

# In Green Pastures - Choice Excerpts

by J.R. Miller

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*J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes the importance of devotion to Christ, humility in service, and the transformative power of love and pain in the Christian life.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 23:1

**Topics:** "Christ's Love", "Living a Christ-like Life"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound relationship between Christians and Christ, portraying Him as the Good Shepherd who provides for His flock. He encourages believers to live a life of humility, service, and love, reflecting Christ's character in their daily interactions. Miller highlights the importance of prayer, the transformative power of Christ's love, and the necessity of enduring trials with grace. He reminds us that true beauty and happiness come from a life devoted to Christ, and that our struggles can lead to spiritual growth and deeper faith. Ultimately, he calls for a life that mirrors the love and compassion of Jesus, assuring us that we are cherished and known by Him.

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## Transcript

In Green Pastures

by J. R. Miller, 1890

"Handfuls of Grass for the Lord's Hungry Sheep"

Daily readings for every day in the year

"The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; He

leads me beside quiet waters." Psalm 23:1-2

CHOICE EXCERPTS

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

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Work for God's eye

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."

Matthew 6:1

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 noiselessly. Do not try to draw attention to yourself--to make others know that you did some beautiful thing. Be content to pour your rich life into other wasted, weary lives--and see them blessed and made more holy--and then hide away and let Christ have the honor. Work for God's eye--and even then, do not think much about reward. Seek to be a blessing--and never think of self-glory.

"Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:4

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Unto the end!

"Having loved His own who were in the world --He loved them to the end." John 13:1

The most wonderful thing in the universe, is our Savior's love for His own people. Christ bears with all our infirmities. He never tires of our inconsistencies and unfaithfulnesses.

He goes on forever forgiving and forgetting.  
He follows us when we go astray. He does not  
forget us--when we forget Him. Through all  
our stumbling and sinning, through all our  
provocation and disobedience, through all  
our waywardnesses and stubbornnesses,  
through all our doubting and unfaithfulness  
--He clings to us still, and never lets us go.

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake  
you." Hebrews 13:5

"I give them eternal life, and they will never  
perish--ever! No one will snatch them out of  
My hand!" John 10:28

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Your amusements

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever  
you do--do it all for the glory of God."

1 Corinthians 10:31

Amusements are proper, both as to kind and  
degree--just so far as they make us better  
Christians. Whenever they become hindrances  
to us in our Christian living or in our holy walk  
--they are harmful, however innocent they  
may be in themselves.

How do your amusements influence your  
spiritual life? They may be very pleasing to you.  
They may afford great gratification. But what is

their effect on you, as a Christian? Are they hindering your love for Christ, and your growth in grace? We ought to be honest enough with ourselves, to answer these questions truthfully, and then act accordingly.

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Loving the unseen Christ

Holy thoughts in the heart, transfigure the life.

Your daily thoughts--build up your character.

Our hearts are the quarries where the blocks are fashioned, which we build into our life-temple. If our thoughts and meditations are holy, beautiful, true, pure, loving, and gentle--our life will grow into Christ-likeness.

Drummond tells of a young girl whose character ripened into rare beauty--"one of the loveliest lives," he says, "that ever bloomed on earth!" She always wore around her neck a little locket. But no one was ever allowed to open the locket or to know what it contained.

Once, however, in a time of dangerous illness, she permitted a friend to look within it, and there she saw the words, "Whom having not seen--I love."

That was the secret of the dear child's transfiguration of character--loving the unseen Christ. The same love--warm, tender, earnest, glowing in the heart year after year--will transfigure any life into

heavenly beauty!

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Life-lessons

"Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble  
in heart." Matthew 11:29

We all fail in the life-lessons which our great

Teacher sets for us. The hardest school-tasks are  
easily mastered--in comparison with the lessons of:

patience,

sweet temper,

forgiveness,

unselfishness,

gentleness,

humility,

purity,

contentment.

Even at best--we can learn these lessons but slowly.

And though but little seems to come from our yearnings  
and strugglings after Christ-likeness--yet God honors the  
yearning and the striving. While we sit in the shadows of  
weariness, disheartened with our failures--He carries on  
the work within us, and with His own hands produces  
the divine beauty in our souls.

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We will be like Him!

"We know that when He appears--we  
will be like Him!" 1 John 3:2

As the beauty of Christ's character glows before us in the light of the Gospels--we should say, "That is what I am to be some day! I am now very far from it--but I am to reach it. That is my assured destiny!"

Such a hope cherished in the heart, has a wondrous uplifting power.

Since we are so soon to be like Christ--we should seek to grow continually in grace and virtue. We should daily be getting a little more like Christ in character, in temper, in disposition, in affection.

Our aim should be to bring every thought, and every emotion, and every desire--into sweet subjection to Christ.

We should not only cherish the blessed vision --but should seek daily to grow into its divine beauty! "We know that when He appears--we will be like Him!" 1 John 3:2

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Walking with God

"Direct my footsteps according to Your Word; let no sin rule over me." Psalm 119:133

This is a prayer which should always be on our lips.

We should get our direction from God, not once in our life only, when we first give ourselves to Him; not at the opening of each day only, as we go forth to the day's task; not merely at the beginning of each new piece of work or of each fresh task--but

every moment, for each step.

That is what "walking with God" means.

We may make this so real, that we shall look up into God's face continually, asking, "What next, dear Lord? What shall I do now? Which course shall I take today? How shall I do this duty?"

If we can but have God's guidance and help for the little short steps--we need not fear for the long miles--the great stretches of road. If each step is of His directing--the long miles will be paths of His choosing.

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The motto of all His beautiful years

"For the Son of Man did not come to be served--but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Mark 10:45

The life of Jesus Christ, was the noblest life ever lived.

No earthly king ever attained such splendid, such real royalty--as did He. No hero on battle-field ever did deeds of such inherent greatness--as those wrought by the hands of the Carpenter of Nazareth!

What was the ruling spirit of His life? Was it not service?

"Not to be served--but to serve"--was the motto of all His beautiful years. He lived wholly for others. He never had one thought for Himself, never did the smallest act for Himself. At last He poured out His very blood--in the greatest of all His acts of service.

Shall we not learn from our Lord's example--that the truest life in this world, is one of self-forgetting love? Selfishness anywhere mars and spoils the beauty of the rarest deed. We must get the spirit of Christ--and then our lives shall be Christ-like.

"Leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps." 1 Peter 2:21

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The old monks intently gazed upon the crucifix

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." Hebrews 12:2

Keeping the heart upon Christ--transfigures the life.

The old monks intently gazed upon the crucifix, thinking that the print of the nails would come in their hands and feet, and the thorn-scars in their brow--as they gazed.

It was but an utter fiction--yet in the fiction there is a spiritual truth. Gazing by faith upon Christ--the lines of His beauty indeed imprint themselves on our hearts!

That is the meaning of Paul's words--"We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord--are transformed into the same image!"

The gospel is the mirror. There we see the image of Christ. If we earnestly, continuously, and lovingly behold it--the effect will be the changing of our own lives into His likeness. The transformation is wrought by the Holy Spirit, and we are only to behold, to

continue beholding, the blessed beauty! As we sit  
before Christ--His image is imprinted on our soul.

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#### The true ministry of pain

There is a Christian art of enduring pain, which we should seek to learn. The real goal is not just to endure the suffering which falls into our life; to bear it bravely, without wincing; to pass through it patiently, even rejoicingly. Pain has a higher mission to us, than to teach us heroism. We should endure it in such a way as to get something of spiritual blessing out of it.

Pain brings to us some message from God, which we should not fail to hear. It lifts for us the veil which hides God's face, and we should get some new glimpses of His beauty, every time we are called to suffer. Pain is furnace-fire, and we should always come out of this furnace, with the gold of our graces gleaming a little more brightly. Every experience of suffering ought in some way--to lift us nearer God, to make us more gentle and loving, and to leave the image of Christ shining a little clearer in our lives.

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#### The path to comfort in our time of sorrow

"Being in an agony--He prayed," is the record of our Savior's Gethsemane experience. The lesson stands for all time. Like a bright lamp, the little sentence shines amid the olive trees of the garden. It shows us the path to comfort in our time of sorrow. Never before or since--was there such grief as the Redeemer's, that night. But in His prayer, He found comfort. As we watch Him the hour through, we see the agony changing as He prayed, until at last its bitterness was all gone--and sweet, blessed peace took its place. The gate of prayer is always the gate to comfort. There is no other way to consolation.

We may learn also from our Lord's Gethsemane, how to pray in our Gethsemanes. God will never blame us for asking to have the cup removed, nor for the intensity of our supplication; but we must always pray with submission. It is when we say, in our deepest sorrow and intensity, "Not my will--but may Your will be done," that comfort comes, that peace comes.

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#### Sermons without words

When you are tempted to chafe and repine at the narrowness of your circumstances and the limitations of your sphere, remember that Jesus for thirty years found room in a humble peasant home for worthy living and for service, not unfitted to his exalted character. If you can do nothing but live a true Christian life--patient, gentle, kindly, pure--in your home, in society, at your daily duty--you will perform in the end a service of great value and leave many blessings in the world. Such a life is a little gospel, telling in sermons without words, the wonderful story of the cross of Christ.

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#### Christian amusements

Amusement must never become an end in life. It must always be a means, a help on the way--just as sleep is, just as rest is. An hours amusement, should be to you just what a night's sleeping is--it should make you stronger, clearer-headed, braver, calmer-souled, more hopeful, more earnest, more enthusiastic--inspiring you for godly living. Anything which leaves a taint of impurity upon the life, or starts a thought of impurity in the mind, anything which degrades or debases the soul--is an unfit and unworthy amusement for a Christian. Christian amusements must be such, as do not harm spiritual life; they must be means of grace.

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do--do everything for God's glory!" 1 Cor. 10:31

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#### Paying love's debt

We ought not to need night--to teach us the glories of the day. We ought not to have to wait for sorrow, before we can appreciate the sweetness of joy. Yet is it not often true, that we learn the value of our blessings--but by their loss? Many a time an empty chair is the first full revealer of the worth and faithfulness of a precious friend.

Would it not be best, if we were to seek to appreciate our good things--while we have them? We would then have the joy itself, and not merely the dull pain of regret as we look back at vanished blessings. Besides--we would do more for our friends while they are with us--if we appreciated their worth. Too many of us never understand what we owe to our dear ones--until there remains no further opportunity of paying love's debt.

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#### The race!

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."  
Philippians 3:14

That Christian life which costs nothing--is worth nothing. There must be self-restraint, discipline, severe schooling. There must be struggle, and the agonizing effort. If you are to reach the goal and win the prize--you must put every energy of your life into the race. There must be a sacrifice of indolence and self-will and personal ease. Too much pampering, spoils many a promising Christian.

Every noble and godly life, is a struggle from beginning to end. Only those who toil and fight and overcome--are successful in life. This is true in every sphere--in business, in academics, and in spiritual life. Are we resisting sin, overcoming temptation, living victoriously in trial? If not--we are not living worthily. "To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me." Colossians 1:29

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Little's

"Little's make perfection," replied the artist to one who asked him why he spent so much time in giving the little finishing-touches to his statue. There can be no perfection in any kind of workmanship, unless attention is paid to the minutest details of construction or finishing. One smallest flaw or incompleteness left in the work, in any part of it--leaves a blemish on the finished endeavor.

Life is a mosaic, and each small stone must be polished and set with greatest care--or the piece will not at last, be perfect. One whose daily life is careless--is always weak in Christian character. But one who habitually walks in right paths, no matter how small and apparently trifling the things may be--grows strong and noble. Little's make perfection. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do--do everything for God's glory."

1 Corinthians 10:31

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Think!

It is a good thing to think. The more thought we put into our work--the better it will be done. Work of all kinds becomes exalted, ennobled, refined, and produces good, lasting effects--just in proportion as men put thought into it. All worthy, noble, useful, beautiful living--must have its dark quarries of purposing, thinking, planning, shaping, polishing, behind its being and doing. Look well to the quarries, and you need not give much thought to the rising of the building.

Prepare no stained blocks in your heart-quarries. Train yourself to think only pure thoughts--white, clean thoughts. "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things!" Philippians 4:8

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Wounded and empty hands

"Full hands" at the end of a life--do not always tell of true success. Earthly failure is oftentimes higher success in God's eyes--than what men regard as "success". Scars of wounds gotten in conflict and strife with sin--are more splendid marks of honor, when the hands are held up before God--than diamonds and gold and crowns gained by yielding in life's conflicts.

Strive to get your hands filled with the invisible things of God's heavenly kingdom. Fight the battles of life heroically--and never mind the scars. Better to have wounded and empty hands which are clean--than hands which are full, and yet are stained with sin.

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Inscrutable things

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

There are depths in the love of God, which are as vast and fathomless as the ocean--but we are only on the shore. Then, there are inscrutable things in God's providential dealings with each one of us. Heaven will solve a thousand mysteries for us in a moment. We will then see the reason for every trial, every pain, every loss, every disappointment. There will not be a trace of mystery left hanging, about any dark providence. Then we shall see clearly, what now we know only by faith--that "all things work together for the good of those who love God--to those who are called according to His purpose."

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Our very mistakes and our sins  
Our very mistakes and our sins, if we repent of them, will be used of God to help in the growth and upbuilding of our Christian character. Our very falls, through the grace and tender love of Christ, become means of growth to our souls.  
In the hot fires of penitence--we leave the dross and come out as pure gold. But we must remember that it is only Christ who can make our sins yield blessing. If we are Christ's true followers, even our defeats shall become blessings to us, stepping-stones on which we may climb higher. This is one of the marvels of divine grace--that it can make all things

--even our sins--work together for good.

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The best thing that we can do in this world

We should be Christ to others all about us.

There are few people whom God calls to do great things

for Him. The best thing that we can do in this world

--is to live out a real, simple, beautiful, strong Christian

life in our allotted place. Thus in our little measure, we

shall repeat the life of the Master himself, showing men

some feeble reflection of His sweet and loving face; and

doing in our imperfect way, a few of the lovely things

He would do--if He were here Himself in our place.

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Death is not the end

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Philippians 1:21.

The Christian life is not a voyage in the sunshine,

darkening as it progresses and growing stormy,

ending in utter wreck on death's shores. Rather,

it is a voyage through earthly storm and shadow

--but at last out into the broad ocean of eternal

blessedness.

Death is not the end--but the beginning.

Death is not loss--but gain.

Death is not into darkness--but into marvelous light.

Death is not away from joy and gladness and beauty

--but is out of the mere shadows and hopes of

blessedness--into the full revelation of Christ, into  
His very presence, where there is fullness of joy,  
where there are pleasures forevermore!

"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which  
is better by far!" Philippians 1:23

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Better than money!

We can do a great deal of the wisest, truest good among men--without giving money. A strong hand reached out to help a fallen one rise again--is better than money. New hope and fresh courage put into a discouraged heart--are better than money. True comfort, enabling one in sorrow to pass through it sustained and victorious--is better than money. Let no one say he cannot do anything for others, unless he has money to give. Use what you have! Heart-coins and life-coins, are better than coins from the mint. The things we do for men's souls--are far more important to them--than the things we do merely for their bodies. Besides, all God asks us to give to others--is of such as we have.

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The touch of Christ

A man with leprosy came to Him and begged  
Him on his knees, "If You are willing, You can  
make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus  
reached out His hand and touched the man.

Mark 1:40-41

No one can read the gospel story, without being  
impressed with the marvelous power of Christ's  
touch. Wherever it was felt--blessing came.

We find ourselves sometimes mourning the loss  
of this touch, and wishing that we could feel it  
and get its blessing. But really, we have not lost  
it. Christ has indeed passed out of our sight--but  
His hand is stretched out still. It is laid on us--just  
as of old upon sufferers--and has lost none of its

power to comfort. Christ lays His hand upon our heads, every time we bow at his feet in prayer. When we are in trouble--He comes and comforts us with His warm touch of sympathy. When we are sick or in pain--He is by our bed, and His hand is laid on our fevered brow to give rest and peace.

"Surely I am with you always--to the very end of the age!" Matthew 28:20

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In these luxurious days

"If anyone would come after Me--he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it--but whoever loses his life for Me will save it."

Luke 9:23-24

We are strongly tempted, in these luxurious days--to seek out the easy ways in life. Naturally, we are not fond . . .

of bearing heavy burdens,  
of performing hard tasks,  
of making self-denials.

We prefer to be indolent and self-indulgent.

Souls are withered, too, by self-indulgence. It is a false idea--that God has sown His blessings thickest --amid the flowers of earth's gardens. Nay, they lie thickest on the bare fields of hardship and toil. In shrinking from self-denials which are called for in

the path of duty--we are missing the best things  
which God has to give us.

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Transformed into His likeness

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus!" Hebrews 12:2

If we would see life in its wholeness--unmarred,  
undebased--the highest, purest, truest life--we  
must look at Jesus!

We are to become like Christ. We should never,  
therefore, lose sight of Him. Keeping the ideal  
always before our eyes will, unconsciously yet  
powerfully, draw us toward it.

"And we, who with unveiled faces all contemplate  
the Lord's glory--are being transformed into His  
likeness with ever-increasing glory!" 2 Corin. 3:18

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His life of sweet patience and kindness

"I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you  
have received. Be completely humble and gentle;  
be patient, bearing with one another in love."

Ephesians 4:1-2

If we are sour, peevish, easily provoked, surly,  
resentful, jealous, envious, bad-tempered in any  
way--what sort of impression of Christ do we give  
to those who know nothing of Him--but what they  
learn from our lives? Surely if we truly love Christ  
--we will not allow ourselves to continue to dishonor

Him--by living a life so unworthy of His dear name!

Whatever we may do for Christ, in gifts to His cause or work in His service--if we fail to live out His life of sweet patience and kindness--we fail of an essential part of our duty as Christians.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Ephesians 5:1-2

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Unlovely and disagreeable traits

"Above all, love each other deeply--because love covers over a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8

There are some people whom it is very easy to love.

They are congenial to our tastes. They have amiable qualities or charming manners, or they are our social companions.

But there are others who are not congenial--not amiable--not to our taste. They have unlovely and disagreeable traits. Faults mar the beauty of their character. Yet if we are Christians--we should not fail to show brotherly love toward any.

We must seek that love, which hides the multitude of sins and faults.

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Your speech

"Your speech should always be gracious."

Colossians 4:6.

We are to talk about the bright, beautiful, joyful things around us. The Christian must not be sanctimonious. Religion suffers from nothing more, than from pious cant. Our talk on business, on science, on pleasure, on whatever theme--should be fragrant with the perfume of grace. An old proverb says: "The heart and the tongue are only a span apart."

If a man's heart is touched by the grace of God, his lips will speak ever words of beauty, truth, and gentle love on whatever theme he may speak.

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Grace does not take trouble out of life

Grace does not take trouble out of life. It does not make all the world feel kindly toward you.

It does not hush the tongue of reproach and scorn.

It does not quell the contentions of life. It does not soften human harshness, nor destroy selfishness. It does not hush the sharp voices of criticism, fault-finding, and frivolous talk. It does not command a truce to jealous rivalries and envyings, to personal abuse and silly strife. It does not say to the adverse winds, "Blow not on my home." Christ makes no charmed circle about us where we shall never more

feel the blast of the storm; but he gives a peace  
which will keep the heart calm and tranquil, in the  
midst of the angriest strifes and storms.

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How very strange it must seem to the angels  
We are greedy after this world's things--and never  
can get enough of them. But of the real things, the  
things which will last through eternity--we are  
satisfied with very small portions.

"What do you seek?" asks the Master. His hands  
filled with precious blessings; and we ask for some  
little thing, some trifle, when we might have glorious  
fullness of blessing.

How very strange it must seem to the angels,  
to see us poor mortals giving our life, our very soul,  
to get some paltry thing of earth, which will perish  
tomorrow; and then not taking the precious spiritual  
blessings which we might have for the mere asking!

~ ~ ~ ~

This heavenly casket

"We cry, Abba, Father." Romans 8:15

When we learn to look up to God out of our  
weakness and sorrow, and say, "Abba, Father,"  
what a revelation does the name disclose! What  
a treasure of precious love-thoughts does it  
unlock! For one thing, there is love in this  
divine Fatherhood--love which never falters,

which never wearies, which stops at no sacrifice.

There is also watchfulness which never sleeps, which looks down with compassionate eye from above the silent stars, and keeps vigil day and night. There is compassion, also, which peers into the depths of all our want and woe. There is shelter too, forever does our Father stand between us and danger. There is guidance--a divine Hand clasping ours and leading us along through every difficult and dark way. No casket of earth's jewels holds so rich a cluster--as does this heavenly casket--this name "Father," contain of the jewels of divine grace.

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When we are weak

"Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour!" 1 Peter 5:8

We are not at all times equally strong. There are days with all of us when we throw off temptation with almost no effort. But none of us are so every day. There are hours with the strongest of us--when we are weak. These are the times of peril for us, and our adversary is watching for them. In your weak hours keep a double guard, therefore, against temptation. Keep out of its way. Throw yourself with mighty faith on Him who was tempted in all points as we are, and knows therefore how to deliver us when we are tempted. In time of special weakness--run to Christ for shelter!

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You are a letter from Christ

"You show that you are a letter from Christ --written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God." 2 Corinthians 3:3

The world does not read the Bible, nor come to church to hear the gospel. All it learns about Christ

and the Christian life--it must learn from those who bear Christ's name and represent Him. If all church members lived truly consecrated lives--holy, beautiful, separate from the world; loyal to Christ in business, in pleasure, in all things--it is impossible to estimate what the powerful influence of the Church would be, in example alone. We are all responsible for the influence of our example. Our lives should be New Testament pages, which all can read.

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Weaving our soul's garments

We are all busy weavers. Forever are we pushing the shuttle back and forth--each moment weaving one new thread in the web of our life which shall stay there forever. Every thought, every feeling, every motion, every imagination which plays but for a moment in the soul--become a thread which is instantly a permanent part of the life we are living. Our words and acts are threads which are clean and beautiful--or stained and blemished, according to their moral character. Thus we are forever weaving, and the web that we make--our souls must wear in eternity. How important it is that we put into this fabric--only threads of immortal beauty! If we do God's will always, and train ourselves to meditate on God's thoughts, and to receive into our heart the influences of God's love and grace, and to yield ever and only to God's Spirit--we shall weave for our souls a robe of righteousness, which shall appear radiant and lovely when all earth's garments have faded and crumbled to dust!

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Keep the water out of the boat

The problem of sailing--is not to keep the boat out of the water--but to keep the water out of the boat. In like manner, the problem of true Christian living--is not to keep ourselves out of life's cares, trials, and temptations--but to keep the cares, trials, and temptations out of us. As the sea is the normal element for ship-sailing, so care is the normal element of life in this world. But we must keep the sea out of our heart. Some people make the mistake of letting their cares and worries creep into their souls. The result is that they grow discontented, fretful, unhappy. The secret of peace--is to keep the heart free from care and anxiety, even in the midst of the sorest trials. "Cast all your cares upon Him--for He cares for you!"

~ ~ ~ ~

The ideal for all Christian life

True life, wherever it is found, is ministry. Men think that they rise in life--as they get away from serving; but it is the reverse. "Not to be ministered unto--but to minister," our Lord gave as the central aim and

desire of His life. These words also give us--the ideal for all Christian life. The whole of Christ's wonderful biography is focused and printed here. He himself holds up the picture as the pattern on which every disciple's life is to be fashioned. No one really begins to live at all, in any worthy sense--until selfishness dies in him and he begins to serve. We should ourselves ask concerning others--not how we can use them to advance our own interests and welfare--but how we can do them good, serve them, become in some way blessings to them.

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#### The test of amusements

Is the love of pleasure growing upon you, gaining the power and the ascendancy over you? Is it dulling the keenness of your zest for spiritual pleasures? Is it making Bible-study, prayer, communion with Christ, meditation upon holy themes--less sweet enjoyments than before? Is it making your hunger for righteousness, for God--less intense? Is it interfering with the comfort and blessing you used to find in worship services, or in Christian work? If so, there is only one thing to do--to hasten to return to God, cut off the pleasure which is imperiling the soul, and find in Christ the joy which the world cannot give, and which ever enhances the life. We must test all our pleasures by this rule--Are they helping us to grow into the noblest spiritual beauty?

~ ~ ~ ~

#### If we knew

We should learn to look at the faults of others, only through love's eyes--with charity, 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 which we see in people's souls. 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 carry hidden beneath their smiling faces--we would be patient and gentle with all people.

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#### God's strange schools

No books, no universities, can teach us the divine art of sympathy. We must be sorely tempted ourselves, before we can understand what others suffer in their temptations. We must have sorrow ourselves in some form, before we can be real and true comforters of others in their times of sorrow. We must walk through the deep valley ourselves, before we can be guides to others in the same shadowy valleys. We must feel the strain and carry the burden and endure the struggle ourselves, and only then we can be touched with the feeling of sympathy or can give help to others in life's sore stress and poignant need. So we see, that one compensation of suffering--it fits us for being in a larger sense, helpers of others.

~ ~ ~ ~

#### Through life's sorest winter

In the heat of life's conflicts, set upon on every hand by a multitude of things which tend to distract our peace--we are to maintain an unruffled calm, and all the tenderness and simplicity of the heart of a little

child. That is the problem of life and of living, which Christ sets for us, and which he will help us to solve, if we follow him as our teacher. As the sweet flowers live and grow all through the winter under the deep snows, and come forth in the spring-time in beauty--so our hearts may remain loving, tender, and joyous through life's sorest winter, under the snows of trial and sorrow.

~ ~ ~ ~

God's clock is never too slow

In the divine providence, nothing comes a moment too soon or too late--but everything comes in its own true 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 the providence 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, full of blessing. Not until afterward will you see it--but the "afterward" is sure, if you firmly and faithfully follow Christ and cleave to him. The "afterward" of every disappointment or sorrow is blessing and good. We need only to learn to wait in patience.

~ ~ ~ ~

Silence which is golden

It is easy for one to poison a person's mind concerning another. There is measureless ruin wrought 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 give it wing on breath of ours. Let us never whisper an evil thing of another. We know not where it may end, to what it may grow, what ruin it may work! Words once spoken, can never be gotten back again. We had better learn to keep the door of our lips locked and never say evil of anyone. This is a silence we shall never regret.

~ ~ ~ ~

### Countless little irritations and provocations

True religion is not believing alone; it is getting the virtues and graces out of the pages of Scripture where we find them--and into our own lives. Meekness as a beatitude is very beautiful. Meekness in Moses we admire greatly. But how much of it are we getting out of beatitude and biography into our experience? In our daily fellowship with men--do we hold our hearts quiet and still under all harshness, rudeness, criticism, injustice? There are countless little irritations and provocations which make friction every day. How do we endure them? Do they polish and refine our natures? These are the lessons of meekness.

~ ~ ~ ~

### The oyster's wounds

What must we do with the wrongs and injustices and injuries inflicted upon us by others--if we are not to avenge them? How are these wrongs to be righted--and these injuries to be healed? Do not fear the consequences of any wrong done to you. Simply roll the matter into God's hands and leave it there, and he will bring all out clear as the noonday. He will not allow us to be permanently and really injured by any enmity. Our duty, then, is to bear meekly and patiently the suffering which others may cause us to endure; to bathe with love the hand which smites; to forgive those who injure us; and to commit all the injustices and inequities of our lives and all wrongs--into the hand of the just and righteous God. The oyster's wounds become pearls; and God can bring pearls of spiritual beauty out of the hurts made by human hands in our lives.

~ ~ ~ ~

### Before we turn our microscopes on others

It is strange how oblivious we can be of our own faults and of the blemishes in our own character--and how clearly we can see the faults and blemishes of other people. Finding so much wrong in others, is not a flattering indication of what our hearts contain. We ought to be very quiet and modest in criticizing others, for in most cases we are just telling the world what our own faults are. Before we turn our microscopes on others, to search out the unlovely things in them--we had better look in our mirrors to see whether or not we are free ourselves from the blemishes we would reprove in our neighbor. There is a wise bit of Scripture which bids us get clear of the beams in our own eyes, that we may see well to pick the motes out of the eyes of others.

~ ~ ~ ~

### Every Christian can preach sermons

Every Christian can preach sermons every day,  
at home and among neighbors and friends--by the  
beauty of holiness in his own common life. Wherever  
a true Christian goes, his life ought to be an inspiration.

Our silent influence ought to touch other lives with blessing--shining like holy lamps into sad and weary hearts. Our lives ought to be blessings to human sorrow and need all about us.

~ ~ ~ ~

#### A silent personal influence

There is a silent personal influence, like a shadow, which goes out from everyone, and this influence is always leaving results and impressions wherever it touches. You cannot live a day--and not touch some other life. 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 under-estimate holy activities. Good deeds must characterize every true life. Our hands must do holy works. But if the life itself is noble, beautiful, holy, Christ-like, one that is itself a blessing, an inspiration, the worth of the influence is many times multiplied.

~ ~ ~ ~

#### Your busy, harassed, tempted, struggling life

It is in prayer that God shows his face to his children, that they have visions of his beauty and glory, that the sweet things of his love come down as gifts into their hearts, and that they are transformed into his likeness. If you would be blessed, get many seasons of prayer into your busy, harassed, tempted, struggling life. It is in these quiet moments, that you really grow. Somewhere in every vexed, feverish day--get a little "silent time" for prayer. It will bring heaven down into your heart, and make you strong for service.

~ ~ ~ ~

#### Self-made crosses

There are crosses which we make for ourselves.

Whenever our will falls athwart God's will--we have a cross. We make a cross for ourselves--when we refuse to take God's way, to accept His will, or when we chafe or fret at anything which God sends us. When, however, we quickly accept what God gives, and yield in sweet acquiescence to the divine will--we have no

crosses to carry.

Yet there are many people who fill their lives with self-made crosses. Much physical illness and pain, are produced by violation of healthy habits--and the suffering endured in consequence, is self-inflicted. Much of the trouble in people's lives--they bring upon themselves by their indiscretions, follies, and evil habits.

Then there are those who make crosses for themselves--by magnifying their common ills, by dwelling on their troubles, by brooding over imaginary evils until their moderate share of human troubles, grows into a seeming mountain of calamities.

If all the crosses which we make for ourselves were taken out of our lives--we would not have many left. Far more than we realize--we are the authors of our own troubles.

~ ~ ~ ~

Another room in our Father's house!

We are in the Father's house in this world--though not in the best room of it--because sin has marred everything here. Still we are in the Father's house. His care is over us continually. His love pours its brightness all about us. His hand provides for our needs.

Let us not think basely of earth--for it is part of our

Father's house. How near it brings heaven to us--to think of it as but another room in our Father's house!

The life in heaven, is not a new life--but is simply the life we begin here--which is continued there, with sin taken out--and imperfection and all pain and suffering left forever behind!

~ ~ ~ ~

The mysteries of His providence

We ought not to ask questions about our Father's ways--why he does this--why he does that. Surely it is better to trust our Father--than to weary our brain with efforts to solve the mysteries of His providence.

Questions indicate fear or doubt. Perfect trust asks no questions, and does not seek to understand the mysteriousness of God's ways. It says, "Even so, Father--for so it seems good in your sight," and rests there in perfect peace. Of course we cannot expect always to understand God's ways--he would not be God if we could; but we know that God's love is the key to them all, and that in time, all shall be made clear even to us.

~ ~ ~ ~

Our personal creeds

How many of us have taken our Bibles--and put the doctrines of our creed to the proof?

Our creeds might be shorter if we did this.

Yet if we only believed two or three great doctrines, and believed them after personal inquiry, and were able to tell why we believed them--it would be better than if we believed thirty-nine or forty, or any number of doctrines, merely because our church teaches them. It is time we should begin to think earnestly about these things. Every Christian ought to be able to give an intelligent reason for the faith that is in him. Our personal creeds ought to grow out of our daily searching of the Word, and our daily living.

~ ~ ~ ~

At least a dim reflection

Go and speak of Christ to others; tell them of his holiness, his purity, his mercy, his patience, his great love, his infinite gentleness. Speak of his gracious beauty until your face glows and your eyes shine with the luster of his radiancy as you see it in his face.

But do not fail to show them in your own character, in your disposition, in your love--patience, gentleness, sympathy, unselfishness, kindness, purity--some gleams, some radiant hints, of the beauty of Christ. Let people see in you at least a dim reflection of the beauty you praise.

~ ~ ~ ~

Not a matter of theory

Every word of Christ comes to us with the challenge, "Put me to the test. Try me. Prove me." True religion is not a matter of theory --but a matter of life. We are to prove it--by living it. Take every word which Christ speaks, and begin at once to obey it--if it is a command;

or trust it and lean on it--if it is a promise. It does not matter if you do not understand it, nor see why the command is good--still do it. You will not know--any faster than you will do. Only keep on following Christ--and the way will open to you and become plain as you go on step by step.

~ ~ ~ ~

Life is hard for very many people

There are sorrows which wear no black, and close no shutters, and drop no tears that men can see, and can get no sympathy. If you knew the inner life of many of the people you work with, and do business with, and meet socially in the common days--you would be very gentle with them; you would excuse their peculiarities, their absentmindedness, their seeming thoughtlessness at times. Life is hard for very many people. It is a wonder they can be as cordial and loving as they are--in view of the burdens which crush them.

~ ~ ~ ~

Lying at our Father's feet

True prayer is earnest, not tiring nor fainting. It takes every burden to God--the small and the large alike. It is submissive, referring all to the Father's will. Its answer may not come in the direct granting of the request we make; but may come instead, in more grace and strength, enabling us to keep the burden--and yet rejoice. Lying at our Father's feet in the time of need, with our strong cryings and tears, we learn obedience. Our sobbings end in praises, our struggles end in acquiescence, our tears are dried, and we rise victorious.

~ ~ ~ ~

If we hide Christ's words in our hearts

Every word of Christ which we ponder deeply, opens to us a vision of beauty or excellence-- something very lovely, a fragment of Christ's own image. We should instantly strive to paint the vision on our own life, to get the beauty, the excellence, the loveliness into our own life. Let us learn to be loyal to the word of Christ; not only to know it and ponder it and meditate upon it--but to do it, and to allow it thus to shape and mold our whole being into its own holy beauty. If we hide Christ's words in our hearts, they will transform us into His likeness.

~ ~ ~ ~

Christ-likeness at home

Keep the lamp of love shining day after day amid the multitude of home cares and home duties; amid the annoyances of home interactions and thoughtlessness; amid the thousand little irritations and provocations of home life, which so tend to break peace and mar sweet temper. Let home love be of the kind that never fails. Wherever else, far away or near, you pour the bright beams of your Christian life--be sure you brighten the space close about you in your own home. No goodness and gentleness outside the home, will atone for unlovingness and uncharitableness in the home.

~ ~ ~ ~

Whatever is lovely

"Whatever is lovely" Philippians 4:8

We become truly beautiful, just in the measure that we become like God. There are some who are Christians--but who are not lovely. They have qualities which repel others. But true holiness is attractive. We ought to make our religion so beautiful--that all who look upon us shall be drawn to our Master. We do dishonor to Christ, when we profess to be His people, and yet show in our character, disposition, and life--things which are unlike Christ. How will men 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 is just and true and honest--but also whatever is lovely.

~ ~ ~ ~

Misfortunes, sore trials, disappointments

"Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you."  
Ephesians 4:32

We ought to keep our hearts warm and full of kindness and sweetness, even through the harshest experiences. Many of us find that life is hard and full of pain. We meet misfortunes, sore trials, disappointments. We should not allow these harsh experiences to deaden our sensibilities or make us stoical or sour. Nothing but the love of God shed abroad in us by the Holy Spirit--can keep any of us in such gentleness and tenderness, amid the stern and severe experiences of life. Yet it is possible to carry the gentle heart of a little child, through all life's hardness and chill, into the fullest and ripest old age.

~ ~ ~ ~

## Second-hand Bible truth

Many Christians have their heads stored full of teachings, catechisms, creeds, and Scriptures--and yet when trouble comes, they have not one truth on which they can really lean or trust their weight, or which gives them any actual support or help to walk with over the dark mountains. They have piles of doctrines--but no rod and staff to lean on in weakness. They have lamps hung away in great clusters--but not one of them burning to throw its light upon the darkness. Let us learn to study the Scriptures for ourselves, and to know what we believe. Second-hand Bible truth, is not the kind of food our souls need.

~ ~ ~ ~

## Spiritual Greatness

Spiritual Greatness--sanctified character, beauty of soul, the likeness of God upon the life, heart-qualities--shall endure forever. Into this true spiritual greatness, God wants to train every one of us.

Many Christians grow sadly disheartened, because they seem never to become any better. Year after year the struggle goes on--with the old tempers 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 scholars. He will teach the same lesson over and over until we have learned it. He will never tire of us, and his gentleness will make us great.

~ ~ ~ ~

## Who touched me?

Unless words mean nothing, unless the Scriptures cheat us with poetical images and illusions, Christ feels our every grief and every struggle, and sympathizes with us in each one. Remember how his heart responded when he was on earth to all human need. Sorrow stirred his compassion. Every cry of distress went to the depths of his soul. That heart is still the same. When angels are thronging about him, and a poor weary sufferer in some lowly home on earth, or a stricken penitent crouching in some darkness, reaches out a trembling finger-tip of faith and touches the hem of his garment--he turns about with loving look and asks, "Who touched me?"

~ ~ ~ ~

## Grow in the grace

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

Every day should see us advancing--learning

more of Christ, and growing more and more

into the beauty of Christ.

~ ~ ~ ~

## A harvest of wretchedness

An unholy life yields a harvest of wretchedness in old age! But a life of obedience to God, of faithfulness to duty, of personal purity and uprightness, and of unselfish, Christ-like service, will make old age like a garden of fruit and flowers!

~ ~ ~ ~

#### Spiritual culture

We begin our Christian life as spiritual children, in the lowest grades at school. Yet we are to grow in all the qualities which belong to the beautiful Christian character. Spiritual culture is the process by which our nature is softened and mellowed into the gentleness of love, our talents are developed into their best possibilities of usefulness, and our whole life is transformed into the beauty of Christ.

It is not mere personal magnetism, human love, eloquence, earnestness, or enthusiasm--which will make us real helpers, comforters, and healers of others; only the power and grace of God, received through prayer, can prepare us for such service.

~ ~ ~ ~

We all have our faults

"Cleanse me from my secret faults." Psalm 19:12

We all have our faults, which mar the beauty of our lives in the eyes of others. Every noble soul desires to correct all their faults. The smallest fault mars the beauty of the character; and one who seeks to possess only "whatever things are lovely" will be eager to be rid of whatever is faulty.

Ofttimes, however, we do not know our own faults--we are unconscious of them. We cannot see ourselves as others see us. That friend does us a true kindness--who tells us of the things in our character, habits, manners, which appear as blemishes; although many people have too much vanity to be told of their

faults. They resent it as a personal insult when one points out any blemish in them. But this is most foolish short-sightedness. To learn of a fault is an opportunity to add a new line of beauty to the life. Our prayer each day should be that God would show us our secret faults, whatever messenger he may send to point them out--and then give us grace to correct them!

~ ~ ~ ~

You will have many trials and sorrows

"You may have peace in Me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows." John 16:33

There is no life into which do not come many things calculated to cause anxiety and disturbance of mind:

there are great sorrows;

there are perplexities as to duty;

there are disappointments and losses;

there are annoyances and hindrances;

there are chafings and irritations in ordinary life;

there are countless petty cares and frets.

All of these tend to break the hearts' peace and to disturb its quiet. Yet there is no lesson which is urged more continuously or more earnestly in the Scriptures, than that a Christian should never worry, or let anxious care oppress his heart. He is to live without disturbance and with unbroken peace--even in the midst of the most trying experiences. "The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." Colossians 3:15.

~ ~ ~ ~

Blue glasses

One way to train ourselves to true and cheerful views

of life, is resolutely to refuse to be frightened at shadows, or to see trouble where there is none. Half or more of the things which most worry us have no existence, except in a disordered imagination. Many things which in the dim distance look like shapes of peril, when we draw near to them, melt into harmless shadows, or even change into forms of friendliness!

Much of the gloomy tinge which many people see on everything, is caused by the color of the glasses through which they look. We put on our blue glasses, and then wonder what makes everything blue and dismal. The greater part of our discontent is caused by some imaginary trouble, which never really comes. "Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise." Philippians 4:8

~ ~ ~ ~

His treasured possession!

"I am the Good Shepherd; I know My sheep." John 10:14

When we think of the millions who are in Christ's flock, it seems strange to us that He knows and calls each one by name. Yet the truth is made very clear in Scripture. Every mother knows her own children by name, and it is as easy for the Good Shepherd to know each of His millions by name, as for any human mother to know each of her little children.

There is comfort in this teaching. We are not lost in

the crowd. Each one of of God's children, is the special object of His love and thought and care!

"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are Mine!" Isaiah 43:1

"For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people, His treasured possession!" Deuteronomy 7:6

~ ~ ~ ~

Truly beautiful and truly happy

Only Christ can make any life, young or old--truly beautiful and truly happy. Only He can cure the heart's restless fever and give quietness and calmness.

Only He can purify that sinful fountain within us--our corrupt nature, and make us holy. To have a peaceful and blessed ending to life--we must live it with Christ.

Such a life grows brighter even to its close. Its last days are the sunniest and the sweetest. The more earth's joys fail--the nearer and the more satisfying do the spiritual comforts become.

~ ~ ~ ~

A living, loving, personal Savior

We are in the habit of saying that Christ saved us by dying for us on the Cross. In an important sense this is true. We never could have been saved, if He had not died for us.

But we are actually saved by our relation to a

living, loving, personal Savior--into whose hands we commit all the interests of our lives; and who becomes our friend, our helper, our keeper, our burden bearer--our all in all.

Christian faith is not merely laying our sins on the Lamb of God and trusting to His one great sacrifice; it is the laying of ourselves on the living, loving heart of one whose friendship becomes thenceforward the sweetest joy of our lives!

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

~ ~ ~ ~

Inspirations to beautiful living

The beauty of Christ in a human life--is not merely a heavenly yearning. It is intensely practical. It is . . . more than religious sentimentality, more than devout feeling, more than holy aspiration.

True spiritual longing draws the whole life upward with it. True holiness does not unfit people for living well in this world. It has its visions of Christ - but it brings them down to brighten its daily path and to become inspirations to beautiful living. It has its joyful emotions - but they become impulses to self denial and patient work for the Master.

~ ~ ~ ~

How to wear chains for Christ

"I am in chains for Christ." Philippians 1:13

Paul teaches us by example--how to wear chains for Christ. He counted it a glory. It was that chained hand which wrote the Epistle to the Philippians--the most cheerful and joyous of the Apostle's letters. Paul's sweetest songs came from his prison!

We shall not likely have the privilege of wearing literal chains for Christ - but there are many hindrances and limitations and hardships in every Christian life, which are really chains upon us:

Sickness sometimes shuts us in.

Poverty binds the hands of many.

Household cares keep many a woman in chains.

Few Christians are absolutely free to do what their hearts prompt them to do for Christ. We should study Paul, and gather the lessons . . .

of rejoicing,

of cheerfulness,

of contentment,

of usefulness.

Paul's prison life was not idle. He continually sent out blessings, from his place of captivity.

The influence poured out into all the world.

"I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has actually resulted in the

advancement of the gospel!" Philippians 1:12

~ ~ ~ ~

The Lord Will Provide!

"So Abraham called that place Jehovah-Jireh--

The Lord Will Provide!" Genesis 22:14

Write deep in your heart this New Year's day, this word of sublime confidence, Jehovah-Jireh. It 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 never traveled this way before." Joshua 3:4.

There will be sorrows and joys, failures and successes, this year, just as there were last year. You cannot forecast individual experiences. You cannot see a step before your feet! Yet Jehovah-Jireh calls you to enter the new year with calm trust. It bids you put away all anxieties and forebodings--"The Lord will provide!"

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/in-green-pastures-choice-excerpts/>

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