

In Green Pastures - July, August, September

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of using our time to serve God and others, and to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

Scripture: Psalm 23:1

Topics: "Living For Christ", "The Power of Love"

Description

J.R. Miller's sermon 'In Green Pastures' emphasizes the importance of living a life devoted to Christ, highlighting the value of time, the necessity of serving others in His name, and the transformative power of love and forgiveness. He encourages believers to cultivate a heart that reflects Christ's love, to be mindful of their influence on others, and to embrace the challenges of life as opportunities for spiritual growth. Miller reminds us that true Christianity is not just a set of beliefs but a vibrant, active life that seeks to bless others and glorify God.

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

JULY

July 1

The Value of Time

Our days, as God gives them to us--are like beautiful summer fields. The minutes are blooming flowers and silvery grass-blades and stalks of wheat with their golden grains. The hours are trees with their rich foliage or vines with their blossom-prophecies of purple clusters. Oh the fair, blessed possibilities of the days and hours and minutes--as they come to us from God's hands! But what did you do with yesterday? How does the little acre of that one day look to you now? What are we doing with our time? Every moment God gives us, has in it a possibility of beauty as well as something to be accounted for. Are we using our time for God?

July 2

For the Sake of Christ

Love to Christ must be the spring and inspiration of all duty, all heroism, all fine achievement, all service to our fellow-men. "In His Name" is the true motto of all Christian living. Serving our fellow-men amounts to nothing in Heaven's sight--if it is not done for the sake of Christ. The service must be really rendered to Christ, no matter to whom the kindness is shown--or otherwise there is no blessing in it, however beautiful it may be in itself. Things we do from any other motive, have no acceptableness in the sight of God.

July 3

Watch Your Heart Life

We need to watch our heart-life, for it is in thoughts, feelings, dispositions, moods, tempers, affections, that all departure from Christ begins. We need to watch our inner spiritual state. The world may see no abatement in our zeal, in our religious activity, in our earnest advocacy of the truth--and yet there may be less prayerfulness, less love for Christ, less tenderness of conscience, less hunger for righteousness, less desire for holiness. Is Christ more to you now, than ever he was before? Does his love constrain you with overmastering sway? Can you say, with Zinzendorf, "I have only one passion--and that is Christ!"? Is your heart right?

July 4

Praying for Our Country

We need to pray much for our country. Perhaps we err in making our prayers ordinarily only for ourselves and for our own little world. Certainly our country ought to have a place in the daily supplications of every Christian. Those who rule over us ought to be continually remembered. They are men, and need divine wisdom and guidance. They are men under the sway of political influence, and we need to pray that they be kept free from any influence which would lead them to forget God. We need to pray for our institutions, that they be kept pure and holy--that righteousness may prevail throughout the land. We need to pray for all our people, that they may be made good citizens--that uprightness and integrity may characterize them. "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

July 5

Over-Answered Prayer

No true, faith-winged prayer, goes unanswered. But many a prayer which seems to us unanswered is really over-answered. The very thing we ask God does not grant, because he is able to do something

infinitely better for us. We ask only for bodily help or relief, and he sees that we need far more some deep spiritual blessing. He answers our soul's needs--before he gratifies our personal wishes. We ask for a temporal favor; he does not give it to us--but instead he bestows upon us a spiritual good which will enrich us forever. We ask for the lifting away of a burden, or the averting of a sorrow; our plea is not granted in form--but instead we receive a new impartation of the power of Christ. Thus many times our little prayers are really over-answered.

July 6

Pass on Your Blessing

God does not like to bestow his blessings where they will be hoarded--but he loves to put them into the hands of those who will do the most with them to bless their fellows. The central object of true living, is to be helpful to others. The true life is one devoted to Christ, to be used then for him in blessing others. Lay every gift at the Master's feet, and then, when it has been blessed by him, carry it out to bless others. Bring your barley loaves to Christ, and then, with the spell of his touch upon them--you may feed hungry thousands with them.

July 7

Under God's Orders

Wherever God puts us, he has something definite just there for us to do--something which he has brought us there on purpose to do. There is something he created you specially to do. He brings you every day into places where it is true that you are there for a definite duty. Every time we find ourselves in the presence of a need or an opportunity for helpfulness, we may well stop and ask if God has not brought us to this point for this very thing. We are ever really under orders. Ofttimes the orders are sealed, and are opened only as the hours move. To realize this, gives all our commonest life a sacredness that should make us reverent. We are continually serving our King.

July 8

The Beginning of Bitterness

Let us instantly crush the beginnings of envy, jealousy, and hate in our hearts--never allowing the day to close on a bitter feeling. The hour of evening prayer, when we bow at God's feet, should always be a time for getting right, everything which may have gone wrong with us and in us during the day. Then every injury should be forgiven when we pray, "Forgive us--as we forgive others." Then every spark of envy or jealousy or anger should be quenched, and the love of Christ should be allowed to flood our hearts. We should never allow the sun to go down on our anger.

July 9

Written Not With Ink

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. It is an awful thought, that professing Christians, by the inconsistencies of their personal lives, lead souls to reject the Savior. We are all responsible for the influence of our example. Our lives should be New Testament pages, that all can read. "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

July 10

Grace for the Day

God does not give us his grace as he gives his sunshine--pouring it out on all alike. He discriminates in spiritual blessings. He gives strength according to our need. His eye is ever on us in tender, watchful love, and what we need at the time--he supplies. He gives us grace for grace. When one grace is exhausted, another is ready. The grace is always timely. It is not given in large supply in advance of the need--but is ready always in time. It may not always be what we wish--but it is always what we really need.

July 11

The Transfigured Life

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 about 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.

July 12

The Blessing of Doing

It is the building of godly character, which should be our central aim in all life. Business, school, home, church, reading, pleasure, struggle. work, sorrow--all are but means to that one end. I do not care how much money you made last year; but let me ask earnestly what mark last year's business made upon your character. The growth of one's graces, is of infinitely more importance than the growth of one's fortune. Everything we do leaves its impress within, upon our soul. We are building life all the while, whatever we are doing. The work itself may fail--but in the worker's disappointment, amid the failure of his plans--the work on his character goes on. Even in defeats, the struggling leaves a recompense within. Giving, though nothing good comes from the gift, blesses the giver.

July 13

The Influence of Words

Words are so easily spoken, that we forget what power they have to give pleasure or pain. They seem to vanish so utterly, the moment they have dropped from our lips--that we forget they do not go away at

all--but linger, either like barbed arrows in the heart where they struck--or like fragrant flowers shedding their perfumes. No matter when we talk with others or on what theme, however playful or light--we should always try to speak some thoughtful word before we part, some word that will give strength or hope or cheer or help. We may not meet our friend again.

July 14

Seeing Only the Faults

There are some people who walk through God's fair world, and in the midst of men and women whose lives shine with bright qualities and dazzling gems of character--and yet they have no eyes for any of these radiant beauties. But for every fault and blemish--they have the sharpest vision! They judge uncharitably. They think evil--where there is none. This is one of the things Christ condemns. We should train ourselves away from a habit of life, which is so unchristian. We should seek to have eyes only for the beauty--and not for the blemishes.

July 15

Home-Work for Christ

We are not truly Christians, if we are doing nothing for our Lord. But the work of Christ is not all found in the things we do in the Church. Let no one fret who finds no time from love's devoted service for outside or public work for Christ. You are doing most beautiful things for Christ in your unselfish toil, in your sick-room ministry, in your care for your children, in your deeds of kindness to the invalid within your own doors. Only do all in Christ's name--and it will shine like angels' work! Some people God seems to ordain for just such ministry, and to keep ever busy, and out of the world's sight. Let none such fret that they cannot take part in the public work of the Church.

July 16

Prayer Without Promise

There are human lives that never learn to sing the songs of faith and peace and love--until they enter the darkness of sorrow and trial. Would it be true love for these--for God to hear their prayer for the removal of every sorrow and pain? There is no promise--for the prayer that God would take out of our life--all the hindrances, the griefs, the bitternesses. If we pray such a prayer, it must be simply a humble, shrinking request, which we shall refer at once, without undue urging, to the wise and perfect will of God.

July 17

You Did It Not

We are too apt to neglect opportunities of helping others and of relieving distress; never thinking that we are sinning against Christ, that we are indeed leaving him unhelped and unrelieved when we might have given him sweet comfort. We forget that neglects are sins. "You did it not" is the charge, in our Lord's picture of the Judgment, against those who are bidden to depart. The things we have failed to do, will be the things that shall turn the scales on that great trial-day. We must meet our neglects as well as our sins.

July 18

Visions in the Words of Christ

Every word of Christ that we ponder deeply, opens to us a vision of beauty or excellence-- something very lovely, a fragment of Christ's own image--and 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.

July 19

Our Weak Hours

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! "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

July 20

Individual Responsibility

God looks upon us as individuals. We come into this world, one by one. We live in one sense, alone with our own personal responsibilities. We die one by one. As individuals, not as crowds, must we stand before God. Your destiny will not depend on any chance of the moment; you are fixing it yourself in your choices and acts, in your habits and life. Your own faith and obedience must weave the garment of beauty for your life. God gives the materials--but after that each one is the weaver of his own "wedding-garment."

July 21

Doing Things for Christ

We often imagine that it was a great deal easier for our Lord's first disciples to do things for him, than it is for us. They could see him and hear his voice and do errands really for him, and coming back hear his approval or his thanks; but we cannot hear him telling us what to do, nor can we see his pleased look when we have done anything for him. So we find ourselves wishing he were here again, that we might get our duties right from his very lips. We sometimes ask how we can do things for him--when he is not here. But we have only to remember his promise: "I am with you all the days." He is here, though unseen, just as really as he was with his first disciples. We can do things for him all the time. Every loving obedience is something done for Christ. Every kindness shown to another in his name and for his sake--is shown to him. Every piece of common, routine task-work, if done through love for him, becomes something done for Christ. So we can make all our dull life, as radiant as angels ministry, by doing all for Christ!

July 22

God's Unchanging Love

Human love may change. The friendship of last year--has grown cold. The gentleness of yesterday--has turned to harshness. But it is never thus with God's love. It is eternal. Our experience of it may be variable, but there is no variableness in his love. Our lives may change, our consciousness of his love may fade out; but the love clings forever, the gentleness of God abides eternal. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you."

July 23

God's Present Help

There is never a moment, nor any experience, in the life of a true Christian, from the heart of which a prayer may not instantly be sent up to God, and back to which help may not instantly come. God is not merely off in some remote heaven. He is not far away, looking down upon us in serene calm and watching us--as we struggle upward in pain and tears. He is with each one of us on every part of the way. His promise of presence is an eternal present tense--"I am with you." So "God, you see me" becomes to the believer a most cheering and inspiring assurance. We are never out of God's sight for a moment! His eye watches each one of us continually, and his heart is in his eye. He comes instantly to our help and deliverance, when we are in any need or danger.

July 24

The Greatest Attribute

The greatest attribute in God is not his power, though it is omnipotence; not his knowledge, though it is omniscience; not his glory, though it is burning majesty: it is his love. He is greatest--as he blesses and serves. The brightest hour in Christ's life was not the hour of his transfiguration, or of his miracle-working, or of his sublime teaching--but the hour when he hung in the darkness on his cross. Then it was, that his love shone out in the most wondrous revealing. We need to remember for ourselves, that the greatest thing in the world is love--that serving is the path to highest honor.

July 25

Of His Fullness

Every life will have its times of sore testing, its times of sharp trial, its experiences in which ordinary strength and preparation will not avail. It is when we have Christ behind our own little strength, when we are abiding in Christ, when our faith links us to his everlasting fullness--that we have the reserve we need for any future necessity. True religion binds the soul to God, so that from his divine fullness supply comes for every emergency. We cannot fall--if God is behind us. Our lamps can never go out--if they are fed from heaven's olive trees. But if we have no such reserve, our own feeble strength will soon be exhausted, and there will be no refilling of the emptied vessel.

July 26

Shrinking From Duty

When we stand before any duty, whatever peril or cost it may involve, let us not hesitate to do it. You cannot turn away from duty, but at the peril of your soul. Forget not the momentous word of Christ:

"Whoever will save his life shall lose it; but whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." There are times when the best use we can make of our life--is to give it up. Life that which is saved by shrinking from duty--is not worth saving. It has been stained, and has lost its glory in the saving. It is infinitely better to die in the way of duty--than to live by cowardice or disloyalty to Christ or by any unfaithfulness.

July 27

As a Flower Scatters Fragrance

Stay at Christ's feet--until your heart overflows with love for all, even for people you have not liked before. Then begin to think about them and to live for them. Begin to scatter happiness as a flower scatters fragrance, as a lamp scatters beams of light. Christ was always making people happy. Shall we not take the same aim for ours? It is a wonderful power, too--a power that we all have in a greater or smaller measure--to put gladness and joy into others' hearts. No mission in life can be nobler--than to live to be a happiness-maker.

July 28

Prayer and Answer

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.

July 29

Taking Short Cuts

We should never take short-cuts, even to things that we are sure will some day be ours. Life is full of these opportunities to shorten the path to success, to achievement, to position. God's way oftentimes seems long and far around. But any other way, however short it seems, is longer. Though there may be no sin committed in taking the short-cuts, nothing dishonorable done, nothing to stain the soul--still it is better to go only as God leads. His way is always in the end the shortest.

July 30

What We Try to Do

Christ accepts--whatever we try our best to do for him, whatever we truly want to do, even though no results come from our efforts. This ought to be a comfort to many of us--for we do not do, any of us, indeed, what it is in our hearts to do. Our hands are awkward and unskillful, and fail to work out the beauty which our mind dreams. We go out with high resolve and loving thought, to do some sweet service for our Lord--and come back with tears and sad regret over the failure, or the marring of what we meant to do. But Christ knows what our hearts planned and what we wanted to do--and that is what he counts and sets down on his books.

July 31

Blessing of Daily Crosses

A true Christian life never grows easy, never becomes entirely agreeable to our natural tastes. Every day is, in a certain sense, a crucifixion, a nailing of self on the cross. But this very hardness is a means of grace. The cross lifts us upward. We grow under the burden of our daily duties and cares. So it comes that the things we would like to be freed from--are the things we could least afford to lose. What we consider our disadvantages, may really be our most indispensable advantages. We grow best under pressure, under the hard necessity of toil and care.

AUGUST

August 1

Christianity a Life

It would be easier to get all the sunbeams out of grasses and flowers and plants in the bright summer days--than to get the life of Christ out of the world. It has wrought itself into everything along these Christian centuries, not only into the individual lives of Christ's followers--but also into laws and systems and institutions, into thought and literature and music and art. Christianity is not a mere creed. There is that in it--which can never be wrapped up in forms, in liturgies, in confessions. Nor is Christianity a mere code of ethics; it is a life, a throbbing, pulsing, immortal life. It enters into men as the sunshine enters into the plant or the flowers. It becomes their very heart's blood, their breath, their spirit. It inspires their thought, their feeling, their words, their acts.

August 2

The Hidden Life

We are all conscious that we are living in this world, even at our best--far below our best. We are conscious, too, of possibilities of character hidden within us undeveloped, and of powers of helpfulness in our life which we have barely begun to exercise--but which might be drawn out into activity. We see hints and gleams, and we have glimpses now and then, of far more glorious life than we have yet reached. The highest attainments here--are but the beginnings of sanctified life. The peace, joy, love, unselfishness, service, purity, holiness, reached in the ripest experiences of earthly sainthood--are only dim intimations of what we may become--ay, of what we shall become! Our life is hid, concealed, with Christ in God.

August 3

Life's Sensitivity

You go through a day of varying experiences, and everything that touches your life--the words you hear, the pictures you see, the books you read, the companions you meet and with whom you associate, the friendship that warms your heart--everything that touches you, leaves its mark on your character. And it is not a mere passing, transient impression that these things and these lives and experiences leave on your life; it is permanent work that they do. Not the great stones in the massive building are so wrought into the fabric--as these impressions are wrought into the character. Our lives are temples, and everyone who touches us, is a builder. So it is also with the influences we throw off on other lives. They make their record there, and it is ineffaceable.

August 4

A Casket of Sweet Thoughts

"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.

August 5

The Moral Power of "Yes"

It is important that we learn to say "Yes"--when "Yes" is the true answer. To all invitations upward to truer, deeper, richer, nobler life--we should instantly answer "Yes." All calls to duty, to holy service, to noble deeds, to heroic battle--we should meet with glad "Yes." While we instantly shut our hearts against all that is impure and unholy, all thoughts that would tarnish or stain or blight--we should open them just as quickly to all thoughts which are pure and true and honest and just and lovely. One of the old Bible answers which we hear so often from the lips of saintly men, when called of God, is, "Here am I!" It meant readiness for instant, unquestioning obedience. We need to get the same answer into our heart's vocabulary, that when God calls we may always respond with our prompt, ringing "Here am I!"

August 6

Spiritual Poverty

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 that we might have for the mere asking!

August 7

Unseen Brethren

While we pour our kindness in perpetual blessings upon those whose lives touch ours in our daily walks--we must not forget that we have brethren whom we have never seen. Says the old proverb, "There are people who live beyond the hill." We must think of these in our planning for ourselves. We are in danger of living in a very small world, thinking of only a few people; but wherever there is a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is one of our brothers. He may be in India or China or Africa, or in some island of the sea; still he is our brother, and we ought to have some kindly thought for him.

August 8

Grief Ofttimes an Excuse

There are sorrows which wear no black, and close no shutters, and drop no tears that men can see, and can get no sympathy--but that of Christ and perhaps a closest human brother. 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. Grief makes life 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.

August 9

Testing Christ's Words

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. Let God lead you--only be sure that you obey and trust him. 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.

August 10

Christ in Sunshine

We are in danger of using our religion only in our dark hours, when we are in some trouble. But we need Christ just as much in our bright, prosperous, blessed hours--as in the days of darkness, adversity, and depression. His religion is just as much for our hours of joy--as for our days of grief. There are just as many stars in the sky at noon as at midnight, although we cannot see them in the sun's glare. And there are just as many comforts and promises and divine encouragements and blessings above us when we are in our noons of human gladness and earthly success--as when we are in pain and darkness.

August 11

Are There Little Sins?

We talk about little sins--but when we remember that every sin is committed against the infinite God, and that all sins are eternal in their influences and consequences--the smallest sin grows into stupendous importance. Indeed, there is nothing little in moral life. How do we know what is small or what is great in God's eye--or as measured by its results through future ages? True faithfulness is not careless in little things. It is harder always to be faithful in small, obscure, unpraised things--than in things which are brilliant and conspicuous. More people fail in doing the little things, the common ho-hum things, of everyday life--than in doing the greater and more prominent things. Hence it is here that we need to keep double watch upon ourselves. All fraying out of character, begins with one little thread left loose.

August 12

Imagining Christ's Beauty

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.

August 13

Forgiving Injuries

Even those to whom we are the truest friends, and for whom we do the most, will sometimes treat us unjustly and do us hurtful injury. We cannot but feel the pain of such wrongs; but if meekly borne--they will be turned to good for us, by that divine love which transmutes everything into blessing, for the life of faith. It is only when we cherish resentment and hold grudge in our hearts--that the injuries done to us by others really harm us. Forgiveness robs them of their power to hurt us. Let us forgive generously. Too much of our forgiveness is with reservation: "I forgive you; but . . ." The fuller our forgiveness, the richer blessing do we take from the injurious treatment.

August 14

God's Goodness in All

It is not hard to believe in the divine goodness--when all things are joyous. The hard thing is to believe in it just as firmly and quietly--when all things seem against us. The goodness of God is just as surely and as richly revealed in the dark things of providence, as in the bright things. God comes to us in many forms; but always his name is Love, always is he our Father. We keep two lists, and write some things as "prosperous and some as "adverse." God writes "goodness" over all.

August 15

What Grace Does Not Do

Grace does not take trouble out of human 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 that will keep the heart calm and tranquil, in the midst of the angriest strifes and storms.

August 16

Working By Faith

Faith links a man to Christ, so that he is no more a mere common man, with only his own poor feeble strength--but is more than a man--a man whom Christ is using, behind whom Christ's omnipotent energy is working. We must yield ourselves altogether to God and let him use us. Then his power, his wisdom, his skill, his thoughts, his love shall flow through our souls, our brains, our hearts, and our fingers. That is

working by faith. It is simply putting our life into God's hand to be used, as one uses a pen to write, or a brush to paint, or a chisel to carve the statue.

August 17

Receiving Correction Patiently

Very many people are glad to correct others, and think it very strange they will not take the correction or criticism patiently, while if anyone tries the same with them--they quickly resent it. What is good for another sinner ought to be good for us too. Let us seek for grace to take correction from those who love us. If a friend tells us of a fault, let us not get angry, even if he does it awkwardly so as to give us pain. Let us thank him, and set about to cure the fault. Even from the lips of an enemy in anger--we may yet get lessons which will do us good to learn.

August 18

Blessing of Conflict

We enter a world of antagonism and opposition--the moment we resolve at Christ's feet to be Christians, to be true men and women, to obey God, to forsake sin, to do our Christian duty. There never comes an hour when we can live nobly without effort, without making resistance to wrong influences, without struggle against the power of temptation. It never gets easy to be a worthy and faithful Christian. Sometimes we are almost ready to give it all up and to cease our struggling; but we should remember that the spiritual nobleness and beauty after which we are striving--can become ours only through this very struggling.

August 19

Blessing of Darkness

We shall learn in the end--that the best treasures of life and character, come out of the dark, painful hours. In days and nights of pain--we learn endurance. In the struggles with doubt and fear--we find at last bright blessed faith. In the darkness of sorrow--we learn the song of joy. In weary suffering--we acquire sweet pity for others. Meet every hard thing, every obstacle, every trial, every disappointment, every sorrow--with faith. Be more than conqueror over it, through Him who loved you, and it will leave blessing, treasure, and enrichment, in your life.

August 20

Christian Conversation

"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.

August 21

Our Personal Creed

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.

August 22

No Strange Mystery There

"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 providence. Love will glow everywhere. 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."

August 23

Loving Unlovely People

"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 have befriended us, 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.

August 24

Misrepresenting Christ

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 love Christ truly--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. "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

August 25

The Well in the Heart

All noble life must be an inspiration from within--a well of water springing up--the spontaneous outflow of a full heart. We must seek to be filled with the divine Spirit. Then self will die. Then our life will breathe blessings and drop blessings everywhere. Our very look will be full of kindness. We shall radiate light wherever we move, chasing away the darkness of others' sorrow. Then, sharing our loaf with the hungry, our joy with the joyless, our strength with the fainting--Christ will give us more and more of comfort, joy, strength, and helpful power, and at last will share with us his own crown and glory. For the well in the heart--springs up into everlasting life.

August 26

The Blessing of Trust

You cannot take into the innermost circle of your own heart's friends, one who does not fully trust you. Doubt builds walls between hearts. Distrust hinders close fellowship. The same is true in friendship with Jesus. There must be perfect trust--if we would get near to him. He knows those who trust in him. He feels the touch of every hand that rests in faith upon his arm. He feels the gentle pressure of every head that is laid upon his bosom. He hears every sweet breathing of confidence that goes up from our lips. Oh for that trust that, in every experience of sorrow and joy, remains calm and unbroken!

August 27

The One Perfect Life

Where do we find the truest, noblest life? There is no smallest fragment of our humanity, which retains the absolute perfection and beauty that were in human life as it came first from the Creator's hand. 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. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus!" Hebrews 12:2. "And we, who with unveiled faces all contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory!" 2 Corinthians 3:18

August 28

Not in the Easy Paths

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. Not many people die of overwork; more die of laziness. 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 called for in the path of duty--we are missing the best things God has to give us. "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

August 29

Uselessness of Worry

Worrying about your hard work, does not make the work any easier--and it only makes you less strong and courageous for doing it. Worrying about some misfortune which you cannot help--makes the misfortune no less, and only renders its endurance harder. Thus far even common-sense goes. Then true religion goes farther, and assures us that even the hard things, the obstacles and the hindrances, become blessings if we meet them in faith. They become stepping-stones upward, disciplinary experiences in which we may grow ever into nobler, stronger life.

August 30

Trust Better Than Questions

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, 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.

August 31

The Greatest Work

We cultivate benevolence, charity, philanthropy, patriotism. We feed the hungry, and visit the sick, and minister to the poor, and provide for the widow and the orphan, and practice generosity. We emphasize personal character and service. We try to do good to men's bodies. We educate their minds. We seek their best interests in all physical and intellectual ways. All this is well so far as it goes; but we have not yet reached the greatest of all earthly things, the most important of all the work which a Christian can do. Are we striving to win souls? Are we seeking the lost to bring them to Christ? Saving souls is earth's greatest work!

September 1

Life's Great Lessons

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

September 2

Devotion and Service

He who neglects love's duties of service, in Christ's name, to those who need the ministry of love--cannot long enjoy the raptures of worship within the sanctuary. Devotion is not the end of Christian life; we wait

upon God--that we may renew our strength for noble service. In our eagerness to press within the temple to look upon the face of God--we must not pass unheeding by the suffering ones who lie with soliciting glance and voice, outside the temple-gate. Visions of God which lead to no active service, will soon die out.

September 3

Why Are we so Weak

Every Christian ought to be an apostle of Christ, and ought to leave a shining record of blessed ministry all along his path. But how is it with many of us? Is there always power in our lives? Are we always victorious in temptation? Does life flow out from our lives in perpetual blessings to others whom we touch or on whom our shadow rests? Is it not true of us that we continually fail to be, in the largest and best sense, blessings to others? Do we not come to Christ at the close of many of our days--to lament our failures and to ask him why we could not do the things we ought to do? Do we not all know what the answer is?--"Because of your little faith."

September 4

The Sin of Thoughtlessness

We try to excuse crude things or careless things we do that hurt others by saying, "I didn't mean any unkindness." Certainly we did not--it was not in our heart to be crude or brusque, or to give pain in any way. It was only "lack of thought." Yes--but "lack of thought" is "lack of heart"--lack of a gentle heart; for a gentle heart should always be thoughtful--love should never be thoughtless. We have no right to forget our relations to others, and the duties of love we owe to them. Nothing can ever excuse a Christian for not being kindly, gentle, thoughtful, considerate.

September 5

God's Plan--Life's Ideal

People sometimes sentimentalize over the constant changes and thwartings of plans and the disappointments of life. They grow morbid over them, and sigh, "Vanity of vanities!" Or they ask, "Why is the Lord dealing so sorely with me?" The success or non-success of our earthly plans, is of very little consequence in comparison with the building up of Christ-likeness in our souls. Do not be surprised if you fail to have your own way at many a point. God would teach you that true success lies in the doing of his will--not your own--and the realizing of his plan for your life, not your plan.

September 6

What We Owe to Friendship

We do not know how much we owe to our true and pure friends--how much they add to our joy, what they do toward the formation and the adornment and enrichment of our character. We know not what touches, delicate and beautiful, on the canvas of our soul there will be forever--which the fingers of a friend have left there. There will be a silver thread in every life-web when finished, woven into the fabric by the pure friendship of many days. How important that only the true, the worthy, those with clean hands and good lives--be taken as friends! For an evil companionship will put stained and soiled threads into the web.

September 7

God's Love, Changeless

Most of us have times when we can say, "Oh, I know that God loves me now;" but the feeling is transient, and soon passes away. Tomorrow we are doubting and fearing as before, and the joy has gone out of our heart. Does God's love, then, change? Did he love me yesterday, and does he not love me today? Has the divine heart unclasped its hold upon me? No! The love of God is changeless and eternal. Heaven and earth may pass away--but the kindness of the Lord shall never depart from any of his children! Let us try to grasp this truth. Then, come what may--joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity--we shall know always that the love of God abides unchanging--that we are held in its clasp with a hold that never can be torn loose.

September 8

Brotherly Love

There is no true love to Christ--which does not also kindle in our hearts a corresponding love to men. He who loves not his brother whom he has seen--cannot love God whom he has not seen. Brotherly love is the very proof and badge of Christian discipleship. This love is not in name merely--but is real. It is a love that protects and helps; a love which keeps sacred watch over the good name of a brother, and by a strong arm averts the descending blow; a love which seeks every opportunity to bless and cheer and comfort; a love which serves and forgets self in loyal devotion even to death for a brother. In a word, it is, "as I have loved you." And how does Christ love us? To answer this--is to tell how he would have us love the brethren. We can thus read the meaning of the lesson, in the blessed life of our Lord.

September 9

Besetting Sins

The best things of life come to us wrapped up in difficulties, obstacles, seeming hindrances and oppositions. Unless we meet them heroically and victoriously, we shall miss God's richest and best gifts and treasures. It is hard, for example, to have a besetting sin, one specially weak point, one temptation which comes perpetually up to us, stalking like a Goliath before us. Some of us know what it is to have sins which we do not overcome, which we do not even wrestle with--but which we allow to overcome us again and again. But do we not know that these very besetting sins are enemies, which can be made friends to help us heavenward?

September 10

Silent Work

All the greatest work of this world goes on noiselessly. Only little workers clatter. God, both in nature and in grace, works silently. The angels go about noiselessly on their blessed ministries. So the best work any of us do, is what we do without noise. Our words give forth sound--but it is not the sounds which do good, which brighten people's sad faces, which change tears to laughter, which stimulate hope, which put courage into fainting hearts; it is not the noise of our words--but the thoughts which the words carry. The best part of any good man's life is his influence--that strange, impalpable something, which goes out evermore from his character like fragrance from a flower, like light from a star; and influence works always in silence, without words.

September 11

Taking Thought

There is one thing for which we are to take thought--not anxious thought--but very deep and earnest thought. We are to take thought about our duty, about our work, about doing God's will, and filling our place in God's world, and taking our part in advancing the heavenly kingdom. Too many people worry far more about their food and clothing, lest they shall be left to poverty; than they do about doing their whole duty. That is, they are more anxious about God's part in their lives than about their own part. They fear that God may not take care of them--but they do not seem to have any fear that they themselves may fail in duty, or in fidelity to him.

September 12

The Beautiful Vision

"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!

September 13

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.

September 14

Saying Good-Byes

Since any good-bye may be for years or may be forever--should we not always part from our friends tenderly, kindly, lovingly? We should never separate in any angry mood, with bitterness in our hearts, with unforgiveness or misunderstanding, as we may never again have an opportunity to set things right. We should never say good-bye carelessly or coldly--but with thoughtful love. We should strive to make our every briefest good-bye, as sweet and kindly enough for a last good-bye, should it prove to be the last--as it may be.

September 15

Religion for All Days

Intense aspirations for holiness, sometimes seem to unfit people for living in this world. Christ never meant it to be so, however, and such religion is lacking somewhere. You do not need a religion, which will lift you up out of the weekday world--into a seventh heaven of rapture, making you forget your duties to those about you. You need a religion which will bring God down to walk with you in all the hard paths of toil and service, making even drudgery--divine, and routine and commonplace toil--a joy. That is what Christ wants to be to us.

September 16

God's Thought for Us

God has a plan for our life--for each individual life. There is something that he made us for; he has a thought in his mind for us, something he wants us to be and to do. Now we can never be what God wants us to be--except by doing his will day by day. Disobedience or lack of submission at any point, will mar the perfectness of his plan for us. We know that whatever he wills for us--is for us the highest possible good. God's will for us, is always blessing. It will lead us at every step--in the best way home. It will fashion in us each day--a little more fully the image of Christ.

September 17

The Safest Place

The safest place in all this world--is ever the place of duty. God's wings are over it. God's peace guards it. It is said that at the center of the cyclone, that there is a spot where there is almost perfect calm. A leaf there is scarcely stirred, and a baby could lie there unharmed. So at the center of every great peril in life, is a spot of holy calm where even the feeblest would not be harmed. It is the place of duty, of obedience, of the doing of God's will. He who stays there amid peril and trial--is perfectly safe. No storm smites him, no plague comes near his dwelling. The way of duty, is always a place of absolute safety. But he who departs from this charmed center, soon finds himself caught in the wild swirl and in peril. None of sin's ways are safe.

September 18

Dying Grace

Many people worry because they do not seem to have "dying grace." They still fear death, and shrink from it. But God has never promised dying grace, when one's duty is to live. Grace for duty, for toil, for love, for honesty, for earnest service in every good cause, for brave struggle, for unselfish ministry, for holy influence; grace for noble and beautiful living, and for loyal devotion to Christ while the heart's pulses are steady, and while God wants us still in this world--but not yet grace for dying, since death is far away. Then--grace for dying when the life's work is done, its duty finished, and the call comes to leave this world and go home. Will not that be soon enough for dying grace to be bestowed?

September 19

The Touch of Christ

"Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man." Mark 1:41. 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 into the heavens--but his hand is stretched out still. It is laid just as of old upon sufferers, and has lost none of its power to comfort, to heal, to open blind eyes. 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.

September 20

Serving Christ for Himself

We are ready for usefulness--just in the measure in which we have learned the lesson of self-forgetfulness. SELF stands in the way of many glorious possibilities of good. Men drag their own personal interests into the cause they are serving. They stickle for honor and place, and demand recognition, appreciation, and reward. Appreciation and gratitude are very sweet. Who does not love to receive words of commendation? But if such words do not come--if, instead, wrong and injustice come--our zeal for Christ should be no less intense. Let us so sink ourselves in the cause of Christ--that our loyalty, devotion, and fidelity shall in no way be affected either by honor or neglect, by praise or blame.

September 21

To Make Men Better

Our mission as Christians in this world--is to do good to the worst people--to comfort, to help, to bless, to save. We are debtors to all men. We owe to everyone we meet, some blessing. We have an errand to everyone. Where we can see no beauty--we are to seek to put the beauty of holiness; where we find only enmity and rage and wrong--we are to seek by patient love, to overcome the evil with good. So, always forgetting ourselves and our rights--we are to strive to save others for heaven. If we go among men with this motive in our hearts--we shall have great joy in doing good, even to the lowliest.

September 22

Peace Before Ministry

We are in no condition for good work of any kind--when we are fretted and anxious in our minds. It is only when the peace of God is in our heart, that we are ready for true and helpful ministry. A feverish heart makes a worried face, and a worried face casts shadows wherever the person goes. A troubled spirit mars the temper and the disposition. It makes the whole life less beautiful. It unfits one for giving cheer and inspiration, for touching other lives with good and helpful impulses. Peace must come before ministry. It was when Jesus had touched the sufferer's hand and the fever had left her--that she arose and ministered unto her friends.

September 23

Beyond Pain's Valley

Many of the richest possibilities of prayer, lie beyond valleys of pain and sorrow. The best things of life cannot be gotten, except at great cost. When we pray for more holiness, we do not know what we are asking for; at least we do not know the price we must pay to get that which we ask. Our "Nearer, my God, to you," must be conditioned by, and often can come only through, "even though it be a cross, that raises me." Not only are the spiritual things the best things--but many times the spiritual things can be grasped only by letting go and losing out of our hands, the earthly things we would love to keep. God loves us too much to answer prayers for comfort and relief, even when we make them, if he can do it only at spiritual loss to us. He would rather let it be hard for us to live--if there is blessing in the hardness, than make it easy for us, at the cost of the blessing.

September 24

God's Dark Room

The noblest, richest, purest, and most fruitful lives in this world--have always been lives of sufferers. There are elements of loveliness in the depths of every human soul which the fires of pain alone, can bring out. The photographer carries his picture into a darkened room to develop it. God often takes his children into the chamber of pain, and draws the curtains, while he brings out the features of his own image, which before had been there in but dim and shadowy outlines.

September 25

The Human Not Enough

Sometimes we are in danger of putting our trust in our human friends rather than in the divine Friend. God comes to us still in human forms. He reveals his sympathy and love through human hearts. He speaks to us through human lips. He guides us by human hands. But if the human is all we get, if we do not learn to cling to God, and lean upon the divine arm beneath the human arm, and look to God for the blessings we need--dark for us will be the hour when the human falls away--and we are left alone in the darkness. Wherever, in whatever form and by whoever you are led first to know God--be sure that it is God whom you know and trust.

September 26

Misrepresentation

Life is full of misinterpretations. Many of us have wrong opinions of others. We think they do not care for us--when they really do. We imagine they are angry at us--when there is not a shade of unkind feeling in their heart. We misinterpret their acts. Many a time things which offend us, if we but understood the motive which prompted them and the true love which is in them, would appear really beautiful in our eyes. We ought to guard continually against these misinterpretations. They do wrong to others. They rob our own hearts of peace. "Love thinks no evil." Let us be sure always that we see an act in its proper light.

September 27

Little White Lies

People talk about "little white lies"--little deceptions, concealments, false appearances, subterfuges--as if they were not particularly wrong. But he who would be true--must be true through and through, in the

innermost depths of his being and in the smallest affairs--as well as the largest. He must simply be true. Let your soul of truth be as pure and unstained as the snowflakes when they fall from the cloud. There really are no "little white lies;" all lies are black. Falsehood is from the devil--no matter whether it is merely a look or a silence which deceives--or whether it is an uttered untruth. Let us learn to be true for God's eye.

September 28

Such As We Have

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.

September 29

God Guiding Our Steps

"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 du

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