

F.B. Meyer:

I have poured out my soul before the Lord - 1 Samuel 1:15

HANNAH'S soul was full of complaint and grief, which flowed over into her face and made it sorrowful. But when she had poured out her soul before the Lord, emptying out all its bitterness, the peace of God took the place of her soul's anguish, she went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. What a glad exchange! How great the contrast! How much the better for herself, and for her home!

Is your face darkened by the bitterness of your soul? Perhaps the enemy has been vexing you sorely; or there is an unrealized hope, an unfulfilled purpose. in your life; or, perchance, the Lord seems to have forgotten you. Poor sufferer, there is nothing for it but to pour out your soul before the Lord. Empty out its contents in confession and prayer. God knows it all; yet tell Him, as if He knew nothing. "Ye people, pour out your hearts before Him. God is a refuge for us." "In everything, by prayer and supplication make your requests known unto God."

As we pour out our bitterness, God pours in his peace. Weeping goes out of one door whilst joy enters at another. We transmit the cup of tears to the Man of Sorrows, and He hands it back to us filled with the blessings of the new covenant. Some day you will come to the spot where you wept and prayed, bringing your offering of praise and thanksgiving.

His mother made him a little coat - 1 Samuel 2:19

WHAT happy work it was! Those nimble fingers flew along the seams, because love inspired them. All her woman's art and wit were put into the garment, her one idea and ambition being to make something which should be not only useful, but becoming. Not mothers only, but fathers, are always making little coats for their children, which they wear long years after a material fabric would have become worn out. How many men and women are wearing today the coats which their parents cut out and made for them long years ago!

Habits are the vesture of the soul. The Apostle bade his converts put off the old man, "which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts," and to put on the new man, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"; to put off anger, wrath, and malice, whilst they put on mercy, humility, and meekness. What words could better establish the fact that habits are (as the name indicates) the clothing of the inner life! Where and how are habits formed? Not in the mid-passage of life, but at its dawn; not in great crises, but in daily circumstances; not in life's arena, but in the home, amid the surroundings of earliest childhood. Oh that the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness may ever be exhibited before those with whom we daily come in contact!

By their behavior to each other and to their children; by the ordering of the home-life; by their actions, more than by their words; by the way in which they speak, and spend their leisure hours, and pray - men and women are making the little coats which, for better or worse, their children wear ever after, and perhaps pass down to after generations.

And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel! 1 Samuel 3:10

SEE the urgency of God! Four times He came, and stood, and called. Mark how He stands at the door to knock. At first He was content to call the lad once by name; but after three unsuccessful attempts to attract him to Himself, He uttered the name twice, with strong urgency in the appeal, Samuel! Samuel! This has been called God's double knock. There are seven or eight of these double knocks in Scripture: Simon, Simon; Saul, Saul; Abraham, Abraham.

How may we be sure of a Divine call?

We may know God's call when it grows in intensity. If an impression comes into your soul, and you are not quite sure of its origin, pray over it; above all, act on it so far as possible, follow in the direction in which it leads and as you lift up your soul before God, it will wax or wane. If it wanes at all, abandon it. If it waxes follow it, though all hell attempt to stay you.

We may test God's call by the assistance of godly friends. The aged Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child, and gave him good advice as to the manner in which he should respond to it. Our special gifts and

the drift of our circumstances will also assuredly concur in one of God's calls.

We may test God's call by its effect on us. 'Does it lead to self-denial? Does it induce us to leave the comfortable bed and step into the cold? Does it drive us forth to minister to others? Does it make us more unselfish, loving, tender, modest, humble! Whatever is to the humbling of our pride, and the glory of God, may be truly deemed God's call. Be quick to respond, and fearlessly deliver the message the Lord has given you.

Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. 1 Samuel 4:3

ISRAEL had been defeated with great loss. Their only hope of being able to hold their own against the Philistines and the people of the land was in the protection and help vouchsafed to them by God. They knew this, and thought that they would be secured, if only the Ark of the covenant were on the field. They forgot that it was only the material symbol of a spiritual relationship; that it was useless unless that relationship was in living force; and that the bending forms of the cherubim, emblematic of the Divine protection, would not avail if their fellowship with the God of the cherubim had been ruptured by backsliding.

There is a sense in which we are always sending for the Ark. The reliance on outward rites, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, on the part of those who are alienated from the life of God; the maintenance of the forms of prayer and Scripture-reading, which no longer express the passionate love of the soul; the habit of churchgoing, which so many practice, not because they love God, but because they think that it will in some way secure his alliance in life's battle 'all these are forms in which we still fetch the Ark of the covenant, whilst our hearts are wrong with the God of the covenant.

It should never be forgotten that nothing can afford to us protection and succor but vital union with Christ. We must hide in his secret place if we would abide under his shadow. We must dwell in the most holy place if we would be shadowed by the wings of the Shekinah. There must be nothing between us and God, if we are to walk together, and enjoy fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord. 1 Samuel 5:3

THE idols of the heathen represent demons who are their accepted gods, just as the Ark was the symbol of the presence of Jehovah. In the one case there was a material representation of the demon; but in the case of the Ark there was only a throne, the Mercy Seat; and no attempt was made to represent the appearance of the God of Israel. When placed in the Holy of Holies, the Shekinah shone between the cherubim; this alone spoke of the Divine Spirit who filled the apparently vacant throne. When the effigy of the fish-god was confronted by the Sacred Ark, it was as though the demon spirit and the Divine Spirit had come into contact, with the inevitable result that the inferiority of the one ensured the crash of its effigy to the ground.

What a lesson this must have been to the Philistines 'similar to that given Pharaoh in the plagues of Egypt, and with the same object of leading them to see the superior greatness of Jehovah! How great the encouragement to Israel 'to know that God could defend his superiority! And how striking the prognostication for the future, when all the Dagon of the world shall be broken before the symbol of Divine power and love!

Bring the Ark of God into your life. Set it down in your heart, and forthwith the Dagon which have held sway for so long will one after another succumb. "The idols He will utterly abolish." Let Christ in 'that is the one need of the soul; and let Him take full possession of you. Then He will do his own work. Darkness cannot abide light; nor the defilement of the Augean stable the turning in of the water of the river.

And the kine went along the highway, lowing as they went. 1 Samuel 6:12

THAT two milch kine which had never borne the yoke should move quietly along the high road, turning neither to the right nor to the left, and lowing for the calves they had left behind, clearly indicated that they were possessed and guided by some mysterious power, which we know to have been God's. And if He were able thus to overpower the instincts of their nature, and to compel them to do his will, may we not infer that all circumstances, and all men, however unwittingly, and against their natural instinct, are subserving the purposes of his will, and bearing on the Ark? The fish yields the tribute money; the colt of the ass waits where two ways meet to bear the Redeemer; the man with the waterpot leads to the upper room; the Roman soldiers enable Paul to fulfill the mission of his life, in preaching the Gospel without hindrance in the very heart of Rome.

As we go forth into the world, let us believe that the movement of all things is towards the accomplishment of God's purpose. Herein is a fulfillment of the Psalmist's prediction about man, which can only be perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the second Adam "that all things are under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field. Everything serves Christ, and those who serve Christ. In a true sense all things are ours; they minister to us, even as Christ to God.

And against our natural inclinations let us always regard the claims of God as paramount; and dare to go his way, though our heart pines for those we leave behind. "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me."

Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God. 1 Samuel 7:8

SAMUEL was famous for his prayers. They are repeatedly referred to in the brief record of his life. In the Psalms he is spoken of as the one "who called upon God's name." Indeed, he fought and won Israel's battles by his strong intercessions. Mary of Scots said that she dreaded the prayers of John Knox more than the battalions of the King of France. So his people were accustomed to think that if the prophet's hands were held out in importunate prayer, their foes must be restrained.

In the Life of Mr. Reginald Radcliffe, one who contributes a reminiscence interjects a remark which deserves to be carefully pondered: "The great secret of the blessing which came from God to the awakening of whole districts, the quickening of Christians, and the salvation of multitudes, was prayer, continued, fervent, believing, expectant. There was never anything striking in the addresses; but through communion with the living Christ, the word came forth with living and life-giving power. Often would the forenoon be spent in continuous prayer." This may well convict some of us of the cause of our failure. We have expected the Lord to thunder and discomfort our Philistines, and with a great deliverance; but we have ceased to cry unto the Lord.

Ye that are the Lord's remembrances, cease not to cry unto Him. If the judge avenged the unfortunate widow, shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night? It is recorded of our Lord that He prayed early and late, and all night. He prayed when He was about to be transfigured; for his disciples; in the Garden of Gethsemane; and for his murderers. How much more do we need to "pray without ceasing"!

But the thing displeased Samuel.... And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. 1 Samuel 8:6

A LITTLE further down in the chapter we learn that Samuel rehearsed the words of the people unto the Lord. His prayer, to a large extent, was a rehearsal of all the strong and unkind things that the people had said to him; and in this way he passed them off his mind, and found relief. There is a suggestion of close communion with God in the expression, "He rehearsed them in the ears of the

Lord." It had been the habit of his life to be on intimate terms with his God.

Things do not always turn out as we had hoped, and we get displeased for our own sakes and God's. We had planned in one direction, but events have issued in another; and the results have threatened to become disastrous. There is but one resource. If we allow vexations to eat into our heart, they will corrode and injure it. We must rehearse them to God "spreading the letter before Him, as Hezekiah did; making request like Paul; crying like Samuel.

Surely it is the mistake of our life, that we carry our burdens instead of handing them over; that we worry instead of trusting; that we pray so little. The grass grows thick on the pathway to our oratory; the cobwebs hang across the doorway. The time we spend in prayer is perhaps better spent than in any other way. It was whilst Samuel prayed thus, that he saw the Divine program for Israel:

"And he who at the sixth hour sought

The lone house "top to pray,

There gained a sight beyond his thought "that

The dawn of Gentile day.

Then reckon not, when perils lour,

The time of prayer misspent;

Nor meanest chance, nor place, nor hour,

Without its heavenward bent."

Behold, there is in this city a man of God. 1 Samuel 9:6

THERE is a street in London, near St. Paul's, which I never traverse without very peculiar feelings. It is Godliman Street. Evidently the name is a corruption of godly man. Did some saint of God once live here, whose life was so holy as to give a sweet savor to the very street in which he dwelt? Were the neighbors who knew him best, the most sure of his godliness? Would that our piety might leave its mark on our neighborhoods, and the memory linger long after we have passed away!

A generation or two ago in the Highlands, there were earnest and holy men who were known by the significant title of the men. No great religious gathering was deemed complete without them. Their prayers and exhortations were accompanied by an especial unction.

In such manner Samuel's godliness was recognized far and wide. The fragrance of his character could not be concealed. And this gave men confidence in him. They said, "He is an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass." How much credit redounds to godliness, when it is combined with trustworthiness and high credit amongst our fellows!

Let us seek to be God's men and women. Let us live not only soberly and righteously, but godly, in this present world. Let us remember that God hath set apart the godly for Himself. The godly are the godlike. They become so by cultivating the fellowship and friendship of God. Their faces become enlightened with his beauty; their words are weighty with his truth. After being for a little in their company, you detect the gravity, serenity, gentleness, beauty of holiness, which are the court manners of heaven.

Thou shalt do as occasion serve thee. 1 Samuel 10:7

THIS is an example of how God demands of us the use of our sanctified common sense. Samuel sketches to Saul the course of events during the next few days; showing how clearly our lives lie naked and open to the eyes of God, and how easily He can reveal them when necessary. But whilst the various incidents are told, the prophet does not feel it incumbent to tell this goodly young man how he should behave in any given instance. "When these signs are come upon thee, thou shalt do as occasion serve thee."

We are reminded of a parallel in the life of Peter. The angel of God unbarred the prison's doors, and led him forth, because nothing short of Divine power would avail. He led the dazed Apostle through one street, because he was too bewildered to realize what had happened. But, as soon as the night-air had brought him to his senses, the angel left him "to consider the matter" to use his own judgment. The result of which was, that he went to the house of Mary.

One of the divinest of our faculties is the judgment, before which the reasons for and against a certain course of action must be adduced, but with which the ultimate decision lies. It is a tendency with some to depreciate the use of this wonderful power, by looking for signs and visions to point their path. This is a profound mistake. God will give these when there are complications in which the exercise of judgment might be at fault; but not where it is sufficient. Where no sign is given, carefully divest yourself of selfish considerations, weigh the pros and cons, ask for guidance, dare to act; and having acted in faith, never look back or doubt.

Come let us go to Gilgal, and renew the Kingdom there. 1 Samuel 11:14

IT is good to have days and occasions for renewing the kingdom. Already Saul had been anointed king. It was a recognized matter that he should inaugurate the days of the kings, as distinguished from those of the judges. But his great victory at Jabesh-Gilead seems to have wrought the enthusiasm of the people to the highest pitch, and to have presented a great opportunity for renewing the kingdom. They went to Gilgal to do this, because there, on the first entrance into Canaan, Israel had rolled away the reproach of uncircumcision, which symbolized their lack of separation.

Jesus is our King. The Father hath anointed Him, and set Him on his holy hill; and we have gladly assented to the appointment, and made Him King. But sometimes our sense of loyalty and devotion wanes. Insensibly we

drift from our strenuous endeavor to act always as his devoted subjects. Therefore we need, from time to time, to renew the kingdom, and reverently make Him King before the Lord.

Go over the old solemn form of dedication; turn to the yellow leaves of the diary; bring under his scepter any new provinces of influence that have been acquired; tell Him how glad and thankful you are to live only for Him. Let this be done at Gilgal, the place of circumcision and separation, with the Jordan of death flowing behind, and the Land of Promise beckoning in front. There is a sense in which we can consecrate ourselves only once; but we can renew our vows often.

"Blessings abound where'er He reigns;

The prisoner leaps to burst his chains;

The weary find eternal rest,

And all the sons of want are blest"

The Lord will not forsake his people for his great Name's sake. 1 Samuel 12:22

THE certainty of our salvation rests on the character of God. Moses, years before, had pleaded that God could not afford to destroy or forsake Israel, lest the Egyptians and others should have some ground for saying that He was not able to carry out his purpose, or that He was fickle and changeable. "What wilt Thou do for thy great Name?" Samuel uses the same argument. We also may avail ourselves of it for our great comfort.

God knew what we should be — how weak and frail and changeable — before He arrested us and brought us to Himself. Speaking after the manner of men, we might say He counted the cost. He computed whether his resources were sufficient to secure us from our foes, keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. He foreknew how much forbearance, pity, consolation, and tenderness, we should require. And yet it pleased Him to make us his people. He cannot, therefore, now run back from his purpose; otherwise it would seem that difficulties had arisen which either He had not anticipated, or was not so well able to combat as He had thought. What an absurd suggestion! In the former case there would be a slur on his omniscience; on the other, upon his omnipotence.

"What if God should cast you into hell?" was asked of an old Scotch woman.

"Well," she answered, "If He do, all I can say is, He will lose mair than I will."

The gracious promise given to Joshua may be appropriated by every trembling saint of God: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." To the poor and needy He says, "I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

I forced myself, therefore, and offered a burnt offering. Sam. 13:12

THIS was wholly outside Saul's province. Samuel had engaged to arrive within the seven days: they had nearly expired, and still there were no signs of the prophet; and Saul, yielding to the promptings of his impetuous nature, took the matter into his own hand, and rashly assumed an office to which he had no right. He protested that he had been very unwilling to add the function of priest to that of king. But this was notoriously contrary to the truth. For some time he had chafed against Samuel's prerogative, and now sought to supersede the Divine order.

It seemed but a small act, and, to superficial judgment, not enough to warrant the loss of his kingdom; but it was symptomatic of a great moral deficiency. He had not learned to obey the commandment of the Lord: how could he rule? He could not control the hasty suggestions of his own nature, in favor of the deliberate movement of the Divine order: how could he be God's chosen agent? He acted on the showings of expediency, rather than of faith: how could he be a man after God's own heart? The restlessness and haste which characterize the present age must not be allowed to affect our service for God; for thereby the progress of the Gospel will be hindered rather than helped.

We must learn to wait for God. He may not come till the allotted time has almost passed; but He will come. He waits for the exact moment in which He can best succor you. Not till patience has been exercised, but before it has given out. In the meanwhile, be sure that your safety is secured; He will see to it that the Philistines shall not come down to overwhelm you.

His eyes were enlightened. 1 Samuel 14:27

THE Philistines were in full flight. The Israelites followed hard at their heels through the wood. It was there that the honey dropped in rich abundance on the ground, and there Jonathan tasted a little, dipping the end of his rod into it. It made all the difference to him, warding off the excessive exhaustion which paralyzed the rest of the army.

The Word of God is sweeter than the honeycomb. It is luscious to the sanctified taste; enlightening to the dimming eyes; strength-giving to the weary. It drops in abundance to the ground, as though inviting the hand of the Christian warrior or wayfarer to take it freely. If there is no taste for the written Word, it may be assumed that the living Word has not been enthroned in the heart; for where He reigns supreme, there is a longing for the food which alone can fit us for the Christian life.

Where we cannot take much, let us take some. There was not time for Jonathan to sit down and take his fill. He could only catch up some as he hastily passed through the forest-glade; but that little made all the difference to him. So, in the early morning, or at midday, if we cannot fill our hearts with Scripture, we may catch up a morsel, which will minister untold refreshment, and clear our spiritual vision.

We specially need to do this when flushed with success. Too often, when we have had success in the battles of the Lord—a good time in preaching or teaching—we are apt to congratulate ourselves, and suppose that we can live on the emotions excited. But, probably, there is no time when we need more absolutely to turn to the Word of God. In victory, as in defeat, we must be fed and nourished.

To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 1 Samuel 15:22

THIS is a great principle, which is repeatedly enforced throughout the Bible. Men have always been apt to divorce religion and morality, and to suppose that a certain tribute of sacrifice to God will be sufficient compensation for notorious evil-doing. But in every age God's servants have protested against the notion, and have insisted, as Samuel did with Saul, that it were better to obey, although there should be no spoil from which to select victims for sacrifice. This was Christ's perpetual protest against the Pharisees.

Let the Ritualist beware. There is a grave fear lest extreme attention to the outward rite may be accompanied by carelessness to the inward temper. Where the outward observance is the expression of the attitude of the soul, it is to be respected even by those of us who feel that excessive symbolism is hostile to the devout life; but where the rite takes the place of the soul's devotion, or condones a lax morality, it cannot be too sternly deprecated. Though all the Levitical rites should be observed without flaw, they could not compensate for the persistent neglect of the least item of the Decalogue. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Let us all beware. We are apt to make sacrifices of time and money and energy for God, and to comfort ourselves with the reflection that such as we are may be excused if in small lapses of temper, or disposition, we come short of the Divine standard. No; it cannot pass muster. One sin mastered, one temptation resisted, one duty performed, is dearer to God than the most costly sacrifices that were ever piled upon the altar.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. 1 Samuel 16:13

WHAT may not a day bring forth! Here was a shepherd lad, summoned hastily from his sheep, and anointed king. But an even greater blessing came into his life that day, for he was mightily endued with the Holy Spirit. Without doubt, during his early years the Spirit of God had dwelt within him, molding his character, inditing his songs; but, henceforth, the Spirit was to abide on him, as a Divine unction.

Why should not this day witness a similar transformation for you; not in the change of earthly position, but in your reception of the "power from on high" through a renewed enduement? Why should not the Spirit of the Lord come mightily upon you from this holy hour, even as your eyes glance down this page? Though it is quite possible that you have been empowered once, there is no finality in God's bestowals; the apostles were filled and filled again (Acts ii. and iv.).

The age of Pentecost in which we live is distinctly one of Divine anointing. It awaits all who will separate themselves to God, and receive it for his glory. The characteristic preposition of this age is on. If you have not received power, seek it; he that seeketh findeth; nay, receive it—to ask is to get. If the Master, though

begotten of the Holy Spirit, forbore to preach the Gospel, and bind up broken hearts, till He had been anointed as the Christ by the Spirit, who descended on Him at his baptism; how foolish it is for us, who were born in sin, to attempt similar work, apart from similar enduement! The promise to each child of God is: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8).

The armies of the living God. 1 Samuel 17:26,36

THIS made all the difference between David and the rest of the camp. To Saul and his soldiers God was an absentee — a name, but little else. They believed that He had done great things for his people in the past, and that at some future time, in the days of the Messiah, He might be expected to do great things again; but no one thought of Him as present. Keenly sensitive to the defiance of the Philistine, and grieved by the apathy of his people, David, on the other hand, felt that God was alive. He had lived alone with Him in the solitude of the hills, till God had become one of — the greatest and most real facts of his young existence; and as the lad went to and fro among the armed warriors, he was sublimely conscious of the presence of the living God amid the clang of the camp.

This is what we need. To live so much with God, that when we come amongst men, whether in the bazaars of India or the market-place of an English town, we may be more aware of his over-shadowing presence than of the presence or absence of any one. Lo, God is here! This place is hallowed ground! But none can realize this by the act of the will. We can only find God everywhere when we carry Him everywhere. The miner sees by the candle he carries on his forehead.

Each of us is opposed by difficulties, privations, and trials of different sorts. But the one answer to them all is faith's vision of the Living God. We can face the mightiest foe in his name. If our faith can but make Him a passage, along which He shall come, there is no Goliath He will not quell; no question He will not answer; no need He will not meet

David behaved himself wisely. 1 Samuel 18:5,14,15,30.

THERE must be some strong reason for the four-fold repetition of this phrase in so short a space. It is as though the Holy Ghost would lay very distinct stress on the Divine prudence and circumspection, which must characterize the man whose life is hid in God. Let us walk with God, abiding in Him, subjecting our thoughts and plans to his, communing about all things with Him, talking over our lives with Him, before we go out to live them in the presence of our fellows. Then we too shall have this gracious wisdom, which is more moral than intellectual — the product of the grace of God rather than of human culture.

Our life shall commend itself to men (5). — David's was good in the sight of all the people, and more wonderful still, in the sight of Saul's servants, who might have been jealous. A life lived in God disarms jealousy and envy. He who, as a boy, did his Father's business increased in wisdom, and in favor with God and men.

Our life shall rebuke and awe our foes (15). — Saul stood in awe of him. When traps and snares are laid for us we shall be enabled to thread our way through them all, as Jesus did when they tried to entangle Him in his talk. We shall have a wisdom which all our foes together shall not be able to gainsay or resist.

Our name will be precious (30). — People loved to dwell on the name of David; it was much set by; they noticed and were impressed with the beauty and nobility of his character. We must always view our lives, amusements, and undertakings, in the light of the result which will accrue to Him whose name it is our privilege to bear.

And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan. 1 Samuel 19:6

IT was a noble act of Jonathan. He might have withdrawn from his friendship with David when it threatened his relations with his father; but, instead, he stepped into the breach, and pleaded for his friend, endeavoring to eradicate the false in ungenerous conceptions of which Saul had become possessed. It is an example we do well to study and copy. For his love's sake, as well as for his father's, he was extremely eager to effect a reconciliation between him to whom he owed allegiance of son and subject, and this fair shepherd-minstrel-warrior, who had so recently cast a sunny gleam upon his life.

Men often misconceive of one another. Jealousy and envy distort behavior and actions which are in themselves as beautiful as possible. Misrepresentation will blind us to the true excellences of one another's characters.

Wrong constructions are often put on the most innocent incidents. We cannot help these things, they are part of the sad heritage of the Fall; but we may often take up the cause of a misunderstood man, and at the risk of losing our own reputation, and diverting to ourselves some of the odium which attaches to him, we may stand as his sponsors.

Even if we dislike another, as Saul did David, let us give scope to the good Spirit to plead his cause at the bar of our hearts, as Jonathan did for his friend. Let us consider all the kind and loving things that may be said of him; let us put ourselves in his position; let us be willing to believe and hope all things. Let us plead for others, since this is a work in which Christ's followers most closely approximate to Him who ever liveth to intercede.

Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. 1 Sam, 20:18

JONATHAN and David had entered into a covenant, each loving the other as his own soul. Anxious to shield his friend from the wrath of his father, Jonathan discloses to David the plan by which he shall know how matters fared in the royal palace. David's vacant seat suggests a lesson for us.

There are a good many empty seats in our houses. Those that occupied them can never do so again; they have gone never to return again, and we miss them sorely.

Let us see to it that we do not leave our seats in the home circle needlessly vacant. Let not the mother be away at the dance, or even at the religious meeting, when she should be at home, joining in her children's evening prayers. Let the father be very sure that God has called him elsewhere, before he habitually vacates his place in the evening family circle. Let each of us avoid giving needless pain to those we love by leaving empty seats. But if God calls us away to his service, then for those who miss us, another Form shall glide in, and sit in the vacant chair; and they will become conscious that the Master is filling the gap, and beguiling the weary moments.

Above all, let not your seat be empty in the house of God, at the ordinary service, or at the Lord's Table. We are too prone to allow a trifle to deter us from joining in the sacred feasts. At such times we are missed, our empty seat witnesses against us; there is a lack in the song and prayer, which cries out against us; there is a distinct loss to the power of the service, which is in proportion to the number of earnest souls present. Oh that there may be no empty seats at the marriage supper, vacated through our unfaithfulness!

There is none like that; give it me. 1 Samuel 21:9

WHAT David said of the sword of Goliath we may say of Holy Scripture "the sword of the Spirit" "There is none like that."

There is no book like the Bible for those convinced of sin. "The Word of God assures the sinner of God's love in Christ, whilst it refuses to condone a single sin, or excuse one shortcoming. The Bible is as stern as conscience herself against sin, but as pitiful as the heart of God to the sinner. It, moreover, discloses the method by which the just God becomes the justifier of those who believe.

There is no book like the Bible for the sorrowful. "It tells of the Comforter; it reminds us that in all our sorrow God also is sad; it points to the perfect plan according to which God is working out our blessedness; it insists that all things are working together for good; it opens the vision of the blessed future, where all the griefs and tears of men shall be put away for ever.

There is no book like the Bible for the dying. "Read to me," said Sir Walter Scott, on his dying bed, to his friend. "What shall I read?" "There is only one book for a dying man," was the answer; "read to me from the Bible." The Book which tells of the Lord, who died and rose again; of the mansions which He has gone to prepare; of the reunion of the saints; of the fountains of water of life "is the only pillow on which the dying head can rest softly.

In these days of debate and doubt there is no such evidence for the Divine authority of the Bible as that which accrues from its perpetual use, whether in our own life, or in the conviction of the ungodly.

Till I know what God will do for me. 1 Samuel 22:3

WE shall never get to the end of all that God will do for us, if only we perfectly give ourselves up to Him. David had a very imperfect vision of all that was in God's plan for him; he had an inkling, but that was all. And we have

still less. Yet let us recapitulate some of the things which God will do for us.

He waits to give us the spirit of Sonship: so that we may ever be conscious of his Fatherhood, and look up into his face in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the Mount of Transfiguration alike, calling Him Abba, Father.

He longs to lead us to full consecration; to lead us into such close association with Jesus in his redeeming purpose, that we may become his willing bondâ€‘servants, with no other purpose and aim in life than his service and glory.

He desires to deliver us from all known sin: that we may be blameless and harmless, his children without rebuke in this sinful world, who walk before Him in holiness and righteousness all our days.

He wants to anoint us with the Holy Spirit: so that our ministry to men may have more of the savor of Christ; may plough deeper furrows in human hearts; may have more abiding results.

He desires us to come into partnership with his Son â€‘ here in his redemptive purpose, yonder in his throne. To this indeed He calls us.

Who can know all that God waits to do, not here only, but yonder, when life has entered upon its eternal stage! "Now are we children of God; and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2, R.V.).

He said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. 1 Samuel 23:9

DAVID was passing through one of the most awful experiences of his life, when his men spoke of â€‘stoning him instead of taking up his cause. How many times in this chapter we are informed that David inquired of the Lord! Some three or four times the appeal for direction was renewed, as though he were fearful to stir one step by the light of his own unaided wisdom. In that changeful life of his, it must have been extremely difficult to set the Lord always before him, and await Divine direction. Many a time his circumstances might seem to demand immediate action rather than prayer; and the rude soldiery must have insisted on their voice being heard rather than a priest's; but David was not deterred by one or the other, and still held to his practice of consulting the Urim and Thummim stone, set in the ephod; which was probably a splendid diamond, flashing with God's distinct "Yes," or growing cloudy and dark with his definite "No."

Let us inquire of the Lord. The answer will surely come, if we wait for it. If we are not sure of it, let us still wait, for it will come â€‘ not so early as to save us from using our faith, not so late as to permit us to be overwhelmed. Direction will come in the growing conviction of duty, in the drift of circumstances, in the advice of friends, in the perceptions of a sanctified judgment. None that wait on God can be ashamed. Whether our duty be to arise and pursue, to sit still, or to escape â€‘ "the meek He will guide in judgment; the meek He will teach his way." He gives us a white stone in which a name is written, which only they know who receive.

And David's heart smote him. 1 Samuel 24:5

IT is well to have a tender conscience, and to obey its least monitions, even when men and things militate against it. Here was an opportunity for David and his band to end their wanderings and hardships by one thrust of the spear; but though it was a very small thing that he had done, David was struck with remorse for having taken advantage of Saul's retirement in the precincts of the cave, where his men and he were hiding, and cut off a piece of his robe.

It was a trifling matter, and yet it seemed dishonoring to God's anointed king; and as such it hurt David to have done it. We sometimes in conversation and criticism cut off a piece of a man's character, or influence for good, or standing in the esteem of others. Ought not our heart to smite us for such thoughtless conduct? Ought we not to make confession or reparation?

Circumstances seemed to favor it. â€‘ Of all the scores of caves in the neighborhood, the king had happened to choose the very one, in the dark recesses of which David and his men were sheltering. What more natural than to obtain some token to convince the king how absolutely he had been in his young rival's power? But favoring circumstances do not justify an act which is not perfectly healthy and right. Opportunity does not make a wrong thing right.

His men unanimously approved the act, nay, they wanted him to go further. Their standard was a very low one, not only in this case, but in others. How wonderful that David kept such a high ideal amid such comrades! We

shall not be judged hereafter by the standard which obtained among our comrades.

This shall be no grief unto thee. 1 Samuel 25:31

THERE was an inimitable blending of woman's wit with worldly prudence in the words of the beautiful Abigail. Poor woman, she had had a sorry life of it, mated to such a man as Nabal was! An ill-assorted pair certainly, though probably she had had no hand in bringing about the alliance. Like so many Eastern women, she was the creature of another's act and choice. But she succeeded in averting the blow which David was hasting to inflict, by asserting her belief that the time was not far distant when he would no longer be a fugitive from his foes, and by suggesting that when that happy time came it would be a relief to feel that he had not allowed himself to be carried to all lengths by his hot passion.

It was very salutary advice. Let us always look at things from the view-point of the future, when our passion shall have subsided, when time shall have cooled us, and especially when we review the present from the verge of the other world — how then?

We can well afford to do this since God is with us, and our life is bound up with Him in the bundle of life. Abigail reminded David that God would do to

him all the good of which He had spoken, and would sling out his enemies as from a sling. So God will do for us; not one good thing will fail of all that He hath promised; no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper. Within a little, Nabal was dead, and David's wrong righted. So shall the evil that now molests us pass away. God will deal with it. Let us leave it to Him: before Him mountains shall melt like wax; and we shall have nothing to regret.

Then said Saul, I have sinned. 1 Samuel 26:21

THE Apostle makes a great distinction, and rightly, between the sorrow of the world and the sorrow of a godly repentance which needeth not to be repented of. Certainly Saul's confession of sin belonged to the former; whilst the cry of the latter comes out in Psalm li., extorted from David by the crimes of after years.

The difference between the two may be briefly summarized in this, that the one counts sin a folly and regrets its consequences; whilst the other regards sin as a crime done against the most Holy God, and regrets the pain given to Him. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

Obviously Saul's confession was of the former description, "I have played the fool." He recognized the unkingliness of his behavior, and the futility of his efforts against David. But he stayed there, stopping short of a faithful recognition of his position in the sight of God, as weighed in the balances of eternal justice.

Many a time in Scripture do we meet with this confession. The Prodigal, Judas, Pharaoh, David, and Saul, uttered it; but in what differing tones, and with what differing motives! We need to winnow our words before God; not content with using the expressions of penitence, unless we are very sure that they bear the mark of heaven, and deserve the master's Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

When sin is humbly confessed, the Saviour assures us: "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee, go in peace." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

And David said, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. 1 Samuel 27:1

WHAT a fit of despondency and unbelief was here! We can hardly believe that this is he who in so many psalms had boasted of the shepherd care of God, who had so often insisted on the safety of God's pavilion. It was a fainting fit, brought on by the bad air he had breathed amid the evil associations of Adullam's cave. Had not God promised to take care of him? Was not his future already guaranteed by the promises that he should succeed to the kingdom? But nothing availed to check his precipitate flight into the land of the Philistines.

Bitterly he rued this mistake. The prevarication and deceit to which he was driven; the anguish of having to march with Achish against his own people; the sack and burning of Ziklag: these were the price he had to pay for his mistrust. Unbelief always brings many other bitter sorrows in its train, and leads the soul to cry,

"How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou forget me forever?

How long wilt Thou hide thy face from me?"

Let us beware of losing heart, as David did. Look not at Saul, but at God, who is omnipotent; not at the winds and waves, but at Him who walks across the water; not at what may come, but at that which is â€ˆâ€ˆ for the glorious Lord is round about thee to deliver thee. He shall deliver thy soul from death, thine eyes from tears, and thy feet from falling. He that has helped will help. What He has done, He will do. God always works from less to more, never from more to less. Dost thou not hear â€ˆâ€ˆ hast thou not heard â€ˆâ€ˆ his voice saying, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee? What, then, can man do unto thee? Every weapon used against thee shall go blunt on an invisible shield!

Because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord, therefore . . . 1 Samuel 28:18

THUS unforgiven sin comes back to a man. We cannot explain the mysteries that lie around this incident; but it is clear that in that supreme hour of Saul's fate, that early sin, which had never been confessed and put away, came surging back on the mind and heart of the terrorâ€ˆstricken monarch. "Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, and didst not execute his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee This day. Moreover the Lord will deliver Israel also with thee into the hands of the Philistines" (R.V.). But Saul did not realize that even then the gates of God's love stood open to him, if only he would pass through them by humble penitence and faith. If instead of applying to the witch, he had sought God's mercy, light would have burst on his darkened path, and he had never perished by his own hand on Mount Gilboa.

In strong contrast with this, let us put the assurance of the new covenant: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." When God forgives, He blots out from the book of his remembrance. The sin is gone as a pebble in the ocean; as a cloud in the blue of a summer's sky.

Saul's was a sin of omission. The question was not what evil he had done, but the good he had failed to do. Let us remember that we need pardon for the sad lapses and failures of our lives, equally as for the positive transgressions. And if such things are not forgiven, they will lie heavy on our consciences when the shadows of death begin to gather around us. The New Testament especially judges those who knew and did not do â€ˆâ€ˆ the slothful servant, the virgin without the oil, the priest that passed by on the other side.

What do these Hebrews here? 1 Samuel 29:3

IT was a very natural remark. The Philistines were going into battle with the Hebrew king and his troops, and it was very anomalous that a strong body of Hebrews should be forming part of the Philistine array. They had no business to be there. The annoyance of the chief captains and lords that surrounded Achish was natural enough. For long, probably, it had been smoldering; now it broke out into flame.

It is very terrible when the children of the world have a higher sense of Christian propriety and fitness than Christians themselves, and say to one another, "What do these Hebrews here?" The word "Hebrew" means one that has passed over â€ˆâ€ˆ a separatist. The death of our Lord Jesus was intended to make all his followers separatists. Through Him they have passed from death unto life; they have been delivered out of the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The appeal of his cross to us all is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." Too often, however, that call is unheeded; and, for fear of man, we mingle with the ranks of the enemies of our Lord.

If Christians attend the theatre; if Sundayâ€ˆschool teachers, elders or deacons of a church, are found participating in the pleasures of the ungodly; if the young Christian man is found loosely consorting with the cardâ€ˆplayers of the smokingâ€ˆroom of an ocean steamer â€ˆâ€ˆ may not the sneer go round, "What do these Hebrews here?" "What doest thou here, Elijah!" is the remonstrance of God. "What do these Hebrews here?" that of the world, which not unfrequently has a truer sense of propriety than God's professing followers.

David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. 1 Samuel 30:6

HIS God! Doubtless the chronicler heard him say repeatedly, as he was so fond of saying, "My God, my God. "I will say unto God, my rock, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Though he had seriously compromised God's cause, by the failure of his faith, by consorting with Achish and the Philistines, by a tortuous and treacherous policy, yet God was still his God; and, in the supreme crisis which had overtaken him, he naturally betook himself to the covert of those loving wings.

He encouraged himself. "He would go back on promises of forgiveness and succor, which had so often cheered him in similar straits. He would recall his songs in former nights as black as this, and therefore would have hope. He would remember that he had been brought through worse trials; and surely He who had helped him against Goliath and Saul would not fail him against the Amalekites. Besides, he had probably left his dear ones in the protection of the encamping angel; and though his faith might be tried, it could not be entirely disappointed. In this way he encouraged himself. All around was tumult and fear; but in God peace and rest brooded, as swans on a tranquil lake. His men might speak of stoning him; his heart be greatly distressed for wives and children; his life be in jeopardy: but God was a very present help, "Why art thou cast down, and disquieted, O my soul? Hope thou in God."

In similar circumstances, let us have resort to similar sources of comfort; hide in God, and encourage ourselves in Him. It was in this spirit that John Knox, when about to face death, said to his wife, "Read to me where I first cast anchor."

All the valiant men . . . 1 Samuel 31:11,12

THIS was a noble and generous act. At the beginning of his reign, in the early dawn of youthful promise and prowess, when he was the darling of the nation, Saul had interposed to deliver their beleaguered city. And now, as the awful tidings of his defeat and suicide spread like fire through the country, the men whom he had succored remembered his first kingly act, and showed their appreciation for his kindness by doing a strong and chivalrous deed in rescuing his remains from dishonour. They could not help him, but they could save his honour. When David heard of this act, he sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead, thanking them for their chivalrous devotion to the memory of the fallen king, and promising to requite the kindness as one done to the entire nation, and to himself

Are we careful enough of the honour and name of our dear Lord? He has done for us spiritually all that Saul did for Jabesh-gilead, and more. He has delivered our soul from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Let us be swift to maintain the honour of his name among those who are so apt at making it their scorn.

It was well that these men did not wait for others to act. Had they done so, the body of Saul might have rotted piecemeal on the walls of the temple at Bethshan. If they had left this act of reparation for Abner, or Ishbosheth, it would never have been done. There is no order of precedence, when a wrong has to be righted, or a friend vindicated. The man who is next must act. Let us strike into the fray, and count that our opportunity is warrant enough. He who can, may.