

F.B. Meyer:

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives. 2 Samuel 1:23

IT was very lovely and pleasant of David to say so. He had no hesitation, of course, in saying this of his beloved Jonathan, every memory of whom was very pleasant, like a sweet strain of music, or the scent of the spring breeze; but he might have been excused for omitting Saul from the graceful and generous epithets he heaped on the kindred soul of his friend. But death had obliterated the sad, dark memories of recent days, and had transported the Psalmist across the dream of years to Saul as he was when he was first introduced to him. All that could be said in praise of the first Hebrew king was crowded into these glowing lines 'the courage, martial prowess, swiftness to aid those who required help, his pleasantness and courtesy in address.

This is the love of God, which He breathes into the hearts of his children. They become perfect in love, as He is. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It is God's like for his children to love their enemies, bless those who curse them, and pray for all who despitefully use and persecute them. Is such love ours? Do we forbear from thinking evil? Do we look on the virtues more often than the failures of our friends? Do we cast the mantle of forgiveness over the injuries done to us, and dwell tenderly on the excellences of our foes? Such is the love which never fails, but endures when faith has turned to fruition, and hope has realized its dreams.

We need most of all a baptism of love. A piece of clay will become fragrant if placed in contiguity to attar of roses. Let us lie where John did, on the bosom of incarnate love, till we begin to love as he.

The men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king. 2 Samuel 2:4

THUS was David anointed a second time. Hitherto he had been the leader of a troop; now he became king of his own tribe: and his kingdom clustered around the ancient city of Hebron.

Typically, we learn that our blessed Lord will be acknowledged King of his own people, the Jews, before He is accepted by the world at large. Now, his kingdom is in mystery 'it is in the Adullam stage. Men are gathering to Him from all quarters; but as yet the world does not recognize it in their political calculations. But ere long the Jews will recognize Him as King, and then we may begin to expect his enthronement over the populations of the globe. When they repent and are converted, times of repenting will come to all the world.

Experimentally we are taught, that as each new department of our life unfolds, we should give Christ a fresh coronation. The attitude which we took up years ago, of complete consecration, must be applied perpetually to each fresh development of experience. Each new step should be characterized by a definite waiting on God, that there may be a fresh endowment of power, a recharging of the spirit with his might. Was He King in the cave, then be sure to acknowledge Him as such, now that you are called from obscurity into the glare of noon. Whenever God says, by the circumstances of your life, Go up; always kneel at the feet of Jesus, saying, "Lord, in the very little I found my joy and strength in serving Thee only; and now, amid the greater responsibility and publicity of my life, I desire to be thy earnest, simple-minded, whole-hearted follower."

Have you anointed Jesus as your King? Do not fail. Remember how near of kin He is.

David wared stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul wared weaker. 2 Samuel 3:1

THE war between the flesh and the Spirit is long, but the end is sure. As the Baptist said of Jesus, so must the flesh say of the Spirit, He must increase; I must decrease. Sometimes, in the long strain of the war, our spirit dies down. Will the bugle never cease to ring out its alarm? Will the assaults never come, to an end? When shall we be able to lay aside sword and breastplate, and to enter the land of rest? Oh to be able to say with the Apostle, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith!"

Yet take heart. The assaults diminish in frequency and strength in proportion as they are faithfully resisted. Each time you resist successfully you will find it easier to resist. The strength of the vanquished foe enters the vanquisher.

Moreover, ultimate victory is secured. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John v. 4, 5). It makes a great difference to the soldier, when he belongs to an

Allâ€Victorious Legion, and serves under a Captain that never lost a fight. And there can be no doubt as to the issue in your heart or mine. "He must reign till He has put all enemies under his feet."

At any moment we may look for the sudden collapse of a great portion of the confederacy of evil, which has so long menaced us; as when Abner suddenly came to Hebron to give in his adhesion to David. What a huge piece of cliff fell that day into the sea! Expect the sudden collapse of evils which have long troubled you.

As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity. 2 Samuel 4:9

IT was the midâ€day of David's life, and, looking back, he saw how good the Lord had been to him. Step by step God had brought him up out of a horrible pit, and from the miry clay, setting him upon a rock, and establishing his goings. What need was there, then, that men should interfere to hasten the unfolding of the Divine purposes? It had been his lifelong habit to wait. Whatever he needed he looked to God to supply. Whatever difficulties blocked his path, he looked to God to remove. Whatever men stood in his way, he looked to God to deal with them. Twice in the wilderness he refused to take Saul's life. He had executed the Amalekite because he claimed to have slain Saul on Gilboa. And, in pursuance of the same policy, he could have no complicity in the act of the murderers of Ishbosheth, even though they made his way clear to the throne of Israel.

Let God redeem thee out of all thine adversities. Do not lose heart or hope. Do not put forth thy hand to snatch at any position or deliverance by an act which might afterwards cause thee shame or sorrow. "Trust in the Lord, and do good. Roll thy way upon the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him " (Psa. xxxvii. 3â€7, R.V.). He who turns glaciers to rivers that pass away, will remove all thy difficulties and perplexities. He shall cause thee to inherit the land. He will promote thee in due time, and give thee to see thy desire upon thine enemies. He who redeemed thy soul by his most precious blood cannot fail thee, however long He may tarry. Remember that He ever liveth, and loveth, and reigneth

And David took him more wives out of Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 5:13

THIS is terribly disappointing! According to the ideas of the surrounding nations, the greatness of a monarch was gauged by the extent of his harem. But the law of Moses put severe restraint on the multiplication of wives, "that his heart turn not away " (Deut. xvii. 17). It seems as though the soul of David sank into sensual indulgence and luxuriance. It lost much of its early hardihood and strength in consequence; and at this period of his life those seeds were sown, which in after years brought forth such a plentiful and terrible harvest of anguish, murder, and impurity, in his family.

Few of us realize how much our character owes to the stern discipline to which God subjects us. The only way to keep us healthy and vigorous is to send us many a nipping frost, many a keen northern blast. The bleak hillside breeds stronger natures than the warm sheltered valley. The difference between Angloâ€Saxon and Negro is largely wrought by temperature and soil. The campaign, with its strain on every power of endurance, trains better soldiers than the barracks. As David was a stronger, better man, when hunted like a coney in the rocks of Engedi, so are we braced to a nobler life, when all things seem against us.

Few of us can be trusted with unbroken happiness. God is compelled to withhold what the flesh craves. But where prosperity has shone on your path, be very careful not to abuse it. Consider it as indicating God's loving trust in you. He would rather convey his lesson in sunshine than in storm. But walk carefully and humbly, looking to Him constantly for daily grace, and never relaxing the girdle about the loin.

They set the Ark of God upon a new cart. 2 Samuel 6:3

THIS was their mistake. The Divine directions were explicit that the Ark of the living God must be carried on the shoulders of living men. There would have been no stumbling of oxen, no swaying of the Ark to falling, no need for Uzzah to reach out his hand, if only this simple direction had been obeyed. This breaking forth of God was to recall men to simple absolute obedience to the rules and regulations that had been so explicitly laid down in the Levitical code. It could not fall into disuse without grave loss to the entire people. Better that one life should be sacrificed for disobedience than that the whole nation should be impoverished for the relaxation of that ancient law.

We are fond of bringing new carts to God. At every birthday we build the new cart of good resolution, and place thereon the Ark of God. We will be different, and on our fresh endeavors the Lord of Hosts shall ride; but we must drive, and if needs be, steady the Ark. Ah! it is not long before the oxen stumble, and Uzzah who drives is

smitten to the dust of death.

God wants, not new carts, but the living shoulders of consecrated men. We must live for Him, surrendering ourselves to his service; not driving, but being driven; not conducting, but being impelled; not imposing our thoughts on Him, but being willing to submit ourselves absolutely to Him. There is no need to fear God, if only we will obey Him, and in obedience discover the laws by which we may approach and serve Him. Then the power which otherwise flames forth to destroy will become the useful servant of our faith, and we shall be able to undertake great things for God.

Do as Thou hast said. 2 Samuel 7:25

THIS is the voice of a childlike faith.

Note what led to these words. Nathan had just unfolded to the king all the purposes of God's heart towards him. That He would establish his throne, deliver him from his enemies, and set up his dynasty to succeed him this and much else. David's heart was full of joy and gladness he knew that God would not run back from his word; but he felt none the less the duty of claiming the fulfillments of these guarantees. So it is with all the promises of God; though they are Yea and Amen in Christ, it is requisite for us to put our hand on them; plead them before God; and claim their fulfillment with appropriating faith.

Notice the attitude in which David uttered these words. "He sat before the Lord." Was not this the position of rest and trust? On another occasion, he lay all night upon the earth (xii. 16), in an agony of prayer, because not sure of God's purpose, and hoping to turn God by the extremity of his anguish. But there is a marvelous alteration in the tone of our prayer, so soon as we can base it on the declared purposes of God. We enter into his rest; we put ourselves in the current of his purposes; we sit before the Lord.

Mark the blessedness of communion with God. It is as a man talks with his friend. We are not retired always to kneel when we pray, or to con over a certain form of words; we can sit and talk with God, catching up his words as they fall on our hearts, and reflecting them back on Him in praise, and prayer, and happy converse. All true prayer originates in the declarations of God's love, to each of which we answer, Do as Thou hast said.

The silver and gold he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued. 2 Samuel 8:11

DAVID might not build the temple, but he was bent on making provision for it. Indeed, Solomon had never been able to do as he did, unless his father had gathered these stores of gold and silver. Thus other men labour, and we enter into their labors; but the accomplished building is credited by God to each. He does not forget David when Solomon's temple stands complete. The reward is proportioned to each man's service, according to his share.

It is a glorious thing when we not only defeat our foes, but get spoils out of their overthrow which we can use for the service of God and man. It is as possible for us as for David. Out of our failures, temptations, mistakes, let us get the power of helping and directing others. In death Jesus won the keys of death and Hades, and the power to become a merciful and faithful High Priest; and now He ever liveth to make intercession for his people (Heb. vii. 25).

But the main lesson of this chapter is the foreshadowing of God's purpose, that Gentiles should contribute to the building of his Temple. What was literally true in the case of the temple of Solomon, is spiritually true of the heavenly Temple, the Church. From every nation, and kindred, people and tongue, souls are being gathered, who form a spiritual house, a holy Temple in the Lord. The whole world is destined to contribute to that structure, which is being prepared secretly and mystically, but shall ere long be manifested in its full glory. It is very interesting to get this suggestion from the chronicles of a nation so exclusive and haughty as the Jews. "They shall come from the East and West"

Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. 2 Samuel 9:7

FOUR times in this chapter we are told of the lame man eating bread at the royal table. But what are these facts recorded and repeated for, save to accentuate the infinite blessings which come to us through the Divine love!

Mephibosheth had done nothing to merit the royal favor. Not a word is said of his being well

favoured and attractive. So far from that, he was lame on both his feet, and probably a sickly invalid. In his own judgment he was worthless as a dead dog. His state was impoverished; no deed of prowess could win David's notice; he was almost entirely at the mercy of his servant, Ziba. In these respects there are many analogies to our own condition in the sight of God. We are lame indeed; and, so far as we are concerned, it is quite impossible that we should ever win the Divine regard, or sit at his table among his sons.

But between David and Jonathan a covenant had been struck, which had provided for the children of the ill-fated Jonathan (1 Samuel xx. 14-16). It was because of this sacred obligation that Mephibosheth fared as he did. Look away, child of God, to the covenant struck between God and thy representative, the Son of his love. It is idle of thee to seek to propitiate the Divine favor, or earn a seat at his table; but if thou art willing to identify thyself with thy Lord, and to shelter thyself in Him by the living union of faith; if thou canst base thy plea on the Blood of the everlasting covenant - then the provisions of that covenant between Father and Son shall be extended to thee: and because of God's love to Jesus thou shalt sit at the Divine table, and be regarded as one of the heirs of the great King.

The Lord do that which seemeth Him good. 2 Samuel 10:12

ISRAEL was arrayed against overwhelming odds. To human sight it must have appeared very improbable that Joab would be able to hold his own. However, he made the best arrangements he could; exhorted his men to be of good courage and do their utmost; and then piously left the issue to the God of battles.

There are times in all lives when the case seems desperate. How can we meet with ten thousand him who cometh against us with twenty thousand! Heart and flesh fail. What resource is there, then save in the flight of the lonely man to the only God? It is for God to act, since the help of man is vain.

In your personal straits. When patience is exhausted; when the last handful is taken from the barrel; when complicated trials meet and hem you in; when the iron gate and the keepers before the door appear to render escape impossible - then look up, God is marching with reinforcements to your aid.

In your work and war for God in the world. We too often act and speak as if success were to be won by the forces that we may be able to bring into the field, whereas God asks us for nothing more than fidelity and the right disposition of such forces as we can command; He will do all the rest.

In your outlook on the conflict between good and evil. It is quite true that there appears to be an infinite disparity between the one and the other. But there are other forces in the field than appear. There is another host of which God Himself is captain. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up the standard. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven to thy help."

David tarried still at Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 11:1

AH! fatal dalliance in the arms of sensual ease! It led to David's undoing. It was the time of the year when kings generally went forth to the fight; and in earlier days David would never have thought of leaving to Joab or others the strain and stress of conflict when there were hard knocks to give and take. Indeed, on more than one occasion his followers had remonstrated against his exposing the Light of Israel to the risks of the battlefield. But now he sends Joab and his mighty men to fight against Ammon, while he tarries securely at Jerusalem. In this fatal lethargy he betrays the deterioration of his soul. Already the walls were broken down, and entrance into the citadel was easy. We are not surprised to learn that as he sauntered lazily on his palace roof in the sultry afternoon he was swept away before the rush of sudden passion, and took the poor man's ewe lamb to satisfy the vagrant, hungry impulse which suddenly came to him.

Beware of hours of ease! Rest is necessary; times of recruiting and renewal must come to us all; nature positively demands re-creation; but there must be no neglect of known duty, no handing over to others of what we might and could do ourselves, no tarrying behind the march of the troops when we should go forth with them to the battle. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Be most on guard when not actively engaged against the enemy. One unlocked gate may admit the foe to the citadel of the life, and rob you of peace for all after-days. The luxury of the plains of Capua was more fatal to the soldiers of Hannibal than the passage of the Alps.

And David went to Rabboh, and fought against it, and took it. 2 Samuel 12:29

VICTORY might seem to have been forever forfeited after so great a fall. We could not have been surprised had

we been told that from this time onward the course of David's conquests had stayed. And yet this thought would be a misconception of God's dealings with the penitent. Where there is true contrition, confession, and faith, He not only forgives, but restores; He not only restores to the enjoyment of his favour, but reinstates in opportunities of usefulness. So Jesus not only met the apostle who had denied Him, and put him back into the old position of happy fellowship, but gave him a commission to feed his sheep and lambs.

We have sometimes met backsliders who have doubted the possibility of their forgiveness; or, if they have realized this, they have never dared to hope that they could ever be what they had been. And so long as faith refuses to believe in the perfect work of God's love, it must inevitably take a back seat. Let us seek for such an entire faith in God's forgiving and restoring love as to dare to believe that we are put again into the old place, and allowed to anticipate the same victories as aforesaid. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9).

Directly David said, "I have sinned," in the dash of a moment Nathan said, "The Lord hath put away thy sin"; and when Joab sent tidings that Rabbah was about to fall, David was permitted the honour of its final capture, though it had been associated so closely with Uriah's death. Where sin abounds grace super abounds, and reigns through righteousness. Dare to believe this.

Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth. 2 Samuel 13:31

THROUGHOUT the incidents of this chapter, the soul of David touched the bottom of the sea of anguish and remorse. The circumstances narrated were in themselves sad enough; but there was a more bitter element in them for David, because he knew that they were the harvest of which his own sin was the seed. Here began to be fulfilled the sentence of God through Nathan, "The sword shall never depart from thine house."

He had broken up the peace of another's home, and peace had quitted his home, never to return. He had defiled the purity of Uriah's wife, and the purity of his own daughter had been trampled under foot. He had smitten Uriah, and now Absalom had murdered Amnon. Through those awful hours when the entire fate of the whole of his family seemed trembling in the balance, he drank to the dregs the cup of bitterness. Oh, how true are the apostle's words: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Sin resembles the Australian weed, which when once it is sown in the waters will spread with such rapidity as to spoil their beauty, and choke their flow. We must distinguish between the penal and natural results. The penal were borne by Christ for us all, and are remitted for evermore; but the natural remain even to forgiven penitents, as they did to David. Still, God's grace may transmute them into blessings, and cause pearls to grow where before there had been gaping wounds. Ask God to take in hand the natural consequences of your sins, and make them means of grace and ennoblement.

Yet doth He devise means that his banished be not expelled from Him. 2 Samuel 14:14

THE means that David devised were really inadequate. He allowed his heart to dictate to his royal sense of justice and rectitude, and permitted Absalom to return to his country and home without one word of confession, one symptom of penitence. The king was overmastered by the father; and the result was disastrous. It shook the respect of his people, undermined the foundations of just government, slackened the bands of every family in the land, and confirmed Absalom in his willful and obstinate career. "What!" said he to himself, "does my father bid me come back without conditions? Does he demand no confession or reparation? Then he condones my sin."

Let parents be warned. If your children disobey, and violate the rules of your home, you have no right to treat them as you did before, until they have owned their sin. You must insist on penitence, confession, and reparation, though it take hours or days or even weeks of suffering and pleading to bring it about.

Into what relief does David's mistake throw God's way of forgiveness and salvation! Had he acted as David, and as so many wish us to believe, He would have reinstated the human family in the Paradise of his love without waiting for the work of the Mediator, or the confession of the prodigal. By the arbitrary exercise of his sovereign will He might have wiped out the record of our sins %without our concurrence. But it would have been to the irreparable undoing of man. Hence it behooved Christ to suffer, by his blood making an atonement for our sins, and by his Spirit bringing us to penitence and confession.

Here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him. 2 Samuel 15:26

THERE is the patience of hope. We love to gird ourselves in the vehemence of our self-will, to go where we choose, to rule the lives of others; but as the years pass and our pride is humbled, the sinews of our strength slackened, and the radiance of early prospects overcast, we are willing to hand ourselves over to our Father, saying, "Behold, here am I; let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him."

It was thus that Isaac was passive in the hands of Abraham. It was thus that Jesus spoke to his Father, "I come to do thy will, O my God." It was thus that the maiden who was blessed above women, answered the angel's message. It was thus that Paul, when urged not to go up to Jerusalem, avowed his willingness to live or die, as the Lord might choose.

God is ever working upon us through circumstances; and, as in the present case, sometimes He overrules the plottings of wicked men to fulfill his Divine purpose. His will is sometimes brought to us in a cup which a Judas holds to our lips. How blessed to be able to say, as we go forth to meet our Father's will, Behold, here am I! and to look beyond the plottings and machinations of our enemies to One who loves us infinitely. Whatever He permits must be good. Good, if driven as an exile from our home; good, if exposed to the reviling of a Shimei; good, if the heart breaks in bitter tears. All must be good which the good Lord permits or appoints. Many were the afflictions of David, but out of them all he was delivered. When he had learnt the lesson, the rod was stayed. God did not take away his mercy from him. Thou too art in his hands, and He will certainly bring thee again, and show thee the city and his habitation.

The king and all the people came weary, and refreshed themselves there. 2 Samuel 16:14

A GREAT weariness falls often on our souls. We are wearied because of the greatness of our way, and inclined to say there is no hope. Memory tires us, perpetually casting up the record of past unfaithfulness and transgression. The bitter way of the natural consequences of sin is toilsome and difficult to the feet. We faint before the averted eye of former friends and the pitiless criticism of foes. Longings for a vanished past, for life and love, for purity and peace, grind heavily in the soul. Our King has known something of human weariness, though not from all the sources that cause it in his subjects.

But amid the presence of our weariness the voice of God may be heard saying, "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing." There is rest for weary souls beneath the shadow of the cross, in the sight of which the burden rolls away. There is rest and refreshment as we sit in the banqueting house of Christ's manifested and realized affection. There is refreshment as we eat of his flesh and drink of his blood; as we yield our will to his; as we sit with Him in heavenly places. We assuredly find Him to be "a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa. xxxii. 2).

There is no hill Difficulty without its arbor; no desert without its oasis; no sultry heat without its shadow of a great rock; no weariness without its pillow; no intolerable sorrow without its solace; no weariness without its refreshment; no failure of man without a very present help in God.

Arise, and pass quickly over the water. 2 Samuel 17:21

THE water of Jordan may serve as an illustration for our position. Our David has passed over the waters of death and in doing so has taken us with Him. There is a sense in which in the morning light of Easter Day all who believed passed over with Him, so that "by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan."

We all hold the doctrine of Substitution. Do we sufficiently realize that of Identification? Not only did Jesus die for us, but we died with and in Him. In Him, as the true Noah's Ark, the whole Church passed over the Jordan of death from the old world to the new. There are some who do not understand that in the purpose of God we are already standing on resurrection ground. Across the water we can hear the murmur of the world, and detect its corruption; but we are the inheritors of the world in which there is no death nor corruption nor the dominion of sin. When a man realizes this he no longer braces himself up to meet death, because he knows that in the person of Christ he has left it behind for ever.

What is true, however, in God's purpose should be the aim and goal of our daily striving. To us there comes the unceasing call, "Arise, and go over Jordan." There is always a thither and a hither side for every experience and act. We may always do as the world does; this is to stay on the death side. We may always do as Christ does; this is to pass over to the risen and living side. Reckon that you have died, and mortify the deeds of your body.

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. "

Wherefore wilt thou run? . . . Come what may, said he, I will run. 2 Samuel 18:22,23 (R.V.).

MOAB did not love David, as Ahimaaz did, and could not understand what made the young man so eager to carry the tidings. Doubtless Ahimaaz and Cushie entirely misinterpreted the heart of David, and thought that he would be glad to hear that the rebellion was stamped out, and Absalom was dead. And it was because of the pleasure which he thought to give his king that the swift-footed son of Zadok pleaded for permission to run. What though there would be no reward, or that it would fall to the lot of Cushie, who had already started at Joab's command that mattered not, the love of David constrained him.

How often that question of reward is thrown at the servants of God! It is one of the favorite taunts of the world; as Satan said of Job, that we do as we do because we are paid. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" And nothing so startles men as disinterested service. They cannot account for it; but it wins their respect. "Reward or no reward; recompense or none; smiles or tears, come what may, let me run." That is the spirit that becomes a Christian, and convinces the world. "The love, of Christ constraineth us."

Ahimaaz outran Cushie. The one was a volunteer for love's dear sake; the other, a bond-servant, doing as he was told. Love lent wings to his feet, and speeding past his fellow bore him first into David's presence. So God's will is done in heaven: "The cherubim ran and returned like a flash of lighting." So God's will is done on earth: "They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word. And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail!"

The King is near of kin to us. 2 Samuel 19:42

THERE are two derivations for the word king: one from the word can the king is the man that can do things; the other from the word kin the king is closely related to us, of our kith and kin. In either case, there is a beautiful meaning, as touching our Lord and Saviour. He is King, because He has overcome our enemies, and can overcome. He is King, because He has taken on Himself our flesh and blood, and has forever made us one with Himself. The King is our kinsman. Our kinsman is King.

It is very comforting to know how really our Lord has identified Himself with us. The Gospels are full of the wonderful story. His kinship was manifested in

His Prayers. He bade us speak to God as our Father; in that marvelous possessive pronoun, not only linking us all to one another, but including Himself in our petitions, save when we ask for forgiveness.

His Infirmities. "We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." His hunger and thirst; his weariness and exhaustion; his suffering unto death all accentuate the closeness of the tie between us.

His Temptation. "In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." The avenues through which the tempter could approach Him were those by which He assails us also. No temptation took Him, but such as is common to man. So to every lonely soldier of his He draws near, saying, "Be of good cheer; I have passed through it all. I am your brother in the fight; I feel for you with a quick sympathy; the glories of my throne do not alter my true-hearted love."

The men of Judah clave unto their King. 2 Samuel 20:2

WE are reminded of the exhortation of the good Barnabas, that with purpose of heart the converts of Antioch should cleave unto the Lord. This is the test of a true faith. We often come to the dividing of the paths. We stand on the watershed of the hills: that way leads back to Moab with its fascinations; this on to Canaan with its spiritual attractions. Orpah and Ruth must choose. Each is equally profuse in speeches and tears; but the ultimate test of love is whether they will stay or go. Which will cleave to the widowed Naomi? She is the truest lover; her fidelity will attest the fervor and strength of her affection. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, and returned to her people and her gods, while Ruth "clave unto her."

We must cleave to Jesus, in spite of the derision of the multitude. We must be prepared to stand with Him when He stands alone, or goes forth alone to die. We must be willing to stem the mighty tide of the world which has left Him and pours past us. Though all forsake Him, yet we must cleave.

We must cleave to Jesus, in spite of the rebellion of the flesh. Our whole nature may sometimes rise in insurrection, demanding some forbidden fruit. It is no child's play then for the lonely will to stand by itself in unshaken fidelity and loyalty; but it must.

We must cleave to Jesus when He seems to rebuff us. Only those who can stand so sharp an ordeal, are exposed to it. But sometimes we are called to pass through it as Job, that angels may learn how Christ's lovers cling to Him, not for his gifts, but for Himself.

Because he slew the Gibeonites. 2 Samuel 21:1

THE Gibeonites were under the protection of a special covenant, which had been entered into between them and Joshua. That covenant was the outcome of a ruse on their part. But since it had been most solemnly made by the leaders of Israel, it held good. The fact of their deceit and chicanery could not absolve Israel from the oath which had been passed for their safety. For centuries the provisions of this covenant had been observed, till Saul invaded them, and slew the Gibeonites. This was a grievous sin, which, according to the religious light of the time, seemed to demand blood; and David proposed to atone for blood by blood. Nothing but blood could atone for sin so black and dark.

We are also protected by a covenant, into which the Father has entered with the Son, not for our worthiness or merit, but only because He would. The provisions of that covenant engage to take us to be his people, to remember our sins no more, and to make the Divine law the object of our love (Heb. viii.). And the argument is irresistible, that if man is so mindful of a covenant as to feel that its infraction is a sin which can only be expiated by blood's shedding, it is impossible to suppose that God will ever run back from his.

O my soul, thou mayest rest secure in this: here is an everlasting rock; this foundation shall suffice thee for evermore. Thou art in the Son of his love. Though thou art sinful and evil, yet thou art included in the covenant which is more lasting than that of day and night. Jesus has met its conditions on thy behalf, and has undertaken to secure thy obedience and holiness.

Thy gentleness hath made me great. 2 Samuel 22:36

THE triumph of God's gentle goodness will be our song for ever. In those far distant ages, when we look back on our earthly course, as a grown man on his boyhood, and when the words of this Psalm shall express our glad emotions, we shall recognize that the Hand which brought us thither was as gentle as our mother's; and that the things we craved, but faileth to receive, were withheld by his gentle goodness. Our history tells what gentleness will do.

The Apostle besought the Corinthian converts by the gentleness of Christ (2 Cor. x. 1). Though there were abuses amongst them that seemed to call for stringent dealing, he felt that they could be best removed by the gentle love which he had learned from the heart of Christ. The wisdom which is from above is gentle as well as pure; and in dealing with the sin that chokes our growth, it is probable that gentleness will do more than severity. The gentleness of the nurse that cherishes her children; of the lover to her whom he cherishes above himself; of the infinite love which bears and endures to the uttermost 'is the furnace before which the foul ingredients of our hearts are driven never to return. We might brave the lion; we are vanquished by the Lamb. We could withstand the scathing look of scorn; but when the gentle Lord casts on us the look of ineffable tenderness, we go out to weep bitterly.

That He has borne with us so lovingly; that He has filled our lives with mercy even when compelled to correct; that He has never altered in his tender behavior towards us; that He has returned our rebuffs and slights with meekness and forbearance; that He has never wearied of us ' this is an everlasting tribute to the gentleness that makes great.

As the light of the morning when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds. 2 Samuel 23:4

THE dealings of God with man are compared to morning light, and the sprouting of tender grass in the sunshine that follows rain. The one may refer to youth, and the other to age. In each there is sunlight: in the one case it is before the clouds have gathered; in the other after they have dispersed.

Clouds. ' There are many different sorts: the cirrus, like platines in the sky; the cumulus, in heaps, like the summits of distant mountains; the strata, or long bars; the nimbus, heavy with shower. There is a counterpart for each in human life, without which we should miss much of those experiences of light and shade that so

frequently reveal the nature of the light. We should not know God's comfort and very present help, if it were not for the clouds which are born in the marshlands of trouble. Who does not prefer the changeful beauty of an English spring to the unclouded blue of Italian skies?

The Light of the Morning. The love of God steals over hearts as the dawn. He is the Rock; but his advent breaks gently as light. So God's love came to Lydia, whose heart opened as a flower its petals. This makes it difficult for some of us to decide the moment of our regeneration; only we know that, once darkness, we are now light in the Lord.

Clear Shining after Rain. We all know something of cloud and rain. If we did not, our lives would be arid as a desert. Rain is necessary to fructify the seeds that lie buried in the soil but clear shining is needed too. Times of joy are needed equally as those of sorrow. The tender grass is the child of rain and sun. Hast thou had tears, thou shalt have smiles! Hast thou had clouds and rain, thou shalt have clear shining!

Neither will I offer burnt offerings . . . of that which doth cost me nothing. 2 Samuel 24:24

GOD'S love to us cost Him something. He spared not his own Son, and that Son spared not his blood. But how little our love to Him costs us! Let us understand that where there is true, strong love to Jesus, it will cost us something. Love is the costliest of all undertakings.

It will cost us Self-denial. Christ and self are perfectly incompatible; to have the one we must be prepared to surrender the other. The heart subtly schemes to hold both; but it does not deceive Christ. He knows in a moment when we have preferred to spare ourselves and to sacrifice Him, or to obey Him and sacrifice ourselves. We know it also. At first we may find it an effort to count all things but loss for Him; but as we go on doing it, and drink in the fresh air that breathes about the mountains of self-denial above all, as we see the smile of pleasure on his face our hearts leap with joy, and we love to give Him everything, not thinking of the cost, any more than Mary did when she broke the alabaster box of very precious ointment. After all, it is but fitting that we offer our bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

It will cost us Companionships. Those who knew us will pass us with averted faces. It will cost us hard-earned money; for we shall realize that we have no property in anything that we possess. It will cost us high repute amongst our fellows. But what shall we mind if we gain Christ? You cannot give up for Him without regaining everything you have renounced, but purified and transfigured. Did not the Lord say so? And did He not add a hundredfold, with persecution. Let us heartily respond, "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee! "