

Christlike Living in a Sinful World

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of developing true character through practical kindness, trust in God's timing, and living a humble, service-oriented life in a sinful world.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, Romans 8:28, Romans 12:9, Philippians 3:12, 1 Peter 1:22

Topics: "Character Development", "Practical Love"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of character over reputation, asserting that true character is built through consistent habits and personal integrity. He encourages practical kindness and love, urging believers to actively meet the needs of others rather than merely offering words of sympathy. Miller also highlights the importance of patience in understanding God's timing and the necessity of striving for spiritual growth and Christlikeness in a world filled with distractions. He reminds us that our influence on others is profound, and we should live in a way that reflects the love and grace of Christ. Ultimately, he calls for a life dedicated to serving God and others, rooted in humility and faithfulness.

Transcript

Character

Reputation is what a man's neighbors and friends think of him.

Character is what the man IS.

Character is personal. It is not a possession we can share with someone else. We can give a hungry person part of our loaf of bread; we can divide our money with one who needs it; but character is something we cannot give away or transmit. The brave soldier cannot share his courage with the trembling recruit who fights by his side in the battle. The pure, gentle woman cannot give part of her purity and gentleness, to the defiled and hardened woman she meets.

Character is our own -- a part of our very being. It grows in us over the years. Acts repeated become habits, and character is made up in the long run, of those habits which have been repeated so often, that they become a permanent part of our lives.

Sow a thought -- and you will reap an act;

sow an act -- and you will reap a habit;

sow a habit -- and you will reap a character;

sow character -- and you will reap a destiny!

As the tree falls -- so must it lie;

As the man lives -- so must he die!

As a man dies -- such must he be;

All through the ages of eternity!

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Practical Kindness

"Love must be sincere." Romans 12:9

Kindness must be practical -- not merely emotional and sentimental. It will not be satisfied merely . . .

with good wishes,

with sympathetic words,

or even with prayers.

It should be put into some form that will do practical good.

There are times when even prayer is a mockery. At times it is our duty to answer our own prayers, to be the messengers we ask God to send to help others. We are God's messengers, when we find ourselves in the presence of human needs and sorrows, which we can supply or comfort. Expressions of pity or sympathy are mockeries -- when we do nothing to relieve the distress.

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart." 1 Peter 1:22

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God's clock!

"What I am doing you do not understand now -- but afterward you will understand." John 13:7

In divine providence, nothing comes a moment too soon or too late -- but everything comes in its own complete time. God's clock is never too slow. Every link of the chain of God's providence, fits into its own place.

We do not see God's hand at the time. Not until afterward, will you see that your disappointments, hardships, trials, and the wrongs inflicted on you by others -- are parts of God's good providence toward you, and full of blessing. Not until afterward will you see it, but the "afterward" is secure to faithful followers of Christ. The "afterward" of every disappointment or sorrow -- is blessing and good. We only need to learn to wait in patience for Him.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

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We must test all our pleasures and amusements by this rule:

"Lovers of pleasure -- rather than lovers of God; having a form of godliness -- but denying its power." 2 Timothy 3:4-5

Is the love of pleasure and amusement growing on you -- gaining the power and authority over you?

Is it dulling the keenness of your zest for spiritual pleasures?

Is it making Bible study, prayer, communion with Christ, and meditation upon holy themes -- less sweet enjoyments than they once were?

Is it making your hunger for righteousness, and for God -- less intense?

Is it interfering with the comfort and blessing which you used to find in church services, or in Christ's work?

If so, there is only one thing to do -- hurry . . .

to return to God,

to abandon the pleasure or amusement which is imperiling your soul, and

to find in Christ, the joy which the world cannot give, and which never harms any aspect of life.

We must test all our pleasures and amusements by this rule: Are they helping us to grow into Christ-likeness and spiritual beauty?

"All things are lawful -- but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful -- but not all things edify." 1 Corinthians 10:23

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Divine discontent!

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled!" Matthew 5:6

The ideal Christian life is one . . .

of unquenchable thirst,

of bottomless yearning,

of divine discontent --

wooed ever on by visions of holier living, higher joy, and new attainments.

The trouble with too many of us, is that we are too satisfied with ourselves as we are. We have attained a small measure of peace, of holiness, of faith, of joy, of knowledge of Christ -- and we are not hungering for

the larger possible rewards. Pray for discontent with your spiritual state! With all the infinite possibilities of spiritual life before you, do not sit down on a little patch of dusty ground at the foot of the mountain, in restful contentment. Do not be content until you reach the mountain's summit!

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." Philippians 3:12

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Work for Christ

Many people think that work for Christ must be something great or public. They imagine that to minister to Christ they must . . .

teach a Sunday School class,

or join a missionary society,

or go out to visit sick people,

or go into hospitals or prisons on missions of mercy.

These are all beautiful and important ministries, and Christ wants some of you to do these things as well. But the very first place you are to serve Him, is in your own home! Let the blessed light of your life first be shed throughout that most sacred of all spots. Brightening that little place, you will be all the more ready to be a blessing outside. Those who are the best Christians at home -- are also the best elsewhere.

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Much of our best praying

"Blessed be the LORD, because He has heard the voice of my supplications!" Psalm 28:6

Every thought that flies through your brain, is heard in Heaven. God hears . . .

your wishes,

the longings of your heart,

your aspirations, and

hunger of your soul.

Do not grieve, then, if you cannot find words to tell God what you need, if you cannot put the hopes and hungers of your heart, into well-defined thoughts. When words and even thoughts fail, pray in silent yearnings, in unutterable longings -- and God will understand just as well as if you spoke in ordinary language. Much of our best praying is done when we sit at God's feet and do not speak at all -- but only let our hearts talk to God.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life!" Psalm 139:23-24

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Make the minutes beautiful

Scrupulous people are often laughed at.

"Why be so particular?

Why be so conscientious about mere trifles?

Why be so exacting and punctual in doing small duties?"

The answer is that in the matter of right and wrong -- nothing is little; certainly nothing is insignificant. Duty is duty, whether it be the smallest, or the greatest task. You are on the highway to nobility of character, if you learn to be scrupulous concerning the smallest things. He who is careful in little things, rises a step higher every day. He who is faithful in little things, is then entrusted with larger responsibilities.

It is the small segments in life which are most important.

Look after the little things, and the greater aggregates will be right.

Make the minutes beautiful -- and the hours and days will be radiant.

"Well done, good servant, because you have been faithful in a very little thing" Luke 19:17

"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" Matthew 25:23

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Earth's saddest failure

"A bruised reed he will not break" Matthew 12:20

Christ is building His kingdom with earth's broken people. Men want only the strong, the successful, the victorious, the whole -- in building their kingdoms. But God is the God of the unsuccessful, of those who have failed. Heaven is filled with earth's broken lives, and there is no bruised reed whom Christ cannot take and restore to glorious blessedness and beauty. He can take a life crushed by pain and sorrow -- and make it into a harp whose music shall be all praise. He can lift earth's saddest failure up to Heaven's glory!

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

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It makes no difference what a man believes, or what doctrines he holds

"It makes no difference what a man believes, or what doctrines he holds -- it is only his conduct that counts."

That is the way some people talk, as they sneer at Bible doctrines. But it does matter what one believes. Wrong believing leads to wrong living. The heathen worships a god conceived of as lustful, cruel, and unholy. The Christian worships a God, who is revealed as holy, righteous, pure, and good, and becomes

holy, righteous, pure, and good.

Beliefs shape our lives. It is important, therefore, that we know the truths about the character and will of Christ, as our conception of Christ will imprint itself upon our life.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" Colossians 3:16

"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." Titus 1:9

"You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine." Titus 2:1

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The shadow!

"Shall we indeed accept good from God -- and shall we not accept adversity?" Job 2:10

Shall we trust our Father only when our lives are filled with pleasant things -- and then not trust Him also when a shadow falls over our hearts? Do you think that God is good -- only when He makes all things please you?

Our call is to trust God at all times -- whether good or bad. For even if sorrow should enter our home, He is able, even in the midst of sorrow, to make our home-life sweeter, purer, and more Christ-like. If we trust in God, then the shadow will be as rich a blessing to us as the light; and the sorrow will be steps upward, on which our feet may climb Heavenward!

"We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight!" Proverbs 3:5-6

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How to pray in our own Gethsemanes

"And being in agony -- He prayed more earnestly!" Luke 22:44

This is the record of our Savior's Gethsemane experience. Like a bright lamp, this Scripture shines amid the olive trees of that garden -- to show us the path to comfort in our time of sorrow. Never before nor since, has there been such grief as the Redeemer's that night -- -but He found comfort in His prayer. His agony lessened as He prayed, until at last its bitterness was all gone -- and sweet, blessed peace took its place.

The 'gate of prayer' is one of comfort. There is no other place for true comfort and help. We learn from our Lord's Gethsemane agony -- how to pray in our own Gethsemanes.

God never blames us for asking to have the bitter cup removed, nor for the intensity of our prayers; but we must always pray with submission to His will. When we sincerely pray, "Not my will, but may Your will be done" -- comfort comes, and then peace.

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The Lord will provide!

"You have not passed this way before!" Joshua 3:4

"Abraham named the place Jehovah-Jireh (which means 'the LORD will provide')" Genesis 22:14

As you begin meditating on this verse, write deep in your heart this word with the strongest confidence: Jehovah-Jireh. This name tells you . . .

that you can trust God always;

that no promise of His ever fails;

that He does all things well;

that out of all seeming loss and destruction of human hopes, He brings blessing.

You have not passed this way before. There will be both sorrows and joys, both failures and successes. You cannot predict your future experiences. You cannot see the next step before your feet. Yet Jehovah-Jireh calls you to trust Him calmly. He bids you put away all anxieties and foreboding, because the Lord will provide!

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Not what we HAVE or what we KNOW, but what we ARE!

We must strive to realize every longing for holiness and Christlikeness, which our hearts seek. Remember that it is character alone, which is the test of true living.

It is not knowledge; for knowledge will fail.

It is not money; for money cannot be taken into the eternal world.

It is not fame; for fame's laurels fade at the grave's edge.

It is not culture, or education, or refinement either.

It is our character alone -- not what we HAVE or what we KNOW, but what we ARE -- which we can carry with us into the eternal world.

"He who is unjust -- let him be unjust still;

he who is filthy -- let him be filthy still;

he who is righteous -- let him be righteous still;

he who is holy -- let him be holy still."

Revelation 22:11

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Seeing through love's eyes

"Love . . .

thinks no evil,

bears all things,

believes all things,

hopes all things,

endures all things."

1 Corinthians 13:5-7

Love does not suspect unkindness, in kind deeds.

Love does not imagine an enemy, in every friend.

Love does not fear insincerity, in sincere expressions of love.

Love does not question one's motives, nor discount their acts.

But love overlooks mistakes and hides human faults. It believes tries to think of others always at their best, not at their worst. It considers the best possibilities in people, what they may become through divine love and grace -- and not merely what they now are. It is wonderful how seeing through love's eyes changes the whole view of earthly life, transforming it. If the heart is filled with suspicion, distrust, and doubts -- the world grows very ugly. But love sees brightness, beauty, and hope everywhere!

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The shadow of God's wings

"How priceless is Your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of Your wings!" Psalm 36:7

Is there a grief in your heart, which grows into a nagging pain? Is there a hint of a coming sorrow that you see looming over you? Remember that it is the shadow of God's wings -- and so it is safe to receive. Crawl closer under them.

Earth has nothing so gentle as true mother-love; but God's wings that fold down over you, are gentler than even mother-love; and you can never get out from beneath them. They hold you close to the gentle heart of the divine Father. You need never be afraid while resting there. In all the universe, there is no harm that can come near you. From your eternal refuge, you can look out with confidence on the fury of earth's storms and be at peace. The wildest of them cannot touch you in your refuge!

"Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in You my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of Your wings until the disaster has passed." Psalm 57:1

"Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings" Psalm 17:8

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If all people were angelic

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you -- so you must love one another."
John 13:34

"As I have loved you" means love which is sweet, fragrant, and gentle -- to people who are rude and mean-spirited, selfish, and full of faults, with sharp corners and only partially sanctified lives.

If all people were angelic, and you were too -- it would not be hard to love everyone; but as other people are not yet angelic, you will still have need of patience, even if you are angelic yourself, which is quite doubtful.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

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The worst-tempered people

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23

The worst-tempered people may be made gentle and loving in all their words, acts, and dispositions -- by the renewing and transforming power of divine grace. God can take the jangled keys and put them in tune -- if we will only put them into His hand.

But we must strive ourselves to be sweet-tempered. We must watch the rising anger -- and quickly choke it back. We must keep down our ugly disposition. We must learn to control ourselves, our tempers, our feelings, our passions, and our tongues. We must seek to develop the gentle virtues -- and crowd out the thorns! This discipline is not easy, but the lessons can be mastered.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

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A powerful, silent, personal influence

There is a powerful, silent, personal influence, like a shadow, which emanates from everyone -- and this influence is always leaving results wherever it touches another person. You cannot live a day -- and not touch some other life with this influence. Wherever you go, your shadow falls on others -- and they are either better or worse for your presence.

Our influence depends upon what we are -- more than upon what we do. It is by living a beautiful life, that we bless the world. I do not underestimate good works. Good deeds must characterize every true life. But if your life itself is noble, beautiful, holy, Christlike, one that is itself a blessing and an inspiration -- then the worth of your influence is multiplied many times!

There is not a Christian who cannot preach sermons every day, at home and among neighbors and friends most eloquently -- by the beauty of holiness in his or her own everyday life. Wherever a Christian

goes -- his life ought to be an inspiration. Our silent influence ought to touch other lives with blessing. People ought to feel stronger, happier, and more uplifted -- after meeting us. Our very faces ought to shed light, shining like holy lamps into sad, weary hearts. Our lives ought to be blessings to repair human sorrow and need all around us.

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Building monuments to yourself

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit" Philippians 2:3

No grace shines more brightly in a Christian, than humility. Wherever SELF comes in -- it mars the beauty of the work we are doing. Seek to do your work quietly. Do not try to draw attention to yourself, to make people know that you did this or that beautiful thing. Be content to pour your rich life into other wasted, weary lives, and see them blessed and made more holy -- and then withdraw and let Christ have the honor. Work for God's approval, and even then, do not think much about reward. Seek to be a blessing to others -- and never think of self-advancement. Do not worry about credit for your work, or about building monuments to yourself; be content to do good in Christ's name.

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved -- clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Colossians 3:12

"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another" 1 Peter 5:5

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Two men look at the same scene:

"Be joyful always!" 1 Thessalonians 5:16

"In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy!" 2 Corinthians 7:4

Thankfulness or unthankfulness is largely a matter of the attitude of our heart.

Two men look at the same scene:

one sees the defects and the imperfections;

the other sees the beauty and the brightness.

If you cannot find things to be thankful for today, and every day -- the fault is in yourself, and you ought to pray for a changed heart -- a heart to see God's goodness and to praise Him.

A joyful heart transfigures all the world around us! It finds something to be thankful for in the barest circumstances, even in the dark night of the soul. Let us train ourselves to see the beauty and the goodness in God's world, and in our own circumstances -- and then we shall stop grumbling, and be content and thankful in all situations.

"A happy heart makes the face cheerful!" Proverbs 15:13

"The cheerful heart has a continual feast!" Proverbs 15:15

"A cheerful heart is good medicine -- but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22

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Have a dart ready to draw and hurl at our adversary!

"Jesus answered: It is written . . . " Matthew 4:4

We must all meet temptation. The tempter comes so suddenly and so secretively, that if we cannot instantly repel his assault, we shall be defeated.

There is nothing like texts of Scripture hidden in the heart, to drive Satan away. We need to have our quiver full of these polished shafts, these invincible darts, and to keep them ever ready to shoot on a moment's notice, and to hurl at our enemy. The only way to do this, is to make the Word of God our daily study, storing in our memory . . .

its precious texts,

its counsels,

its promises, and

its warnings.

Then we shall never be surprised, unprepared or defenseless -- but for every temptation, shall have a dart ready to draw and hurl at our adversary!

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

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An unreachd goal in this life

"She has done what she could!" Mark 14:8

No one can do all that he knows he ought to do, or that he wants to do. Yet when we have done our duty, faithfully and earnestly, according to the light and the wisdom given to us -- we should not regret afterwards, if it appears that we might have done things with more wisdom or with greater skill. We cannot get the benefits of experience, until we have already gone through the experience. We cannot have an elder's ripe wisdom, in the days of our youth. We are able to see when a day is done, how we might have lived it better. We should bring to every hour's work -- our finest skill, our best wisdom, our purest strength -- and then feel no regret, even if it does not seem well done. Perfection is always an unreachd goal in this life. Duty is always too large for us. We can never do more than a portion of it.

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect -- but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philipians 3:12-14

"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things -- I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord!" Matthew 25:23

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No one gets the crown -- without the conflict!

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God!" Revelation 2:7

The daily temptations which make every true life such a painful conflict from beginning to end -- bring us constant opportunities for growth of character. To struggle -- is to grow strong. The soldier's art can be learned, and the soldier's honors can be won -- only on the field of battle.

If you would grow into the beauty of the Master, you must accept the conflicts, and fight the battles. You can live easy if you will, by declining every struggle -- but you will then get little out of life which is truly noble and worthy. The best things all come after the battle -- you must fight your way across the field to get them. Heaven is only for those who overcome. No one gets the crown -- without the conflict!

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne!" Revelation 3:21

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A Beautiful Life!

"She has done what she could!" Mark 14:8

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that one be found faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:2

A life does not need to be great, to be beautiful. There may be as much beauty . . .

in a tiny flower -- as in a majestic tree;

in a little gem -- as in a great mountain;

in the smallest creature -- as in a massive one.

A life may be very lovely in God's eyes -- and yet be insignificant in the world's eyes. A beautiful life fulfills its mission in this world, and is what God made it to be, doing what God created it to do. Those with only common gifts, are in danger of thinking that they cannot live a beautiful life, and cannot be a blessing in this world. But the most obscure life which fills its place well, is far lovelier in God's sight, than the grandest and most splendidly gifted life which fails in its divine mission.

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things -- I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord!" Matthew 25:23

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How slowly we learn it!

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you -- so you must love one another."
John 13:34-35

How did Christ love His disciples? How did He demonstrate His love to them? Was it not, among other ways . . .

in His wonderful patience with them -- with their faults, their ignorance, their unfaithfulness;

in His considerate kindness;

in His ever-watchful thoughtfulness;

in His compassionate gentleness;

in His ministering to them in every possible way?

What is it, then, to love one another, as He loves us? Is it not to take His example for our pattern? But how slowly we learn it! How hard it is to be gentle, patient, kind, thoughtful, even perfectly true and just, to one another! Still, the lesson stands and waits for us, and we must never falter in learning it.

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The light, the joy, the blessing, the inspiration of a home!

Home is the true wife's kingdom. There, first of all places, she must be strong and godly. She may touch life outside in many ways -- if she can do it without slighting the duties that are hers within her own doors. But if any calls for her service must be declined, they should not be the duties of her home. These are hers, and no other one's. Very largely does the wife hold in her hands, as a sacred trust, the happiness and the highest good of the hearts that nestle there. The best husband -- the truest, the noblest, the gentlest, the richest-hearted -- cannot make his home happy -- if his wife is not, in every reasonable sense, a helpmate to him.

In the last analysis, home happiness depends on the wife. Her spirit gives the home its atmosphere. Her hands fashion its beauty. Her heart makes its love. And the end is so worthy, so noble, so divine -- that no woman who has been called to be a wife, and has listened to the call, should consider any price too great to pay -- to be the light, the joy, the blessing, the inspiration of a home!

Men with fine artistic gifts, think it worth while to live to paint a few great pictures which shall be looked at and admired for generations; or to write a few songs which shall sing themselves into the ears and hearts of men.

But the woman who makes a sweet, beautiful home, filling it with love and prayer and purity -- is doing something better than anything else her hands could find to do beneath the skies!

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Plank-eye

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye -- and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" Matthew 7:3

Let us learn to seal our lips forever on the wretched, miserable habit of telling the world about the speck in our neighbor's eye! Who made us a judge of others?

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." Matthew 18:15. Tell him his faults, if you will, with love and sympathy in your heart, confessing your own in the meantime. Tell faults because you want to help your neighbor to become nobler, lovelier, and better, because you cannot bear to see your neighbor suffer -- not because you want to humble him or triumph over her. Tell him his faults in secret -- if you are ready for such holy work; but do not tell the world of these faults.

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Life's battles and crises

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble!" Psalm 46:1

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" Philippians 4:13

Many a great battle is won by the reserves. The struggle is perfectly balanced, and victory is uncertain. Then, one side or the other brings up the reserve army, and instantly the question is settled.

Life's battles and crises are often determined in the same manner: by reserve resources -- or their absence.

Our days are not all bright, easy, and free of pain. The course is not always smooth. We all have tasks and duties which completely overwhelm our ability. We are all assailed by spiritual foes and temptations -- and victory comes only if we can call our reserves into action. Blessed are those who have learned to draw on the infinite resources of divine strength. With the fullness of God as a reserve, they can never fail.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes!" Ephesians 6:10-11

"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus!" Philippians 4:19

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Reckless words

Some people boast of their honesty and frankness, just because they "say what they think," flinging out the words right and left as they come, no matter where they strike, or whom they wound. Do not call this honesty -- call it rather miserable rudeness, reckless cruelty.

We have no right to say what we think -- unless we think lovingly and sweetly. We certainly have no right to unload . . .

our jealousies,

our envies,

our bad tempers, and

our miserable spite upon our neighbor.

If we must be bad-tempered, we should at least keep the ugliness locked up in our own heart, and not let it out to hurt other people's happiness. Or, if we must speak our wretched feelings, let us go into our own room and lock the door and close the windows, that no ears but our own shall hear our hateful words!

"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing!" Proverbs 12:18

"Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones!" Proverbs 16:24

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It is good for me that I have been afflicted!

"I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me." Psalm 119:75

Our spiritual life needs trials to bring out its greatest possibilities. It flourishes most luxuriantly, in adverse circumstances. The very trials and temptations which make our life full of unceasing warfare -- train us to be true soldiers of Christ. The difficulties of our experiences, which seem to us to be more than we can possibly endure -- are the very school of life for us in which we learn our best lessons, and grow into whatever beauty and Christlike character we attain.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word." Psalm 119:67

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes." Psalm 119:71

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Pleasant words

"How delightful is a timely word!" Proverbs 15:23

"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones!" Proverbs 16:24

How much better would it be if we were more generous and lavish of our good words, when our friends can be cheered and blessed by them! Sometimes we let other hearts starve, for lack of kindly words which lie meanwhile on our tongues, ready to be spoken. It is not the lack of love for which we are to be blamed -- but the stinginess which locks up the love and will not give it out in word and act to bless hungry lives. Is there any miserliness so base? We let hearts starve close beside us, when we have the bread to feed them; and then, when they lie in the dust of defeat or death -- we come with our love to speak eloquent funeral eulogies. Would it not be far better to give out our kind words when it will do good?

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." Ephesians 4:29

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Choosing Friends

We should choose friends whom we can take . . .

into every part of our life,
into closest fellowship,
into each holy joy of our heart,
into each work and service,
into each hope, and
at every point be in sympathy.

We ought to accept only the friendship . . .

which will bring blessing to our lives,
which will enrich our character,
which will stimulate us to better and holier things,
which will weave threads of silver and gold into our web of life,
whose every influence will be a lasting blessing.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Enlarge your desires and your prayers!

Enlarge your desires and your prayers! Do not ask merely for mercies, and favors, and ordinary gifts. Do not ask God merely to give you bread, and health, and friends, and prosperity. Do not content yourself with asking . . .

for grace to help in temptation,
or for strength to fill up your weakness,
or for wisdom to guide you in confusion,
or for holiness and purity and power.

Ask for God Himself, and then open your heart to receive Him. If you have God -- then you have all other gifts and blessings in Him. God is willing to give you Himself for the asking, not merely the favors and benefits which His hand provides. Ask for great things!

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think!" Ephesians 3:20

"He has all -- who has the haver of all." Augustine

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The sacred and holy trust

Oh that God would give every mother a vision of the glory and splendor of the work that is given to her, when a babe is place in her bosom to be nursed and trained! Could she have but one glimpse in to the future of that life as it reaches on into eternity; could she look into its soul to see its possibilities; could she be made to understand her own personal responsibility for the training of this child, for the development of its life, and for its destiny -- she would see that in all God's world, there is no other work so noble and so worthy of her best powers, and she would commit to no others hands, the sacred and holy trust given to her.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

To be a Christian

Consecration to God is nothing less than doing the will of Christ, rather than our own will -- doing it always, whatever the cost, the sacrifice, or the danger. There is too much mere pretense in our religion. We say that we believe in Christ; but if we truly do, we must follow Him wherever He leads, though we don't know where. We say we love Christ, and from His lips comes the crucial test: "If you love Me -- keep My commandments."

To be a Christian is to be devoted utterly, and irrevocably, to Christ.

"And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple!" Luke 14:27

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

What a shame!

Think of all the magnificent potential God has put into these lives of ours. He has given us minds . . .

to think,

to reason,

to imagine,

to roam amid the stars,

to wander into the very borders of infinity,

to climb the golden stairs of faith even into the midst of Heaven's brightness.

He has given us hearts to feel, to suffer, to rejoice, and to love.

He has put into our beings, the possibilities of the noblest achievements and the loftiest attainments. What a shame it is for one born to live in immortal glory, called to be a child of God -- to become like Jesus -- yet to be content with a poor earthly life and to live without reaching up toward God and Heaven!

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory!" Colossians 3:1-4

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Ladders of commonplace things

To find your mission in life, you have only to be faithful wherever God puts you for the present. The smaller opportunities which He gives you in the earlier years, are for your training, that you may be ready finally for the larger and specific service for which you were born. Do these smaller, humbler things well -- and they will prove to be steps in the stairs up to the loftier height where your "mission" awaits. To spurn these simpler duties and tasks and to neglect them, is to miss your important mission itself in the end -- for there is no way to get to it but by these ladders of commonplace things. You must build your own ladder day by day -- in common, faithful acts.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Divine assistance

"As your days -- so shall your strength be!" Deuteronomy 33:25

There is no promise of grace before you need it. God does not say He will strengthen our arms for the battle -- when there is no battle. When the conflict is approaching -- then we are given the necessary strength. He does not open the gates for us, nor roll away the stones -- until we come to them. He did not divide the waters of the Jordan -- while the people were still in their camps, nor even when they began to march toward the river. The wild stream continued to flow, even as the feet of the priests dipped in the water.

This is the continual law of God's help in time of need. Divine assistance is not given in advance. As we come to the need, the supply is ready -- but not before. Do not worry because you cannot see the way clear and the needs supplied far in advance of your steps. God will always provide for His children.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble!" Psalm 46:1

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Christlikeness at home

Keep the lamp of love shining day after day . . .

amid the many home cares and duties,

amid the criticisms, sarcasms, and thoughtlessness of others,

amid the thousand little irritations and arguments of home life

-- which tend to break peace and disrupt a sweet temper.

Let your love at home be of the kind that never fails. Wherever else, far away or near, you pour the bright beams of your Christian love -- be sure that you brighten your own home. No goodness and gentleness outside the home, will atone for lack of love at home.

"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." 1 Peter 3:8

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows

Wherever Christ places us -- we are to stay; and where He sends us -- we are to go. In the heat of life's conflicts, obstructed by a host of things which tend to distract our peace -- we are to maintain an unruffled calm, and the tenderness and simplicity of the heart of a little child. That is the lesson which Christ presents to us.

As the tender grass and even the sweet flowers live and thrive all through the winter under the deep snows, and emerge in the springtime in beauty -- so our hearts may remain loving, tender, and joyous through life's severest winter, under the snows of trial and sorrow.

"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in Me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world!" John 16:33

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Love's Ministry

"Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her!" Ephesians 5:25

Love's quality is measured by . . .

what it will do,

what it will give, and

what it will suffer.

God so loved the world that He gave -- gave His only begotten Son, gave all -- and withheld nothing! That is the measure of God's love for us -- it loves to the uttermost. If you are one of Christ's redeemed people, then . . .

every energy of your mind,

every affection of your heart,

every power of your soul,

every fiber of your body,

every element of your influence,

every penny of your money --

is Christ's; and all of these are to be used to bless others and to make the world better and holier. If we love, we will give, we will suffer, we will sacrifice. If we would be like God, we must live to minister to others, giving our life, without reserve, to service in Christ's name!

"The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me!" Galatians 2:20

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Make the teaching about God our Savior attractive!

"Whatever things are lovely" Philippians 4:8

"So that in every way, they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive!" Titus 2:10

We become truly lovely, to the degree that we become like God. Human morality is not always beautiful. There are people who are good, but not lovely. Their "goodness" still has qualities which repel others.

But true holiness is always attractive. We ought to make our religion so beautiful, that all who look upon us shall be drawn to our Master! We dishonor Christ, when we claim to be His people, and yet show in our character, disposition, and life -- things which are not in God's character. How will people of the world know what true religion is -- if you and I do not show them its beauty in our lives? We should seek not only whatever things are just and true and honest -- but also whatever things are lovely!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Earth's broken things

Christ is building His kingdom with earth's broken things. Men want only the strong, the successful, the victorious, the unbroken, in building their kingdoms; but God is the God of the unsuccessful, of those who have failed. Heaven is filling with earth's broken lives, and there is no bruised reed that Christ cannot take and restore to glorious blessedness and beauty. He can take the life crushed by pain or sorrow -- and make it into a harp whose music shall be all praise. He can lift earth's saddest failure up to Heaven's glory.

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Spiritual Greatness

Spiritual Greatness -- sanctified character, beauty of soul, the likeness of Jesus upon our lives and hearts -- shall endure forever. God wants to train every one of us into this true spiritual greatness.

Many Christians grow sadly disheartened, because they seem never to become any better. Year after year, the struggle goes on with the old bad habits and ugly dispositions, the old selfishness, pride, and hatefulness -- and they appear never to be growing victorious.

Yet Christ is a most patient teacher. He never wearies of our slowness and dullness as learners. He will teach the same lesson over and over, until we have learned it. If we only persevere, He will never tire of us, and His gentleness will make us great.

"Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go." Isaiah 48:17

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye." Psalm 32:8

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

It is better to be deaf!

"Whoever spreads slander is a fool!" Proverbs 10:18

In the case of slander, the listener is almost as bad as the speaker. The only proper response, is to shut your ears the moment you begin to hear an evil report of another from anyone. The person has no right to tell it to you -- and you have no right to listen to it! If you refuse to listen -- he will not be able to go on with his story. Ears are made to hear with, but on occasion it is better to be deaf. We all aim at courtesy, and courtesy requires that we be patient listeners, even to dull speakers; but even courtesy does not require us to listen to evil reports about a neighbor. Ears should be trained to shut instinctively when the breath of slander touches it, just as our eyes shut at the slightest approach of harm.

"He who speaks a slander, carries the devil on his tongue -- and he who listens to it, carries the devil in his ear!" Thomas Watson

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As we go along the dusty road of life

As we go along the dusty road of life -- we all need sympathy, human kindness, cheer, fellowship, and the thousand little expressions of human love. These small tokens of affection are the bright side of every life that is blessed by rich friendships. It is this unceasing blessing that your heart hungers for, as its daily bread -- not great gifts and large favors, but a gentle affection in your friend to bring cheer, comfort, inspiration, hope, and strength to your soul every time you look into his face.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

One selfish soul

Love is always ready to deny itself, to give, sacrifice -- just in the measure of its sincerity and intensity. Perfect love is perfect self-forgetfulness. Hence where there is love in a home -- unselfishness is the law. Each forgets self, and lives for others. But where there is selfishness, it mars joy. One selfish soul will destroy the sweetness of life in any home. It is like an ugly bush in the midst of a garden of flowers. It was selfishness that destroyed the first home and blighted all the loveliness of Paradise; and it has been blighting lovely things in earth's homes ever since. We need to guard against this selfish spirit.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The Law of Amusements

"All things are lawful -- but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful -- but not all things edify." 1 Corinthians 10:23

Amusements are proper, only so far as they make us better Christians. Whenever they become hindrances to us in our Christian living, or in our progress in sanctification -- they are harmful, no matter how innocent they may be in themselves.

How do your amusements affect your spiritual life? What is their influence on you? They may be very pleasing to you and provide great pleasure. But what is their influence on you as a Christian? In other words, are they means of grace? Or are they making you careless regarding Christ, and hindering your advancement in spirituality? We ought to be honest enough with ourselves to answer these questions truthfully, and then act accordingly.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

A true disciple of Jesus

"Lord, what will You have me to do?" Acts 9:6

To be a true disciple of Jesus, is to say "Yes" to Him always, with our whole heart, and with our whole being.

It means giving up the sins that grieve Him.

It means cutting free from whatever displeases Him.

It is renouncing every other master, and taking orders from Him only.

It means walking with Him, following Him wherever He leads, without question, without reservation, not counting the cost.

It is saying "Yes" to Christ whatever He may ask us . . .

to do,

or to give up,

or to sacrifice,

or to suffer.

That was the way His first disciples followed Him. And that is the way His disciples must follow Him now. Absolute obedience to Him, is the condition of following Him completely.

"His disciples followed Him." Matthew 8:23

"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me." Matthew 10:38

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Matthew 16:24

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Character Building

"In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built." 1 Kings 6:7

The account of the silent temple builders on Mount Moriah, is the picture of all the worthwhile work within us. The builders are always at work on our characters, but they work quietly. The little blocks come from a thousand sources, and are laid upon the walls of our hearts.

The lessons we receive from others,

the influences friends exert upon us,

the books that feed our minds,

the impressions our experiences leave upon us,

the inspirations from the Holy Spirit --

in all these ways the quiet work of character-building goes on. It never ceases, because the builders never rest. By day and by night, your character-temple is rising. Is it completely beautiful? Are the stones all clean and white? Your character-temple is not yet completed.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The continuing debt

"Owe no one anything, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law." Romans 13:8

If we have the true spirit of service, we will look upon everyone we meet, even casually, as one to whom we owe some debt of love, one sent to us to receive . . .

some blessing,

some cheerful word,

some comfort,

some strength,

some inspiration,

some touch of beauty from our hand.

We may never do even one great or noticeable thing that people will talk about, or that will be reported in the newspapers. Yet every word we speak, every small act, every influence we bring out, even unconsciously -- all "in His name," meeting human need and pain and sorrow as we pass by -- will prove to be a sweet and blessed ministry of love and will impart strength and help to others. The name of Christ consecrates every smallest deed or influence, pouring it full of love.

"The King will answer and say to them: Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them -- you did it to Me!" Matthew 25:40

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The balanced Christian life

While the Christian life is firm and yielding in its integrity and uprightness -- it is still beautiful in its love and gentleness. The unchangeable principles of uprightness, like mountain-crags, are covered over with tender vines, and with the sweet flowers of grace and charity.

True religion is never meant to dry up our life and make it cold, hard, and formal. It is meant to bring out new beauty, and to clothe the soul in garments of loveliness. It asks for the development of every power of body, mind, and spirit to the greatest possibility. It demands the strongest motives for godliness. It

demonstrates the finest examples. Its ideal includes not only "whatever things are true, whatever things are just," but also "whatever things are lovely."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Don't worry about the package!

"No chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11

Beyond the River of Sorrow, there is a Promised Land. No trial for the present seems joyous, yet afterward it leads to blessing. There are rich possibilities for good -- beyond every pain and trial. There are green fields beyond Jordan's sorrows. Our disappointments are really God's appointments, and bring rich rewards. God takes our losses -- and molds them into gains for us. There is nothing really evil in the experiences of a Christian, for "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Our Father sends us nothing but good. Don't worry about the package! Be it dull or attractive, it enfolds a 'gift of love'.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Our unconscious, perpetual, pervading, and immortal difference

"To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Corinthians 2:16

Every human life has an influence in this world. Our impact perpetually continues on every side. If our lives are true and good -- then this influence is a blessing to other lives. Let us never set in motion any influence that we would later want buried. When we think of our unconscious, perpetual, pervading, and immortal difference in the world -- we can only cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" How can we hope that the efforts from our lives will always be blessed? Let us be faithful in all our duties, obligations, and responsibilities -- in act, word, and attitude, all our days, in whatever makes an impact. In no other way, can we fulfill the responsibility of living for others.

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Yes, Lord!

"Lord, what will You have me to do?" Acts 9:6

Whatever command God gives -- we should instantly and cheerfully answer, "Yes, Lord, I am ready to obey!"

It is not hard to say "Yes, Lord!" when God leads us in pleasant paths, where the flowers are plentiful, where the way is smooth and agreeable. But we know that sometimes the path is covered with thorns and is rough and steep -- or runs through fire or flood. We are still called always to say, "Yes, Lord!" If God calls us to some trial or cross-bearing or sacrifice, our answer should always be the same. We should be able to trust His loving heart -- when our eyes cannot see blessing or goodness in the way He takes us. Every true path of God leads to rich joy!

"Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path!" Psalm 27:11

"He led them forth by the right way" Psalm 107:7

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If God sent two angels to earth

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

The service of the angels in Heaven's glory, is no more radiant than the faithful duty of the lowliest saint on earth.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

If He were in our place

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

The spirit of Christian love, if allowed to work deeply and thoroughly in all hearts and lives -- will prevent divisions and alienation among Christians. It will lead us to forget ourselves and think of others, not pushing our own interests excessively nor demanding the first place, but in honor preferring one another. It will make us willing . . .

to serve,

to minister,

to stoop down to wash a brother's feet.

It will make us thoughtful, too, in all our acts, in all our manners, in all our words. It will make us gentle, kind, and patient, teaching us to be all that Jesus would be, if He were in our place.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart" Matthew 11:29

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

We are like Christ

"May Your will be done on earth -- as it is in Heaven." Matthew 6:10

Obedience is what Heaven is made of. All the life of Heaven, is simply perfect obedience. A little bit of Heaven comes into our lives on earth, when we learn to obey the will of God. Obedience is the mark of royalty. Wherever God finds a soul that is ready to always yield to His will, to do His commandments without question, and to submit to His care without murmuring -- there is a person whom He is ready to

crown.

We are like Christ -- only as much as we learn to obey and do God's will. Heaven comes down into our heart -- only as we yield our lives to God.

"If you love Me, you will obey what I command." John 14:15

"If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." John 14:23

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We are lifted up in the arms of omnipotence

"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother!" Proverbs 18:24

God helps and blesses us through our friendships, but these are meant only to draw us up to Himself. Jesus is the only man in whom we can have eternal trust. All other friendships are only shadows -- His is the perfect friendship.

Behind the sweet, gentle, human qualities in Jesus which make it so easy for us to come to Him and rest in Him -- is the power of the eternal God. When we come to His precious human love, for which our hearts crave and which seems so satisfying -- we know that His infinite, divine fullness lies behind the tender warmth of the Son of God. His humanity comes very close to us, and we only need to lay our heads upon its bosom. Then when we lean on Him, we are lifted up in the arms of omnipotence.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . and He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!" Isaiah 9:6

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The blemishes and faults of others

"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." 1 Peter 3:8

We should learn to look at the blemishes and faults of others -- only through the eyes of love, with sympathy, patience, and compassion. We do not know the secret history of the lives of others around us. We do not know what piercing sorrows have produced the scars we see in people's lives. We do not know the pains and trials which make life hard, to many with whom we are tempted to be impatient. If we knew all the secret burdens and the heart-wounds which many keep hidden beneath their smiling faces -- we would be patient and gentle with all people.

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Colossians 3:12

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The way to waste our life

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." Luke 9:24

The way to waste our life, is . . .

to be very protective of it,

to hold it back from dangerous duty and costly service,

to save it from the work of self-denial and sacrifice.

The way to make our life an eternal success, is to do with it what Jesus did with His -- present it a living sacrifice to God, to be used wholly for Him. Some say He threw His life away -- and so it certainly seemed, up to the morning of His resurrection. But no one would say that now of Christ. The throwing away of His life -- led to its glory. In no other way can we make anything worthy of our life. Saving is losing. It is losing life in devotion to Christ and His service, which saves a life for Heavenly honor and glory.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The glory of all loveliness

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Matthew 5:8

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

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me". Psalm 51:10

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The secret of peace

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." John 14:27

Perfect loyalty to Christ -- brings perfect peace into the heart. The secret of Christ's own peace, was His absolute devotion to His Father's will. We can find peace in no other way. Any resistance to God's will, any disobedience of His commands -- must disturb the peace of our hearts. No hard lesson which He teaches, ever destroys our peace -- if we receive it with a willing, teachable spirit, and strive to learn it just as He has written it out for us. If we receive the lessons in the way that our Master gives them to us -- we shall make our life into beautiful music, and we shall find peace.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Whoever spreads slander is a fool!

It is easy for one to poison a person's mind, concerning another's reputation. There is measureless ruin created in this world, by the slanderer.

Characters are blackened,

friendships are destroyed,

jealousies are aroused,

homes are torn up,

hearts are broken!

Let us never take up an evil report, and pass it onto others. Let us never whisper an evil word about another. We do not know . . .

where it may end,

how it may grow, or

what ruin it may work.

Words once spoken, can never be taken back again. We'd better learn to keep the door of our lips locked and speak no evil of anyone.

"The Scripture calls slandering, smiting with the tongue. "Come, and let us smite him with the tongue!" Jer. 18:18. You may smite another -- and never touch him. The tongue inflicts greater wounds than the sword. No physician can heal the wounds of the tongue! To pretend friendship to a man, and slander him, is most odious!" Thomas Watson

"As a rod scourges the back, so the slanderer's tongue scourges the name!" Thomas Watson

"The scorpion carries his poison in his tail; the slanderer carries his poison in his tongue!" Thomas Watson

"He who raises a slander -- carries the devil in his tongue!

He who receives a slander -- carries the devil in his ear!" Thomas Watson

"Do not go about spreading slander among your people." Leviticus 19:16

"Whoever spreads slander is a fool!" Proverbs 10:18

"Brothers, do not slander one another!" James 4:11

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Faithfulness in small things

"And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.'" Luke 19:17

There will be eternal honors for those who have filled important places of trust and responsibility in this world, and have proved faithful in great things. There will be crowns of glory for the martyrs who, throughout the ages, have died rather than deny Christ.

But there will be rewards just as brilliant and crowns just as splendid, for those who, in lives of lowly service and self-denial and in patient endurance and humble devotion -- have been faithful in the small things. God does not overlook the lowly, nor does He forget the little things. If only we are faithful in the place to which He assigns us and in the duties He gives us, we shall have our reward from God, even though our lives and our deeds are unknown and unpraised by others.

No one is endowed with all gifts. Every person has his or her own particular

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