

HEARTS-EASE

by Phillips Brooks

A devotional work offering spiritual comfort and encouragement to believers, providing meditations designed to bring peace and rest to troubled hearts through the promises of God.

2 Chapters

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Happiness is perfectly hollow unless there is a meaning behind it, unless it tells of intention somewhere, unless it means love. "Eat and drink and be merry" is not the end of it all. [Illustration: Flowers] Whoever, by a Christian word he speaks or by a Christian life he lives, brings a new soul to see the perfect life and take the perfect grace, has poured out of his full hands a blessing on his brother that leaves utterly out of sight any gift that riches can bestow on poverty. We want a faith, a truth, a grace to help us now, ... and we can have it. One who was man, yet mightier than man, has walked the vale before us. Every attempt to do right has a tendency to reveal to us more spiritual ways of doing right, and our need of spiritual helps in doing it. The thought of life is like that untouched line we call the "sky," but which, when we try to reach it, proves to be not one single line, but an infinite depth ... stored with what strange uses and benefactions we dare not say. Some men's faith only makes itself visible; other men's lightens everything within its reach. [Illustration: Flowers] There is positive proof in the single sunbeam of the existence of the sun. Strike God's iron on the anvil, see God's goods across the counter, put God's wealth in circulation, teach God's children in the school, -- so shall the dust of your labor build itself into a little sanctuary where you and God

may dwell together. Make truth your friend and guide in all your
hourly business, -- truth of plan, and purpose, and
labor... Whoever will not bow before this
monarch you have crowned, let him be rebel to you. If you are not spiritually minded, do not wait
for mysterious light and vision. Go and give up
your dearest sin. Go and do what is right. Go
and put yourself thoroughly into the power of the
holiness of duty. All the world is an utterance of the Almighty. [Illustration: Cherubs, flowers] It
seems so far off, that Cross of Jesus, and it
really is so near! For it is lifted up so high
that the waves of time roll unheeded and
unmeaning at its foot. It is the power of
perfection for us to-day. Each high achievement is a sign and token of the
whole nature's possibility. What a piece of the
man was for that shining moment, it is the duty
of the whole man to be always. May we not daily tread the same paths of holiness
and sorrow, joy and love, that Christ has
trodden, and see His footsteps on them still? Even if you have to force yourself to your
duty, -- still, do it. Do your duty, even if
duty be wearisome and hard, for then you are in
the place where it can become joyous and easy to
you. We must answer for our actions; God will answer
for our powers. [Illustration: Graveyard scene] Some day certainly the fog shall rise, the clouds
shall scatter, and in the perfect enlightenment
of the other life the soul shall see its Lord,
and be thankful for every darkest step that we
took towards Him here. Devotion is like the candle which Michael Angelo
used to carry stuck on his forehead in a
paste-board cap, and which kept his own shadow

from being cast upon his work when he was hewing out his statues. David's pilgrims, going through the vale of misery, "use it for a well." ... When they grew thirsty they looked not merely farther on into the heart of the future, but deeper down into the bosom of the present. The sense of evil in life does not deny, but implies the noblest capacities in men. Man must be a ray of the great sunshine under whose touch some special flower may open, and some special fruit fill itself with healthy and nutritious juice, some little corner of the field grow rich. Any honest task is capable of being so largely conceived that he who enters into it may see, stretching before him, the promise of things to do and be, that will stir his enthusiasm and satisfy his best desires. Your life cannot be frivolous or vulgar unless you are frivolous or vulgar. He who complains of his circumstances really complains of himself, and is his own accuser. God is as willing that you should read your lesson in the sunlight as in the storm. Heaven at last will be the perfect sight of Christ. [Illustration: Flowers] A life with no intention of God in it must be shallow. The thoughtful trader believes that Trade, in its ideal, is generous and beautiful. It is the reality that he makes of it, by the way in which he does it, that seems to him sordid. Character is the divinest thing on earth. It is the one thing that you can put into the shop or into the study, and be sure that the fire is going to burn. Never does human nature seem so glorious and so wicked all at once as when we stand before the cross of Jesus! The most enthusiastic hopes, the

most profound humiliation, have found their
inspiration there. The only way to run from God is to run to Him.

The Infinite Knowledge is also the Infinite Pity. [Illustration: House and yard] [Illustration: Stream and flowers] Not simply His coming and His going, not simply His birth, or death, but the living, total life of Jesus is the world's salvation. And the Book in which His life shines orbed and distinct is the world's treasure. Remember we are debtors to the Good by birth, but remember we may become debtors to the Bad by life; and both debts -- of service and allegiance -- must be paid alike. Not merely a Voice to be heard, but a Friend to be loved, a Shepherd to be followed, a Bread to be eaten, -- so does the Christ of the Gospels present Himself in word and sacrament and every presentation of His personality. The tent-life is the true life until the building of God, the "house not made with hands," is reached. [Illustration: Flowers] The visionary is the man who has no present; the drudge is the man who has no future. To be saved from being either, -- that can come only by joining a clear, sharp, solid work to large hopes and great ambitions. Does not the soul, finding the heart of its suffering full of joy, forget the mere rough outside in which that heart of joy was folded? Ideality, magnanimity and bravery -- these are what make the heroes. The materialist, the sceptic and the coward -- he cannot be a hero. To believe is the true glory of existence. To disbelieve is to give ourselves into the power of death, and just so far to cease from living. It is only in poor men and in the lower things that success increases self-conceit. In every high work and in men worthy of it, success is

always sure to bring humility. Our strength is measured by our plastic power...
Bricks and mortar are mortar and bricks until the
architect can make them into something else. A man who lives right, and is right, has more
power in his silence than another man by his
words. Oh! believe me that no man lives at his best to
whom life is not becoming better and better,
always aware of greater and greater forces,
capable of diviner and diviner deeds and joys. [Illustration: Sunset and pond] God is omnipotent,
and man is immortal.

Therefore be patient and work. The end shall
certainly be joy, not sorrow. The stone shall
roll away and the dead come forth. Optimism is a belief in a great purpose
underlying the world for good, absolutely certain
to fulfil itself somewhere, somehow. That must
have been what God saw when He looked upon the
world and called it "good." A hundred men stand on the shore and say: "There
is no land beyond." One brave and trustful man
like Columbus, believes that the complete world
is complete, and sails for a fair land beyond the
sea, and finds it. Put your faith where it will be safe; and the
only place where a faith ever can be safe is in
the shrine of an action. [Illustration: Flowers] I must have some notion in general of what I am
alive for, or I cannot live rightly from hour to
hour this evening and to-morrow morning. Give our lives room to grow to truth, and they
will grow to symmetry; give them leave to ripen,
and they will richen too. The only real way to "prepare to meet thy God" is
to live with thy God so that to meet Him shall be
nothing strange. It is not good for a man to devote himself to
preparation for dying. It is preparation for

living that you need. Our virtue should not be a deed, or a work, but a growth -- a growth like a tree's, always rising higher from its own inward strength and sap. The moment that the face is turned away from the dead past, and looks toward the living future, a new power comes. Hope is awake, and hope is infinite. [Illustration: Flowers] The gracious mercy that binds Omnipotence a willing servant to every humble prayer! Self-restraint and honesty and independence, if they are the crown upon the head of a benignant despotism, are the very lifeblood in the veins of a self-governing republic. To be calm and serene, and yet to be full of energy and hope of higher things, -- this comes to him whose life aims at the absolute. If you cannot argue, live! Be true and pure and lofty and devout, and He who ever seeks the souls of men shall find His way to some of them through you. When a man means to be honest solely because honesty is right, and not because honesty is profitable, there is a perpetual and beautiful tendency of his honesty to refine and deepen itself. Dependence upon God makes the independence of men in which are liberty and courage. [Illustration: Flowers] [Illustration: Flowers] There is a type of universal human life in harmony with the best life of all the ages, in tune with the sublimest and finest spiritual music of the universe, which you can live in your parlor and your shop. No beauty is really beautiful which in any way hinders righteousness or weakens spiritual life. To every heart's experience comes its time of desert-journeyings.... It eats its manna in the wilderness. You can know nothing which you do not reverence. You can see nothing before which you do not veil

your eyes. Repentance for safety, even for cleanness, is not complete. The true motive is that God may be glorified in us. [Illustration: Angel] [Illustration: Inside back cover]

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