

Miller's Year Book - January to June

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living by faith, striving for continuous progress, and trusting in God's provision and care.

Scripture: Numbers 6:24

Topics: "Trust in God's Provision", "Daily Devotion"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of daily scripture readings as a source of strength and guidance throughout the year. He encourages believers to seek God's blessings for themselves and others, to strive for personal growth, and to trust in God's provision and protection. Miller illustrates that true happiness and wisdom come from living according to God's will and serving others selflessly. He reminds us that every experience, whether joyful or painful, can lead to spiritual growth and deeper faith. Ultimately, Miller calls for a life of continuous learning, service, and reliance on God's unfailing love.

Transcript

Miller's Year Book--a Year's Daily Readings

J. R. Miller, 1895

JANUARY to JUNE

A verse of Scripture in the morning, may become a blessing for all the day. It may sing in the heart as a sweet song, from morning until evening. It may become a liturgy of prayer in which the soul shall voice its deepest needs and hungers--amid toils, struggles, and cares. It may be a guide through perplexing tangles, 'God's voice' whispering cheer, a comforter breathing peace in sorrow.

JANUARY

January 1.

"May the Lord bless you and protect you.

May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace."

Numbers 6:24-26

In the first days of a new year, we all say to our friends and neighbors, "Happy New Year!" Our hearts are full of generous feelings and wishes for all we meet. But what can we do to give them a happy new year? We cannot compel their circumstances into fortunate adjustments, so as to produce happiness. Besides, we cannot know what would be the truest and best blessings for our friends.

After all, the only really safe thing is to pray that God may be with them through the year, and may bless them in his own best and truest way. He knows better than we do--what is the best blessing.

January 2.

"You have made your way around this hill country long enough; now turn north." Deuteronomy 2:3

We ought never to be willing to live any year--just as we lived the last one. No one is striving after the best things--who is not intent on an upward and a forward movement continually. The circular movement is essential too, the going around and around in the old grooves, routine work, daily tasks; yet, even in this treadmill round, there should be constant progress. We ought to do the same things, better each day. Then in the midst of the outward routine--our inner life ought to be growing in earnestness, in force, in strength, in depth.

Yet there are some people whose life year by year is only a going around and around in the old beaten paths, with no onward movement. They are like men who walk in a circular course for a prize, covering a thousand miles, perhaps, but ending just where they began. Rather, our daily walk should be like one whose path goes around a mountain, but climbs a little higher with each circuit, until at last he gains the clear summit, and looks into the face of God. While we must do in a measure the same things every day--we should do them a little better with each repetition.

January 3.

"The jar of flour was not used up--and the jug of oil did not run dry." 1 Kings 17:16

There was always just a little flour and a little oil--but the supply never grew any less. After each day's food had been taken out--there was another day's left. There was never a month's supply ahead, nor even two days' supply. The added provision came--only as there was need. Thus there was in that household, a continuous lesson in faith. But the food of no day failed.

The lesson is, that God wants us to live by the day. The same truth is taught us in the prayer Christ gave: "Give us this day, our daily bread." Enough for the day is all we are to ask. God does not promise supplies in advance. If we have only bread for today, and are doing our duty faithfully, we may trust him until tomorrow, for tomorrow's food. And it will surely come, for God's Word fails not.

It is well that we get this lesson fixed in our heart at the beginning of the year. As the days come, each one will bring with it its own little basket, carrying a day's supplies--but no more!

January 4.

"If you continue in My Word, then you really are My disciples." John 8:31

It is not enough to begin; continuance is necessary. Mere enrollment will not make one a scholar; the pupil must continue in the school through all the long course, until he has mastered every branch. One who has observed the course of men for many years, says that success in life depends upon staying power. The reason for failure in most cases--is lack of perseverance. Men get tired and give up. There are thousands who begin to follow Christ--but who, when discouragements come, faint and drop out.

To continue in Christ's word--is to obey him. We must do it continuously too; not today only--but tomorrow as well, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, unto the end.

There is another way of abiding in the word of Christ. Many of his words are promises. The forests in summer days are full of bird-nests. They are hidden among the leaves. The little birds know where they are; and when a storm arises, or when night draws on, they fly each to his own nest. So the promises of God are hidden in the Bible, like nests in the great forests; and there we should fly in any danger or alarm, hiding there in our soul's nest until the storm be over and past. There are no castles in this world so impregnable, as the words of Christ.

January 5.

"We must do the works of Him who sent Me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work." John 9:4

We are all in this world on divine missions, are all sent from God to take some specific part in blessing the world. To do this--we have just a day of time. A day is a brief time. It is a fixed time. When the sun comes to his going down, no power in the universe can prolong his stay for one minute.

Yet the day is long enough for God's plan. The sun never sets too soon for his purpose. Each life is long enough for the little part of the world's work allotted to it. This is true even of the infant that lives only an hour, merely coming into this world, smiling its blessing, and flying away. It is true of the child, of the young man or young woman, of him who dies in the maturity of his powers with his hands yet full of unfinished tasks. No one can ever offer as an excuse for an unfinished life-work, that the time given to him was too short. It is always long enough, if only every moment of it is filled with simple faithfulness.

To have our work completed at the end, we must do it while the day lasts, for there will be no opportunity afterward. If we are living earnestly, we shall live all the time under the pressure of the consciousness, that the time is short. We must not waste nor lose a moment. Soon it will be night--when we cannot work!

January 6.

"The pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and stood behind them." Exodus 14:19

It is not always guidance that we most need. Sometimes we must stand still, with danger all around us, and then God goes behind us to shelter us. He always suits himself to our need. When we require guidance--he leads us. But when we need protection--he puts himself between us and the danger.

There is something very striking in this picture the divine presence moving from before, and becoming a wall between Israel and their enemies. There are some mother-birds, storks for instance,

which cover their young with their own body in time of peril, to shield them, receiving the dart themselves. Human love often interposes itself as a shield to protect its own. On the cross, Jesus bared his bosom to

receive the storm of wrath--that on his people no blast of the awful tempest might strike!

But not only does Christ put himself between us and our sins; he puts himself also between us and danger. The Lord God is our shield. Many of our dangers come upon us from behind. They are stealthy, insidious, assaulting us when we are unaware of their nearness. The tempter is cunning and shrewd. He does not meet us full-front. It is a comfort to know that Christ comes behind us--when it is there we need the protection.

January 7.

"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." Matthew 6:20

Saving, in order to "lay up for a rainy day", is universally commended. By just so much more as the object is higher, is it commendable to economize in order to "lay up treasures in heaven." We really have--only what we have used well for Christ. When one has learned this secret of banking in heaven, one has the true philosopher's stone which turns everything to gold. The simplest possessions, are transformed into eternal treasures. A threadbare coat becomes a robe of righteousness, a last year's bonnet a crown of glory, when worn in self-denying economy for Christ's sake. We should live always for the highest and best things!

January 8.

"You are my friends--if you do whatever I command you." John 15:14

There is something very sweet in the thought, that we may be Christ's friends, and that he opens all his heart to us. "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him." This means that if we are Christ's friends--he takes us into the closest intimacy. Not many of us realize all that is possible, in the way of companionship with Christ. If we are on terms of unhindered friendship with him--we can indeed talk with him freely, intimately, as friend with friend.

"How does he talk with us?" some one asks. A heathen convert said, "When I pray--I talk to Christ! When I read my Bible--Christ speaks to me!" If we live close to Christ--the words of Scripture are very plain to us; Christ himself indeed speaks to us in them.

There was a godly man in Germany, named Bengel, who was noted for his intimacy with Christ. A friend desired to watch the saintly man at his devotions. So he concealed himself one night in his room. Bengel sat long at his table reading his New Testament. The hours passed. At length the clock struck midnight, and the old man spread out his hands, and said with great joy, "Dear Lord Jesus, we are on the same old terms." Then closing his book he was soon in bed and asleep. He had learned the secret of friendship with Christ.

January 9.

"So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten pounds. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'" Luke 19:13

We are doing business in this world for Christ. Each one of us has something of His--a pound which He has entrusted to us to trade with as his agent. Our life itself, with all its powers, its endowments, its

opportunities, its privileges, its blessings, its possibilities--is our pound. Our life is not our own. We are not in this world merely to have a good time for a few years. Life is a trust. We are not done with it either, when we have lived it through to its last day. We must render an account of it to him who gave it to us. Our business is to gather gains through our trading with our Lord's money. We are required to make the most that is possible of our life!

People often speak of the solemnity of dying. It is a grave and serious matter--but it is a great deal more solemn thing to live. Dying is but giving back into God's hand his own gift--life. If we have lived well, dying is victory, glory, the trampling of life's fragile vanities to fragments, as our soul bursts into real and full life and blessedness.

It is living then, which is serious and solemn. Life to its last particle is our Lord's property, entrusted to us to be used so that it shall grow. Then comes the judgment. We shall have to look up into our Lord's face, and tell him what we have done with his pound. We shall be expected to return our trust, not , only kept safe--but enhanced in value!

January 10.

"The first came forward and said--Master, your pound has earned ten more pounds!" Luke 19:16

We always find these ten-pound servants among the followers of Christ. They are those Christians who, from the very beginning, strive to reach the best things attainable in life--through divine grace. They are not content with being merely saved from sin's guilt, with being mere members of the church. They make their consecration to Christ complete, keeping nothing back. They set their ideal of obedience to their Lord at the mark of perfectness, and are not slack in their striving, until they reach the mark in heaven. They seek to follow Christ wholly, fully, with their whole heart. They accept every duty--without regard to its cost. They seek to be like Christ, imitating him in all the elements of his character. They give their whole energy to the work and service of Christ. They lie, like John, on the Master's bosom, and their souls are struck through, as it were, with the Master's loving spirit.

So these men and women grow at last into a saintliness, a spiritual beauty, and a power of usefulness and influence, by which they are set apart among Christians, shining with brighter luster than other stars in the galaxy of the church. Their one pound has made ten pounds more! Their high spiritual attainment has been won by their diligent and wise use of the pound with which they began!

January 11.

"The second came and said--Master, your pound has earned five pounds!" Luke 19:18

Christ gives into no man's hand at the beginning of his life--a finely trained, fully developed mind. The great poets and writers of the world, began with only one pound. There was capacity for growth--but that was all. Christ gives to no one at the start a noble, full-statured, rich, transfigured Christian character, with spiritual graces all blossoming out. The most saintly Christians began with very little saintliness, very little spiritual power. The most useful men in the church, began with a very small and imperfect sort of usefulness.

Those whose influence for good now touches thousands of lives, and extends over whole communities, or fills an entire country--had nothing to begin with--but one little pound of capacity which the Master entrusted to them. This is the principle on which all our Lord's gifts are distributed. He puts into our hands

a little at first; and as we use what we have, and gain experience, and show ability, and prove faithful to our trust--he adds more and more, giving us all we can use well, and as fast as we can use it!

January 12.

"Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint!" Isaiah 40:31

The source of strength in any life--must be God. It is only when we are co-workers with him--that we are unconquerable. If we would be strong, therefore, able to resist sin, able to do valiant battle for the truth, able to touch other lives with healing, uplifting influences--we must abide in Christ. Then his strength shall be in our heart and in our arm.

It is told of General Gordon, that each morning, during his journey in the Soudan country, for half an hour there lay outside his tent a white handkerchief. The whole camp knew well what it meant, and looked upon the little signal with the utmost respect; no foot dared cross the threshold of that tent while the little guard lay there. No message, however pressing, was to be delivered. Matters of life and death must wait until the white signal was taken away. Everybody in the camp knew that God and Gordon were communing together. Sweet is the communion of the spirit--which obtains nearness to its God. Powerful is the influence of the soul that hourly longs to draw near to its God and drink in the inspiring draughts of his presence.

January 13.

"Whoever is fearful and trembling--let him return!" Judges 7:3

Through God wanted only a few men--he wanted the best. So the first thing was to weed out the incompetent. The army would be stronger with all these sent home--rather than with them all straggling along. There were twenty thousand cowards; and the ten thousand brave men would be stronger alone than the thirty thousand, having the timid thousands among them.

Timidity is infectious. Many a church would be stronger if it were weeded out--just as Gideon's army was. Its weakness lies in its great numbers, not because numbers necessarily weaken--but because there are so many half-hearted people on the church roll. They have lost their interest, if they ever had any, and are indifferent, without thorough consecration. They add no strength--but only hinder the other members and dampen their zeal.

January 14.

"I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you--the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you--every living creature on earth." Genesis 9:9-10

It is strange how God's care extends even to animals. This covenant was not with man only--but with all the animal creation as well. Think of God making a covenant with the cattle that roam in the valleys, the sheep that graze in the meadows, the birds that fly in the air, and even with the insects that chirp in the fields. Yet that is what he did! We know, too, that this divine care is real. There are other promises which contain the same assurances.

"He feeds the wild animals, and the young ravens cry to him for food." Psalm 147:9. Our Lord said, "Look at the birds. They don't need to plant or harvest or put food in barns--because your heavenly Father feeds them!" Matthew 6:26. God cares for birds. There is a promise, too, for the flowers, "Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are!" Jesus says.

Of course the lesson for us from all this, is the one which Jesus taught. If God cares for the birds and flowers--how much more will he care for his own children! Therefore we ought to trust him without fear!

January 15.

"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth."
Genesis 9:13

There can be no rainbow--unless it is raining. So we cannot see the brightest glory of God's grace, without entering into the experiences of trial. We can learn the full preciousness of the divine promises, only in the circumstances of need for which they were given.

A young friend told me that she had seen richer revealings of the love of Christ in the weeks she had been in her sick-room, than in all the former years of her life. Words of God which she had known from childhood, had flashed out then for the first time in the rich splendor of their meaning! There had been no clouds in her life before--all was health and happiness, and she had not seen the rainbow hues.

The same is true of all the divine comforts; we never can know the best of their meaning--until the sorrow comes in which they are meant to give strength. A beatitude reads: "Blessed are those who mourn--for they shall be comforted." We cannot receive the comfort--until we mourn. Every Christian who has passed through sorrow understands this. In the deepening darkness--the lights in the heavenly promises flashed out bright and clear, showing him for the first time--the fullness of their blessed comfort.

January 16

"I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be perfect." Genesis 17:1

"Perfection is impossible!" we are in the habit of saying; and therefore we do not try to reach perfection. It is better for us always to keep our aim high, although we cannot hope to reach it. If we have low ideals and aims--our attainments will be low. We cannot look with approval upon anything lower than the perfect beauty of God Himself, and not have the beauty of our own life dimmed thereby. We should always keep perfection before us--as our aim. We should keep our eyes ever fixed upon the perfect model, Jesus Christ!

Jesus taught, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 5:48. We are always to seek to model our life upon the divine pattern. Of course we cannot reach this lofty standard in a day--but the way to Christlikeness, is to strive toward it.

When a child begins to write, his scrawling lines fall far short of the beauty of the original at the top of the page. Book after book he fills with his scribbling--but if he is diligent, each new page shows a little improvement, and by and by his writing rivals the original. We can learn to live holy and sweetly, only in the same way. Begin where you can, no matter how imperfect or faulty your life--but strive always toward perfection, and at last you shall be like Christ! That is the hope which shines before us--when we shall see

Him as He is--and shall be like Him!

January 17

"Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things!" Psalm 103:2-5

What an enumeration of divine blessings this is! Any one of them is worth more than all earth's treasures combined!

If we are not forgiven--we must rest forever under the burden of sin, a weight greater than all the Alps! But God forgives--and forgives all our sins--and forgives freely, fully and forever!

If we are not healed--we must be sick forever, sick with the plague and leprosy of sin! But God heals--and heals all our evils, and heals completely!

If we are not saved from the dangers of this ensnaring world--we never can reach heaven! But God keeps, rescues, and saves our life from all impending destructions!

Earth's crowns are made of thorns, and at the best are only what the children call, 'play-crowns', for they are but of leaves that wither, or of gold and gems that will not last. But God crowns His people with crowns of love and compassion, which are real and radiant, which shall never fade--but shall shine forever, becoming crowns of eternal life and glory in heaven!

This world cannot satisfy a heart's deepest cravings. Its possessions only make the hunger more intense! But God satisfies the souls of His people, and meets all their cravings and hungers with truly good and eternal realities!

January 18.

"Cast your burden upon the Lord--and He shall sustain you!" Psalm 45:22

There are some mistaken notions current concerning the ways in which God would help us. People think that whenever they have a little trouble, a bit of hard path to go over, a load to carry, a sorrow to endure--all they have to do is to call upon God, and He will at once take away their sorrow, or free them from the trouble. But this is not the way God helps us! His purpose of love concerning us is--not to make all things easy for us--but to make something of us!

When we ask God to save us from our trouble, to take the struggles out of our life, to make the paths mossy, to lift off every heavy load--He will not do it! It would be most unloving in Him to accommodate us. We must carry the burden ourselves! All God promises is, to sustain us--as we carry it! He wants us to learn life's lessons, and to do this--we must be left to work out the problems for ourselves.

There are rich blessings which can be gotten, only in sorrow. It would be short-sighted love indeed--which would heed our cries, and spare us from sorrow--and thus deprive us of the wonderful blessings which can be gotten only in sorrow! God is too good to us to answer our prayers--which would save us from pain, cost, and sacrifice today--at the price of holier, better, truer life in the end. He would not rob us of the blessing that is in the burden--which we can get only by carrying it!

January 19.

"He knows our frame; He remembers that we are but dust!" Psalm 103:14

God does not treat us as if we were strong, holy, and unfallen angels! He does not forget that we are weak, that it is hard for us to live right, that we are easily tempted and overcome. He is very patient and gentle with us when we have sinned--binding up our wounds, restoring our soul. He does not lay upon us loads too great for us--for He knows how weak we are! He gives us help, too, with our burdens--that we need not faint under them.

We ought to get a great deal of comfort out of these words.

You say you are so weak that you cannot resist temptation. Does not God know it? Will He not help you to overcome?

You are weary through trouble or burden-bearing--but God knows all about it! You find your work hard, and cannot see how you are ever to get through with it; but God understands. He knows how frail you are; He remembers that you are only dust. He is pitiful, and gives always needed help!

January 20.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart--and you will find rest for your souls!" Matthew 11:29

We have to learn to live--if ever we are to live worthily. No one becomes a fine musician, without much learning. Nor can anyone take a piece of canvas, with palette, paints, and brushes--and at once paint a masterpiece.

Learning to live beautifully--is harder than learning music or art. We must learn to live--and the lessons are hard, requiring long years of patience and practice. But we ought to learn the art of living, whatever the cost may be!

Life is a sacred trust. We are accountable for it to God, who gave it to us. We are required to make the most of our abilities, training them to their best capacity. By self-discipline, we are to get the perfect mastery of our being--and then do the things which we were made to do.

Yet many people never seriously try to learn to live! This is unworthy a being endowed with immortality, and sent forth on a divine errand. We should live in a way, which will not shame us when we come to the end.

January 21.

"Whoever wants to become great among you--must be your servant; and whoever wants to be first--must be your slave." Matthew 20:26-27

There are some people with a little measure of "position" who seem to accept all favors shown to them, and all services rendered to them by others, as due to them because of their exalted rank, or their exceeding importance among men. They stand upon their dignity, and in effect demand attention, and a degree of subserviency from their plain, ordinary fellow-men. They complain, if by any accident they appear not to receive their due quota of honor. They seem to feel that their high place among

men--entitles them to a great deal of consideration; and they are offended if they do not get it!

It would seem, however, in the light of our Lord's teaching, that the truly greatest among men--are those who are most ready to serve. The haughty spirit described above, is scarcely, therefore, a mark of real greatness in Christ's eye--but really, a mark of littleness. All self-seeking is littleness. The law of service is taken from the very heart of God; nothing else is truly great.

January 22.

"The Son of Man did not come to be served--but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many!"
Matthew 20:28

The art of photography is now so perfect, that the whole picture of a large newspaper can be taken in miniature so small, as to be carried in a little pendant--and yet every letter and point be perfect.

Just so, the whole life of Christ is photographed in one little phrase, "not to be served--but to serve." He came not to be served; if this had been His aim--He would never have left heaven's glory, where He lacked nothing, where angels praised Him and ministered unto Him. He came to serve. He went about doing good. He altogether forgot Himself. He served all he met--who would receive His service. At last He gave His life in uttermost service--giving it as a sin-atonement ransom for others. He came not to be served--but to serve.

You say you want to be like Christ. You ask Him to print His own image on your heart. Here, then is the image! It is no vague dream of perfection that we are to think of--when we ask to be made like Christ. The Catholic monks thought that they were becoming like Christ--when they went into the wilderness, away from men, to live in cold cells. But that is not the what this picture suggests. "To serve"--that is the Christlike thing! Instead of fleeing away from the world--we are to live among men, to serve them, to seek to bless them, to do them good, to give our life for them!

January 23.

"No longer do I call you servants . . . I have called you friends." John 15:15.

If we ask, "What is the best that Christ's friendship can be to any soul?" We may answer, "It is shelter, comfort, rest, inmost refreshment, guidance, and far more. Christ is an atmosphere about us--an atmosphere of love, warm with all tender influences, all healthful inspirations, all holy impulses. Christ comes into all our life--as our friend--so really, so fully, that he becomes "an unconscious part of every true beat of our heart." As the summer sunbeams enter into the flowers, and reappear in their lovely hues and sweet fragrance--so does Christ enter into the lives of his people, and permeate and transform them, until they become like him in spirit, in character, in disposition, in every feature. "Christ, who is our life." Colossians 3:4. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:27. "Until Christ is formed in you." Galatians 4:19

We know what Christ's friendship was to his disciples. He found them crude--and left them refined. He found Matthew a publican, unjust, grasping, an outcast--and made him an apostle, then a writer of a Gospel. He found Peter profane, rough in manner, impetuous--and made him an eloquent preacher, a man of marvelous power, whose influence lives today wherever the Christian church has gone. He found John a son of thunder, with a strong, fiery temper--and made him the apostle of love, the human embodiment of all the sweet, gentle, tender graces of his own life. The friendship of Christ, can do the

same for us!

January 24.

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." Luke 10:28

That is just the trouble with a great many people--they can answer correctly. They know all about their duty. They can repeat with glib tongue, text after text of Scripture. They can recite catechism and creed without missing a word, and like to boast of their thorough familiarity with these sacred formularies. But it is the doing that they fall short in.

They know the commandments--but they fail to keep them. They can quote any number of Bible texts about honesty and truthfulness--yet they are neither honest nor truthful. They like to talk about the love of Christ, which is meek, gentle, patient, and compassionate--but they do not think of getting any of this spirit into their own life!

They recite texts about sending the gospel to the heathen, and make speeches about saving the lost--but neither give money nor make any personal effort to save others!

If doing were as easy as knowing--how blessed we would all be! Would it not be a beautiful thing for us--to try to live all the duty we know?

"Now that you know these things--you will be blessed if you do them!" John 13:17

January 25.

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father--I have made known to you." John 15:15

One of the marks of a noble nature, is open-heartedness. Jesus gave it as the chief privilege of friendship with him that he would make known to his friends--all that his Father had taught him. That is, full, trusting confidence is the deepest, truest thing--in the highest and best possible friendship. Soul and soul should be thoroughly united in two friends.

Two gentlemen lived in houses adjoining each other. Their back yards were separated by a fence. A warm friendship grew up between the two families; and soon that fence came down, and the children played together alike in both yards. True friendship pulls down the fences between lives.

Therefore a secretive man can never be a friend--nor have a friend at more than a few points. He is afraid to let his friend know what he knows, what he has been doing, what he is intending to do. Secretiveness is narrow, hindering, cramping. It is like living in a closed cell. It robs one's own life of sweet blessings which it might get from others--and it robs others of pleasures and benefits which it might give to them. The secretive man has not yet learned the meaning of the sweet word about the open-heartedness of the Master toward his friends, which he would have them repeat toward other Christians.

January 26.

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

God often does better for us--than we ask.

We go to Him--with our little requests.

We are in need--and ask for temporal relief.

We are suffering--and ask that our pain may cease.

We are poor--and ask Him for more money.

We are just like the beggar, holding out our hands for paltry alms to eke out the day's need. Then God looks down upon us and says, "My child, are these little trifles all you want Me to give to you--daily bread, clothing, fuel for your fire, medicine for your sickness, comfort for your grief? The small things to supply your common needs--are these the only gifts and blessings you want and ask from the hand of your heavenly Father, who has infinite treasures to give to you?"

Yet thousands never get beyond just such requests in their praying! Bowing daily before a God of infinite power and love, in whose hands are unsearchable riches--they never ask for anything, but fleeting earthly comforts and worldly trinkets! They ask only for things for their bodies, or to beautify their homes--making no requests for the heavenly and spiritual gifts God has for their souls! We should learn to ask for the best things in all God's treasure house!

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things!" Colossians 3:1-2

January 27.

"Happy is the man who finds wisdom!" Proverbs 3:13

It is worth our while to study what the Bible says about happiness, and how to get it. All people want to be happy--but most miss the mark.

Yet those who follow the Bible rules for happiness, will never be disappointed. "Happy is the man who finds wisdom."

WISDOM is a large word. It is not merely knowledge. A man may know so much, that he is a walking encyclopedia, and yet not be happy. He may pursue knowledge into all its nooks and hiding-places, dig it out of the rocks, extract it from the minerals, gather it from flower and plant, draw it down from among the stars--and yet not find happiness. Knowing a great many things--does not make one wise!

Wisdom is knowledge applied to life. He has found wisdom--who has learned to live well. To live well--is to live according to God's laws, which are summed up in one word, love--love to God and love to man. No one is happy who does not recognize God and do His will. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Likewise, no one can be really happy who does not love his fellow-men. Happiness never is found in selfishness. Those who seek happiness in thinking, toiling, and striving only for themselves--will have a vain quest! It never lies that way. He only has found wisdom--who has found rest in Christ.

January 28.

"The angel of God . . . went before the camp of Israel." Exodus 14:19.

This angel was revealed in the form of cloud and fire. It was wonderful guidance which God gave to his people in their marches. By day the pillar of cloud sheltered them--and then by night the same cloud was light. By day it was shelter--by night it was light. And always it was guidance. When they were to move, it lifted and went in advance, to lead them. When they were to halt and rest, it settled down, thus giving them the signal to pitch their tents.

This was miraculous guidance; but we have God's presence just as really, though without a visible 'pillar' to lead us. God guides his people by his Word, by his providence, by his Spirit. If we are willing to follow unquestioningly, we shall never be left long in perplexity, as to the way we should take. Our guidance is given to us only as we will accept it and shape our course by it.

Nor is the guidance given in maps and charts, showing us miles and miles of the road; it is given only step by step as we go on.

January 29.

"And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord, set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off, and stand up in a heap." Joshua 3:13

There must be faith first. The priests must take up the ark and walk with it down into the flowing stream--before the waters would be cut off. They did not see a path across the river before they started. They broke up their camps and began their march while there was no sign of any crossing-place. If they had walked down to the edge, and then stopped to wait for the path to be opened, it would not have been opened. If they had lifted their feet and held them over the water, waiting for its flow to cease, they would have waited in vain. They must take one step into the water--before the current would be cut off. They must move on as if the way were open, believing that it would be open.

Likewise, we must learn to take God at his Word and go forward in duty, though we see no way by which we can go forward. The reason we are so often balked by difficulties, is because we expect to see them removed before we venture to pass through them. If we would move right on in faith, as soon as our feet touch the brim, the waters would flow away and leave a path. A great many people stand on the edge of the Christian life, waiting for feelings, before they will begin to follow Christ. If they would but begin to follow him, the way would open before them.

January 30.

"All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created." John 1:3

We like to look at a beautiful piece of workmanship, and remember that some beloved friend of ours fashioned it. This makes it more precious and sacred.

Some orphan children had been received into an institution, and were exchanging their old garments for new ones. One poor boy was seen picking up the wretched cap he had been wearing, and tearing out of it a piece of faded silk that had been sewed into it. He was asked why he wanted to keep the patch; and he said, his eyes full of tears, that his mother had sewed it into his old cap with her thin frail fingers when she was on her death-bed, and he wanted to keep it in remembrance of her.

Men prize old paintings, and pay large prices for them, because they were painted by some famous master. All the works of nature would be sacred to us--if we but remembered that our Savior made them. The sweet flowers in the field would be all the sweeter--if we only thought as we look upon them, "The hands of Christ painted these!"

January 31.

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men." John 1:4

Life is a mystery. We can note its manifestations--but we cannot find its source. We see that a man lives--we see it in his actions; but we cannot tell what it is, that keeps the heart beating, beating, beating, without pause, for sixty, seventy, years. We can read the poet's lines, and look at the artist's pictures, and hear the musician's songs; but what do we know of the inner mental life that produced the poem, the pictures, the songs? It is hidden life.

So spiritual life is hidden. We see one supported in quiet peace, amid great trial; another comforted into sweet acquiescence in a bitter sorrow; another living purely and nobly amid sore temptations; another lifted up out of degradation, and transformed. We cannot understand the processes; we see only the effects. So all life is mysterious.

But we know that it all comes from Christ. He is the fountain of all life. No human genius, skill, or power has ever been able to produce life of any kind, even a living blade of grass or a little violet. Still less can any human power give new life to a dead soul. Only Christ can do this. We must get our life from him.

FEBRUARY

February 1.

"I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." Genesis 9:11

Science now explains so many things, which devout people in the past loved to look upon as the very acts of God, that some have begun to wonder whether after all our Father really has anything to do with nature. But what is nature? It is God's handiwork. The powers that work so mightily in earth and air--God put there. Can these powers be greater than he who lodged them in his works? We need never fear that any scientific discovery shall show us a universe without a God. We know, too, that the God who controls all the forces and energies of nature, holding all in his hands--is our Father!

During a great flood, when houses, barns, outbuildings, and fences were swept away in the wild current, some men in a skiff saw a baby's cradle borne along in the stream. Rowing to it, they found in it, sleeping as quietly and sweetly as it had ever slept in its mother's bosom, a little baby. So, in the wildest floods of earth, God cares for his little ones. He is Lord of all the forces of nature. Not a drop of water, even in angriest billows, ever breaks away from the control of God! Natural law! Yes--but natural law is only the leash of divine control which is held firmly in the hand of God. No wild tempest ever sweeps beyond the "Hitherto" of our Father!

February 2.

"When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds" Genesis 9:14

So always, too, in spiritual life, whenever a cloud is in the sky--the rainbow appears on the cloud, the rainbow of divine promise, of God's love and grace. We are accustomed to say that every cloud has a silver lining, and the saying is true. In other words, every dark providence has a bright, shining side. As God sees it, there is a blessing in it. It is not always true that we can see the rainbow on the cloud; sometimes we can see only gloom and shadow. But faith can always be sure of good in every trial, in every sorrow, in every loss, even when the natural eye cannot see it. "We know that all things work together for good--to those who love God."

Someday we shall know that many of our best blessings have come to us out of our sorrows. In the Book of Revelation we are told that there is a rainbow about the throne of God and the Lamb in heaven, which would seem to be a suggestion that God's covenant is not for earth only--but also reaches forward into the blessed life beyond. Perhaps our richest blessings in heaven--will be from earth's sorrows!

February 3.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!" Romans 11:33

Our knowledge is limited. We see only little fragments of truth. We are like children on the shore of the sea, gathering a few pebbles and shells--while the ocean's depths are hidden from us. Says Zophar: "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens--what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave--what can you know?" Job 11:7-8

Job himself, speaking of God's works in nature and in providence, adds: "And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?" Job 26:14

We ought to learn the lesson. God is not a man--not one of ourselves. If we could understand him, he would not be God. His greatness puts him beyond our comprehension. We cannot hope to know the reasons for his acts. Some of his ways with us are mysterious. We are perplexed; we say, "God cannot love me--or he would not do these things." We should learn to trust God even in the deepest mysteries, not expecting to understand--but sure of his love and goodness--even when it is darkest and when his face is veiled in most impenetrable mists. We should be silent unto God, when we cannot fathom Him. That is the truest faith.

February 4.

"Do not be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them!" 2 Kings 6:16

It is not enough just to put on a bold face and compel ourselves to be brave or appear brave. It will not do merely to try to make ourselves think there is no danger--when we know very well that there is danger. We cannot play tricks on ourselves. The true secret of confidence and fearlessness in danger--is faith in the divine keeping, not in thinking there is no peril. "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world." John 16:33

The great truth to be learned by all who would acquire true moral courage--is the reality of God's care for his people in all their dangers. The ninetieth and the one hundred and twenty-first Psalms describe this

care. "The Lord is your keeper." "The Lord shall keep you from all evil." "He who keeps you will not slumber." I have slept in a camp with armed enemies on all sides; but I was not afraid, for I knew that waking sentinels formed a complete circle all around the camp. Likewise in any danger we may feel safe--because God wakes and watches!

February 5.

"Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along," Jacob said. "Then come back and bring me word." So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from his home in the valley of Hebron. Genesis 37:14

Joseph left his home in good spirits. We can imagine his good-bye as he set out. The family would see him off, expecting him to fare well and to return again in good time. Not one of them dreamed that it would be twenty years before they should see his face again! If they had imagined this, then their parting that morning would have been very tender.

We never know when we say farewell at our door to the friends we love, as they or we go out for a time, that we shall ever see them again. We should always say good-bye, even for the briefest parting, with thoughtfulness and with love's warmth, for we may never clasp hands with them any more.

February 6.

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 14:11

HUMILITY is an excellent grace. It is the empty hand which God fills. Self-conceit is weakness. We are strongest, when we distrust ourselves, and are thus led to lean upon God. Emptiness is the cup into which God puts blessing. Pride leaves no room for the divine strength. But there is a danger also in self-distrust. It sometimes makes a person shrink from duty. It almost wrecked the mission of Moses. A little more excusing of himself, and God probably would have left him with his sheep in the wilderness, seeking some other man to bring Israel out of Egypt. No doubt many people have failed altogether of the mission for which they were sent into this world, through a like feeling of unfitness for the work. When God clearly calls us to undertake any task, we should never raise the question of ability. He would not call us to it--if He did not equip us for the task.

February 7.

"You will have tribulation in this world." John 16:33

The word tribulation is very suggestive. It comes from a root which means 'a flail'. The thresher uses the flail to beat the wheat sheaves, that he may separate the golden wheat from the chaff and straw.

Tribulation is God's threshing--not to destroy us, but to get what is good, heavenly, and spiritual in us--separated from what is wrong, earthly, and fleshly. Nothing less than blows of pain will do this. The evil so strongly clings to the good; the golden wheat of goodness in us is so closely wrapped up in the strong chaff of sin, that only the heavy flail of suffering can produce the separation!

Suffering is like John the Baptist, wearing grim garments, with stern visage and rough hands and a baptism of bitter tears, uttering sharp, harsh words, going before Christ to prepare us for his gentle coming

and his message of love. Many of us would never enter the gates of pearl--were it not for this unwelcome messenger, pain.

February 8

"Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God . . . " Romans 12:1

A Christian man had quoted this verse, urging those whom he had addressed to present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice. When he closed, a good friend who sat beside him said, "John, the next time you quote that verse, you would better quote all of it."

"Didn't I quote it all? "

"No; you left off the last words, 'which is your reasonable service.' That is very important."

The old Quaker was right. We had better quote the whole verse. It is not an unreasonable thing that God asks us to do when he beseeches us to present ourselves to him as a living sacrifice.

He is our Father, and we are his children; is it unreasonable that a child shall be asked to do a father's will?

We may think of our redemption, and remember at what tremendous cost Christ bought us, and then of all the blessings and hopes that are ours through his sacrifice for us. Is it unreasonable that we should be asked to consecrate our lives to God when he has done such things for us?

We may think, too, of what will be the result if we do not yield ourselves to God--that our lives will be lost in sin's darkness; and of the good that will come to us through devoting ourselves to him eternal life and blessedness. Is it, then, unreasonable that we should be called to make this presentation of ourselves to God?

February 9.

"If only we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat and ate all the bread we wanted. Instead, you brought us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of hunger!" Exodus 16:3

It is a sad thing when we allow life's disappointments to make us despondent! The problem of Christian living in this troublesome world, is not to escape experiences of hardship--but to retain sweetness of spirit in all such experiences.

You must have hardships, losses, sorrows. But see to it that you retain through all these--a gentle heart, full of trust and hope. Then when the harsh adversity is past--you will emerge unharmed, with even richer life, tenderer beauty, and deeper joy! The secret of such victorious living--is a trust in God which never fails.

February 10

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

A child offered her teacher a handful of weeds and grass, wilted and soiled, and said, "Here is a bouquet for you!" The teacher saw the love in the child's eyes, and accepted the gift with sincere gratitude. Just so, Christ accepts our smallest gifts or services--if He sees love in our heart.

This is the spirit with which Christ receives the gifts and services of those who love him. The gifts may be worthless, and the services may avail nothing--but for the love that prompts them, he accepts them with real gladness, and richly rewards them.

February 11.

"Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun--blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen." Exodus 35:25

Many young ladies make beautiful things--but do not bring them to Christ. They keep them for their own adornment. But these women brought their fine handiwork to the Lord. They spun beautiful threads to be woven into the curtains and embroideries of the tabernacle. Christian girls and women may help in many ways in preparing dwelling-places for God. They can make a place for him in their own heart. They can put touches of beauty into the lives of others. It needs not great things--but only service of truth filled with love, to please God. The threads may be coarse--but in God's eye they will be beautiful--if love spins them.

February 12.

"I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions." Exodus 16:4

Everything God gives or sends to us--tests us in some way.

Trials test us, whether we will submit with humility and patience to the experiences that are sore and painful, and learn the lesson set for us in them.

But none the less do the blessings of life test us. They test our gratitude. Do we remember God all the time--as the Giver of each new blessing? They test our faith. Do we still lean on him while we have plenty? Oftentimes the trust that turns to him when help is needed--fails to look to him when the hand is full. They also test our obedience. Sometimes when our needs are all supplied, we forget our obligation to serve God. Thus every day is a probation. We are always on trial.

February 13.

"Stand still before the LORD as I remind you of all the great things the LORD has done for you." 1 Samuel 12:7

It is good to stand still sometimes, and look back over the way by which God has led us. Of one thing we may always be sure--all God's dealings with us are right. Some of them may seem hard. We all have our trials, disappointments, sorrows, sufferings, our cups of bitterness. There is no way in which we can see goodness in all these experiences, except by faith in the unfailing righteousness of God. Yet a firm conviction of this truth brings peace in the darkest hour. God cannot be unloving. He is our Father.

It does us good to stand still before God at times, and look back over our life--and see all our experiences in the light of the love that streams from his face. We cannot understand all seems mysterious and dark; yet we know God is righteous, and righteousness is goodness. If we firmly believe this all through life, whatever may come, faith will live, and its light will shine as a bright star in the blackest midnight.

February 14.

"You are my hiding place." Psalm 32:7

God is a hiding-place from all sorts of dangers. He is a hiding-place from sin. His mercy is an eternal refuge. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

God is a refuge from trouble. "God had one Son without sin--but he has none without sorrow." Where shall we go to get away from sorrow? There is no place on earth into which it never enters, no Eden bower, no Paradise, where grief never comes. But there is a hiding-place to which sorrowing ones can flee, and where they will find comfort that shall give them peace. "In the world you shall have troubles; in Me you shall have peace," said Jesus. The sorrow may not be shut out--but the divine peace comes into the heart and calms it. Sorrow is seen then, as God's messenger of love, sent by him on some good errand, and is accepted in faith. So in the pain and loss--there is no more fear. The sufferer has found a hiding-place in God.

God is a hiding-place from danger. In the wildest terrors and alarms--we can run to Him, and, lying down in his bosom, be safe. A Christian sailor said that even if his ship went down into the sea--he would be safe; for God holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, and he would only fall into his Father's hand.

February 15.

"The unfailing love of the Lord never ends! Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each day!"
Lamentations 3:22-23

It is the glory of God's love, that it is always fresh and new. It is never the same in its expression in any two days. We have to patch up our old things and keep them, using them again and again; but God never does. He never gives us the old leaves a second time; each spring, every tree gets new foliage, new garments of beauty. He does not revive last year's withered flowers, and give them to us again for this year; he gives us new flowers for each summer.

So he does with his messages of love; they are not repeated over and over again, always the same old ones. Every time the reverent heart reads the Bible, its words come fresh from the lips of God, always new. They never get old. They are like the water that bubbles up in living streams from the depths in the wayside spring--always fresh, sweet, and new.

So it is with the blessings of prayer. Morning by morning we kneel before God, seeking his blessing and favor. He does not give us always the same blessing--but has a new one ready for each new day. Our needs are not the same any two mornings when we bow before him, and he always suits the blessing to the need. We are taught to live day by day. God's goodness comes to us new every morning.

February 16.

"The king and his men marched to Jerusalem, to fight against the Jebusites who inhabited the land." 2 Samuel 5:6

The Jebusites still held a stronghold in the heart of the country, never having been dislodged. There are 'Jebusites' in every Christian community, and also in every Christian heart. For example, there is worldliness, which has its Jebusites everywhere.

In the midst of a community containing its beautiful Christian homes, sanctuaries, and refinements, one finds a licensed drinking-saloon. It is so entrenched there, too, that it seems impossible to dislodge it. There are many other such citadels of evil, which rear their proud towers and defy conquest.

In every heart, there are little 'Jebusite strongholds', which it seems impossible for us to conquer. Sometimes it is a secret sin which lives on, unconquered, amid the general holiness of a life. Sometimes it is a remnant of the old nature--such as pride, worldliness, selfishness, lust, or bitterness.

"We all have our faults!" we say, and under this 'cloak'--we manage to tuck away a large number of dear idols that we do not want to give up!

We ought to give attention to these unsubdued parts of our life--that every thought, feeling, and temper may be brought into subjection to Christ. It is perilous to leave even one such unconquered stronghold in our heart. "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ!" 2 Corinthians 10:5

February 17.

"He asked this to test him, for He Himself knew what He was going to do." John 6:6

Jesus is continually testing his disciples, putting them to the test to draw out their faith. He is constantly bringing before us cases of need, sorrow, and trial--to test us. He wants to draw out our love, our sympathy, our tenderness, and train us to do the works of love which he leaves us in this world to do.

The disciples thought they could not feed the multitude before them--yet Jesus meant that they should do it. Their 'little', blessed and then used, proved quite enough. We think we cannot answer the needs, sorrows, and hungers that appeal to us; but we can if we will. Christ wants us to go forth to minister in his name to all whom he sends to us. We do not appear to be able to do much. But even our few words spoken kindly, our tears of sympathy, our expressions of love--Christ can use to do great good to the faint and the weary hearts before us. We must never say of any appeals that come to us, "We cannot do anything!" To our word of powerlessness, when we have a bidding of duty, Jesus only answers, "Give them something to eat!" and we must go out to feed them, though we seem to have only a crumb or a crust to give.

February 18.

"Gather the fragments that are left over. Let nothing be wasted!" John 6:12

It seems remarkable, that he who so easily could multiply the five loaves into an abundant meal for thousands, should be so particular about 'saving the fragments'. But Jesus would teach us economy. No matter how great our abundance, we should take care of the 'fragments'. After we have eaten at our tables, there are hungry people who would be glad for the pieces that are left over.

This applies also to the fragments of time. Many busy people waste whole years of time in their life--in the minutes which they lose every day! If at the end of a year they could gather up all these 'fragments', they would have many basketfuls of golden time in which they might do much good.

Likewise, we should not waste our strength. Many people waste their bodily energy, using it in play, or useless amusements, when it belongs to God--and ought to be employed to its last particle for His glory!

Likewise, we should not waste our affections by allowing them to be given to unworthy objects, or people.

There is no limit to the application of this principle. We must give account of everything we have, even the minutes of time, the little fractions of strength, and the smallest bits of bread on our tables!

February 19.

"Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to those who were seated--so also with the fish." John 6:11

Jesus himself wrought the miracle--but he did it through his disciples. That is his usual way. When he wants to take care of a little baby, and train it for a worthy mission, he puts a portion of his own love and gentleness into a mother's heart, and commissions her to train the child for him.

When he wanted to give his Word to the world, he did not speak directly from heaven--but put His thoughts into the lips of holy men to speak them for him. When he wants now to send his grace to a sinner, he does not command an angel from his throne, nor come himself in form of majesty--but sends the message through a saved one.

The disciples that day stood between Christ and the multitude, and so Christ's disciples always do. If they had merely eaten of the bread themselves, and had not passed it to the hungry multitude, the people would have starved, though provision was in the disciples' hands, enough to feed them all. If we who have the gospel bread only feed ourselves with it, and do not carry it to perishing sinners, they will die in their sins, because we have not taken the salvation to them.

February 20.

"Lord, give us this bread always!" John 6:34

That was a good prayer. It is just the prayer for each one of us--every day! But the people who made it first, did not know what they were asking.

It is often so in our praying. We have a dim, glimmering vision of something very beautiful--but it is only a shadowy vision to us. The thing we think we want, is not the thing at all that God had in mind in his promise. He meant something most worthy--but we have in our mind the thought of something material and earthly. It is well that we have an Intercessor into whose hands all our requests must pass, who will take our poor, mistaken prayers--and interpret them aright for us, giving us, not what we thought we would get--but something better, diviner!

Abraham sought all his life, for a country which he never received. But he got something better in his unavailing search--his faith was growing all the while; his thoughts and hopes were turned to spiritual things, of which the earthly possessions he sought were only shadows. So it is in the disappointments of our praying: what we seek--we find not--but meanwhile we are getting blessings a thousand times better. On weary paths of earth where we toil in search of supposed blessings, we are really rising step by step on invisible stairs, and reaching blessings of which the earthly illusions were only pictures.

February 21.

"Then the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil. He still retains his integrity, even though you incited Me against him, to destroy him without just cause." Job 2:3

It is a noble thing, when a man stands steadfast and faithful to God in the midst of trials and adversities. Such a man is like a mighty rock under the beatings of the angry waves of the sea.

Thus Job stood. Trial after trial came. His property was swept away by marauders and by fire, and his children were crushed by falling walls, until in a little while he was stripped o

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