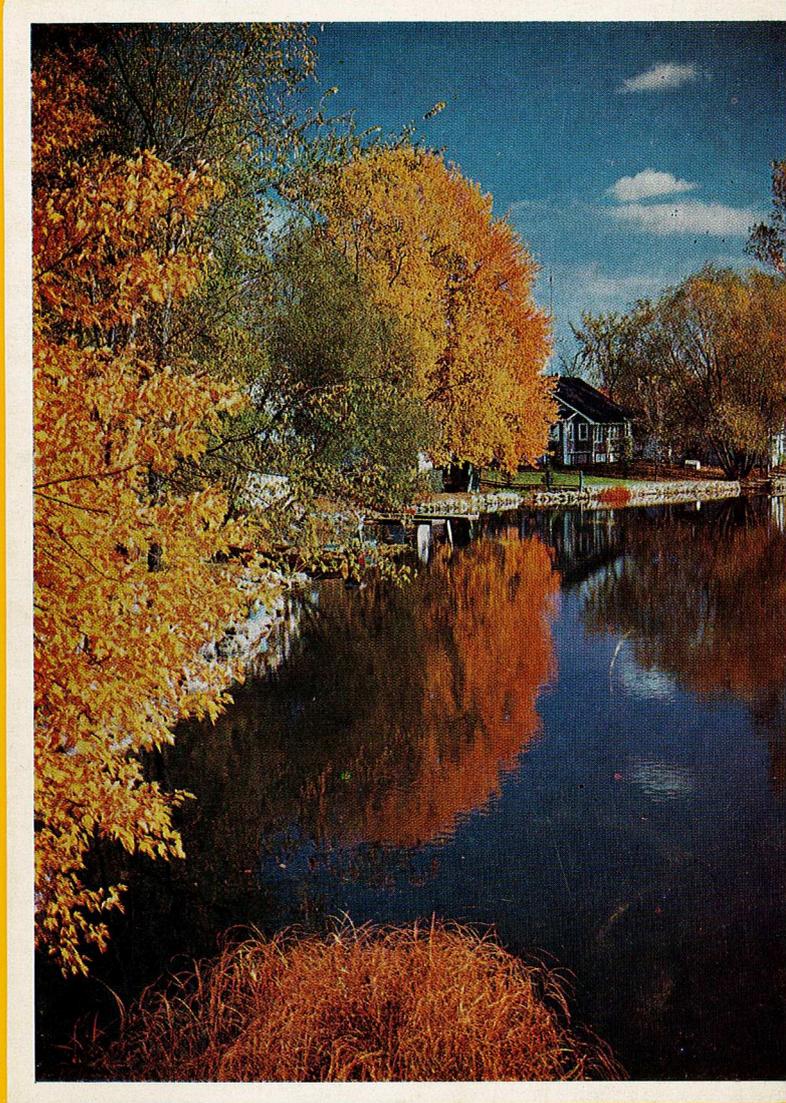


QUIET MOMENTS WITH GOD

V. M. SULLIVAN



DAILY DEVOTIONAL MESSAGES

552

QUIET MOMENTS WITH GOD

Daily Devotional
Messages

by

V. M. Sullivan

Other books by V. M. Sullivan

"BIBLE TEACHING MADE EASY"

"SHELTERING WINGS"

"HE LEADETH ME"

"REST AND REFRESHING"

*Moore College
Library*

MOORE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 2042 10100811 2

First Edition, November, 1966
Second Edition, November, 1969

Wholly set up and printed by J. Bell & Co. Pty. Ltd., Sydney,
for the publishers

Registered at the General Post Office for transmission through post as a book

Church Missionary Society
Sydney: 93 Bathurst Street
Parramatta: City Hall, Church Street

CHRISTIAN PRESS PTY. LTD.
Sydney, Australia

*Moore College
Library*

FIRST DAY

IN HIS QUIVER

"He hath made me a polished shaft, in His quiver hath He hid me." Isaiah 49.2.

This verse refers primarily to the Lord Jesus but surely it has a secondary application to believers. The quiver was the receptacle in which arrows were carried and was worn close to the side of the archer.

In His quiver. Sometimes the Lord puts you in His quiver. Your opportunities may be limited; you may be confined to a narrow sphere, your time completely taken up with "the daily round" or, spending much time in a sick room nursing an invalid. You yourself may be confined to your bed. Instead of fretting because you cannot do more for your Lord in outside Christian activities and perhaps feeling useless, think instead of yourself as occupying a place in the Lord's quiver. Elijah was "hidden" at Cherith. 1 Kings 17.3.

The arrow hidden. Sometimes ours is a hidden ministry, known fully only to the Lord Himself; perhaps the ministry of intercession such as Epaphras exercised and what a blessed, fruitful ministry! Col. 4.12. Remember then if you are hidden "your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3.3.

The quiver is worn close to the archer's heart. Next time you feel you are being overlooked by God or by others, think of yourself as being in the Lord's quiver, close to His heart, ready to His hand.

Readily available for use when and how He may think fit and that is all the Divine Archer asks of us. He will work out His own Divine purposes for us and use us in blessing to others.

SECOND DAY

BALM IN GILEAD

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?" Jeremiah 8.22.

Balm was a resin obtained from a kind of balsam tree. To obtain the balm, the tree is cut or gashed with an axe. The quantity gathered from each tree is very little. It was very precious, being worth twice its weight in gold and was a very important article of commerce because of its healing qualities when applied to wounds and open sores.

In this passage, God's people were thoroughly discouraged and had lost hope. They were like very sick people who thought they had no physician and no medicine. "Is there no balm in Gilead: is there no physician?" the prophet asks. The answer to the child of God is "Yes, there is".

There IS balm in Gilead, there IS a great Physician. If your spiritual health is poor the fault does not lie with God. He is the Great Physician and has provided the remedy. There is no wound that He cannot heal, no sickness that He cannot cure, no heartache which has not comfort and healing for it in the Word of God. Ps. 147.3.

Perhaps you have gone to a quack physician for help (Job 13.4) and have tried the wrong medicine. Go to the Great Physician; let Him prescribe for you and apply His healing balm that your spiritual health might be recovered.

The tree had to be gashed in order to provide this balm. At the Cross of Calvary, where our Lord was wounded for us is found the "Balm of Gilead". "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities . . . and with His stripes we are healed." Is. 53.5.

THIRD DAY

THE GOLDEN SCEPTRE

"The king held out to Esther the golden sceptre . . . so Esther drew near." Esther 5.2.

If any person who was not called came to Ahasueras into the inner court, he was put to death except the one to whom the king held out the golden sceptre. Ch. 4.11. What a contrast to our Heavenly King Whose court always stands open. We may enter, not merely on special occasions but at any time and He will always extend to us the golden sceptre. He bids us draw near in full assurance of faith, believing He will do for us that which we ask. Heb. 10.22.

We have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10.19), not entering into the King's presence in fear and trembling as Esther did. King Ahasueras invited Esther to make her request (v. 3). The Lord Jesus said to the blind man, "what shall I do for you"? Mark 10.51.

"Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much."

King Ahasueras promised Esther half his kingdom. Let us be definite in our requests and, coming with a true, cleansed heart, rest assured that our King will do for us "exceeding abundantly **above** all that we ask or think". Eph. 3.20. We may sometimes have to wait for the answer, it may come in a different way from that which we expected, or He may give us something better, but our King will not turn us away. Always He will hold out to us the golden sceptre.

FOURTH DAY

A PIERCING SWORD

"A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Luke 2.35.

In verse 34 Simeon alluded to the persecution and suffering the Holy Child would later undergo; but in verse 35 he told Mary of the suffering she herself would experience. There is a threefold purpose in suffering and trial.

It is for our own spiritual enrichment for, in the furnace of affliction our faith, which is much more precious than gold, is tested. It will refine and purify us as gold is refined (Mal. 3.3) and will bring forth fruit in our lives. Heb. 12.11.

It will bring praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. 1.7. Therefore it has a purpose for us in this present life and in the future when our Lord returns.

It is also for the sake of others. Simeon prophesied to Mary that a sword should pierce through her own soul. She was to experience sorrow as cutting and heart-piercing as a sword. This was fulfilled when she stood by the Cross and watched her Son dying there. It is a heart-piercing sorrow to witness the suffering of our loved ones, but who can comfort others like those who have passed through the same sorrow? When the sword pierces our own soul, we gain a sympathy for others which makes them want to confide in us and enables them to reveal to us the thoughts of their hearts, for they know we understand. Thus we are able to comfort them with the comfort of God we ourselves have received from Him. 2 Cor. 1.4. What a blessed worthwhile ministry we can exercise because of the piercing sword!

FIFTH DAY

CLOUDS THE DUST OF HIS FEET

"The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm and the clouds are the dust of His feet." Nahum 1.3.

Sometimes God rides on the whirlwind and wraps Himself in the storm. Not always do we recognise Him when He comes like this, but the child of God should know Him whatever His dress and in whatever guise He comes (Luke 24.16), for He is always the same, loving, tender God.

The whirlwind can be terrifying. It appears only to carry destruction in its path. You have prayed to be more loving, gentle and Christlike and the Lord sends the whirlwind sweeping through your life. God has a purpose in it and He has His way. The wind of sorrow, difficulty, trial, loneliness and bereavement may sweep through your life but it is **His** wind, under His control. Ps. 147.18. He speaks to us out of it as He did to Job. Job 38.1. The wind cannot separate you from Him. "He bringeth the wind out of His treasures" (Ps. 135.7), so there are treasures for us in the whirlwind-precious lessons, a deeper sense of His presence, a greater realisation of His loving care and protection.

The storm cleans the trees of the dead wood and rotten boughs. It clears away germs of disease and soaks into the dry and thirsty land. God is in the tempest that sweeps over your life bringing only seeming desolation.

The clouds are the dust of His feet. The dust may conceal Him but whenever the clouds gather over your life, God is not far off. A cloud is a great thing to us, it darkens the sky and hides the sun but to God it is only a grain of dust.

SIXTH DAY

TOWARD THE SUNRISING

"The children of Israel set forward . . . they journeyed . . . in the wilderness . . . toward the sunrising." Numbers 21.10, 11.

JOURNEYING. We are all journeying therefore we need to know in which direction we are going. We need to be certain we are travelling, not toward the sunset but toward the sunrising. God says we **can** be sure. John 20.31. Perhaps you refuse to think of the journey's end because you know you have left God out of your life and have never received Christ. For you, God can turn the wilderness into water-springs. Ps. 107.35.

Journeying toward the sunrising. Those who have put their trust in Christ are also journeying in the wilderness but with this difference, they are journeying toward the sunrising. Have you caught the reflection of the light? Does it show in your face so that others know your destination? Are you a rejoicing Christian?

WHAT THE SUNRISING MEANS. As the day breaks, the light on the path becomes brighter. Prov. 14.18. To those in pain and weariness watching for the morning there will be no more pain. Rev. 21.4. It will mean the goal of all our hopes, longed-for victory and holiness and the end of all temptation. It will also mean re-union with loved ones. Best of all we shall then be like Christ. Whether then we have to cross the river, or the Lord comes first for us, "The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings". Mal. 4.2. Let us then travel with hope, courage and joy in our hearts and, if we have to pitch our tent, let us pitch it toward the sunrising. Numb. 2.3.

SEVENTH DAY

SUCH AS I HAVE I GIVE

"Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." Acts 3.6.

The man lying at the Beautiful Gate was a poor beggar, born a cripple, desperately needy physically, temporally and spiritually. He expected to receive something from Peter (v. 5). All round us there are those who are poor, lonely, sick and spiritually needy. They look to us expecting to receive something. Do we meet their need or, like the priest and Levite do we pass by on the other side. Luke 10.31, 32.

Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none". Many are in this position and, because they are unable to give money, they do nothing. Peter went on to say, "Such as I have give I thee". We all have something to give—our time, a smile, a word of cheer, of sympathy, encouragement and practical help. Perhaps these kindly words and actions may open the way for us to introduce them to our Saviour.

Peter took him by the hand and lifted him up. What Peter gave was worth far more to the lame man than money, for he received strength, was completely changed physically and spiritually and went into the temple praising God. Let us take stock and see if we have something that will be a help to others and meet their need. "Withhold not good when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." Prov. 3.27. Let us use what we have in service to others. May we give the hand of fellowship and helpfulness to those who so sorely need it, not giving our help in an impersonal way, but with the warmth of the personal touch—let us give ourselves.

EIGHTH DAY

GOD'S ABIDING PRESENCE

"I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." Genesis 28. 15,16.

Jacob had been uprooted from home and loved ones and was on his way to a strange land. He was absolutely alone when, in his great need, God met him and gave him the assurance of His presence. Have you been uprooted from all that is dear and familiar? Here is something to rest upon, "I am with thee". His presence means not only companionship but His protection and practical help.

The promise of His keeping—"and will keep thee". God knew the hardships which lay ahead, the deceit and injustice of Laban but He assured Jacob of His presence in every situation—His presence at the moment and His protection for the future. The Lord Himself is our Keeper. Ps. 121.5.

"In all places"—"even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28.20), therefore no place is exempt, even the place where there is lack of fellowship and where it is difficult to live the Christian life, "even there".

The promise of His abiding presence—"I will not leave thee". There are times when our nearest and dearest must be absent from us. The captain of the ship cannot always be at the wheel, or the doctor with his patient, or the mother with her sick child but God is never off duty. Ps. 121.4. Whom God loves He never leaves until His promise is fulfilled.

Jacob had been unaware of God's presence (v. 16). How often we fail to recognise the presence of Our Lord as Mary Magdalene in the garden (John 20.14), as the disciples in the boat (John 21.4) and the two going to Emmaus. Luke 24.16. Let us always count on His presence.

NINTH DAY

SECOND MILERS

"Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Matthew 5.41.

The above verse is a reference to the Roman custom of staffing the postal system, by obliging civilians to carry letters. They were **compelled** to carry them one mile. Instead of resenting this, our Lord said they were to go the **second** mile. The first mile was their duty; the second mile was voluntary.

First Milers. They are conscientious, they do their duty only and they will not go one yard beyond it. Christ said, there is no credit due to them, they were only doing their duty. Luke 17.10. The first milers pride themselves on doing their duty and never go beyond that.

The Second Milers do more than their duty, just the little more, the extras which mean so much—the nurse doing the extra to make the patient more comfortable, the worker helping out in an emergency, the mother doing the extras in the home. These not only render a kindness but they do it with a smile and a cheery, kind and loving word. There are no grumbles from them because of all they have to do, or complaints that they have no time. They always find time to do just the little more, the extra. These are the second milers. This is the kind of service that counts with Christ and with others. We have a splendid example of a second miler in Ebed-melech, who rescued Jeremiah from the dungeon. He did not forget the rags to put under the arms of God's servant so that the ropes would not chafe and cause him pain. Jer. 38.11-13.

TENTH DAY

SHOES OF PEACE

"Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." Ephesians 6.15.

How important it is to have strong, comfortable shoes. You make slow progress otherwise for you feel every stone, every rough bit of the road and you are apt to slip when not wearing the right shoes—shoes of peace. These shoes were given by Christ to His disciples and every Christian should be wearing them constantly. John 14.27. They are soft inside, for all who wear them have the untroubled heart. You may have had comfortable shoes which you have worn to the shape of your feet but they are worn out and new ones have had to be broken in. Not so shoes of peace which God will provide for all who will accept them. They are suitable for every kind of road and, if you are wearing these shoes, the rough roads of difficulty, sorrow and trial will not affect you. These shoes never wear out. Deut. 29.5.

We can lose these shoes by getting into the Slough of Despond, of discouragement and depression and then we leave our shoes in the mud. The prodigal son lost his when he went into the far country and did not regain them till he returned to his father's house. Luke 15.22. Unconfessed sin can cause us to lose our shoes, holding a grudge against another, getting out of the will of God, and by being anxious and worried. To give us these shoes of peace Christ's feet had to be pierced.

How are we to retain our shoes? "Be anxious for nothing; pray about everything; thank Him for anything and the peace of God shall keep our hearts and minds. Phil. 4.6, 7.

GOD'S OWNERSHIP

"The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."
Is. 1.3.

How poignant are these words from the heart of God Himself. The ox knows his owner but Israel does not.

The ox knows his owner. Though a dull, brute creature, he knows and recognises his master and never mistakes him for another. He faithfully serves him, submits to the yoke and draws in it. Our Owner is Christ. We are His by creation because He made us; by purchase because He died to redeem us and His because of our surrender to Him. He is absolute Owner of our lives, possessions, home, money, time and our family relationships. Acts 10.36. How true it is of many Christians that they do not recognise their rightful Owner and His claims upon them. "Israel doth not know," sadly says the Lord.

The ass knows his master's crib. The food box is kept well filled by the Master and the ass goes to it regularly. The crib represents the Word of God and the Master has made every provision to meet the needs of our spiritual life. We may know this theoretically but do we act upon it? Do we go to the Word daily to feed upon the contents of the crib (Jer. 15.16) or are we trying to feed our spiritual life upon husks?

My people doth not consider the cost of their purchase, the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1.18, 19); the claim their Redeemer has upon them, or the purpose of their redemption. That purpose is not only to save us from sin and punishment, to give us eternal life, but that He might be LORD of our lives. Rom. 14.9.

TELL JESUS

"His disciples . . . went and told Jesus." Matthew 14.12.

John the Baptist had been a devoted follower of Christ and a faithful witness to Him. Why then had the Lord allowed His dear servant to be imprisoned and killed? Many sorrows and trials for which we can find no reason and many problems for which there seems to be no answer, come to us. Do as the disciples of John did, go and tell Jesus, the only One Who fully understands.

Go and tell the One Who can help and comfort. When a small child is in trouble, the only one whom he wants is his mother. The Lord said, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you". Is. 66.13.

Go and tell Jesus so that your heart will not become bitter. Heb. 4.15. You have been through great sorrow or bereavement, your loved ones have suffered or perhaps you yourself have been injured, criticised and hurt and your heart has become bitter. Pour out your bitterness of soul to God as Hannah did and He will remove the sting. 1 Sam. 10.15.

He, the Man of Sorrows is able to comfort because He too was acquainted with grief and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Heb. 4.15. The Lord also felt the sorrow of bereavement when He heard of John's death, for He went by ship into a desert place to talk to His Father. Matt. 14.13.

Tell Jesus about your victories. This will keep you humble for you will then know that it was Christ's power, and not your own that was used and you will give all the praise and glory to Him. Mark 6.30.

THIRTEENTH DAY

TESTED AND TRIED

"For thou, O God, hast proved us, Thou hast tried us."
Psalm 66.10.

A Solomon Islander had made a beautiful canoe and when asked how it had fared in a rough sea the builder replied, "I have not yet tried it outside the harbour". A bystander said, "try it and then we shall know what sort of canoe it is".

God tries us inside the harbour first where it may be a bit choppy. He tests us in small things, small trials, a minor illness, or small difficulties in His work. He tries us according to that which we can bear lest we become discouraged and sink under the trial. 1 Cor. 10.13. Perhaps we are like a canoe which does well only inside a quiet harbour or where it is only slightly rough. We stand up to the smaller trials and testings but not to the greater ones. Some Christians lose heart when the sea is choppy and they begin to sink. If tested and found seaworthy, God sends us into rough seas. In the storm the faith of the disciples failed (Mark 4.40); John Mark turned back when the way became difficult but Joseph, Abraham, Daniel and Paul were like ships riding the waves triumphantly.

Why God tries us. In order to know what is in our heart, to see if we really love and trust Him when the way is difficult. Deut. 13.3. The sea discovers the leaks. In trouble we may doubt His love and our love for Him fails. God may be proving you in sickness, loneliness, sorrow or trial. Do not fail Him, trust His love and He will see you through and give victory. 1 Cor. 15.57.

FOURTEENTH DAY

A THREEFOLD REQUEST

"Think on me... show kindness... unto me, make mention of me." **Genesis 40.14.**

These words were spoken by Joseph to the chief butler. Taking Joseph as a type of Christ, they may be taken as spoken by Him to us. We may not be able to teach or preach but each of us is able to do these three things.

Think on Me. They remind us of the words of Christ, "do this in remembrance of Me", in other words, "Remember Me". Luke 22.19. We all like to be remembered by those who love us and, lest we should forget Him, our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper. He longs that we should think of Him. Let us meditate on His love, His holiness, His power, His majesty and glory. If our thoughts are taken up with Him there will be no room for evil or unkind thoughts. When we think on His Name, a record is kept in the Book of Remembrance. Mal. 3.16.

Show kindness unto Me. How is it possible for us to show kindness to our Lord when everything is His. When He lived on earth there were those who had the great privilege of ministering to Him of their substance (Luke 8.3), but how is this possible now? He Himself tells us that when we show kindness even to one of the least of His brethren, we do it unto Him. Matt. 25.40.

Make mention of Me. **David said,** "I will talk of Thy righteousness". Ps. 107.2. Let us talk to the Lord's people about Him and of His loving kindness and, to those outside Christ, let us witness to them of our Saviour. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another."

CROSSING THE RIVER

"And there went over a ferry-boat to carry over the king's household." 2 Samuel 19.18.

In "Pilgrim's Progress", Bunyan tells of Christian crossing the river at the end of his earthly pilgrimage. At first he was fearful of sinking but he went safely through and "all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side".

In the Old Testament, God's Picture Book, an incident is related of David and his household who, in order to reach Jerusalem had to cross the river in a ferry-boat, thus giving us a picture of our last journey.

Death becomes the common experience of us all. Heb. 9.27. If the Lord does not first come for us, we must all cross the river, we cannot escape it. Therefore it is useless for us to try to ignore the fact or to dismiss it from our mind.

Death to the Christian is like crossing a narrow river. There is comfort in the knowledge that the crossing will be a very short one, therefore there is no need for dread. It is a journey to a safe and real landing-place, heaven, a home which has been prepared for us by Christ Himself John 14.2.

We shall not travel alone but in company with the King Himself. When David thought of his own home-going he said, "I will fear no evil for **Thou** art with me." Ps. 23.4. Death loses its terrors when we know that the King Himself will be on the ferry-boat with us. Make sure then that you are a member of the King's household. You may become so by taking two simple steps, "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ". Acts 20.21.

GIFTS FOR THE LIVING

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly and anointed the feet of Jesus." John 12.3.

On the resurrection morning, the three women brought sweet spices to anoint the body of their beloved Lord. Mark 16.1. They brought their gifts to Christ **after** He died. Contrast Mary of Bethany who brought her precious gift and anointed her Lord while He was still alive. Because she brought her gift **beforehand** (Mark 14.8), this thoughtful act of love and devotion gladdened the heart of the One Who was so soon to die.

Most of us have bitter regrets that we did not do more for our loved ones while they were still with us. Some neglect them while they are still alive and bring costly gifts of flowers to the grave after they have gone and perhaps erect a magnificent monument.

Let us pour out our gifts on our loved ones while they are still here—the words of love and appreciation for all they mean to us, the expression of our gratitude for their loving service, the words of cheer and encouragement and the acts of loving kindness. Gal. 6.10. We always mean to do and say these things some time, but the words are left unsaid and the kind deeds left undone and those whom we love think we take them for granted.

An old Scotch woman lay dying. Her husband, overcome with grief, sat beside her. Taking her hand he said, "Jeannie, you have been a wonderful wife to me and you mean everything to me". "Ah, Jamie," she replied, "Why did you never tell me that before?" Let us seize the opportunities while we have them and not wait till it is too late.

SEVENTEENTH DAY

THE STONE ROLLED AWAY

"Who shall roll us away the stone." Mark 16.3.

The women were very sad, walking with downcast eyes, because they were in a seemingly hopeless situation. They knew that the moving of the great stone from the door of the sepulchre was a task utterly beyond them. Who then could remove it? Though an impossible task awaited them still they went on. Do you see an impossibility ahead of you, an apparently insoluble problem, a stone that is beyond your ability to move, a task for which you feel quite inadequate? Keep going forward as these women did.

When they **looked up**, they saw that the stone **was** rolled away. Mark 16.4. How often this is our experience. We trouble about the great stone ahead and when we come up to it and **look up** we find the difficulty has been removed already, the problem has been solved and the thing we feared has not eventuated. The fears of the women had been groundless and their worry unnecessary. Let us not look down or around, with our eyes on people or circumstances but **look up** beyond the difficulty to the Lord.

The stone was rolled away, not to allow the Saviour out of the grave because nothing could hold Him there, but to allow those who came to the sepulchre to see that the grave was empty and that Christ had risen. From henceforth they were to know Him as the living, risen and ascended Lord.

The angel sat on the stone in triumph. Matt. 28.2. That which had been a barrier became a seat for the angel of the Lord. God can turn all things to our good. Rom. 8.28.

EIGHTEENTH DAY

FEAR NOT YE

*"For fear of him the keepers did shake . . . fear not ye."
Matthew 28.4, 5.*

Fear not. The Lord knows how fearful most of us are therefore the Bible is full of the expression "Fear not". At the resurrection the keepers shook and were terrified but the angel said to the women (and the emphasis is on the word "ye"), "fear not ye". The keepers may well be terrified but not ye.

The reason for their not being afraid. "Ye seek Jesus." Those who seek Jesus have no need to be afraid, for the Lord **invites** them to come (v. 6) and those who truly seek Him shall surely find Him. Jer. 29.13. It must be the **crucified** Lord we seek. Those who seek Jesus apart from the crucifixion may well fear. Perhaps they seek Him as an example only, but we are not saved by His holy life and example but by His death. Rom. 5.10. Those who know the Crucified One will find the Risen Lord. Many are seeking Him in the wrong place. He is not here, He is risen (v. 6).

And so for every phase of life the words come, "Fear not ye". Fear not when you come to Him for salvation or when you are seeking to follow the Lord at all costs, and even when you pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death may you be able to say, "I will fear no evil for Thou art with me". Ps. 23.4.

"**Come**" (v. 6) is followed by the words, "**go and tell**" (v. 7). This is our responsibility; we must tell the good news to others. When we go we have the assurance, "He goeth before you . . . **there** shall ye see Him" (v. 7). John 10.4. In the path of obedience we shall see Him and have the consciousness of His presence.

NINETEENTH DAY

A DEVOTED FOLLOWER

"Surely in what place my Lord the King shall be, whether in life or death, even there also will thy servant be." 2 Samuel 15.21.

Ittai was a new follower of David in his rejection. Although a Gittite, he loved David with a wholehearted devotion. He had nothing to gain from a worldly point of view and everything to lose. He was not a time-server.

David tested him (v. 19) as our Lord did the would-be disciples. Luke 9.57-62. David may have been afraid that Ittai's desire to follow him was inspired by emotion and enthusiasm only and these were not sufficient to carry him through severe hardships and dangers.

Ittai's decision had been made. There was no hesitation, he had counted the cost and would not be turned aside. He was willing to go anywhere with and for his king, in life or death. This man with such love and devotion to his king was a newcomer. How often new converts put older Christians to shame in their love, loyalty and devotion to Christ. His life, service and all that he had were accepted (v. 22). You may have a limited sphere, few talents and possessions but bring all to Christ and He will accept and use them as He did the lad's five loaves and fishes. John 6.9, 11.

Ittai was honoured. How? By being given a place in the forefront of the battle. 2 Sam. 18.2. How do you react when placed in the firing line where the battle is fiercest? Your front line may be your home, your business or place of employment. If the going is hard in the King's army, count it an honour. We never again read of Ittai. Probably he laid down his life for his king.

TWENTIETH DAY

TOO MUCH FOR YOU

"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." 1 Kings 12.28.

Jerusalem was the centre of the faith of God's people where the rightful king was on the throne and where their worship was acceptable to God. But Jeroboam told the people it was too much for them to go up to Jerusalem to worship, that Bethel and Dan were much nearer. This led them away from God into idolatry.

Satan says "it is too much for you" when you are wanting to walk with God and obey Him. In effect he said these words to Adam and Eve in Eden when he pitied them for not being allowed to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Gen. 3.1.

The flesh, self says constantly, "It is too much for you to spend time with the Lord, to be different from others and be thought narrow-minded, to give up your Sundays to attend divine worship or to give time to the Lord's service. We must however deny self. Matt. 16.24.

Our loved ones say to us, "it is too much for you" to be all out for Christ, to go all the way with Him. They tell us there is no need to be extreme and try to dissuade us from going up to Jerusalem and tell us to choose the easy road instead. Because we love them they are hardest of all to resist. When Peter tried to turn our Lord from the Cross by saying "be it far from Thee, Lord", Christ replied, "Get thee behind me Satan". Matt. 16.22, 23. He would not be deflected by those who loved Him, from taking the hard road, but steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. Luke 9.51. He went all the way to Jerusalem and Calvary for us, can we think then that anything is too much for us to do for Him?

TWENTY-FIRST DAY

THE TENT TAKEN DOWN

"We know that if our earthly house (tent) be dissolved we have a . . . house not made with hands." 2 Corinthians 5.1.

A tent is only a temporary dwelling and the person living in it realises it. He does not spend all his time and energy furnishing and beautifying the tent but keeps always in his mind the fact that the tent will be taken down when the permanent home is acquired. Paul knew that the time was probably at hand when his tent would be taken down (we call this "death") but the tent was not Paul himself, therefore he had no fears for he knew that he himself would be perfectly safe. "Paul regarded death as merely the removal of a tottering tent, that he might enter into a permanent palace."

A tent is a frail structure, not like a substantial house, and more so as it gets older and frequently needs repairs. When Paul wrote these words his body was getting frail, the tent was wearing out and would soon be taken down but he knew he would not be without a home. You may be getting old; sight, hearing, walking, memory are beginning to fail, the tent is wearing out, but you are not the tent. "The inward man" is the real you. 2 Cor. 4.16. Notice the "if" of the above verse. Paul was not sure that his tent would be taken down. He was looking for the coming of the Lord and hoped that he might be caught up **alive** to be with the Lord. 1 Thess. 4.17.

The permanent house "a building of God". Become interested in your future home; find out all you can about it from the Word of God. Others of our loved ones have gone ahead and we shall be joining them. Jesus spoke of His departure as "going to the Father" (John 13.1) and so should we.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY

EVEN THERE

"Even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me." Psalm 139.10.

"Even there" is a matter of **all** circumstances and **every** place. God is present everywhere therefore He is with you just where you are. This applies to the missionary leaving home, family and dear ones and the known for the unknown. He is "even there". Towards the end of a long life you may have been uprooted from the home which you have known and loved for so long and have had to make a new start in totally unfamiliar surroundings. "Even there" shall He lead you and will be better to you than at your beginnings. Ezek. 36.11.

Perhaps you are a patient in hospital, lying in weakness and pain, "even there" shall His right hand hold you, imparting comfort and strength. Your faith may have failed and you have drifted from God, "even there" He will uphold and restore you. You may be the only Christian in your home or at your place of business, "even there" He will lead you.

Are you fearful of the unknown future? "Even there" you will have the companionship and help of the Lord. When everything is dark, He will make the night to shine as the day, for darkness and light are both alike to Him. Ps. 139.12.

You do not have to beg Him to come, He is there already, "even there", and not only when we are conscious of His presence but when we are not. In the utter loneliness of the desert, Jacob was not conscious of the Lord's presence, but He was there. Gen. 28.16. So wherever we may be "even there" God will lead us and uphold us.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY

EVEN NOW

"I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." John 11.22.

Consider the circumstances in which Martha spoke these words. Their Friend had apparently failed them, He had not come to them in their anxiety and grief and it seemed without any reason. Their brother was dead, the funeral over, the sepulchre closed. Had Christ come too late? But even in these circumstances, Martha showed that she believed that Christ was omnipotent and in the words, "I know that **'even now'** . . ." she expressed the magnificence of her faith and courage.

You may have reached some crisis in your life when you desperately need the help of Christ and apparently He has failed you. He did not come to your aid when your need was so urgent; He has allowed your dear one to die. No matter how hopeless the circumstances may seem, say with Martha, "I know that **even now** . . ." and lay hold of Christ's words "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (v. 25). Your loved one will be restored to you later. 1 Thess. 4.16, 17.

Perhaps you are facing a difficulty in which there seems to be no way out, no solution to your problem, no cure for your heartache, no remedy for your sickness. Or you may have tried to live for Christ and seem to have miserably failed. However seemingly hopeless the situation, "even now" Christ can overcome your difficulty, solve your problem, give comfort in bereavement and bring victory out of defeat. Rom. 6.14. Say in the midst of sorrow, fear and defeat, "I know that even now . . ." and trust the living Lord. He will not fail you. Josh. 1.5.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY

EVEN SO

"Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Matthew 11.26.

Our difficulty may not be on account of time—"Even now" for we know that no situation is impossible to God; it may not be on account of distance and absence, "Even there", but it is on account of God's dealings with us. It is not people, it is not circumstances, but the difficulty is God Himself. We have not yet reached the place where we can say, "Even so, Father" which is just a simple "Yes, Father." These words were uttered by our Lord and expressed the attitude of His whole life toward God. If the circumstances were good to the Father, then they were good to Him. Whatever comes to us can we say with James, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost **and to us**". Acts. 15.28. Is it bereavement? "Even so, Father"; is it a great trial? "Even so, Father"; is it a thorn in the flesh, some painful malady? "Even so, Father."

"Not so Lord." We can either bow to the will of God and accept it as our Lord did or, we can say as Peter did, "Not so Lord". Acts 10.14. If we say "Not so" then we cannot truthfully add, "Lord"; if we honestly say "Lord", we shall never add "Not so". Only in the glad acceptance of the Father's will lies peace. Let us say in the face of solemn perplexities and problems which are unexplained, "Even so, Father"; in the midst of difficulties and fears, "Even now"; and in the midst of distance and absence "Even there". To whatever is good in God's sight let us say a glad "Even so, Father"; "that good, acceptable and perfect will of God". Rom. 12.2.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY

THE STRENGTH OF FRIENDSHIP

"And Jonathan went to David in the wood and strengthened his hand in God." 1 Samuel 23.16.

A beautiful friendship existed between David and Jonathan. When Saul was seeking David's life, Jonathan loyally stood by his friend for a friend loves at all times, particularly in adversity. Prov. 17.17. Jonathan thought more of loving than of being loved; more of serving his friend than of being served; more of ministering than of being ministered unto. Matt. 20.28. He thinks nothing of himself, least of all of the throne. He rejoices in his friend's advancement and he himself will be happy to take second place (v. 17). His deep, personal devotion to David had its roots in humility.

The strength of Jonathan's friendship lay in the fact that he turned the eyes of his beloved friend away from himself to God. He gave David the kind of sympathy which did not weaken him but "strengthened his hand in God" (v. 16). Their friendship was cemented by their love for the Lord, "they two made a covenant **before the Lord**" (v. 18). See to it that every friendship and close relationship is cemented by mutual loyalty to God and that He has the central place in each heart. Through Jonathan, David had learned to encourage himself in God when his beloved friend was no longer there. 1 Sam. 30.6. Christ said our love for each other must have the same quality as His (John 15.12)—unselfish, self-giving, bestowing rather than receiving, thinking only of the good of the loved one. It is no surprise to us that at his friend's death, David said, "my brother Jonathan, thy love to me was wonderful". 2 Sam. 1.26.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY

TEMPERING HIS ROUGH WIND

"He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." Isaiah 27.8.

God holds back his rough wind in the day of the east wind. There is a current saying which conveys the same meaning "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb". God will not allow you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear (1 Cor. 10.13), nor will He put upon you a burden too heavy for you to carry. Is. 46.4. In the day of the east wind, God will hold back His rough wind so that you will not be overwhelmed.

When Paul, a prisoner in chains, was being taken to Rome, the centurion Julius treated him courteously and allowed him to visit his friends at Sidon. Acts 27.3. On his arrival at Rome he was granted another privilege, that of living by himself with a soldier to guard him. Acts 28.16. In prison later, Luke, John, Mark and his beloved Timothy were allowed to be with him. Thus God stayed for Paul the rough wind in the day of the east wind of persecution and trial.

When Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, God gave him favour with his master. Gen. 39.4. When Daniel was a captive in Babylon, the prince of the eunuchs loved him and this made his lot easier. Dan. 1.9. God stayed His rough wind for him.

In the day of the east wind of God's correction, He will also give His comfort for He will not always chide. Ps. 103.9.

Then do not dwell on the discomforts of the east wind, but look for the comforts and helps in the staying of the rough wind and be thankful for God's compensating mercies.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

BUT GOD

"Behold I die, but God shall be with you." Genesis 48.21.

"Behold I die." Jacob, the aged patriarch, lay dying. Taking his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, with him, Joseph hastened to his beloved father's bedside. After blessing the lads, Jacob said to his dear Joseph, "Behold I die". Yes, the time comes to us all when we must part with a loved one, dearer to us perhaps than life itself. We cannot keep our loved ones always with us, we cannot hold them back when God calls them Home, or perhaps into His service which will take them into another part of the world.

"But God shall be with you." At such times these words bring comfort and healing to the broken in heart. Ps. 147.3. They were not only a comfort to Joseph but to Jacob himself as he committed his family to God's care and keeping, knowing that God would be with them and care for them better than Jacob himself could do. Joseph was losing his father, BUT GOD, a very present help would be with him. Ps. 46.1.

"Thou remainest", "Thou art the same". Heb. 1.11, 12. Loved ones are taken, or we are separated from them by distance; earthly joys depart; we suffer losses of various kinds but "THOU REMAINEST". Nothing and no one can separate us from His love. Rom. 8.35. He is always present, close by, then let us **count** on His presence and claim the promises. Men come and go, the great ones of Bible times have passed on but "Thou remainest". Earthly friends may fail us, their affections toward us may change, but "Thou art the same".

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY

VISIONS AND THE DAILY ROUND

"They saw God and did eat and drink." Exodus 24.11.

"They saw God." Moses, the priests and elders were given a wonderful vision of God. At times we, too, have our mountain-top experiences, fresh visions of God, of His majesty, His beauty, His holiness and love and, like the disciples of old we wish we could remain there. Matt. 17.4. But are we living on a higher spiritual plane than when we are doing the daily round and performing the common task? Was not the Lord Jesus as well-pleasing to the Father when working in the carpenter's shop as in His public ministry or when praying on the mountain? Of course He was. These men referred to in the above verse saw God but also:—

They did eat and drink. We are so apt to divide our lives into two compartments, the secular and the so-called spiritual, and to think that the one has no connection with the other. There was no such division in the life of Christ or that of the apostle Paul who said that whatever we did, even eating and drinking should be done to the glory of God. 1 Cor. 10.31. Visions of God, special blessings, were never meant to unfit us for the common duties of life but rather that we might glorify God in them. Even the common acts of eating and drinking should be done **before the Lord**, and the children of Israel were commanded to rejoice in all work to which they put their hand (Deut. 12.7), the mundane things, the ordinary and common duties of life. In these, let us "serve the Lord with gladness" Ps. 100.2.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY

GOD AT WORK

*"Now thou wilt see what I will do." Exodus 6.1.
"He Himself knew what HE would do." John 6.6.*

Conditions were growing worse for the Children of Israel. They were serving Pharaoh in bitter and hard bondage. In effect Moses told God that He had let the people down, that he had not delivered them at all. Ex. 5.23. Have you ever been in a similar position when God does not seem to be doing anything on your behalf, prayer is not being answered and the way is becoming more and more difficult? God sometimes brings us to the end of our own resources when there is no more that we can do but take our hands off in order that He might step in and show us what He will do and to bring us to the place where we are compelled to say, "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work. Ps. 119.126. Man's extremity is God's opportunity".

God had heard (v. 3), He had remembered His covenant with them (v. 5) and He promised to bring them out of their bondage and into the land (v. 8). Moses had been trying to see what he could do and he effected nothing; as far as he was concerned the situation was hopeless. Deliverance comes when we take our hands off and God takes over.

The disciples were in an apparently hopeless situation—the hungry multitude, a desert place, lack of food and no means of procuring it. When Jesus said, "When shall we buy bread", He was testing Philip for He Himself knew what He would do. John 6.5, 6. He had His own plans and the disciples were to prepare for the miracle, with the result, they were all filled.

THIRTIETH DAY

ME AND THEE

"Give unto them for Me and thee." Matthew 17.27.

Money was due for taxes. The Lord sent Peter with a hook and line and told him that the first fish he caught would have in its mouth a piece of money. Take it, He said, and give it to the taxgatherers "for Me and thee".

"Me and thee" indicated the close relationship between Peter and Christ. Peter was poor and needed money for his tax and so did the Lord Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor. He shared our poverty. How wonderful that the Lord of glory, by becoming man should associate Himself with us. Royalty does not associate with commoners in this way but the King of kings does.

"I and thee" for communion. God said to Moses "there I will meet with thee and commune with thee. Ex. 25.22. This indicates fellowship and communion. We meet with Him in public worship and in prayer with others but here it is just "I and thee", my Lord and I.

"I and you" for service. "Be strong . . . saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you." Hagg. 2.4. He does not give us work to do and then leave us to it, we do it together. Work done without Him and in our own strength is useless. How a small child loves to work with his parent and, even though his part of the work is far from perfect, it is precious to the father because of their mutual love.

"I and thee" in rivers of trouble and in the fire of affliction. Is. 43.2. "I and you" always. Matt. 28.20. May these combinations of pronouns in their various contexts bring comfort to us.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY

FINISHING TOUCHES

"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Philipians 1.6.

A **good work**. The work of grace in our lives is a "**good work**" for it makes us good. It is **God's** beginning "for it is God which worketh in you". Phil. 2.13. We may try to make a new beginning by good resolutions, by doing our best, by keeping the golden rule or turning over a new leaf but it must be **God's** beginning. Conversion is a crisis (2 Cor. 5.17), a holy life is a process. 2 Pet. 3.18. Have you had this beginning?

He will perform it, will carry it on, will complete it. Many people start making things but never complete them. God finishes what He begins. Do not hinder His work in your life by lack of co-operation, by self-will, unbelief or discouragement because you fall far short of all you long to be. He will perfect that which He begins until the day of Jesus Christ, the day of His second coming or it may be when you go to meet Him by crossing the river.

Finishing touches. Bishop Handley Moule has a lovely translation of this verse "will evermore put His finishing touches to it". How different an article looks when it has received the finishing touches—the icing to a cake, the pressing of a piece of fancy work, the French polish to a piece of furniture. Many of the finishing touches come through pain, sorrow, trial and suffering but they are the means used to complete the work Christ has begun in our lives making us fit to meet our Lord. 1 John 3.2. Many of these "finishing touches" come to us towards the end of life. Let us regard them as such.



CP
Sydney