

# The Every Day of Life - Part 3

by J.R. Miller

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of patience in our lives, highlighting Christ's perfect patience and encouraging us to follow his example.*

**Scripture:** Luke 21:19, James 1:2

**Topics:** "Patience", "True Friendship"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the vital role of patience in the Christian life, illustrating how it is a form of active endurance that reflects Christ's character. He explains that true patience is essential for spiritual growth and is necessary in our relationships, particularly within families and communities. Miller also warns against the dangers of harming others through impatience and neglect, urging believers to embody Christ's patience in all interactions. He concludes by highlighting the importance of true friendship, which requires selflessness and a willingness to bear burdens for one another, mirroring the love of Christ.

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## Transcript

The Every Day of Life

J. R. Miller, 1892

The Blessing of Patience

Patience and passion are near of kin. A fragment of etymology will shed light on the meaning of the words. Says Crabb, in his English synonyms: "Patience comes from the active participle to suffer; while passion comes from the passive participle of the same verb; and hence the difference between the two names. Patience signifies suffering from an active principle, a determination to suffer; while passion signifies what is suffered from lack of power to prevent the suffering. Patience, therefore, is always taken in a good sense, and passion always in a bad sense."

Patience, therefore, is the spirit of endurance, without complaint or bitterness, of whatever things in our life are hard to endure. It is a lesson which is hard to learn--but which is well worth learning, at whatever cost. So important is it that our Lord himself said of it; "In your patience--you shall win your souls." That is, life is a battle in which we fight for our soul. The battle can be won only by patience. To fail in this grace is to lose all. This suggests how necessary it is that we learn the lesson, however hard it may be. Not to learn it is the battle of life, and that is the losing of the soul.

In one of Paul's epistles is a blessing, which in the Revised Version reads, "may the Lord direct your hearts--into the patience of Christ." This is a blessing which all of us would like to bow our heads low to receive. In Christ's own life, patience, like all virtues, had its perfection. And his was not a sheltered life, without such trials of patience as we must endure--but one exposed to all that made it hard for him to live sweetly. He met enmities, antagonism, and un-congenialities at every step. Besides, his nature was one that was sensitive to all rudeness and pain, so that he suffered in his contacts with others, far more than we do.

Yet his patience was perfect. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." He pressed upon them the gifts of love--but they rejected them. Yet he never failed in his loving, never grew impatient, never wearied in his offers of blessing, and never withdrew his gracious gifts. He stood with his hands out-stretched towards his own until they nailed those hands to the cross, and even then he let drop out of them, from their very wounds, the gifts of redemption for the world.

His patience appears also in his dealings with his own disciples. They were very ignorant and learned their lessons very slowly. They tried him at every point by their lack of faith, their lack of spirituality, and their weak, faltering friendship. But he never wearied in his love for them nor in his teaching.

His patience is seen; too, in his treatment of the people who pressed about him wherever he went, with their clamors for healing. We have only to think what a motley mass an oriental crowd is, at its best, and then remember that it was the very wreckage of misery and wretchedness who came to him, if we would get a thought of the wearisomeness of moving day after day among these poor sufferers as Jesus did. Yet he never showed the slightest impatience with any of them, however loathsome or repulsive--but gave out freely and lovingly of the richest and best of his own precious life to heal and comfort them, even the vilest and most repulsive of them.

His patience with his enemies is also wonderful. It was not the patience of weakness; for at any moment he might have summoned legions of angels from heaven to strike down his opposers. Nor was it the patience of stoicism, which did not care for nor feel the stings of hate and persecution; for never was there another life on earth that felt so keenly, the hurts of human enmity. Nor was it the patience of sullenness, such as is sometimes seen in savages, who bear torture in grim, haughty silence. Never did the world see any other patience so sweet, so gentle. He prayed for his murderers. He gave back gentlest answers to most cruel words. His response to the world's enmity was the gift of salvation. From the cruel wounds made by nail and spear--came the blood of human redemption.

We see his patience also in his work. He saw very few results from his preaching. He was a sower, not a reaper. Multitudes flocked after him and heard his words--but went away unimpressed. Yet he never lost heart.

Thus to whatever phase of Christ's wonderful life we turn, we see sublime patience. He was a patient in accepting his Father's will, patient toward the world's sin and sorrow, patient with men's unreasonableness, uncharity, unkindness, patient in suffering wrong. Marvelous, indeed, is this quality in our Lord's life. Who is not ready to turn the blessing into a prayer, saying: "Lord, direct my heart--into the patience of Christ?" We all need patience. It is one of the rarest adornments of character. "Patience," says one, "is like the pearl among the gems. By its quiet radiance it brightens every human grace and adorns every Christian excellence."

In the work of our life, too, and in our contacts with others, patience is essential. We need it in our homes. The very closeness and the familiarity of the relations of the lives within our own doors, make it hard at times for us to preserve perfect sweetness of spirit. There is much harshness as yet, in most earthly families! We too easily throw off our reserve and our carefulness, and are too apt now and then to speak or act disagreeably, unkindly. We assert ourselves, and are willful and exacting.

It is easy in the frictions that too often are felt in our homes, to lose patience and speak unadvisedly and unkindly. Husband and wife in their mutual relations do not always exercise patience. They seem to forget that love should never be ungentle--but should be thoughtful, kindly, and affectionate in look and word and manner. Parents fail sometimes in the duty of patience with their children. The children of a household, in too many cases, do not live together in that lovingness which belongs to the ideal Christian home. Many words are spoken which show irritation, and even bitterness. Such words hurt gentle hearts, sometimes irreparably. But family life ought to be free from all impatience. Wherever else we may fail in this gentle spirit--it should not be in our own home. Only the gentlest life should have place there. We have not long to stay together in this world, and we should be patient and gentle while we may.

We need the patience of Christ also, in our mingling with others, in our business associations and contacts, in our social relations, and in all our dealings with our neighbors. Not all people are congenial to us in spirit and manner. Some want their own way. Some are exacting and unreasonable. Some fail to treat us kindly. Possibly in some cases the fault may be ours, at least in part. Others may think of us as we do of them, that is hard to live peaceably with us. However this may be, the patience of Christ will teach us to bear sweetly and lovingly with even the most unreasonable people. He was patient with all, and we are to be like him. It is not for the gentle only, that we are to show this grace; anyone can be patient with loving and gentle people--but we are to be kind to the harsh and the evil. If we are impatient with any one, however unworthy or undeserving, we fail to be true to the interests of our master, whom we are always to represent.

We need the patience of Christ in meeting the trials of life. We have but to remember how quietly he himself endured all wrongs, all pain and suffering, to get a vision of a very beautiful idea of life set by him for our following. The lesson is hard to learn--but the Lord can direct our hearts even into this sweetness of spirit. He can help us to be silent in the time of distress. He can turn our cry of pain--into a song of submission and joy. He can give us this gentle peace, so that even in the wildest strifes--our heart shall be quiet.

We need the patience of Christ to prepare us for his service. The moment we enter the company of his disciples--he gives us work to do for him. We are sent to find other souls, to bind up broken hearts, to comfort sorrow, to help lost ones home through the gloom. All this work is delicate and important, and we need for it the patience as well as the gentleness of Christ. It must be done lovingly, in faith, unhurriedly, under the Spirit's guidance.

Mothers need the lesson--that they may wisely teach and train their children and not hurt their lives by impatience. All who are dealing with the young, with inexperience, all who work among the ignorant and the lost--need the patience of Christ. Those who would put their hands in any way to other lives need a large measure of the patience of Christ. We must teach the same lessons many times over and over, and if we grow impatient, we may never see any result. If we become vexed with those we are striving to help, we hinder and spoil the beauty we are seeking to produce in their lives. Nothing but patience in the Christian worker, fitly represents the Master. That is the way he would work. He would never show

petulance or irritability, or any lack of perfect lovingness, in dealing with even the most trying life. In no other spirit or temper--can we do this work for him. They are Christ's little ones with whom we are dealing--and we must seek to do his work for them as he would do it with those gentle hands and that gentle heart of his--if he were here.

We need Christ's patience also in waiting, as we work for God. We are in danger, continually, in our very interest in others, of speaking inopportunistly, of trying to hasten our work. Eager, loving words, must wait the true time for speaking them, else they may do harm. There are many who speak too soon to young souls, and only close the heart they sought to open. Even in our hunger--we must not pluck the fruit while it is yet unripe.

How can we learn the lesson? Some of us find it very hard to be patient. Can we ever get the gentle grace into our life? Yes! Christ can teach it to us.

### Hurting the Lives of Others

It seems to have been the nurse's fault. Perhaps she was only careless. However it may have been, the maiming that came to the child that day was something he never got over. Down along the years we see a man lame, that he had to be carried about by attendants--crippled, unable even to walk, because that day the nurse tripped and fell with the baby. No doubt there are many people continually in the world who carry scars and injuries which mar their usefulness and cause them suffering or loss--simply through the negligence of those who in childhood were set as their guardians and protectors.

But there are other hurts besides bodily ones, which come to people's lives through the fault of others. There are woundings of children's minds, which stunt or cripple them all their days, limiting or marring their development and hindering their usefulness. There are marrings of character which leave child-life distorted, wounded, scarred, deformed, sending men and women into the world unfitted for duty; to be a curse, not a blessing; to do harm, not good, to their fellows all their days. There are maimings of immortal souls in the home, in the school, which leave their sad mark on lives for all eternity.

George MacDonald says, "If I can put one touch of a rosy sunset into the life of any man or woman, I shall feel that I have worked with God." That is very beautiful: but suppose it not be a rosy sunset--but a touch of wounding, or marring, of defiling, that we put into a life--have we not wrought with the enemy of souls, in the harming of immortalities?

We all know, too, that it is easier to do harm--than good to other lives. There is a quality in the human soul, which makes it take more readily, and retain more permanently, touches of sin--than touches of holiness. Among the ruins of some old temple there was found a slab which bore very faintly and dimly the image of the king, and in deep, clear indentations the print of a dog's foot. So human lives are apt to take less deeply the image of the Father's face, and more ineffaceably the impressions of evil things. It needs, therefore, in us, infinite carefulness and watchfulness, as we walk ever amid other lives, lest by some word, or look, or act, or disposition, or influence of ours, we hurt them irreparably.

The lesson touches home-life. It is sad if the harm be only in their bodies, making them lame or infirm through all their years; but it is sadder still when their characters are marred through faulty education or training; when they are sent into life unfitted for its duties, unprepared for meeting its responsibilities, only to fail in its struggles, because we were negligent in our training of them. Saddest of all is it when by sinful example, or by the lack of pious culture, we maim their souls, wound or scar their spiritual natures, and

send them, moral cripples, into life. The greatest of crimes--is the hurting of a child's soul.

But parents are not the only people who may harm the lives of others. There is not a fallen life anywhere in the depths of sin and shame--which once was not innocent and beautiful. Somebody whispered the first unholy thought in the unguarded ear. Somebody started the first suggestion of evil and kindled the first wrong desire in the breast. Somebody led the unwary feet into the first steps of wandering. Somebody first caused the little one to stumble, and after that, through all the years--the life was deformed. There is always a first tempter, one who causes the innocent to stumble. The tempter may go his way, and may walk among honorable men with no brand upon his brow, with no finger pointed at him--while the victim of his tempting, moves in weakness and sadness toward deeper shame and utter ruin. Society is full of such moral tragedies. But God does not forget. The hidden things shall be brought to light. The maiming or hurting of a soul, though no man knows now whose the sad work is--some day will reveal its own story. Its secret will be declared in the glare of noon.

It is stated that within ten years a certain merchant in a great city lost six bookkeepers by death. He could not understand the strange fatality attending these young people. The symptoms were similar in all the cases, and all of them finally died of consumption. An investigation at last convinced the merchant that the room in which the bookkeepers worked was unhealthy. It was a small office in the back part of the building, into which no sunlight ever came. The merchant then prepared another room, high up in his store, where the sunlight streamed in all day--and almost instantly the health of his staff became better. Unconsciously he had been committing a great wrong against the lives of his clerks. We may say this was only a bodily hurt; but does God not care for our bodies? Is it no sin to injure the health of another, to send men and women down their years with broken constitutions, unable for the tasks and duties that God assigns to them? Is there not a commandment against murdering the body?

The time must come when the law of Christian love shall assert its sway over all the relations of life. Employers must recognize it, and must properly treat every man, woman, and child in their service. Business must recognize it, and the Golden Rule must become its basis, instead of the hard, soul-less, god-less, grinding law of greed and gain, which yet in too many establishments has sway. Men cannot afford to get rich by oppressing the hire-ling in their wages, by grinding the poor into the dust, by doing injustice to the least of God's little ones. With the New Testament in our hand, containing the Sermon on the Mount, the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, and the thirteenth of First Corinthians, we dare not forget that all men are brethren, and that he who hurts the least or the weakest hurts Christ himself, and smites God in the face.

There is need for plain teaching all long the line of the great burning question of capital and labor. Men must learn that money, which comes into their hands through the slightest wronging or harming of another life--brings a curse with it. Or an employee may be unjust to his employer, and the law applies equally to them. None are exempt from the law of love.

We may hurt our neighbors in many ways. We may do injury to their business, to their influence, to their good name. We may treat them rudely, unkindly, or we may do them harm by neglecting to do the good we owe to them. "It was an hungry--and you gave me no food; I was thirsty--and you gave me no drink." All about us are human needs--which are silent prayers to us for help. We may shut our eyes, if we will, and say it is no affair of ours, and these suffering or imperiled ones may go down in the current, while we go on in our busy life and prosper. But we cannot thus get rid of the responsibility. They are our brethren, these hurt ones. Christ died for them. To pass them by is to pass him by. "Inasmuch as you did it not to

one of the least of these--you did it not to me."

Then the lesson has another side. It is not enough that we do not hurt the lives of others; we must do the part of Christ in healing the hurts, which have already been given. Everywhere they move--children with pinched faces and sad eyes; young people wounded in their souls by sin, victims of evil habits; lives crippled and maimed; the poor, hurt by man's oppression and greed.

A workman with a gentle heart told recently, with pathetic detail, how he had once saved the life of his canary-bird. The bird had escaped from its cage into the room, and had flown against the surface of some boiling water. There seemed little hope of saving the poor-suffering creature. But this kindly man quickly applied soothing remedies, and, with womanly gentleness, nursed the bird for many weeks, until at last he saw it fully restored, and heard again its sweet songs.

That is like Christ, who did not break a bruised reed. That is what we should do in Christ's name with the hurt lives about us, whether hurt by the wrong of others--or by their own sin. We should pray for gentleness--nothing but gentleness can perform such holy ministry. Then we should seek to be restorers of lives that are wounded or bruised. That is Christ-likeness.

#### Cost of Being a Friend

We use the word friend very lightly. We talk of our "hosts of friends," meaning all with whom we have common friendly relations, or even pleasant acquaintance. We say a person is our friend when we know them only in business or socially, when their heart and ours have never touched in any real communion. There may be nothing amiss in this wide application of the word; but we ought to understand that in this use of it, its full sacred meaning is not even touched.

To become another's friend in the true sense--is to take the other into such close, living fellowship that their life and ours are knit together as one. It is far more than a pleasant companionship in bright, sunny hours. It is more than an association for mutual interest, profit, or enjoyment. A true friendship is entirely unselfish. It seeks no benefit or good of its own. It loves not for what it may receive--but for what it may give. Its aim is "not to be ministered unto--but to minister."

There are many people who take others into what they call relations of friendship--but who think only selfishly of what these people may be to them. They seek social advancement and hope to enter new circles through certain friends. Or they aspire to enter some brilliant intellectual clique and seek the entrance by forming a friendly connection with one whose name is on the honored list. Or they wish to win business success, and they spare no cost to make friends of those who are influential in the community and can help them in the achieving of their ambition. Or they seek merely passing enjoyment, and choose for companionship, one which seems amiable, kindly, congenial, with a good measure of sweetness and power to please--and thus minister to their own cravings. In all these instances there is nothing but selfishness, not one trace of true affection. To apply to them the name of friendship is to degrade and desecrate a sacred and holy word. The friendship which is true--"seeks not its own."

It costs to be a friend. "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health," runs the marriage engagement, and true marriage is a type of all the true friendships.

When we take a person into our life as a friend we do not know what it may cost us to be faithful to our trust. Misfortune may befall our friend, and they may need our help in ways that will lay a heavy burden

upon us. It may be in their business or in their secular affairs that they shall suffer.

Timely aid may enable them to overcome their difficulties and attain to prosperous circumstances. It is in our power to render them the assistance that they need, without which they must succumb to failure. It will cost us personal inconvenience and trouble to do this. But they are our friends. We have taken them into our life, thus becoming partners in all their affairs. Can we withhold from them the help which they need and which we can give, without breaking the holy covenant of friendship and failing in our sacred obligations to them?

Or it may be the misfortune of sickness--broken health which falls upon our friend. They are no longer able to be helpful to us, as they were in the days when the compact of friendship was first formed. Then they could contribute their part in the mutual ministering, giving as well as receiving. Then friendship for them brought us no care, no anxiety; exacted from us no self-denial, no sacrifice; laid on us no load, no burden. On the other hand, it was full of helpfulness. It brought strength to our heart by its loving cheer. It was a blessing to our life, in its warm inspirations, in its sweet comfort, in its satisfying affection. It stood beside us in all our times of trial, with full sympathy, putting its shoulder under our burdens, aiding us by its counsel, its encouragement. It brought its countless benefits and gains. But now in its feebleness and brokenness it can give us no longer this strong helpfulness and uplifting. Instead, it has become a burden. We must carry the loads alone, which their friendship so generously shared previously. They need our help, and can give in return only a weight of care.

For example, a wife becomes an invalid. In the early days of her wedded life, she was her husband's true help-mate, his royal partner in all duty, care, toil, and burden-bearing. Her friendship brought back far more than it received. But now she can only lie still amid the cares, and see her husband meet them alone. Instead of sharing his burdens, she herself has become an added burden, which he must carry. But his love falters not for a moment. He loved her, not for the help she was to him--but for her own dear sake. Hence his love changes not, when she is no longer a strong help-mate--but a burden instead, which he must carry. His heart only grows more tender, his hand gentler, and his spirit braver. He finds even deeper, sweeter joy now in serving her--than he found before in being served by her.

That is the meaning of true friendship wherever it exists. It is not based on any helpfulness or service, which it must receive as its condition. Its source is in the heart itself. Its essential desire is to help and serve. It makes no nice calculation of so much to be given and so much to be received. It stops at no cost which faithfulness may entail. It hesitates at no self-denial, which may be necessary in the fulfillment of its duties. It does not complain when everything has to be given up. It only grows stronger and truer and more constant, as the demands for giving and serving become larger.

There is another phase of the cost of friendship which must not be overlooked--that which comes with the revealing of faults and flaws and sins. We see people at first only on the surface of their life, and we begin to admire them. We are attracted to them by elements that win our attention. As we associate with them we become interested in them. At length our affection goes out to them, and we call them our friends. We walk with them in pleasant companionship that makes no demands on us, and that discloses but little of their inner life. We know them as yet, only on the surface of their character, having no real acquaintance with the self that is hidden behind life's conventionalities. Nothing has occurred in the progress of our friendship to bring out the things in their disposition, which are not altogether lovely.

At length, closer intimacy or ruder contacts reveal faults. We learn that under the attractive exterior, which so pleased us, there are blemishes, spots, flaws, and infirmities, which sadly disfigure the beauty of the life. We discover in them elements of selfishness, untruthfulness, deceitfulness, or meanness which pain us. We find that they have secret habits, which are repulsive. There are uncongenial things in their disposition, never suspected in the days of social fellowship, which show offensively in the closer relations of friendship's intimacy.

This is sometimes so in wedded life. The longest and freest acquaintance previous to marriage, reveals only the better side of the life of both. But the same is true in greater or less degree in all close friendships.

This is oftentimes a severe test of love. It is only as we rise into something of the spirit of Christ that we are able to meet this test of friendship. He takes us as we are, and does not get weary of us, whatever faults and sins he discovers in us. There is infinite comfort in this for us. We are conscious of our unworthiness and of the unloveliness which is in our souls. There are things in our lives, which we would not reveal to the world. Many of us have pages in our biography, which we would not dare to spread out before the eyes of anyone.

There are in our inner heart feelings, desires, longings, cravings, jealousies, motives, which we would not feel secure in laying bare to our dearest, truest, and most patient and gentle friend. Yet Christ knows them all. Nothing is hidden, from his eyes. To him there is perfect revealing of the innermost springs of our being. Yet we need not be afraid that his friendship for us will change, or grow less, or withdraw itself--when he discovers repulsive things in us.

Yet, what we would not reveal to gentlest-hearted friend of the innermost things of our life, not daring to trust the strongest, truest, most compassionate human friendship, lest the discovering of our faults, blemishes, and infirmities should cost us our friend, Christ knows continually, and his eye sees always. Yet he loves us, loves unto the uttermost.

This is the ideal human friendship. The finding of blemishes does not repel it. Even if the friend has fallen into sin, the love yet clings, forgiving and seeking their restoration. No doubt there are such friendships. A gentleman had a friend whom through long years of intimacy he had learned to love deeply and to trust implicitly. A sacred covenant of friendship had passed between them and had been sealed and was regarded as inviolable. One evening he found his friend in great distress, and pressing to know the cause, he received at last the confession of a series of sins, involving debasement and dishonor of a very grievous kind. The revelation almost killed him. After the first shock came revulsion. He would thrust his friend from him forever. But after a struggle, love triumphed. There were extenuating circumstances. His friend was weak, and had fallen under sore temptation, and was now penitent, crushed by a sense of shame and sorrow.

The sin was forgiven and put away forever, and the friend restored to the old sacred place. From that time their relations were closer than ever until the friend died; and since death the love is cherished most sacredly.

This was Christ-like friendship. He loved his own in spite of all there was in them to hinder or check his love. We are apt to complain if our friends do not return as deep, rich, and constant love as we give them. We feel hurt at any evidence of the ebbing of love in them, when they fail us in some way, when we think they have not been altogether faithful and unselfish, or when they have been thoughtless and ungentle toward us. But Christ saw in "his own" a very feeble return for his deep love for them, a most inadequate

requital of all his wondrous goodness and grace. They were inconstant, weak, and unfaithful. They were ungentle. Yet he continued to love them in spite of all that he found unbeautiful and unworthy in them.

And this is the friendship he would teach his disciples. As he loves us--he would teach us to love others. We say men are not worthy of such friendship. True, they are not. Neither are we worthy of Christ's wondrous love for us. But Christ loves us not according to our worthiness--but according to the richness of his own gracious heart. So should it be with our giving of friendship; not as the person deserves--but after the measure of our own character.

These are illustrations enough to show what it may cost to be a friend. When we receive another into this sacred relation, we do not know what responsibility we are taking upon ourselves, what burdens it may be ours to being faithful, what sorrow our love may cost us. It is a sacred thing, therefore, to take a new friend into our life. We accept a solemn responsibility when we do so. We do not know what burdens we may be engaging to carry, what sacrifices we may unconsciously be pledging ourselves to make, what sorrow may come to us through the one to whom we are giving our heart's love. We should choose our friends, therefore, thoughtfully, wisely, prayerfully; but when we have pledged our love we should be faithful whatever the cost may be.

#### Our Unsuspected Perils

"Because they have no changes; therefore they do not fear God." Psalm 55:19

Many of life's worst dangers are unsuspected. Where we suppose there is good and blessing--there is hidden peril. Disease lurks oftentimes in a soft, still, dreamy atmosphere--which we think delicious with its sweet odors; while the chill, rough, wintry blast, from which we shrink as too severe--comes laden with life and health. Most of us think of a life of ease, leisure, and luxury--as the most highly favored lot, one to be envied. We are not apt to think of it as one of danger. Yet there is no doubt that a life of rugged toil, hardship, and self-denial, which we took upon as almost a misfortune, is far safer than one of ease.

It is said that there was laid one morning on the minister's pulpit a little folded paper which, when opened, contained the words, "The prayers of this congregation are requested for a person who is growing rich." It certainly seemed a strange request for prayer. If it had been for a person who misfortune or calamity had become suddenly poor; or for a person who was suffering in some great adversity; or for one who was in sorrow and distress, who had met with sore loss or bereavement, every heart would at once have felt deep sympathy. Such experiences as these are thought to be trying and perilous ones, in which people need special grace. We instinctively pray for those who are in trouble. We think these need our prayers. We regard such conditions as fraught with danger. But to ask prayers for a person who was growing rich, no doubt too many people in the congregation, seemed incongruous. Where they not indeed specially favored? Were they not receiving peculiar blessing? Should it not rather have been a request for thanksgiving for this person's success?

Yet when we open our Bible we find that the experience of growing rich is indeed set down as one full of spiritual peril. It was Jesus who said, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And Paul said, "Those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all evil." There is no doubt that when a Christian is prospering and growing rich, is indeed a time when he needs the prayers of God's people, whether they are requested and offered for him or not.

True, this is an experience, which but few people are known ever to have dreaded. It is not often that people are heard to say, that they are afraid to get rich. It is not the popular impression, that wealth is a condition in which danger lurks. Yet thousands of souls have been lost in the valley of gold! Countless men have buried their manhood in the fabrics of earthly prosperity, which their hands have reared. Many a man's envied fortune, is in God's sight, but the splendid mausoleum of his soul. We do indeed need the prayers of God's people if we are growing rich, that our hearts may be kept warm and soft; that the fires may not be allowed to go out on the secret altar; that we may continue humble and simple with all divine simplicity; that we may be held ever near to the heart of Christ, and that we may be sheltered by the love of God from all the insidious dangers and hurtful influences that belong to the experience of growing rich.

Another kindred condition, which, according to the Scriptures, hides an unsuspected peril, is one of unbroken prosperity. "Because they have no changes; therefore they do not fear God." Psalms 55:19. Those who are thus described, are free from trouble. They do not suffer from adversity, from misfortune, from losses, from disappointments. They move along, year after year, without any breaks in their human happiness.

It is not usual that such an experience as this, is regarded as one of danger. Indeed, we naturally consider such people peculiarly favored. For example, here is a home, which has gone on for a long time without saddening changes. Business has been prosperous, and the circumstances of the household have become more and more easy. Additions have been made to the comforts and luxuries enjoyed in the home. There have been no long, serious illnesses, causing pain and anxiety, and draining the resources of the family. There have been no deaths, breaking the happy circle of loved ones.

No one naturally looks upon such a household as in any peculiar danger. The neighbors do not have special prayer requested for it in the church. Friends do not feel distressed about its condition. Yet there is no doubt that insidious moral dangers do lurk in such an experience of unbroken prosperity.

Oftentimes it is true that God has less and less welcome in such a home. The fires burn low and then go out upon the altar. The voice of prayer dies out of the home. Christ is lost out of the household life. And beneath the bright earthly prosperity, God sees spiritual death.

The same is true of individual life. Unbroken worldly prosperity is the bane of spiritual good. For one thing, it hinders growth in spiritual knowledge and experience. There are truths which can be learned better in darkness, than in light. We would never see the stars--if there were no night to blot out for the time the glare of the day. And there are truths in the Bible, which are perhaps never learned in the brightness of human joy. There are divine promises, which by their very nature are invisible in the noonday of gladness, hiding away like stars in the light, and revealing themselves only when it grows dark around us. The deeper, richer meaning of many a word of Scripture, is learned only amid life's painful changes.

There are also developments in spiritual growth, which cannot come in time of unbroken prosperity. The artist was trying to improve on a dead mother's picture. But the son said, "No; don't take out the wrinkles; just leave them--every one. It wouldn't be my mother if all the wrinkles were gone."

It was well enough, the son said, for young people who had never known a care to have faces free from wrinkles; but when one has lived seventy years of love and service and self-forgetfulness, it would be like trying to cover up the tracks of one's real life, to take out the marks. The very beauty of that old face was in the wrinkles and the lines, which told of what her brave heart, and strong hands had done for love's sake.

There is a blessing in such a life. But in the life of ease and luxury, which many of us experience, especially in woman's lives, there hide sore perils.

Another of the unsuspected perils of "no changes"--is in the lessening of our dependence upon God. While all things go well with us, and there are no breaks in the flow of blessings--we are apt to forget that all our good gifts come from our Father's hand. It is a sad hour in any life when consciousness of the need of God fades out of it. It seems pleasant to be able to go on, making plans of our own, and carrying them out without check or defeat. We like to be victorious. We like to say that we are masters of our circumstances, which we make all things serve us, that we turn obstacles into stepping-stones, climbing continually upward upon them. But a little thought would show the peril which hides in this having always one's own way. It is not our own will--but God's will which leads to perfect character and blessedness. Unless therefore, we are doing always God's will, filling out his plan for our life, the unbrokenness of prosperity is not an unmixed good.

Most of us need to be baffled oftentimes in our schemes, to be defeated in our projects, to have our plans fail, to be compelled to yield to a stronger will. In no other way can the sense of dependence and of obligation to God, be kept warm in the heart. If we always get our own way, we are apt, being human, to grow willful, proud, and rebellious.

Quiet trust in God and unswerving obedience and submission to his will, can be learned at least by most of us, only through long discipline and much thwarting of our own will. It is a sore misfortune to any of us--if in having our own way we forget God and cease to love and follow Christ. Says Farrar--and we had better read the words twice: "God's judgments--it may be the very sternest and most irremediable of them--come, many a time, in the guise, not of affliction--but of immense earthly prosperity and ease."

Another unsuspected peril of prosperity lies in its easy circumstances, which make toil and severe exertion necessary. It is the young who are most exposed to this danger. They are not required to work to provide for themselves. All that they need comes to them without effort of their own. Such young people are envied by their companions and neighbors, who have to work hard to earn their own bread and to win whatever opportunities for improvement they may gain. The latter do not suspect that there is any peril lurking in the easy condition of those they envy. They suppose it is in their own poverty and hardship, and in the necessity in their life for pinching economy and unceasing toil. They do not dream that theirs is really the safer condition, that there is a blessing in work and self-denial and care--and that there is always danger in ease and luxury.

The story of the outcome of life, shows that early disadvantages, instead of being a hindrance to the development of godly character, are helpful and stimulating. Most people are naturally indolent, indisposed to exertion, needing to be impelled to it by the pressure of necessity. No greater blessing can come to young people than to be compelled to endure hardship, to bear the yoke in their youth, to have their demanding tasks to perform, their heavy burdens to carry, their responsibilities to meet, their own way to make.

Another hidden peril of continuous prosperity, is the dropping of God out of the life-plan. The years pass without break, and all things go on well and prosperously, until at length we begin to grow content with earth, and lose our hunger, our homesickness for our heavenly abode. Spiritual things begin to have less and less interest for us, and power over us. We grow materialistic, if not in our creed, yet in our life. Our souls begin to cleave to the dust, no longer flying aloft like the eagle--but groveling like the worm!

This is a most serious peril. A picture, which has no sky in it, and is without the highest beauty. "It is the horizon which gives dignity to the foreground." A life without sky in it--is most unworthy and incomplete.

A person who sees only bonds and stocks and deeds, bales of goods and blocks of houses, stores and factories and machinery and chimney tops--with no gleams above and beyond all these, of stars and blue skies and a Heavenly Father's face--is not living as an immortal being should live. There is no sky in this person's vision of life. This world is very beautiful in its place and God means us to enjoy it and do faithful, earnest, and beautiful work in it; but it is only one little part of our Father's house. When in our thinking, planning, and doing--we do not look beyond this world, we are not living worthy of our high calling. When we lose the sky out of our life-vision, the glory fades from it. The only secret of spiritual safety in prosperous times--is in keeping the eye fixed on heaven.

These are a few illustrations of the truth that the best things of life are oftentimes found in conditions which are not thought to be kindly or congenial, while in conditions regarded by men and women as exceptionally favorable and desirable--there often lurks subtle perils to life's highest good. This truth lets in strong light upon some of God's ways with his people. He does not allow them to be hurt, even by temporal blessings. He breaks the prosperity, that its bane may not leave poison in our lives. He gives us adverse changes, that we may not forget him--but that the consciousness of our dependence upon him may never fade out. He thwarts us when we would let our own folly rule us; and baffles us when our selfish ambitions would only work our ruin. He breaks into our plans and schemes, with the resistless requirements of his own will--to save us from the willfulness, which would destroy us. He lets us have hardship and toil--that our lives may be disciplined into spiritual strength and energy.

These are not pleasant interferences, for they break into our cherished hopes, and cut oftentimes into our heart! But they are blessings, which some day in the clearer light of eternity--we shall recognize, and for which we shall give thanks.

#### Bearing of Our Burdens

"Put any burden upon me--only sustain me.

Send me anywhere--only go with me.

Sever any tie--but the one that binds me

To your service and to your heart."

#### Fly-leaf, Miss Brigham's Bible

We all have our burdens. Of course they are not the same in all of us. Some are more evident than others. There are people whose burdens we all see. These get our compassion and our sympathy. We come up to them with love's warmth and help. There are others however, whose burdens are not visible or apparent. These seem to us to have no trouble, no struggle, and no load to carry. We envy their lot. But probably if we knew all about their condition which God knows, our envy would change to sympathy. The burdens which the world cannot see--are often the heaviest. The sorrows which wear no mourning clothes, are oftentimes the bitterest and the hardest to endure.

It is not wise for us to think that our load is greater than our neighbor's. Perhaps theirs are greater than ours are, although to us they seem to have none at all. We sometimes wish we might change places with

some other people we know. We imagine that our life would be a great deal easier if we could do this, and that we could live more sweetly and beautifully than we do, or more usefully and helpfully. But most likely we are mistaken. If we could change places with anyone, the one who seems to have the most favored lot; if we could take this person's place, with all its conditions, its circumstances, its cares, its responsibilities, there is little doubt that we would quickly cry out to God to give us back our own old burdens. It is because we do not know all--that we think our neighbor's load lighter and more easily carried than our own. We all have our own burdens.

There are three Bible verses about the bearing of burdens. One tells us; that "every person shall bear their own burden." There are burdens which no one can carry for us, not even Christ, and which no one can share with us; we must carry them ourselves alone. This is true in a very real sense of life itself, of duty, of personal responsibility. No one can live your life for you. Friends may help you by encouragement, by sympathy, by cheer, by affection's warm inspirations, by counsel, by guidance; but after all, in the innermost meaning of your life, you must live it yourself. No one can make your choices for you; you must make them for yourself. No one can have faith in God for you. No one can believe in Christ for you. No one can meet the obligations of Scripture for you. No one but yourself can get your sins forgiven. No one can do your duty for you. No one can meet your responsibility for you. A thousand other people all around you may be faithful to their trust; but, if you fail in faithfulness, their faithfulness will not be any avail to you. There is no vicariousness of this kind in life. You must live your own life.

No one can come up in loving interest and unselfishly take your load and carry it for you. A friend may be willing enough to do it--but it is simply impossible. David would have died for Absalom; he loved his erring son well enough to do it--but he could not do it. "The soul that sins--it shall die." Many a mother would willingly take her child's burden of pain as she sees it in anguish--but she cannot do it. There is a burden, which everyone must carry for themselves.

Then there is a second Bible verse, which tells us that "we should bear one another's burdens." So there are burdens in the carrying of which, others can help us. No one can suffer for us--but true human friendship can put strength into our hearts to make us better able to endure our own sufferings. No one can do our duty for us--but human sympathy can nerve us for greater faithfulness and heroism in duty. Sympathy does not take away the pain, nor lighten the load; but it gives companionship, and puts another shoulder under the burden.

It is a great thing to have brotherly, sisterly help in life. We all need each other. Not one of us could get on without others to share our loads. We do not begin to live truly--until we begin to put of our own strength into the hearts of others. We should notice that "Bear one another's burdens" is called "the law of Christ." We begin to become like Christ only when we begin to be of use, when we begin to help others, to make life a little easier for them, their weakness, something of our joy in their sorrow. Even the smallest ministries of unselfish helpfulness redeem a life from utter earthiness.

The third Bible verse about burden is, "Cast your burden upon the Lord--and he shall sustain you." There are burdens we must carry ourselves. There are others, which our friends may help us to carry. Then there are those, which we can cast only upon God.

This promise discloses special preciousness when we study it closely. In the margin of our common Version we find gift "gift" as an alternative reading for "burden." Then in the Revised Version the marginal reading is, "what he has given you." "Cast what he has given you, upon the Lord."

"What he has given you." It may be duty. Oftentimes the burden of duty is heavy. It is heavy with the fathers, who must provide for their families, and hold and fill their places in the world's busy life. It is heavy with mothers, who have the home-care in their hand, with the training of their children. It is heavy with those that have large business interests entrusted to them, which they must manage wisely and faithfully. It is heavy with the minister who watches for souls.

Duty is always enough to fill heart and hand, and sometimes it seems a greater burden than can be borne. But it is "what he has given you," and therefore it may be cast upon God. He will help us in it, and then, we know it comes only for one little day at a time.

It may be struggle with our sinfulness. Life is not easy for any of us. Every day is a prolonged conflict. We desire to live godly--but there is a law of sin in our members, which contests every holy advance. We want to live lovingly--but the natural heart's bitterness keeps breaking out in us continually, in bad tempers, in ugly dispositions, in envies, jealousies, selfishness, and all hateful things. We wish to live purely--but the dark streams of lust ever well up out of the deep, black fountains of our being; staining the white flowers that Christ has planted in our life's garden. Thus the days are full of struggle and conflict, and sometimes we feel that there is no use trying to be godly. Yet this burden is "that he has given you," and therefore we may cast it upon God.

Or sorrow may be the burden. God has no children without sorrow, and in many cases the load seems too heavy to be borne; but again it is "what he has given you," and we may lay the burden on him who is mighty.

Or your lot in life may be your burden. It is uncongenial. The circumstances are unkindly. It seems to you impossible to live lovingly, to grow up into spiritual beauty, and to ripen into Christ-likeness in your environment. But against it is "what he has given you." God planted you just where you are, and when he did it--he knew it was the place in which you could grow best into godly character. He gives you this burden of environment, and you may cast it again upon him.

Our burden, whatever it is, God's "gift," and has a definite blessing in it for us, if we take it up in faith, in love. "What he has given" we may always bring to him again, seeking his help in hearing it from him.

We need to notice also, the precise form of the promise. It is not that the burden shall be lifted away from our shoulder, or that it shall be borne for us--but that we shall be sustained in carrying it ourselves. If it is God's gift, it is his will that we should keep it, at least for the time. There is some blessing in it for us, and it would not be kindness to us for God to take it away, even at our earnest pleading. It is part of our life, and is essential to our best growth. This is true of duty; however hard it is, to relieve us of it would be to rob us of the opportunity for reaching larger usefulness. It is true of struggle; all nobleness and strength of character come out of conflict. It is true of suffering; it is God's cleansing fire, and to miss it would be a sore loss to us.

Human love, in its short-sightedness, often seeks to lift away the burdens which seem heavy; but this is not God's way. He bids us keep our load, and then he gives us grace to bear it. He does not, every time we groan under a burden, run up to us and lift it away. This is often our way--but it is never God's.

Parents oftentimes think they are showing deep and true affection for their children when they make their tasks and duties seem easy for them; but really they may be doing them irreparable harm, dwarfing their life and marring their future. So all tender friendship is in danger of over helping in the lifting away of loads,

taking hindrances out of the way--when it would help far more wisely, by letting God's arrangement of burden alone. That is not the greatest kindness to us, which seeks to make life, as easy as possible to us--but that which inspires us to do our best, and so to make something of us. Not an easy life--but a God-like character, is the only true aim for a life. Hence, while God never fails us in need, he loves us too well to relieve us of weights, which are essential to our best growth and to the largest fruitfulness of our life. He does not take the load from our shoulder--but instead he puts strength in us to enable us to carry the burden and thus grow strong.

This is the secret of the peace of many a sick-room, where one sees always a smile on the face of the weary sufferer. The pain is not taken away--but the power of Christ is given, and the suffering is endured with patience. It is the secret of the deep, quiet joy we see oftentimes in the home of sorrow. The grief is crushing; but God's blessed comfort comes in gentle whispers, and the mourner rejoices. The grief is not taken away. The dead is not restored. But the divine love comes into the heart, making it strong to accept the sorrow and say, "May Your will be done."

#### Influence of Companionship

The power of one life over another life, is something almost startling. There have been single looks of an eye, which have changed a destiny. There have been meetings of only a moment, which have left impressions for life, for eternity. No one of us can understand that mysterious thing we call influence. We read of our blessed Lord that virtue went out of him and healed the timid woman who came behind him in the crowd and touched the hem of his garment. Again, when the throng surged about him and sought to touch him, that virtue went out of him and healed them all. Of course there never was another such life as Christ's; yet out of everyone of us continually virtue goes--either to heal, to bless, to leave marks of beauty; or to wound, to hurt, to poison, to stain other lives.

We are forever either adding to the world's health, happiness, and good--or to its pain, sorrow, or curse. Every moment's true living, every victory we win over self or sin, every fragment of holy life we live--makes it easier for others to be brave and true and sweet. We are always giving out of influence.

Thus it is, that companionship always leaves its impress. Eye cannot even look into eye, in one deep, earnest gaze--but a touch has been left on the soul. An artist of distinguished rank would not permit himself to look at any but good pictures. He said the mere seeing of inferior pictures hurt the tone of his own conceptions. If this were true, how we should guard our hearts and minds against the receiving of any impression which is not refining and elevating. The reading of a book which is unworthy, the indulgence in thoughts or imaginations which are unwholesome, the admitting into the life even for a little time of a companionship, which is not what it should be, cannot but lower the tone of the life.

A man well past middle life said, that in sensitive youth, another young man drew him aside and furtively showed him a vile picture. He looked at it just for one moment and then turned away. But a spot had been burned upon his soul. The memory of that glance he had never been able to wash out. It had come back to him along all the forty years he had lived since, even breaking in upon him in his most sacred moments, and staining his most hallowed thoughts.

We do not know what we are taking into our life when we admit into companionship, even for one hour, one who is not godly, nor pure, nor true. Then, who can estimate the debasing influence of such companionship when continued until it becomes intimacy, friendship; when confidences are exchanged, when soul touches soul, when life flows into and blends with life?

When one awakes to the consciousness of the fact, that he has formed or is forming a companionship with another whose influence cannot but hurt him and may perhaps destroy him--there is only one true thing to do--it must instantly be given up. A rabbit's foot was caught in the hunter's steel trap. The little creature seemed to know that unless it could get free, its life must soon be lost. O with a bravery, which we cannot but admire, it gnawed off its leg with its own teeth, thus setting itself free, though leaving its foot in the trap. But who will say that it was not wiser thus to escape death, even with the loss of its foot--than it would have been to keep the foot and die?

If anyone discovers that they are in the snare of evil companionship or friendship, whatever it costs them, they should tear themselves away from it! Better enter into pure, noble, and worthy life, with one hand or one foot, or with both hands and feet cut away--than to save these members and be dragged down to eternal death! Young people should beware of the beginnings of evil companionship. It is like the machinery in the mill, which, when it once seizes the outmost fringe of one's garments, quickly winds in the whole garment and whirls the person's body to swift and terrible death.

But a godly and true character has also its influence. There have been mere chance meetings just for the moment, as when ships meet at sea, and pass each on its course, never to meet again, which yet have left blessings whose influence shall never perish. So it is with the influence of godly lives. Words, thoughts, songs, kindly deeds, the power of example, the inspiration of noble things, drop out of the heaven of pure friendship into the depths of the heart; and, falling, are folded there and become beautiful gems and holy adornments in the life.

If even brief moments of worthy companionship leave their mark of blessing--then, who can tell the power of a close and long-continued friendship, running through many happy years, sharing the deepest experiences, heart and heart knit together, life woven as it were into one web? There is a little poem by a gentle writer, which asks, "What is the best a friend can be? And answers it. A friend is not only shelter, comfort, rest, refreshment, a guide--but also an atmosphere warm with all kindly inspirations of pure life, which has no taint of sin. This is not sentimental exaggeration. Life indeed flows into life in true sympathetic union, and the two, blend as the fragrance of the flowers blends with the air into which it is diffused. And ever after, each life carries something of the other in its very fibre and tissue, something ineradicable. No one of us is ever altogether the same again--when we have had a friend or even an intimate companion for a time.

Our friends are also our ideals. In every godly friend's life, we see a little fragment of the beauty of the Lord, which becomes part of the glory into which we should fashion our lives.

When we truly love a friend, we unconsciously reach toward what he is, and grow into or toward his likeness. Thus as a father and mother are models to their child who copies their life, their speech, their faults as well as their virtues. The same is true in all friendships and close companionships. If these were not godly, the influence can be only hurtful and evil.

There is a wonderful restraining and constraining power over us--in the life of one we love. We dare not do wrong in the sacred presence of a pure, gentle friend. Everyone knows how unworthy they feel when they come, with the consciousness and recollection of some sin or some baseness, into the companionship of one they honor as a friend. It is a kind of "Jesus-presence" that our friend is to us, in which we dare not do evil things.

One says: "A friend has many functions. They come as the Brightener into our life--to double our joys and halve our griefs. They come as the Counselor--to give a wisdom to our plans. They come as the Strengtheners--to multiply our opportunities and be hands and feet for us in our absence. But above all use like this comes as our Rebuker--to explain our failures and shame us from our sins; as our Purifier, our Up-lifter, our Model, whose life to us is a constant challenge in our heart."

Even when they leave us in death--the influence of our friends and companions abides upon us, like an afterglow when day is done. The memory of their purity is a gentle restraint upon us, when we would sin. Many a mother is more to her children when she is in heaven--than she was when with them on the earth. Whether those sainted ones in glory ever see us--we know not--but there is an influence ever in which inspires us to noble things.

Thus, the influence of companionship projects even far beyond the earthly story of those who touch and impress our lives. Indeed, we can never get away from it, and can never be as though we had not experienced it.

If these things are true--and no one can doubt their truth--this matter of companionship is one of vital importance. Especially is it important for young people to give most watchful thought and care in choosing of their associates and friends. Of course, they cannot choose those with whom they shall mingle in a general way--at school, or in work or business. One is compelled oftentimes to sit or stand day after day, beside those who are not godly or worthy.

The law of Christian love requires that in all such cases, the utmost courtesy and kindness shall be shown. But this may be done and the heart not be opened to real companionship. It is companionship that leaves its mark on the life, that is, the entering into relations in which the hearts blend. Jesus himself showed love to all men and women--but he took into companionship only a few chosen ones. We are to be like him, seeking to be a blessing to all--but receiving into personal relations of affection and confidence only those who are worthy, and whose lives will help in the up-building of our own life.

As it is in Heaven

"As it is in heaven" is the standard of the doings of God's will on earth, which the Lord's Prayer sets for us. It is a high ideal, and yet there can be no lower. The petition is a prayer that heaven may begin in our hearts right here on the earth. Indeed, it must begin in us here--or it will never begin at all for us. None can ever enter heaven--but those whom heaven has first entered. Heaven only can be a wing to lift us to heaven. "The kingdom of heaven is within you," was the Master's own word. Everyone of us goes at last "to his own place," the place for which his character fits them. There can be no heaven for people of un-heavenly mind. It is time that we had right views upon this subject. We must have the life of God in us--before we are ready to dwell in blessedness with God.

A gentle author once said: "We are too much in the habit of looking forward to heaven as something that will be an easier, pleasanter story for us to read when we have finished this tiresome earth-narrative; a luxurious palace-chamber to rest in after this life's drudgery has ended; a remote celestial mountain-retreat, where the sound of the restless waves of humanity forever fretting these shores will vex our ears no longer."

We forget that heaven is not far off yonder--but begins right here in our common days, if it is ever to begin at all for us. Is not that what the prayer means--"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," "On earth"

--that is, in our shops and stores and schools; in our homes and social life; in our drudgery and care; in our times of temptation and sorrow. It is not a prayer to be taken away out of this world into heaven, to begin there the doing of God's will; it is a prayer that right here on the earth and now we may learn to live as they do in heaven.

When we think a little of the true mission of Christian lives in this world--to make at least one spot of it better, changing briars to roses, darkness to light, hate to love, we see how important it is that our prayer be not, "Lord take me home out of all this sorrow and sin;" but, "Lord, let me stay here longer and do your will and bless a corner of earth."

How do they live in heaven? What is that sweet, beautiful life into whose spirit we ask now to be introduced and ultimately to be altogether transformed? There, all wills are in perfect accord with the divine will. We begin our Christian life on earth with hearts and wills estranged from God, indisposed to obey him. Naturally we want to take our own way--not God's. The beginning of the new life is the acceptance of God as our King. But not at once does the kingdom in us become fully his. It has to be subdued, and the conquest is slow. Christian growth is simply the bringing

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