

SHOWERS UPON THE GRASS

A companion volume to As the Small Rain

by

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CHAPTER ONE

“THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD”

FOOL’S HEART

The existence of God is a self-evident fact. One has only to look about him at the wonders of the universe and at the beauties of nature to realize that back of all the visible creation is a Deity who planned and wrought it.

- The wonders of the heavenly bodies, hanging like myriad candles to light the capacious halls of space, reflect dimly the radiance of the Divine Mind which gives them light.
- The microscopic life teeming in a drop of water evidences with no less certainty the existence of the Author of all life.
- The glory of God gleams in the pyrotechnics of the aurora borealis.
- The power of God is apparent when the storm rides the wings of the wind.
- The majesty of God is manifested when the earth which He created trembles in His presence and the earthquake shakes the rocks.
- The beauty of the rainbow, unfurled like a banner across the heavens, proclaims His residence in His universe.

The mind of man can but recognize in the split second accuracy of planetary motion, in the ordered sequence of the seasons, in the cycle of the processes of life in nature, the presence of a divine mind, a divine hand—a divine Lord. Truly: **“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork”** (Psalm 19:1).

The Psalmist declares: **“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”** (Psalm 14:1). In the face of all the overwhelming evidence, the man who denies the existence of the Creator is nothing more than a fool. The Word of God, always so accurate, says that it is in his heart that the fool has said: **“There is no God.”** Despite all the evidence which must convince the mind of the fact of deity, many men in their self-willed hearts deny the existence of the eternal God.

God, by the very fact of His existence, demands worship and obedience. Some men, proud and rebellious and unwilling to submit themselves to these demands, in their hearts, where the pride and rebellion have their source, say there is no God. Such men, says the Bible, are “fools.”

To a Snowflake

What heart could have thought you?—
Past our devisal
(O filigree petal!)
Fashioned so purely,
Fragilely, surely,
From what Paradisiacal
Imagineless metal,
Too costly for cost?
Who hammered you, wrought you,
From argentine vapor ?—
“God was my shaper.
Passing surmised,
He hammered, He wrought me,
From curled silver vapor,
To lust of His mind:—
Thou couldst not have thought me!
So purely, so palely,
Tinily, surely,
Mightily, frailly,
Insculped and embossed,
With His hammer of wind,
And His graver of frost.”

— Francis Thompson

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THE KING ON HIGH

“**In the year that king Uzziah died I saw . . . the Lord . . .**” (Isaiah 6:1).

Isaiah had no doubt felt great hopes for the land when King Uzziah came to the throne. A noble, high-minded man, Uzziah seemed not only greatly gifted and wise in matters of government, but appeared also to be a spiritual man, devoted to the Lord. But, as is so often the case with men in positions of prominence and power, pride came into the heart of the king, and he usurped the office of the priest. He went into the Temple and made sacrifice to God—something that a king had no more right to do than any other layman during the Old Testament economy; and because of his sin and presumption, he was smitten with leprosy there in the Temple, and from the leprosy he died.

So the hopes of men set on the king were dashed, and there can be no doubt that those who were concerned for the cause of the nation were despondent.

Among these must have been Isaiah. But in the year that the king died, he saw the vision of the King, the Lord of Hosts, upon His throne, the One whose glory filled the Temple. Temporal monarchs die, but the King of the universe sits in power and majesty up on His throne. Wise is the man whose trust is set in Him and not in the power of the wisdom and the righteousness of men.

It is sometimes necessary for God to take away a great man if a nation is to trust in Him.

Sometimes even good men have to pass from the scene so that others may get the right perspective and turn their eyes upon God. Uzziah had brought much promise to the throne with him, but he died, a disappointment to his people, in sin and defeat. God is the never-changing One, the same yesterday, today and forever; the One who never disappoints those whose trust and hope is set in Him.

- Kings die; God reigns.
- Men fail; God is unfailing.
- The glories of mankind fade as the flesh of Uzziah faded under the blight of the leprosy.
- The glory of the Lord fills the universe.

“In the year that king Uzziah died,” Isaiah saw the King.

Happy is the man who never loses sight, amid the pomp and pageantry of human power, of the God of heaven and earth, who does not need to wait for the king to die to behold the King high and lifted up.

The Lord Jehovah reigns,
His throne is built on high;
The garments He assumes
Are light and majesty:
His glories shine with beams so bright,
No mortal eye can bear the sight.

The thunders of His hand
Keep the wide world in awe;
His wrath and justice stand
To guard His holy law;
And where His love resolves to bless,
His truth confirms and seals the grace.

Through all His mighty works
Amazing wisdom shines;
Confounds the powers of hell,
And all their dark designs;
Strong is His arm, and shall fulfill
His great decrees and sovereign will.

And will this sovereign King
Of glory condescend,
And will He write His name,
My Father and my Friend?
I love His name, I love His Word;
Join all my powers to praise the Lord!

— Isaac Watts

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GOD'S FAMILY

God is not the Father of all men, and all men are not brothers one of another. This is true in spite of the popular misconceptions of our day. The teaching of the Bible is very plain on these matters.

God is the Creator of all men. He is the Father of men whom He has made, only in the sense that the watchmaker is the father of the watch. He is the Author of our being.

That “**In him we live, and move, and have our being**” (Acts 17:28) is very clear, but He is not the Father of all men in the sense of the family relationship of father and child. Men are born into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When by faith we are born again of God's Holy Spirit, we become His children. The very life of God becomes ours. We become, as the Word puts it, “**Partakers of the Holy Ghost**” (Hebrews 6:4). Until that miracle occurs, we have no right to call God our Father.

Those Jewish leaders who hated Jesus Christ were boasting of their claim on God, since they were descendants of Abraham whom God called; but Jesus declared to them: “**Ye are of your father the devil**” (John 8:44). “**If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me**” (John 8:42).

So then in the same fashion, men become brothers. Those who are children of the same father naturally are members of the same family and brothers one of another; and until men come into the proper relationship with God by accepting His Son, they are not brothers of each other.

Naturally, a Christian has an obligation to all men. It is his duty and his desire, if he be a true child of God, to do everything he can to help other men, not because they are all his brothers, but because they are his neighbors and because, if the Spirit of the Lord Jesus is in control of his life, he will, like his Saviour, seek to manifest the proper attitude of kindness and consideration to all men. One of the apostles put it this way: “**As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith**” (Galatians 6:10). A Christian has an obligation to men who are his neighbors; he has an obligation, also, to those who are of like precious faith, his brethren in Christ.

All men have a responsibility to God: He is the Creator. Only those who have accepted the gift of His love and open their hearts for His Son to enter, only those who have been born into His family, have the rights of sons and the privilege of claiming the rights of a child of the Heavenly Father.

O hearts are bruised and dead,
And homes are bare and cold,
And lambs for whom the Shepherd bled
Are straying from the fold!

To comfort and to bless,
To find a balm for woe,
To tend the lone and fatherless,
Is angels' work below.

The captive to release,
To God the lost to bring,
To teach the way of life and peace—
It is a Christlike thing.

And we believe Thy Word,
Though dim our faith may be;
Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord,
We do it unto Thee.

—William W. How

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THE IMPOSSIBLE SOLVED

The Sadducees at the time of Christ thought of themselves as the wise and enlightened of their generation. They were too intellectual to believe in angels and immortality. They were above such things. In an attempt to trap Jesus, they came to Him with the story of a woman who outlived seven husbands, and they asked Him this question: **“In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them?”** (Mark 12:23).

They, no doubt, considered the difficulties which they felt would attend such a situation as this a very good reason for believing that there would be no resurrection of the dead. Doubtless this same manufactured incident which they had devised had raised an argument left unanswered in many a previous discussion with those who believed in the Resurrection.

“Do ye not therefore err,” said Jesus, **“because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?”** (Mark 12:24). The Sadducees were proud of their logic and wisdom, but Jesus said to them, ***“You are in error, and it is an error which springs from ignorance.”***

Ignorance of God's power is the cause of many a spiritual error. The man who has experienced God's power in his own life has a living evidence within himself that God is great enough to solve the "impossible" and overcome the "insurmountable."

The man who was dead in trespasses and sin, but who has been born again of God's Spirit, will not likely question the Resurrection of the dead. When you know an omnipotent God you have no trouble in accepting the miraculous.

The Sadducees were in error because they were ignorant of the Scripture. The false religions of our modern day win their converts from among those who do not know the Word of God. Knowledge of the Scriptures will dispel superstition and error. The greatest difficulties in understanding the Bible face those who know the least about it.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). That has to do with a reverence for the power of God.

"The knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

No man can come to a knowledge of the Holy except as it is revealed in the Holy Word of God and by the Holy Spirit, who is the author of the Book.

Great truths are dearly bought. The common truth
Such as men give and take from day to day,
Comes in the common walks of easy life,
Blown by the careless wind across our way.

Bought in the market, at the current price,
Bred of the smile, the jest, perchance the bowl,
It tells no tale of daring or of worth,
Nor pierces even the surface of a soul.

Great truths are greatly won. Not found by chance,
Nor wafted on the breath of summer dream,
But grasped in the great struggle of the soul,
Hard buffeting with adverse wind and stream.

Not in the general mart, 'mid corn and wine,
Not in the merchandise of gold and gems,
Not in the world's gay halls of midnight mirth,
Not 'mid the blaze of regal diadems,

But in the day of conflict, fear and grief,
When the strong hand of God, put forth in might,
Plows up the subsoil of the stagnant heart,
And brings the imprisoned truth seed to the light.

Wrung from the troubled spirit in hard hours
Of weakness, solitude, perchance of pain,
Truth springs, like harvest, from the well-plowed field,
And the soul feels it has not wept in vain.

— Horatius Bonar

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DYING WORDS

The dying words of great men hold a strange fascination for the living. It seems sometimes that God gives to good men, in the last fleeting moment of life a prophetic glimpse of things to come or special inspiration to speak words of truth and power.

Joseph was a good man; he was also a great man; and his dying words were, “**I die: and God will surely visit you . . .**” (Genesis 50:24). These words spoken to his family must have seemed to his descendants a long while in coming to fulfillment, if, indeed, they were remembered by them at all. Joseph died and Pharaoh died. The Bible tells us, “**There arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph**” (Exodus 1:8), and the people of Israel were made slaves to the Egyptians and set to hard tasks. They ate the bread of servitude and felt the lash upon their backs. Yet God in His own good time visited them and raised up Moses to lead them into freedom and set their feet upon a path toward national glory.

“**I die: and God will surely visit you.**” These words are worth our consideration, too, and there is a truth in them for us; it is this: no man is indispensable, for there is a God who is greater than men, who gives to nations their leadership and who is mightier than any man whom He raises up. There is always a great danger in time of national distress or depression or war for a people to look blindly to a leader, trusting that he will bring deliverance and solve the problems. It is sometimes necessary for God to take away a great man in order to teach the nation anew that deliverance is not in the hand of any man but of the God who made heaven and earth, who lifts up nations and brings them low, who builds and destroys with a rod of iron. The most popular hero may pass away, the most beloved leader may die, but if the trust of the people is in God, surely He will visit them.

Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord for He is kind;
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us blaze His name abroad,
For of gods He is the God;
Who by all-commanding might,
Filled the new-made world with light.

He the golden tressed sun
Caused all day his course to run;
Th' horned moon to shine by night,
'Mid her spangled sisters bright.

He His chosen race did bless,
In the wasteful wilderness;
He hath, with a piteous eye,
Looked upon our misery.

All things living He doth feed.
His full hand supplies their need;
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

—John Milton

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ETERNITY SET

The King James version of the Bible does not always catch all the fullness of meaning in the language. Ecclesiastes 3:11 is thus rendered in the authorized version, “**He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end,**” but the full meaning of the text is this: “*He hath set eternity in their heart.*”

The wise man has been reasoning about the matters of life and has declared that “**to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose . . .**” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). There is a time for life and for death, for joy and for sorrow, for planting and for reaping. What a weary round! Is this all purposeless? Quite definitely the wise man decides it is not. There is a purpose in it all, for God “**hath made every thing beautiful in his time,**” and each in its proper season has its own peculiar beauty of purpose. But the constant changing of life, of seasons and of circumstances is emphasized. All life is variable. All around is change and decay, but in man’s heart God has set eternity.

God has set within each man a longing for immortality, a hunger for eternal life, a desire to live when this earthly house of this tabernacle is “**dissolved**” (II Corinthians 5:1). Animals find the end and purpose of their lives in this world, but in the heart of man God sets eternity! That is why no man can be fully satisfied with the gratification of the desires of the flesh. Jesus Christ describes the rich man with his barns full, who said to his soul: “**Soul . . . eat.**” It cannot be done.

The soul cannot feed upon the store of grain in the granary. This feeds the body, but in the heart eternity is hid and only that which is eternal can satisfy its hunger. What then is the answer?

Augustine had it when he said, “Thou hast made us for Thyself, and the heart never resteth till it findeth rest in Thee.”

While, with ceaseless course, the sun
Hasted through the former years,
Many souls their race have run,
Nevermore to meet us here:
Fixed in an eternal state,
They have done with all below;
We a little longer wait,
But how little, none can know.

As the winged arrow flies
Speedily the mark to find;
As the lightning from the skies
Darts, and leaves no trace behind;
Swiftly thus our fleeting days
Bear us down life’s rapid stream;
Upward, Lord, our spirits raise;
All below is but a dream.

Thanks for mercies past received;
Pardon of our sins renew;
Teach us henceforth how to live
With eternity in view:
Bless Thy word to young and old;
Fill us with a Saviour’s love;
And when life’s short tale is told,
May we dwell with Thee above.

—John Newton

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GOD’S HANDIWORK

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork” (Psalm 19:1).

The whole creation praises God, for He it is who created all things.

Everything that was made was made for His honor and for His praise.

- He is the One who hung the world on nothing and the North on empty space.
- He is the God who reared the battlements of the hills against the sky
- He is the One who hangs the pink curtain of the dawn in the East.

- He is the One who set the music in the throat of the nightingale to make beautiful the springtime.
- He is the One who sends the rain to wash the earth, to kiss the flowers and to anoint the green things with freshness.
- He is the God who drives the chariot of the sun across the heavens.
- He is the One who spreads the velvet night like a dark cloak about the sleeping form of a weary earth.
- He is the God who sends dewdrops like tears of joy on the face of the morning.
- He is the One who established the deep places of the seas and who covered those hollows with the garment of water.
- He is the One who knows the treasures of the deep.
- He is the God who said, “**Let there be light,**” and there was light.
- He is the God who commanded: “**Let the dry land appear.**”
- He is the God who makes the green things burst through the sod and push into the sunlight seeking His face who is the God of heaven.
- He is the Lord of all creation!

There was one purpose in your coming into the world, and that was to glorify God. When He made you, He framed the foundation of bone. He fixed the joints and the marrow; He put the muscles there and gave you a brain to control the use of the muscles through the system of the nerves.

He gave you power to think and eyes to see and lips to praise Him and the powers of the senses to contact the world around you. “What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason,”

There is no greater evidence of the power and of the existence of God than your own mortal body.

Those evening clouds, that setting ray,
And beauteous tints, serve to display
Their great Creator’s praise;

Then let the short-lived thing call’d man,
Whose life’s comprised within a span,
To Him his homage raise.

We often praise the evening clouds,
And tints so gay and bold,
But seldom think upon our God,
Who tinged these clouds with gold.

— Sir Walter Scott

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TIME, PLEASE!

Here is a story which is humorous and at the same time points a moral worth considering.

At almost the same hour each day a man's voice would ask the telephone operator in a little New England town for the exact time. Day in and day out this went on. Finally, at the end of two years, unable to contain her curiosity any longer, the operator inquired, "Would you mind telling me why you call here every morning to ask the correct time?"

"Why, certainly," the man's voice answered; "I blow the town whistle at noon, and I want to be sure that my clock is right."

"That is strange," the operator replied. "For the last two years I have set my clock every day by the town whistle."

That is what I call getting in a rut! But theirs was the sort of rut a merry-go-round would make if it had wheels— around and around and around.

To get the right time, one must go to an observatory clock. The observatory gets time from the stars; and to be absolutely correct, a clock must be set by this celestial time. God's clock, the heavenly bodies, never gains or loses one second. Every timepiece which man has ever invented is fallible and variable, it is to be kept accurate, its time must be checked by the stars.

So it is with all things which man can devise. Social institutions, customs, morals, laws, governments—all these, if based wholly on man's conceptions or on some other man-made institution, custom, moral, law or government, are quite as apt as not to be wrong. All human institutions and human concepts must, if they have value, be checked against the eternal verities of God's Truth. The Bible gives us the divine standard.

As the time kept by the heavenly bodies is the only safe and accurate standard by which men's clocks may be set, so is this Book the only unchanging and eternal standard by which institutions and customs may be measured. Principles of right and wrong are unchanging. That which was true five thousand years ago is true today. Men's ideas of truth may change. Man's standards may vary from generation to generation, but God's Word is forever fixed in heaven. Only that concept or that institution which is based upon the truths revealed in the Word of God can make claim to Truth.

Jesus, my Truth, my Way,
My sure, unerring Light,
On Thee my feeble steps I stay,
Which Thou wilt guide aright.

My Wisdom and my Guide,
My Counselor Thou art;
O never let me leave Thy side,
Or from Thy paths depart!

Teach me the happy art
In all things to depend On Thee;
O never, Lord, depart,
But love me to the end!

— Charles Wesley

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ALL INSPIRED

Rather frequently you hear someone say, “I believe in the teachings of Jesus, but I cannot accept the inspiration of the Old Testament. I believe in the sort of life which Jesus lived and in God as He revealed Him, but I cannot believe in the cruel God of the Old Testament. The New Testament I will accept, but I cannot accept the Old.”

Actually, the man who makes this statement knows very little about God at all. The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New is one God. Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, God incarnate in the flesh, is Himself the Creator of the universe; for we are told that: **“all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”** (John 1:3). He declares: **“I and my Father are One”** (John 10:30); **“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”** (John 14:9). He identifies Himself very clearly with the Eternal God, the God of both the Old and the New Testament, when He declares: **“Before Abraham was, I am”** (John 8:58).

God is eternal and unchanging: **“the same yesterday, and today, and forever”** (Hebrews 13:8). He is a God of infinite majesty, infinite justice, infinite purity and infinite love.

A parent may manifest his love for a child in discipline and restraint and punishment as definitely as he does by caress and affection and tender speeches. In the Old Testament, God gives men laws which are as much an evidence of His love for men as the grace which He manifests in the death of the Lord Jesus in the New.

Suppose a father, knowing that a river is turbulent and dangerous and full of whirlpools, says to his son, “You must not swim here.” He forbids his son to swim in the river, because he knows the dangers that are there; but when the son, disobedient to his father’s commands, swims anyway and is sucked down by the whirlpool and is at the point of drowning, the father leaps in and at the risk of his own life saves his son. So God establishes in the Old Testament His law for the good of the creatures which He has made; but when they, disobedient, violate His law and are thereby lost and undone, He comes in the Person of the Saviour, that on the Cross He may rescue them from death and sin.

No, there is no difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New. He is One. The man who says, “I don’t accept the God of the Old Testament, but I believe in the God of Jesus,” shows that he knows nothing at all about either Jesus Christ or His Father.

Our Lord Himself said this of those who refused to accept the words of Moses in the Old Testament: **“If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”** (John 5:47). The man who rejects Moses’ testimony of God cannot accept the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, for Christ is the God about whom Moses wrote.

O how I fear Thee, living God,
With deepest, tenderest fears,
And worship Thee with trembling hope,
And penitential tears.

Yet I may love Thee, too, O Lord,
Almighty as Thou art;
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart.

No earthly father loves like Thee,
No mother half so mild
Bears and forbears, as Thou hast done
With me, Thy sinful child.

Father of Jesus, love’s reward!
What rapture will it be,
Prostrate before Thy throne to lie,
And gaze and gaze on Thee!

— Frederick W. Faber

~ end of chapter 1 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
