

# “AS THE SMALL RAIN”

by

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## CHAPTER SIX

### “SEARCH ME, O GOD” (Psalm 139:23)

#### GHOSTS DO NOT WALK

TWICE the disciples thought Jesus Christ was a ghost. The first time they were in a storm on the sea and they beheld Him walking on the water (Matthew 14:25, 26). The second time the disciples, still unconvinced of His resurrection, were gathered in the upper room where He suddenly appeared in their midst (Luke 24:36, 37).

What a strange and stupid thing that the disciples should twice take refuge from the miraculous in the superstitious, supposing they beheld a ghost rather than accepting the manifest evidence of their own eyes — that He Himself stood before them!

How much more logical on the first occasion to believe that the One who made the water should use it for a highway! How much more reasonable the second time to accept the evidence of His physical presence in the wound prints in hands and feet and side!

At the root of this strange and stupid attitude was lack of faith and hesitancy to accept that which was, from the standpoint of human reasoning, impossible. Having seen Christ perform many miracles, they should have accepted these miraculous manifestations of His power over natural law and over death without surprise, but such was not the case.

Christ said, “**All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**” This is nothing impossible for omnipotent Deity. The man who recognizes an omnipotent God has no trouble believing in the miraculous. When our minds limit Deity, naturally our hearts will lack faith.

Men question the historical accuracy and the inspiration of the Bible because it recounts miraculous happenings which they are unwilling to accept. Grant that God is able to do all things and there is no room for doubts as to the authority and accuracy of His Word. Men accept the foolish and impossible evolutionary theory of the creation of life because they limit God. They refuse to recognize a Deity who by the Word of His omnipotence created the universe and made man in His own image. Because men limit God’s power they, like the disciples, saying, “**It is a spirit,**” believe a theory full of obvious errors and manifest impossibilities rather than accept the Genesis statement of simple truth having Divine Omnipotence as its foundation.

The God who made the universe, who hung the world on nothing and the North on the empty space, is certainly able to perform the miracles recorded in the book of Jonah. The God who created all material things could certainly turn water into wine and feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes.

Behold the blind their sight receive;  
Behold the dead awake and live;  
The dumb speak wonders, and the lame  
Leap like the hart, and bless His Name.

Thus doth th' eternal Spirit own  
And seal the mission of the Son;  
The Father vindicates His cause  
While He hangs bleeding on the cross.

He dies; the heavens in mourning stood;  
He rises, and appears a God;  
Behold the Lord ascending high,  
No more to bleed, no more to die.

Hence and forever from my heart  
I bid my doubts and fears depart,  
And to Those hands my soul resign  
Which bear credentials so divine.

—Isaac Watts

### ASKING FOR A RAISE

SOMETIMES as we study the life of the Saviour we overlook the sorrows which His friends must have caused Him. The disciples were so slow to understand the truths He sought to teach them. They were greedy for preferment and place. They were such poor representatives of His perfection and love. They protested so much and did so little. In the hour of His betrayal and suffering they forsook Him or followed afar off.

One of the saddest examples of the disciples' lack of sympathy and understanding of the Saviour is recorded in the tenth chapter of Mark (verses 32-45). There we are told, "**He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him.**" He wanted them to understand that in Jerusalem, to which they were now going, He would be delivered unto His enemies, condemned to death, crucified. Just as Christ finished describing the anguish and sorrow which lay ahead of Him, James and John spoke up asking for the positions of highest importance and greatest glory in His kingdom. These two disciples had their minds so occupied with their own greedy ambitions that they seem not to have heard at all the words of the Lord. In the very moment when He was describing the suffering which He must endure they were asking for honor and glory.

With this attitude of heart and with minds so preoccupied, it is no wonder that the disciples failed to understand the truths Christ spoke concerning Himself and His redemptive work. It is no wonder that the death of Christ on the cross left them feeling that everything was at an end. It is no wonder that the resurrection seemed to take them by surprise. They listened so half-heartedly, so absent-mindedly to the words of the Saviour as He showed them the suffering and the cross and the open tomb which lay ahead.

Their minds were on the kingdom and power for themselves. Their selfish dreams and ambitions shut from their consciousness the necessity of the cross. Even Peter, who seems at least to have listened when the Lord foretold His death, cried out, “**Be it far from thee, Lord**” (Matthew 16:22). The disciples had not learned the lesson that suffering must come before glory and that through the low gateway of anguish and death leads the path to a throne.

O for a heart to praise my God,  
A heart from sin set free,  
A heart that always feels Thy blood  
So freely spilt for me!

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,  
My great Redeemer’s throne;  
Where only Christ is heard to speak,  
Where Jesus reigns alone;

A humble, lowly, contrite heart,  
Believing, true, and clean,  
Which neither life nor death can part  
From Him that dwells within;

A heart in every thought renewed,  
And full of love divine;  
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,  
A copy, Lord, of Thine!

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;  
Come quickly from above;  
Write Thy new name upon my heart,  
Thy new, best name of love.

— Charles Wesley

## **THE PARALYSIS OF FEAR**

FEAR! HOW it grips the human heart! How it paralyzes with cold terror! But for the Christian it is an emotion that never need be felt. “**For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind**” (II Timothy 1:7).

Fear and a sound mind are not found together. Fear makes a man act with unreasoning instinct, not with the logical accuracy of sound thought. Possessed by it, the mind cannot function accurately and clearly. But love and a sound mind are a natural combination. Love stimulates life. Love motivates action and thought along the highest planes. Pure love can move men to the finest of creative effort and artistic endeavor and tireless activity.

Fear can become man's greatest enemy. Shakespeare said, "Cowards die many times before their deaths. But the valiant never taste of death but once." Love is an ally that never knows defeat. Even death itself holds no terrors when love is by one's side.

The child of God is called to the "**spirit of love,**" and he who lives up to that high calling is freed from the bondage of fear for "**perfect love casteth out fear**" (I John 4:18).

If we have experienced the love of God fully there is no room left in the heart for fear. "**God is love**" (I John 4:8), and resting in Him all is calm and confidence. However alarming external conditions may be, however dreadful may appear the circumstances with which one is surrounded, the Christian trusts unafraid in the love of God.

That God loves us is evident. "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life**" (John 3:16). A God who loves so greatly is not a God who will permit anything to come into the life of His child except what is best for him. An all-wise God surely is a competent judge of what is best! As a child trusts the love of his mother and leaves the problems of his little life to her solution, so may the Christian trust his life to the keeping of a loving God.

We may not understand God's choices for us now. We may not know why He permits some things to cross our paths. We may not comprehend His perfect will when the clouds hide the sun and the smoke of war darkens our sky. But with "**a sound mind**" and perfect confidence, God's child rests in "**the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge**" (Ephesians 3:19).

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,  
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;  
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow  
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning  
Of My command, but thou the light shalt gain;  
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,  
And as Thou goest all shall be made plain,

One step thou seest—then go forward boldly,  
One step is far enough for faith to see;  
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,  
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear thy adversaries counting,  
Dare every peril, save to disobey;  
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting;  
For I, the Strong, will open up the way.

Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,  
Having My promise, needing nothing more  
Than just to know, where'er the future find thee,  
In all thy journeying I go before.

— Selected

### **A GOOD DEED FOR THE DAY**

A MAN who commits a wrong act—who lies, or steals, or murders—is guilty of sin. There is another kind of sin, however, which most of us commit and of which we are rarely conscious. This is not the sin of doing something wrong, but the sin of failing to do something which is right—the sin of omission.

Some sins are not things we do. Some sins are things we “don’t”! Such sin often springs from carelessness, selfishness or indifference, and the child of God is as frequently guilty of this kind of sin as is the unconverted man. We have an opportunity to say a word which will bring comfort into a heart heavy with grief and we fail to take advantage of the opportunity. We fail to take the time to help another who is burdened and perplexed. We fail to be generous to those who are in need. Oftentimes we fail in these things because we are self-centered and unconcerned and fail to notice the need.

The Bible says, “**To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin**” (James 4:17).

We do wrong often, but we fail to do right more often! Those are guilty of the sin of omission to whom the King when He comes in His glory shall say, “**For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat . . . naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me**” (Matthew 25:42-45).

The Word does not record their having added to the load or increased the burden of those in sickness and in sorrow and in prison. Their sin was the sin of failing to lift the load and ease the burden.

There are very few of us who do not need to pray with honest hearts, “**We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us.**”

The bread that bringeth strength I want to give,  
The water pure that bids the thirsty live;  
I want to help the fainting day by day;  
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

I want to give the oil of joy for tears,  
The faith to conquer crowding doubts and fears,  
Beauty for ashes may I give away,  
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

I want to give good measure running o'er,  
And into hungry hearts I want to pour  
The answer soft that turneth wrath away;  
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

I want to give to others hope and faith,  
I want to do all that the Master saith;  
I want to live aright from day to day,  
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

— W. R. Fitch

## THE WHITE FLAG

DISCOURAGEMENT is the great enemy of achievement. We start out with much enthusiasm and when we do not immediately see the results or if the obstacles are greater than we anticipated, the temptation is to say, "Well, I cannot do it anyway," and give up.

Most of us are tempted by discouragement to quit. Oftentimes the difference between the man who is a failure and the man who is a success is that one yields to the temptation and the other resists it. This holds not only in the struggle for material things, for fame and knowledge, but also in the struggle to live a victorious Christian life.

We grow weary in well-doing.

It was discouragement which caused Elijah under the juniper tree to pray for death. "**It is enough,**" he said, referring to the opposition of the rulers of Israel to his message and the power of the priests of Baal and the hardness of heart of the people. "**It is enough,**" he said, meaning, "***I have had all I can stand. I cannot take any more.***" Any man who tries to accomplish anything for God in the world feels like making the prophet's wail a duet by blending his cry with the discouraged Elijah's "**It is enough.**" This is the cry of a weary body and a tired mind and a heavy heart. It is the cry of the man who has given up the struggle with the goal unachieved or who is despondent because of the difficulties and trials that harass him. It is the cry of surrender, of defeat and failure.

But there is another cry of victory and fulfillment, the peal of triumph when the job is done. This is the cry of the Lord on the cross when He saw man's redemption accomplished and the price of sin paid. **"It is finished"** (John 19:30).

This is no languid sigh. It is a shout of triumph. What an example of perseverance to the end we find in this and the circumstances which went before it! **"He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem"** (Luke 9:51) to die. **"As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth"** (Isaiah 53:7) beneath the blows of the lash, the jeers and the persecution and the piercing of the thorny crown. He never hesitated. He **"endured the cross, despising the shame"** (Hebrews 12:2). There is no word of complaint, but at the end the shout of victory. How much better the cry, **"It is finished,"** when the task is completed, than the sigh, **"It is enough,"** when the work is only half done.

"'Tis finished!" so the Saviour cried,  
And meekly bowed His head and died;  
'Tis finished! yes, the race is run,  
The battle fought, the victory won.

'Tis finished! all that heaven foretold  
By prophets in the days of old,  
And truths are opened to our view  
That kings and prophets never knew.

'Tis finished! Son of God, Thy power  
Hath triumphed in this awful hour,  
And yet our eyes with sorrow see  
That life to us was death to Thee.

'Tis finished! let the joyful sound  
Be heard through all the nations round;  
'Tis finished! let the triumph rise  
And swell the chorus of the skies!

— Samuel Stennett

## **WORDS WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE**

THERE are many wonderful lessons for us in the book of Job. It is great drama and great literature. As one of the books in the inspired Word of God it is a source of truth and blessing, but in this modern day its riches are often left unexplored.

Job was a prosperous man who honored God. Satan charged that he served the Lord because it paid him. God, to prove Job's faithfulness, granted Satan permission to afflict him. His children were killed; his property was swept away; he was afflicted with a loathsome disease.

Friends came to commiserate with him, but their conversation was a source of irritation to Job and their “comfort” mocked him. They professed great wisdom about spiritual matters and great understanding of the way in which God worked, but their philosophy was full of falsehood and their arguments stupid and ill conceived as they attempted to convince Job that he suffered because he had committed some secret sin. **“Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?”** (Job 4:7), they asked, and even Job himself was convinced that God had not dealt justly with him.

Finally, God’s voice sounded from the whirlwind, **“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?”** (Job 38:2). The conceit of man in questioning the wisdom of God was challenged with the question, **“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?”** (Job 38:4).

How well might these two questions be addressed to some in our twentieth century who are full of opinions without knowledge. The very air is blue with the empty words of self-important men. Listening to them talk, one would think they knew better than Almighty God how to run the world. They offer advice about problems of which they have no comprehension. They darken counsel **“by words without knowledge.”**

Hearing people, even Christian people, question the goodness and wisdom of God in His dealings with them and with the world which He has made, one cannot help wishing that the Voice out of the whirlwind would ask again, **“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?”**

O Thou Eternal One! whose presence bright  
All space doth occupy, all motions guide;  
Unchanged through time’s all-devastating flight;  
Thou only God! There is no God beside!  
Being of all beings! Mighty One!  
Whom none could comprehend and none explore;  
Who fillest existence with Thyself alone:  
Embracing all, supporting, ruling o’er—  
Being whom we call God, and know no more!

In its sublime research, philosophy  
May measure out the ocean deeps, may count  
The sands or the sun’s rays; but God! For Thee  
There is no weight nor measure: none can mount  
Up to Thy mysteries. Reason’s brightest spark,  
Though kindled by Thy light, in vain would try  
To trace Thy counsels, infinite and dark,  
And thought is lost ere thought can soar so high,  
Even like past moments in eternity.

— Derzhavin

## WANTS AND WISHES

“BUT, Daddy, I need it,” said the little boy. He had asked his father for chewing gum. His father had said teasingly, “Why should I give it to you, Jimmie?” Jimmie wanted the gum so much that he thought he needed it.

There are many folk like Jimmie. They confuse their wishes with their needs. Some things it would be nice to have are not at all necessary. Things we think essential to our life and happiness we discover we can do very well without.

God has promised His children that He will supply their needs. The Bible says to the Christian, **“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 4:19). But that is not enough for some of us. We wish to see our wants supplied also, and we feel that God neglects or forgets us when He does not give us exactly what we want when we want it. We have enough to eat, and enough to wear, and much more, but we want our own favorite nonessential, too. Like Jimmie, we “need” our chewing gum.

Our lives would be much happier if we would trust our Heavenly Father to give what is best and let Him decide what things we need. His judgment in such matters is better than ours. Jesus Christ said, **“Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of”** (Matthew 6:8).

This does not only include temporal things like food and clothes. It covers also our spiritual need, the need of strength in the time of temptation, of comfort in the time of sorrow, of inner peace in the time of war. As God’s child you may not only have the great joy of trusting your Father with the assurance in your heart that He will supply your needs, but you may also enjoy freedom from the responsibility of deciding what the needs are. All needs are met in Jesus Christ. Only He is able to save from sin and every man needs salvation. In Him are also wisdom and knowledge and power. Having Him, we have all needful things beside. **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”** (Matthew 6:33).

## THE BLIND CHILD

I know what Mother’s face is like,  
Although I cannot see;  
It’s like the music of a bell;  
It’s like the roses I can smell—  
Yes, these it’s like to me.

I know what Father’s face is like;  
I’m sure I know it all;  
It’s like his whistle on the air;  
It’s like his arms which take such care  
And never let me fall.

And I can tell what God is like—  
The God whom no one sees.  
He's everything my parents seem;  
He's fairer than my fondest dream,  
And greater than all these.

— Anonymous

## GUILTY

ONE of the most common faults of the human race is the fault of self-deception. We cannot seem to see ourselves as we really are. It is easy to see the fault in the other man, but it is extremely difficult to discover and acknowledge our own. That our neighbor has a vile temper we are quick to admit. We are reluctant to confess our own. In him it is “temper.” In us it is “righteous indignation.” A business associate of ours we consider dishonest, but when our own dealings are a little “shady,” that is simply a “smart move” or a “clever policy.” It is easy to hear the preacher's words and think how they apply to Brother So-and-So and fail to consider that they apply even more to us.

The Prophet Nathan came to King David and told him that there was a certain man in his kingdom who had many sheep and who wanted to prepare a banquet, but instead of slaughtering one of his own flock he stole the one pet lamb which his neighbor owned and killed that and served it. David, full of indignation and wrath at so cruel and so wicked a man, cried out, “**As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and because he had no pity**” (II Samuel 12:5, 6).

The prophet pointed a stern finger at the king and cried, “**Thou art the man**” (verse 7), and the prophet proceeded to uncover the meaning of the parable of the man who killed his neighbor's sheep. David, the king, had taken advantage of his royal power to rob another man of his wife and to send him to the front line of battle to be slain. David was indignant over a sheep stolen by another, but had been completely unconcerned about his own great sin. Having been so dramatically reminded of his guilt, he repented and prayed for forgiveness.

Which of us does not need to pray, “**Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts**” (Psalm 139:23).

Sin has a thousand treacherous arts  
To practice on the mind;  
With flattering looks she tempts our hearts,  
But leaves a sting behind.

With names of virtue she deceives  
The aged and the young;  
And while the heedless wretch believes,  
She makes his fetters strong.

She pleads for all the joys she brings,  
And gives a fair pretence;  
But cheats the soul of heavenly things,  
And chains it down to sense.

— Isaac Watts

## NO REASON FOR FEAR

THE Bible tells of many people who were afraid when there was no reason for fear. We are told that when Peter and James and John beheld the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus, “**they were sore afraid**” (Mark 9:6). The glory of His face and the appearance of Moses and Elias by His side frightened them so much that they did not know what to say, and the thrill of a great experience brought terror to their hearts.

The disciples were caught in a storm at sea and they were so afraid that they woke Jesus, saying, “**Master, carest thou not that we perish?**” (Mark 4:38). How could they fear that the boat in which the God of the sea was riding would be swallowed by the sea!

A woman who had been ill for years and had been unable to find a physician to cure her, touched the hem of Christ’s garment as He passed down crowded streets one day and when He turned and asked, “**Who touched me?**” (Mark 5:31), she fell down “**fearing and trembling**” before Him. Surely, this woman whose faith in God’s Son was so great that she was healed by the touch of His garment had no reason to fear Him who came into the world to give men life.

The women came to the tomb of Christ. They found the stone rolled away, the Lord risen, and an angel on guard, and “**they were affrighted**” (Mark 16:5). Here was no cause for fear. The angel was there to give them the glorious message that Christ was risen.

Christian people today all too often are fearful when there is nothing of which to be afraid. The future should hold no terror for God’s child. The power of God should not frighten those who know His love. The storms of this world should not terrify those of whose lives Christ is the pilot. Men who are out of Christ have much to fear. They are lost here and hereafter, but God’s child in daily fellowship with the Saviour should hear Him say, “**It is I, be not afraid**” (Matthew 14:27).

Give to the winds thy fears;  
Hope and be undismayed;  
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears,  
God shall lift up thy head.

Through waves and clouds and storms  
He gently clears thy way;  
Wait thou His time; so shall this night  
Soon end in joyous day.

Leave to His sovereign sway  
To choose and to command;  
So shalt thou, wondering, own His way,  
How wise, how strong His hand!

Far, far above thy thought  
His counsel shall appear,  
When fully He the work hath wrought  
That caused thy needless fear.

— Paul Gerhardt

### **FOLLOW THE LEADER**

IT SOMETIMES seems to me that the worst sin of our day is the sin of conformity. We fall in line too readily. What other people do, we do. All too often those who claim to be Christians imitate in their lives and habits those who do not claim to be Christians.

Many a man violates his conscience rather than be thought peculiar by refusing to do something he knows is wrong. There is many a young woman who accepts a cocktail because friends around her drink them, and because in the set in which she moves it has become an accepted custom.

We need nonconformists. “**Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God**” (Romans 12:2) is a good motto for Christian people in our day.

They are not supposed to follow with blind devotion the popular practice, but be directed by God’s will. That which is intrinsically wrong does not become right because it becomes commonplace. Sin is sin whether it is popular or not. The great souls who have blessed the world have not been those who went with the crowd. They have been those who went against the crowd. Many of them were willing to die to be different. They gave their lives for holding to an ideal or a truth counter to the practices and beliefs of their day. Today many people would rather die than be different.

When God gave Moses instructions for His chosen people, He included this admonition: “**Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil**” (Exodus 23:2). The tendency of the multitude is away from God and along the pathway of selfish gratification. He who follows the multitude is apt to find himself more often than not doing evil.

Come, Saviour, Jesus from above!  
Assist me with Thy heavenly grace,  
Empty my heart of earthly love,  
And for Thyself prepare the place.

O let Thy sacred presence fill,  
And set my longing spirit free!  
Which pants to have no other will,  
But day and night to feast on Thee.

While in this region here below,  
No other good will I pursue:  
I'll bid this world of noise and show,  
With all its glittering snares, adieu!

That path with humble speed I'll seek,  
In which my Saviour's footsteps shine;  
Nor will I hear, nor will I speak,  
Of any other love but Thine.

Henceforth may no profane delight  
Divide this consecrated soul;  
Possess it, Thou who hast the right,  
As Lord and Master of the whole.

— Antoinette Bourignon

## THE MINORITY WITH GOD

MANY phrases glibly quoted as popular sayings are far from true. Such a phrase is: “The majority is always right.” As a matter of fact, it is to be questioned whether the majority is not more often wrong than right. There certainly can be no doubt that the majority is often wrong. In the days of Copernicus the majority believed that the earth was the center of the universe. In the time of Columbus the majority believed that the world was flat.

Truth is often nurtured and protected by the minority against the attacks and assaults of the majority. Majorities have sent martyrs to the stake. Majorities have crushed liberty and exalted false political theories. The great men and women of the world—those who have been pioneers of progress and enlightenment—have belonged to minorities. All too often the minority has called attention to a truth by suffering for it at the hands of the majority.

Jesus Christ said, “**Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it**” (Matthew 7:13,14). How true His Word is, has been proved by the conduct of men down the centuries. It is being proved today. The majority are greedy for gain, seeking their own pleasure, choosing their own way. The enjoyment of each passing moment and the accumulation of possessions are their chief purposes in life. How few in comparison choose the way of Christ, who said, “**If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me**” (Matthew 16:24). How few choose the things which belong to eternity and not to time!

No, the majority is not always right. The majority usually follows unthinkingly the line of least resistance and greatest immediate personal gratification. The majority is not concerned with truth. The majority seeks what is popular.

Christ's minority walks an unpopular way. They go like lambs among wolves. They are not concerned with being up-to-date and popular. They are, as far as this world is concerned, a minority, but it is better to be in the minority with God than in the majority without Him.

My Redeemer and my Lord,  
I beseech Thee, I entreat Thee,  
Guide me in each act and word,  
That hereafter I may meet Thee,  
Watching, waiting, hoping, yearning,  
With my lamp well trimmed and burning,  
Interceding with these bleeding wounds  
Upon Thy hands and side,  
For all who have lived and erred,  
Thou hast suffered,  
Thou hast died,  
Scourged and mocked and crucified,  
And in the grave hast Thou been buried.

If my feeble prayer can reach Thee,  
Oh, my Saviour, I beseech Thee,  
Even as Thou hast died for me,  
More sincerely  
Let me follow where Thou leadest,  
Let me, bleeding as Thou bleedest,  
Die if dying I may give  
Life to one who asks to live,  
And more nearly,  
Dying thus, resemble Thee.

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

## **THE POINT OF VIEW**

THE angle from which we look at an object is largely responsible for the impression which the object makes upon us. The place where we stand governs our outlook. The “point of view” affects the vision.

God had led the children of Israel out of Egypt. They were camped on the shore of the Red Sea, closed in by the topography of the land between the water and the army of Pharaoh. The pillar of cloud and fire which had led them by day and by night now settled down between them and the army of Pharaoh like a curtain.

To the Egyptians it was “**a cloud and darkness.**” To the Israelites “**it gave light by night**” (Exodus 14:20). Talk about a cloud with a silver lining! Here is one black and gloomy on one side and a flame of brilliance on the other. The Egyptian army in all the pride of its power had set itself against God’s people, and whoever sets himself against them sets himself against God. From their point of view the cloud was darkness. The children of Israel were God’s people on God’s side, led to this spot by God. No wonder the cloud was all brilliance to them! They were in the right place.

The point of view is important. From the standpoint of time, all our little ambitions, our quest for pleasure and physical satisfaction, seem big and important. From the standpoint of eternity, they are petty and insignificant. Our lives are “**as grass.**”

Men solve one problem after a fashion, and are immediately faced with another more difficult problem. From the purely human standpoint the future at best looks gloomy and foreboding. Seen from the viewpoint of God, the future is bright and glorious. This world is to become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. When God’s Son returns to reign, He will solve all problems, settle all strikes.

The Christian should be an optimist. He is in the position always to look on the bright side.

Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest,  
Far did I rove, and found no certain home;  
At last I sought them in His sheltering breast,  
Who opes His arms, and bids the weary come:  
With Him I found a home, a rest divine,  
And since then I am His, and He is mine.

The good I have is from His stores supplied,  
The ill is only what He deems the best;  
He for my Friend, I’m rich with nought beside,  
And poor without Him, though of all possessed:  
Changes may come—I take, or I resign,  
Content, while I am His, while He is mine.

— John Quarks and Henry F. Lyle

## **IT PAYS TO DO RIGHT**

AMAZIAH, the king of Judah, was a “practical” man. He hired a hundred thousand mercenary soldiers from Israel, paying them one hundred talents of silver. These men were to join with his own armies in the wars of conquest which he planned, but God was opposed to “the deal.” He wanted Judah to be dependent upon Him and not upon hired soldiers. The Lord sent a prophet to Amaziah, who said, “**Let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord is not with Israel**” (II Chronicles 25:7).

Amaziah heard the prophet speak the words of the Lord and then replied, “**But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?**” (II Chronicles 25:9). God had spoken. The king’s only concern should have been to do that which God commanded, but he was worried about his hundred talents.

There are many people like that today. They know what God wants them to do. They are perfectly aware of what is the right thing to do, but instead of doing it, they weigh the consequences and ask themselves how much it is going to cost them.

- Business men say, “I know that this is the right thing to do, but I cannot afford to do it. It will hurt my business.”
- Politicians say, “This is the right side of this issue. I should support it, but I cannot afford to. I have to stand in with my constituency. It will cost me votes.”
- There are even some preachers who are unwilling to speak the truth because it may irritate someone who is a prominent member of the church or who helps with his financial support.

Amaziah was not the first man to raise the question about the cost of doing God’s will, and he certainly was not the last. The prophet had an answer from God to Amaziah’s question, “**The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.**” It is an answer which the man who is tempted to compromise for fear of the cost might take to himself. It “pays” to do right, but men should do right because it is right, even if it does not “pay.”

Almighty and Eternal God, the Disposer of all the affairs of the world, there is not one circumstance so great as not to be subject to Thy power, nor so small but it comes within Thy care; Thy goodness and wisdom show themselves through all Thy works, and Thy loving-kindness and mercy appear in the several dispensations of Thy providence. May we readily submit ourselves to Thy pleasure and sincerely resign our wills to Thine, with all patience, meekness and humility; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Queen Anne of England

## **MOURN NOT**

GOD does not promise the Christian that he will not have sorrow. The world is full of grief and God’s child has no right to expect to be free from it. The Christian as well as the sinner loses his loved ones. He feels the anguish of parting and knows the sadness of death. Indeed, the Christian should not only expect sorrow, he should expect persecution also, for if we would live godly in this present world, we shall suffer persecution (II Timothy 3:12).

But the Christian’s sorrow is not like the sorrow of the sinner. “**Ye sorrow not,**” cried Paul, “**even as others which have no hope**” (I Thessalonians 4:13). The sinner sees the tomb sealed and turns away with no hope of being united with the loved one laid to rest. To him death is darkness with no promise of daybreak, night with no hope of dawn. The Christian beside the tomb of one whom he loves knows the sorrow of separation but it is “**for a little while.**” The trusting child of God fallen asleep in Christ has gone to be with his Lord. Someday his Lord will return.

The spirit of the sleeping Christian will be reunited with his body and he will come forth from the dust to be caught up with the living saints in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (I Corinthians 15:52). Loved ones separated by death will be reunited for eternity.

The resurrection of the Christian is assured. Christ who has Himself conquered death, the Risen One who is the firstfruits of them that sleep, declares, “**He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live**” (John 11:25).

The Christian can expect sometime to stand under a cloud of sorrow, but it is a cloud draped with a rainbow of divine promise of resurrection. We sorrow not as those who have no hope. Whittier put into poetry his pity for those who do not have the Christian’s blessed hope:

Alas! for him who never sees  
The stars shine through the cypress-trees!  
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,  
Nor looks to see the breaking day  
Across the mournful marbles play!  
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,  
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,  
That Life is ever lord of Death,  
And Love can never lose its own!

O my God! If Thou art pleased to render me a spectacle to men and angels, Thy holy will be done! All I ask is that Thou wilt be with and save those who love Thee, so that neither life nor death, neither principalities nor powers may ever separate them from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ. As for me, what matters it what men think of me, or what they make me suffer, since they cannot separate me from that Saviour whose Name is engraven in the very bottom of my heart? If I can only be accepted of Him, I am willing that all men should despise and hate me. Their strokes will polish what may be defective in me, so that I may be presented in peace to Him, for whom I die daily. Without His favor I am wretched. O Saviour! I present myself before Thee an offering, a sacrifice. Purify me in Thy blood, that I may be accepted of Thee. Amen.

— *Jeanne Marie Guy on, who was imprisoned in the Bastille because of her religious beliefs.*

## WHEN GOD GOES TO JAIL

JOSEPH was in prison. He was there not because he had done wrong but because he had done right. Because he had repulsed the advances of the wife of Potiphar, his master, she had lied about him and had falsely accused him; and he had, therefore, been thrown into prison.

The thirty-ninth chapter of Genesis, which tells the story, says, “**And he was there in the prison. But the Lord was with Joseph.**” It is better to be in jail and have God with you than it is to be out of jail and without God. It is better to have a body in prison and the soul free than it is to have a body free and the soul in the prison of sin. “**The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord**” (Psalm 37:23), and if, as a good man, your steps are ordered of God to jail, God will share your prison cell.

The presence of God can transform a dungeon into a colony of heaven, but a palace without His presence and without His love to bless it may be a bit of hell itself.

This is not the day—at least in America—when it is common for men to be put into prison for refusing to do evil. There are, however, other surroundings in life just as unpleasant as a cell, and there are circumstances in life just as confining as the bolts and bars of a prison. The God whose presence made Joseph's time of imprisonment a time of blessing for him and a time of ministry to others, will, if our lives are yielded to Him, bless us and make us a source of blessing wherever we may be.

From his prison Joseph went to a position of power in Egypt second only to the king's. The God who was with him in prison went with him to the palace. In the day of his prominence and wealth Joseph remained faithful to God as he had been while in jail. I wonder if that was not the real test of the quality of his faith and spiritual experience. Many a man who enjoys the blessings of fellowship with the Most High in the time of disappointment and sorrow and poverty forgets Him amid wealth and prosperity and prominence.

How tedious and tasteless the hours  
When Jesus no longer I see;  
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers  
Have all lost their sweetness to me;  
The midsummer sun shines but dim,  
The fields strive in vain to look gay;  
But when I am happy in Him,  
December's as pleasant as May.

His Name yields the richest perfume,  
And sweeter than music His voice;  
His presence disperses my gloom,  
And makes all within me rejoice;  
I should, were He always thus nigh,  
Have nothing to wish or to fear;  
No mortal so happy as I,  
My summer would last all the year.

Content with beholding His face,  
My all to His pleasure resigned,  
No changes of season or place  
Would make any change in my mind:  
While blest with a sense of His love,  
A palace a toy would appear;  
And prisons would palaces prove,  
If Jesus would dwell with me there.

— John Newton

## HABITS

WHAT you are is revealed not so much by what you do on special occasions as by what you do habitually. Habits develop through constant repetition of an act. Behind an act is a thought. Character is built act upon act and thought upon thought as a building rises stone upon stone.

Habits reveal character because they indicate the process of the thinking. That which has become such a part of you that you do it unconsciously and habitually reveals what you are. Psychology has discovered this truth, but it was truth before modern “wise men” stumbled upon it. It is the truth set forth over and over in the Word of God:

- **“As he thinketh in his heart, so is he”** (Proverbs 23:7);
- **“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”** (Proverbs 4:23);
- **“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things”** (Matthew 12:35).

Abraham lived habitually in such close communion with God that it became the most natural thing in the world for Abraham to set up an altar for sacrifice wherever he pitched his tent. David forgave his enemies so often that it became a natural part of his character to be forgiving. Moses was habitually so patient that we scarcely notice all the manifestations of patience in the life of this man whom the Bible describes as **“very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth”** (Numbers 12:3).

We notice his act of anger in smiting the rock (Numbers 20:11) for the very reason that it is so unlike him. The obedience to God’s command which is natural for the old Prophet Samuel had its roots in the obedience of the young lad Samuel.

Something of the nature of our Lord Himself may be seen in the casual phrase, **“as his custom was, he went into the synagogue”** (Luke 4:16).

Habits are important whether they be habits of action or the habits of thought which precede the action, but the grace and power of God are sufficient to break the strong chain of evil habit and of wicked thinking. He is able to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit within. He can destroy the power of sinful habits. Indeed, He is able to regenerate completely, to make over the entire life.

Searcher of Hearts!—from mine erase  
All thoughts that should not be,  
And in its deep recesses trace  
My gratitude to Thee!

Hearer of Prayer!—oh, guide aright  
Each word and deed of mine;  
Life’s battle teach me how to fight,  
And be the victory Thine.

Giver of All! — for every good  
In the Redeemer came—  
For raiment, shelter and for food,  
I thank Thee in His Name.

Father and Son and Holy Ghost!  
Thou glorious Three in One!  
Thou knowest best what I need most,  
And let Thy will be done.

— George Pope Morris

### **GOD'S CURE FOR FAINTING SPELLS**

LUKE tells us that the Lord spoke one of His parables to convey to His hearers the truth “**that men ought always to pray, and not to faint**” (Luke 18:1).

We think of prayer as a privilege, which certainly it is. One of the great miracles of God's grace is the fact that man may enjoy in prayer communion with God, that in prayer man may make his desires known to God, that he may in prayer discover God's will and ask God's intervention in his affairs. But prayer is more than a privilege. It is an obligation. Each individual in the universe has a responsibility to do his best. Every father has a responsibility to be the best possible father to his child. Every child has a responsibility to his parents which it is his duty to meet to the best of his ability. Every businessman has an obligation of honor and integrity and industry, and it is the plain teaching of the Word of God that it is a sin for a man to do less than his best.

No one can do his best until he taps the resources of Deity and seeks divine guidance. Prayer is, therefore, an obligation. Christians are commanded to “**pray without ceasing**,” that is, to maintain a constant attitude of prayer, to keep in constant communion and fellowship with the Father. Paul more than once urged the saints to pray for him; and to Timothy, his son in the Gospel, he declared, “**I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting**” (I Timothy 2:8).

Prayer is instinctive. Men who have professed to doubt the existence of Deity in the midst of great battle or in a storm at sea have cried out to God when death seemed imminent. How much better to be in constant communion and fellowship with Him, regenerated children of God, making our desires and requests known unto Him, who is our Father, assured that “**like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him**” (Psalm 103:13).

Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!  
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!  
What parched ground refresh as with a shower!  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;

We rise, and all, the distant and the near,  
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;  
We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!  
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,  
Or other—that we are not always strong—  
That we are sometimes overborne with care—  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled—when with us is prayer,  
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?

— Richard C. Trench

## THE STATE OF CONTENTMENT

THE “State of Contentment” is thinly populated. Few-people know when they are well off. Most of us are like the children of Israel during their years in the wilderness.

They had been freed from slavery in Egypt. Their backs were scarred by the lashes which the taskmasters had laid upon them there. Their hands were still calloused with the toil of their slavery. Here in the wilderness they were free men out of whom God was building a nation.

- His tabernacle had been established in their midst.
- His presence had been shown by the pillar of fire by night and cloud by day.
- His law had been given them by His hand.
- Their clothes and their shoes were being miraculously preserved from wear.
- They were being fed by manna from heaven.

It was no longer necessary for them to labor for the Egyptian taskmaster and feed upon the meal of slaves wearily prepared after the hard labor of the day. They had simply to pick up the manna God generously poured out each day.

But they grew tired of manna and began to long for the fleshpots of Egypt. They complained about God’s menu and for the sake of the pleasure of their palates wished themselves back under the bondage of Pharaoh.

They had forgotten the sting of the lash and the cruelty of the Egyptians. All they remembered was the odor of cooking meat.

It would seem that their hearts would have been so full of thanksgiving and praise that there would have been no room for complaint. But these Israelites are not the only ones who have lacked the virtue of contentment. Some even of the godly have need to pray for a contented heart, without which no man ever truly possesses all that God intends him to have of blessing.

**“Godliness with contentment is great gain” (I Timothy 6:6).**

A little bird I am,  
Shut in from fields of air,  
And in my cage I sit and sing  
To Him who placed me there;  
Well pleased a prisoner to be,  
Because, my God, it pleases Thee!

Naught have I else to do;  
I sing the whole day long;  
And He whom I most love to please  
Doth listen to my song;  
He caught and bound my wandering wing,  
And still He bends to hear me sing.

Thou hast an ear to hear.  
A heart to love and bless;  
And though my notes were e'er so rude,  
Thou wouldst not hear the less;  
Because Thou knowest as they fall,  
That love, sweet love, inspires them all.

My cage confines me round,  
Abroad I cannot fly;  
But though my wing is closely bound,  
My heart's at liberty;  
My prison walls cannot control  
The flight, the freedom of the soul.

Oh, it is good to soar,  
These bolts and bars above,  
To Him whose purpose I adore,  
Whose providence I love;  
And in Thy mighty will to find  
The joy, the freedom of the mind.

— Madame Guyon (*written in the Bastille*)

### **“THE THING WE FORGET WITH”**

SOMEONE asked a little boy what his memory was. He replied, “My memory is the thing I forget with.”

His definition accurately describes the memories of some of us with regard to the blessings and benefits of almighty God. Benisons are poured out upon us. We quickly forget.

As one reads the history of Israel in the Old Testament he finds abundant evidence of man's tendency to forget God's goodness. God brought Israel out of Egypt; He overthrew the power of Pharaoh, the mighty monarch, the ruler of a great nation; he sent plagues upon the land in order to set the people free. Pharaoh and his army were destroyed in the Red Sea. Surely, these happenings were sufficient evidence that the God who brought them out of Egypt was a God who was abundantly able to protect His chosen people and give them the land which He had appointed for them, but when they sent spies into the land, they came back with stories of walled cities, "**fenced up to heaven,**" of giants in the land — powerful, mighty men.

All the spies except Caleb and Joshua advised Israel not to attempt to capture the land. They forgot the power of God, so impressed were they with the physique of the giants. The people accepted their advice and the fear which the spies felt became the fear of the whole nation. For forty years Israel wandered in the wilder-ness until the entire generation died because they forgot the mercy and power of God manifested in their delivery from Egypt.

No wonder, then, that in the book of Deuteronomy the Lord urged Israel to "**well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt**" (Deuteronomy 7:18). The very laws which God instituted, the very ceremonies which He established for the government of His people and for their worship of Him, were to remind them of His power and His grace and His love. God said to them, "**When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand**" (Deuteronomy 6:20, 21).

God is faithful and never forgets His own. How His heart must be grieved at our forgetting Him!

Over and over again He has proved that His grace is sufficient to meet all our needs, yet new trials bring new fears unassuaged by the memory of past blessing. How much happier we would be, how strong to meet the responsibilities of each day, if we would take as our motto and put into practice those words in the fourth verse of the first chapter of the Song of Solomon, "**We will remember thy love.**"

Though I forget Him and wander away,  
Yet doth He love me wherever I stray,  
Back to His dear loving arms would I flee,  
When I remember that Jesus loves me.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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