conspicuous one--but the life that fills the place which it was made to fill, and does the work which it was made to do. God does not ask for great things; he asks only simple faithfulness, the quiet doing of what he allots.

March 4

Minor Untruthfulness

There are other forms of untruthfulness besides the direct lie. There are those who would not speak an untrue word, who yet color their statements so as to make them really false in the impression they leave; or they would not speak a lie--but they will act one. Their lives are full of small deceits, concealments, pretenses, insincerities, dissimulations, dishonesties. You know how many of these there are in society. Oh, be true in your inmost soul--true in every word, act, look, tone, and feeling. Never deceive. There are no little white lies in God's sight!

March 5

Today--Not Tomorrow

There are duties that must be done at a particular moment--or they cannot be done at all. It is today, that the sick neighbor needs your visit, your help; tomorrow he may be well, or others will have ministered to him--or he may be dead. It is today that your friend needs your sympathy, your comfort; it will not be of any use to him tomorrow. It is today that this tempted one needs your help in his struggle; tomorrow he may be defeated, lying in the dust of shame. It is today you must tell the story of the love of Christ; tomorrow it may be too late. Learn well the meaning of Now in all life. Tomorrow is a fatal word; thousands of lives and countless thousands of hopes, have been wrecked on it. Today is the word of divine blessing.

March 6

Trusting for Tomorrow

Should the uncertainty of all human affairs sadden our lives? No! God does not want us to bring tomorrow's possible clouds, to shadow our todays. He does not want us to be unhappy while the sun shines because by-and-by it will be dark. He wants us to live in today and enjoy its blessings and do its work well, though tomorrow may bring calamity. How can we? Only by calm, quiet, trustful faith in God and obedience to him at every step. Then no troublous tomorrow can ever bring us harm. Those who do God's will each day--God will hide under his wings when the storm breaks.

March 7

The Beauty Within

Bodily health is beautiful. Mental vigor is beautiful. But heart purity is the glory of all loveliness. The heart makes the life. The inner, fashions the outer. So, above all things, be pure-hearted. That you may be pure-hearted let Christ more and more into your life, that he may fill all your soul, and that his Spirit may permeate all your being. That the beauty of the Lord may be upon you, that the winning charm of God's loveliness may shine in your features, you must first have the beauty of Christ within you. The transfiguration must come from within. Only a holy, beautiful heart--can make a holy, beautiful character.

March 8

Answers That Wait

The day may come to us, as life's meaning deepens, when we shall cry to Christ--and he will not seem to hear. Whenever this experience may come, let us remember that Christ's silence is not refusal to bless. There may be some hindrance in ourselves, and a work of preparation is needed in us before the blessing can come. Instead of doubting or blaming the Master, we should look within ourselves and ask what it is, which keeps the answer waiting. When we are down lower in the dust of humiliation, when our weak faith has grown stronger, when our self-will is gone, and we are ready to take the blessing in God's way and at his time--the silence will be broken by love's most gracious answer.

March 9

Character Building

That picture of the silent temple-builders on Mount Moriah, is the picture of all the good work of the world. The builders are ever at work on these characters of ours--but they work silently. From a thousand sources come the little blocks which are laid upon the walls. The lessons we get from others, the influences which friends exert upon us, the truths which reading puts into our minds, the impressions which life leaves upon us, the inspirations from the divine spirit--in all these ways, the silent work of building goes on. It never ceases. The builders never rest. By day and by night the character-temple is rising. Is it all beautiful? Are the stones all clean and white?

March 10

Strongest with the Weakest

We are not all alike temptable. There are some with sweet temper and equable disposition, whom nothing disturbs. God seems to have sheltered them by their very nature from the power of evil. Then there are others whose natures seem to be open on all sides, exposed to every danger. To live truly, costs them

fierce struggles every day. These easily-tempted ones, are they to whom Christ's sympathy and helpfulness go out in most tender interest. He singles out the one from every circle that is most liable to fall, and makes special intercession for that one. Even the Johns, with their gentle loveliness, receive less of help from the Master, than do the fiery Peters.

March 11

Weakness of Little Faith

It is because of our lack of faith, or of our small faith, that there is so little outcome from our ceaseless rounds of doing. If we had the power of Christ resting upon us as we might have it, with one-tenth of the activity, there would be ten times the result. Only think of the possibilities of our lives, the plainest, commonest of them--if we had all of Christ that we might have! He is ready to do through us greater things than he himself did. We need faith to lay ourselves in Christ's hand--as the chisel lays itself in the hand of the sculptor. Then every touch of ours will produce beauty in some life. Then all the power of Christ will work through us.

March 12

The Sanctity of Consecrated Life

The soul that has had a vision of the Christ, the person in whom Christ is already formed as the "hope of glory," and who is also himself destined to wear the divine image--must never drag his honor in the dust of sin, must never degrade his holy powers in any evil service. Every time we are tempted to commit some sin, if we would stop and think, "I am now a child of God; shall a child of God, destined to wear Christ's image--stoop to be untrue or dishonest or impure, or to nourish wrath or bitterness?" Would we not turn away from the temptation? Could we sin against God--with the consciousness of our high calling in our heart?

March 13

The Law of Amusements

Amusements are proper, both as to kind and degree--just so far as they make us better Christians. Whenever they become hindrances to us in our Christian living or in our progress in sanctification, they are harmful, however innocent they may be in themselves. How do your amusements influence your spiritual life? They may be very pleasing to you. They may afford great gratification. But what is their effect on you as a Christian? In one word, are they means of grace? Or are they making you careless for Christ, and hindering your advancement in spirituality? We ought to be honest enough with ourselves--to answer these questions truthfully, and then act accordingly.

March 14

The Eloquence of Living

Tongues of angels, without love to inspire their silvery strains, are but as tinkling cymbals. Life itself is infinitely more potent than speech. Character far surpasses elocution as a force in this world. The talking standard is a false one, in the estimating of the value and power of Christian workers. Do what you have gifts to do--but be sure of your heart-life. Make your personal character a sublime force in the world. Then

when the accents of silvery speech shall have died away, your influence will still remain a living power in the hearts of men, and an unfading light in the world.

March 15

What to do with injuries

What must we do with the wrongs and injustices and injuries inflicted upon us by others--if we are not to avenge them? How are these wrongs to be righted--and these injuries to be healed? Do not fear the consequences of any wrong done to you. Simply roll the matter into God's hands and leave it there, and he will bring all out clear as the noonday. He will not allow us to be permanently and really injured by any enmity. Our duty, then, is to bear meekly and patiently the suffering which others may cause us to endure; to bathe with love the hand which smites; to forgive those who injure us; and to commit all the injustices and inequities of our lives and all wrongs--into the hand of the just and righteous God. The oyster's wounds become pearls; and God can bring pearls of spiritual beauty out of the hurts made by human hands in our lives.

March 16

Learning Meekness

True religion is not believing alone; it is getting the virtues and graces out of the pages of Scripture where we find them--and into our own lives. Meekness as a beatitude is very beautiful. Meekness in Moses we admire greatly. But how much of it are we getting out of beatitude and biography into our experience? In our daily fellowship with men--do we hold our hearts quiet and still under all harshness, rudeness, criticism, injustice? There are countless little irritations and provocations which make friction every day. How do we endure them? Do they polish and refine our natures? These are the lessons of meekness.

March 17

Silence which is Golden

It is easy for one to poison a person's mind concerning another. There is measureless ruin wrought in this world by the slanderer. Characters are blackened, friendships are destroyed, jealousies are aroused, homes are torn up, hearts are broken. Let us never take up an evil report--and give it wing on breath of ours. Let us never whisper an evil thing of another. We know not where it may end, to what it may grow, what ruin it may work. Words once spoken, can never be gotten back again. We had better learn to keep the door of our lips locked and never say evil of any one. This is a silence we shall never regret.

March 18

Silence that is Golden

Is there a grief in your heart, which grows into a sore pain? Is there a shadow of a coming sorrow, that you see drooping down over you? Remember it is the shadow of God's wing, and therefore it is a safe shadow. Creep closer under it, closer yet. Earth has nothing human so gentle as true mother-love; but God's wing that folds down over you, is gentler than even mother-love; and you can never get out from beneath it. It holds you close to the gentle heart of the divine Father. You need never be afraid while resting there. In all the universe, there is no harm which can come near you. From your eternal shelter you can look out with

confidence, as from a window of heaven, on the fury of earth's storms, and be at peace. The wildest of them cannot touch you in your pavilion!

March 19

The Beauty of True Religion

While Christian life is firm and unflinching in its integrity and uprightness, it is yet beautiful in its amiability and gentleness. The immutable principles of uprightness, like mountain crags, are wreathed over with the tender vines and covered with the sweet flowers of grace and love. True religion is never meant to dry up the life and make it cold, hard, and dead. It is meant to bring out ever-new beauties, to clothe the soul in garments of loveliness. It insists on the development of every power of body, mind, and soul to the farthest possibility. It presents the strongest motives. It points to the finest examples. Its ideal includes not only "whatever things are true, whatever things are just," but also "whatever things are lovely."

March 20

Self-Renunciation

They are highest in the ranks of men who serve--who live for others, whose lives are given out in loving, unselfish ministry; and they rank highest of all--who serve the most deeply and unselfishly. It is only in serving that we begin to be like the angels, and like God himself. It is when the worker for Christ utterly forgets himself, sacrifices himself in the fire of his love for Christ--that his labor for souls yields the richest and best results. When we care only that Christ may be magnified, whether by honor or dishonor, by life or death, in us--then will he honor us by using us to win souls for his kingdom.

March 21

Saying "Yes" to Christ

To believe on Christ as a disciple, is to say "Yes" to him always, with the whole heart, with the whole being. It is giving up the sins that grieve him. It is cutting loose from whatever displeases him. It is renouncing every other master, and taking orders from him only. It is going with him, following him wherever he leads--without question, without condition, without reserve, not counting the cost. It is saying "Yes" to Christ whatever he may ask us to do, or to give up, or to sacrifice, or to suffer. That was the way his first disciples followed him. That is the way his disciples must follow him now. Absolute obedience to him is the condition of following.

March 22

Unto the End

The most wonderful thing in the universe, is our Savior's love for his own people. Christ bears with all our infirmities. He never tires of our inconsistencies and unfaithfulnesses. He goes on forever forgiving and forgetting. He follows us when we go astray. He does not forget us--when we forget him. Through all our stumbling and sinning, through all our provocation and disobedience, through all our waywardnesses and stubbornnesses, through all our doubting and unfaithfulness, he clings to us still, and never lets us go. Having loved his own, he loves unto the end.

March 23

"Afterward"

In the divine providence, nothing comes a moment too soon or too late--but everything comes in its own true time. God's clock is never too slow. Every link of the chain of God's providence fits into its own place. We do not see the providence at the time. Not until afterward, will you see that your disappointments, hardships, trials, and the wrongs inflicted on you by others, are parts of God's good providence toward you, full of blessing. Not until afterward will you see it--but the "afterward" is sure, if you firmly and faithfully follow Christ and cleave to him. The "afterward" of every disappointment or sorrow is blessing and good. We need only to learn to wait in patience.

March 24

Victory by Yielding

Jacob got the victory and the blessing, not by wrestling--but by clinging. His limb was out of joint, and he could struggle no longer--but he would not let go. Unable to wrestle, he wound his arms around the neck of his mysterious antagonist, and hung all his helpless weight upon him, until at last he conquered. We will not get victory in prayer until we too cease our struggling, give up our own will and throw our arms about our Father's neck in clinging faith. What can puny human strength take by force, out of the hand of omnipotence? Can we wrest blessings by force from God? It is never the violence of wilfulness which prevails with God. It is the might of clinging faith which gets the blessings and the victories. It is not when we press and urge our own will--but when humility and trust unite in saying, "Not my will--but yours be done." We are strong with God only in the degree that SELF is conquered and is dead. Not by wrestling--but by clinging, can we get the blessing.

March 25

The Lessons of Peace

Where Christ places us--we are to remain; where he sends us--we are to go. In the heat of life's conflicts, set upon on every hand by a multitude of things which tend to distract our peace--we are to maintain an unruffled calm, and all the tenderness and simplicity of the heart of a little child. That is the problem of life and of living which Christ sets for us, and which he will help us to solve, if we accept him as our teacher. As the tender grass and even sweet flowers live and grow all through the winter under the deep snows, and come forth in the spring-time in beauty--so our hearts may remain loving, tender, and joyous through life's sorest winter under the snows of trial and sorrow.

March 26

Climbing Upwards

Someone asked an old minister, "What is repentance?" "The first turn to the right," was his answer. If you want to grow into Christ-likeness, rising at length into radiant purity and holiness, you must begin with the first simple duty that comes to your hand. Resist the first temptation. Do the first right thing which offers. Paint on your soul the first vision of divine loveliness you see. You cannot reach holiness at a bound; you must conquer your way up, step by step.

"Heaven is not reached by a single bound,

But we build the ladder by which we rise,
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to its summit round by round"

March 27

Always our Best

All Christ wants from any of us--is what we have ability to do. He asks no impossibilities. He accepts our humblest, poorest gifts or services--if they are indeed our best--and if true love to him consecrates and sanctifies them. We need to concern ourselves only about two things--that we always do our best, and that we do what we do, through love for Christ. If we are faithful up to the measure of our ability and opportunity, and if love sanctifies what we do--we are sure of our Lord's approval. But we should never offer less than the best that we can do; to do so is to be disloyal to our Lord and disloyal to our own soul.

March 28

Thinks No Evil

Love thinks no evil. It does not suspect unkindness, in kindly deeds. It does not imagine an enemy, in every friend. It does not fear insincerity in sincere professions of esteem. It does not impugn men's motives, nor discount their acts. On the other hand, it overlooks foibles, and hides the multitude of faults which belong to every human being, even those who are the holiest and the best. It tries to think of others, always at their best, not at their worst. It looks, too, at the possibilities which are in men--what they may become through divine love and grace--and not merely at what they now are. It is wonderful how seeing through love's eyes changes the whole face of earthly life, transfiguring it. If the heart is filled with suspicion, distrust, and doubt of others--the world grows very ugly. But love sees brightness, beauty, and hope everywhere.

March 29

Need a Revealer of Love

Whatever makes us forget ourselves and think of others--lifts us upward. This is one reason why God permits suffering. We would never know the best and richest of human love--if there were no pain, no distress, no appeal of grief or of need. The best and holiest of mother-love would never be brought out--if the child never suffered. The same is true of God's love. God would have loved his children unfallen, just as much as he loves them fallen--but the world would never have known so much of God's love--had not man fallen. Our sore n

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