

F.B. Meyer:

As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress. 1 Kings 1:29

"IN my distress I called on the Lord, and cried to my God." Never let there be distress without its cry. He will hear your voice out of his temple, and your cry will come before Him even into his ears. He will answer, and set you in a large place. There is even a gain to be won from distress, because it brings out new phases of Christ's redemptive help.

God redeemed David from the calumny of those who maligned him without cause. In so many of his psalms he refers to the unjust and cruel hatred which misrepresented him and his doings. But God, to whom he committed his cause, vindicated him, so that his righteousness shone as the light, and his judgment as the noonday. So He will do for you. Those who now lay all manner of unkind charges to your door, will be compelled to admit your innocence. Only leave your cause with God, and be still.

God redeemed David from all the afflictions that shadowed his early days: from his wanderings in the wilderness; from his hairbreadth escapes in the eaves; from meeting his death on many a terrible battlefield. We hardly realize, just now, how much we owe to the Angel of God's redemption, who is ever beside us, environing us with careful love, so that no evil may approach us, or snare take our feet. Our pathway is thick with shares and dangers, as the pilgrims found it when journeying through the valley of the shadow; but there is a way out, and in the morning we shall marvel to see how we escaped.

God redeemed David's life from destruction. This was the greatest miracle of all, when we consider the strong passions that slumbered within him, breaking out whenever he broke loose from God's grace.

That the Lord may continue his word. 1 Kings 2:4

HOW strongly David held to God's promise! It was deeply graven in his soul. How could he forget the word which guaranteed the succession of his race upon the throne of Israel! At the same time he distinctly recognized that the fulfillment was conditional. There was an if in it. It was only in so far as his children took heed to walk before God in truth that God was bound to place them on the throne of Israel; therefore he urged Solomon to keep the charge of the Lord, that the Lord might continue his word. We also must obey the threefold condition if we would enjoy a continuance of God's helpful care.

1. Be thou strong. "The strength which is in Jesus Christ waits to make us strong. In the Lion of the tribe of Judah there is the boldness which will not swerve in the face of the foe. Timid women and little children in the days of persecution have waxed valiant in the fight, and have not flinched from death, because Jesus was beside them.

2. Keep the charge of the Lord thy God. "He has committed to our care many a sacred deposit, in return for our deposit with Him (2 Tim. i. 12, 14; R.V., marg). They are his holy Gospel, the Rest Day, the doctrines of the Evangelical Faith, and the Inspired Word. Let us watch them until we see them weighed out in the temple as were the sacred vessels which Ezra committed to the priests for transport across the desert (Ezra viii. 33).

3. Keep his statutes and commandments. "We must obey with reverent care the one great law of love, which includes all the rest. Acting thus, we shall put ourselves in the way of enjoying a continuance of that favor which God has promised.

I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked. 1 Kings 3:13

THE understanding heart was Solomon's supreme request, and it was given him before the morning light had broken over Jerusalem. But God did exceeding abundantly beyond what he asked or thought. Riches and honour, victory and long life, were thrown in as part of the Divine gift; as paper and string are given by the tradesmen with the goods we purchase. It seems as though our Lord's words were anticipated, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Put first things first. "One of the most important lessons of life is to discern the relative value of the

objects within our reach. The child will take the handful of glass beads, and leave the heap of diamonds in the rough. It is the terrible mistake of men that, perplexed by earth's crosslights, they put evil for good and good

for evil; they make earth rather than heaven their center; time rather than eternity their measurement.

Seek God and all things in Him. "Things without God cannot satisfy the craving of the soul. To know God, and to be known by Him, is to possess all things. All that is lovely, strong, or right, in any human being was in the Creator before it entered the creature; having God, you possess all things in Him.

Be more careful of what you are than what you have. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth; but in his purity, truth, tenderness, and the properties of his soul. The fruit of the Spirit must ever be manifest in the life of the believer "Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Largeness of heart. 1 Kings 4:29

WE must all admit that our soul is too narrow. It holds too little, knows too little, is deficient in willpower, and, above all, in capacity of love; and when we are called to run in the way of God's commandments, we break down in despair, and cry, "If I am to be a runner, Thou must first enlarge my heart."

How little we know of the experience which Madame Guyon describes when she says: "This vastness or enlargedness, which is not bounded by anything, increases every day; so that my soul in partaking of the qualities of her Spouse seems also to partake of his immensity."

"There is," remarks one of the old Puritans, "a straightness, slavery, and narrowness, in all sin; sin crumples up our souls; which, if they were freely spread abroad, would be as large and wide as the whole universe. No man is truly free; but he that hath his will enlarged to the extent of God's will, by loving whatsoever God loves, and nothing else, he enjoys boundless liberty, and a boundless sweetness." God's love embraces the universe. He "so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son." We who have partaken of the Divine nature must also love as He does.

Thomas a Kempis says, finally: "He who desires glory in things outside of God, or to take pleasure in some private good, shall many ways be encumbered and straitened; but if heavenly grace enter in, and true charity, there will be no envy, neither narrowness of heart, neither will self-love busy itself, for Divine charity overcometh all things, and enlargeth all the powers of the soul." Give unto us, O God, this largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea's shore

Now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side. 1 Kings 5:4

GOD is the Rest-Giver, When He surrounds us on every side with his protecting care, so that our life resembles one of the cities of the Netherlands in the great war "inaccessible to the foe because surrounded by the waters of the sea, admitted through the sluice" then neither adversary nor evil occurrent can break in, and we are kept in perfect peace, our minds being stayed on God.

"Hidden in the hollow of his blessed hand,

Never foe can enter, never traitor stand.

Have you experienced the rest which comes by putting God round about you, on every side "like the light which burns brightly on a windy night because surrounded by its four panes of clear glass! Ah! what a contrast between the third and fourth verse: Wars on every side; Rest on every side. And yet the two are compatible, because the wars expend themselves on God, as the waves on the shingle; and there are far reaches of rest within, like orchards and meadows and pasturelands beyond the reach of the devastating water.

Out of such rest should come the best work. We are not surprised to find Solomon announcing his purpose to build a house unto the name of the Lord. Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus, anointed Him. Out of quiet hearts arise the greatest resolves; just as from the seclusion of country hamlets have come the greatest warriors, statesmen, and patriots. Men think, foolishly, that the active, ever-moving souls are the strongest. It is not so, however. They expend themselves before the day of trial comes. Give me those who have the power to restrain themselves and wait; these are they that can act with the greatest momentum in the hour of crisis.

There was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard. 1 Kings 6:7

IN absolute silence, like the growth of a palm in the desert, that noble building arose in the symmetry of its fair

proportions. But there was plenty of quarrying and hammering and chiselling before the materials were brought to the site.

The absolute silence with which the Temple rose is a meet emblem of the progress of the Church, from its foundations laid in the Apostolate towards the top stone, which before very long will be laid upon the completed structure. Amid the rise and fall of dynasties and empires, the Church is being built. Soul after soul, as so many added bricks, is being quietly placed upon the walls. Some day the world will be amazed when it sees the New Jerusalem descend out of heaven from God. The mightiest works of God are the fruit of silence.

You and I are now in the quarry, hewn, chipped, chiselled: or we are in the saw-pit, being sawn, planed, pierced by nails. Be of good cheer! It will not be long, the preparatory work will be over, and we shall become part of the eternal structure. Into heaven there can enter neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron. The trial will have done its work. Sorrow and crying will flee away. The apostle Paul, who knew more than any man what trial and pain meant, could confidently declare: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Then shall the city of God shine forth in completed beauty, her walls Salvation and her gates Praise; and the triumphant song of the redeemed shall ring forth: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them. 1 Kings 7:46

THE Apostle tells us to obey from the heart that mould or form of doctrine to which we were delivered (Rom. vi. 17). What a mould is to the metal which is wrought into various forms of utensils, that the form of sound doctrine is to believers who desire to resemble Christ. When our hearts, melted in contrition and penitence, are poured into the teaching of the Apostles, to ponder it in memory, and to carry it out in life, they are, so to speak, cast into the pattern of Jesus Christ, which they wear for evermore. Thus we are conformed to the image of his Son.

We differ as widely as the vessels named here. Some are lavers, and some bases; some shovels, and some basins. It matters little what shape we bear; so long as we are cleansed and meet for the Master's use. Each vessel in Solomon's temple filled its own niche. The machinery of the whole would have been hindered if one had been missing. Be content with the shape which the Great Designer hath intended for thee. Yield to it. Dare to pour thyself into the dark passages of the mould. Do not ask the intention of this or that. Obey from the heart, otherwise thou mayest have to be broken up, and put back again into the furnace to go through the process once more. This is the Plain of the Jordan for us, the place of death; but soon we shall be remitted to the Palace and Temple of God.

There is no clue to the understanding of the mysteries of our mortal life, save the hypothesis, that we are being prepared for the position which has been prepared for us in the eternal world. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

That he maintain the cause of his servant, as every day shall require. 1 Kings 8:59 (R.V.).

THE marginal (R. V.) reading is, "The thing of a day in its day." What rest would come into our lives, if we really believed that God maintained the cause of his servants! Men hate you, and say unkind or untrue things about you; on your part, though you are quite prepared to admit that you have made mistakes, yet you know that you desire above all things to act as God's servant should, that your motives are sincere, and your hands clean—be of good courage then: God will maintain your cause, as every day may require.

Or, you are beset by strong competition; and, in order to hold your own, you have been tempted to do what is not perfectly the best—to spice your teaching with a little heterodoxy, puff your wares with misleading titles, to adulterate your goods. But there is no need to do this; if only you are faithful to God, He will maintain your cause, as every day may require.

Or, you are tempted almost beyond endurance, and think that you must yield. The seductions are so insidious, the pitfalls so carefully concealed, the charm of evil so subtle. But, if you will only look away to God, you will find Him a very present help to maintain your cause. Oh, trust Him; for none of them that do so can be desolate. Daily strength for daily need; daily manna for daily hunger; daily maintenance for daily temptation. These are assured.

As we stand on the hill-top in the morning and look across the valley of the coming day, its scenes are too

closely veiled in heavy hanging mists for us to specify all our requests. We can breathe the comprehensive petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." And God will suit his help to each requirement. As the moment arrives "the thing" will be there.

I have hallowed this house which thou hast built. 1 Kings 9:3

MAN builds; God hallows. This cooperation between man and God pervades all life. Man performs the outward and mechanical; God the inward and spiritual. Paul plants, Apollos waters; but God gives the increase. We elaborate our sermons and addresses, building them up with careful, eager thought; but God must work in and through them for his own glory in the salvation and upbuilding of souls. We must be careful to do our part with reverence and godly fear, remembering that God must work in realms we cannot touch, and to issues we cannot reach, before our poor exertions can avail.

May we not apply this especially to the education of a child's life? Many who read these lines are engaged in building structures which will outlive the Pyramids. The body is only the scaffolding, behind and through which the building of the soul is being upreared. The materials with which we build may be the gold, silver, and precious stones, of our example, precept, careful watching, and discipline; but God must come in to hallow. Our strenuous endeavor must be supplemented by the incoming of the Holy Spirit.

God hallows by his indwelling. Holiness is the result of his putting his Name into a place, a day, a human soul; for his Name is his nature, Himself. Each day may be a building, reared between sunrise and sunset, with our activities; but it were vain to hope to realize our ideal unless the structure become a Temple filled with God. Build what you will; but never be satisfied unless God sets his eyes and heart upon your life, hallowing and sanctifying each day and act to Himself.

Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee. 1 Kings 10:9

THERE were two reasons why Solomon was on the throne. First, because of God's love to him; secondly, because of God's love to Israel. May we not address our Saviour with similar expressions of gladness as those which the queen addressed to a less than He?

How well it is, now and again, to let ourselves go in exuberant adoration! Prayer is good, but it may revolve too largely about our own needs and desires: thanks are right, when we have received great benefits at his hands; but praise is best, because the heart forgets itself and earth and time, in enlarged conceptions of its adorable Lover and Saviour.

We are reminded in this connection of a noble hymn by old John Ryland: "â€"â€"

"Thou Son of God, and Son of Man,

Beloved, adored Emmanuel,

Who didst, before all time began,

in glory with thy Father dwell:

"We sing thy love, who didst in time,

For us, humanity assume,

To answer for the sinner's crime,

To suffer in the sinner's room.

"The ransomed Church thy glory sings,

The hosts of heaven thy will obey;

And, Lord of lords, and King of kings,

We celebrate thy blessed away."

We can never praise Him enough. Our furthest thoughts fall short of the reality. His wisdom and prosperity exceed his fame. No question He cannot answer; no desire He cannot gratify; no munificence He cannot excel. Happy are they who stand continually before Him. Let us see that this is our happy privilege; not content to pay Him a transient visit, returning to our own land, but communing with Him always of that which is in our heart.

His wives turned away his heart. 1 Kings 11:4

EVERY man is vulnerable at one point of his character. Strong everywhere else, and amourâ€plated, he is weak there; and our great enemy knows just where to strike home. It would have been useless to argue with Solomon for the claims of idols. He could at once, by his wisdom, have annihilated all infidel arguments, and have established the existence and unity of God. But, step by step, he was led by silken cords, a captive, to the worship of other gods. It is a solemn warning; and Nehemiah was perfectly justified when, in his contention with the Jews who had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab, he said, "Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by these things! Yet among many nations there was no king like him who was beloved of his God. "

Let young people beware where they let their hearts go forth in love. Whom we love we resemble; and in the marriage tie it is almost inevitable that seductions to the lower will overcome the drawings to the higher. When a Christian disobeys God's distinct command against intermarriage with the ungodly, he begins to sink to the level of his ungodly partner whom he had thought to raise to his own religious standing.

Our associates determine the drift and current of our life. It is so easy to launch upon the current that flows past our feet; it seems impossible that the laughing, enticing water should ever carry us against sharp, splintering rocks, or over breaking cataracts. When we are compelled to associate with the ungodly, let us maintain a strict selfâ€watch, and pray that the breath of the heavenward gale may more than counteract the tendency of the earthward current.

The month which he had devised of his own heart. 1 Kings 12:33

JEROBOAM acted on expediency. It did seem reasonable to argue that the constant going up to Jerusalem to worship might alienate the people from his throne, and awaken a desire for the old national unity; and without doubt a mere worldly wisdom extolled his settingâ€up of idolâ€gods at Bethel and Dan; but his policy in this respect led to the downfall of his kingdom. Had he trusted God's promise, made through the prophet Ahijah, the Divine purpose would have ensured the continuance of his rule; but the prompting of expediency resulted in ultimate disaster (ch. xiv).

How prone we all are to devise out of our own hearts! We take counsel with ourselves, and do what seems prudent and farâ€seeing, with the inevitable result of being betrayed into courses of action that God cannot approve, and of which we have reason to repent bitterly. It is infinitely better to wait on God till He develop his plan, as He most certainly will, when the predestined hour strikes. He who trusts in his own heart, and takes his own way, is a fool. To run before God is to sink kneeâ€deep into the swamp. We must make all things after the pattern shown us on the Mount, and take our time from God's almanack. What a contrast to the course of Jeroboam was that of the Son of man! He would do nothing of Himself. His eye was always on His Father's dialâ€plate, and thus He knew when his time was not yet fulfilled. He was always consulting the movement of his Father's will, and did only those things which He saw his Father doing. Similarly make God's will and way thy Poleâ€star. Oh to be able to say with our blessed Lord, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me "!

Forasmuch as thou hast been disobedient, . . . but camest back. 1 Kings 13:21,22 (R.V.).

WE are inclined at first sight to pity this unknown prophet, and to justify his return; but as we look closer into the story, we not only discover the reason for the severe penalty that overtook him, but we are warned lest we make a similar mistake. When we have received a direct command fresh from the lips of Christ, we must act on it, and not be turned aside by a different suggestion, made to us through the lips of professing Christians. God does not vacillate or alter in the thing which proceeds from his mouth. When we know we are in the line of his purpose, we must not allow ourselves to be diverted by any appeal or threat, from whomsoever it may emanate. Deal with God at firstâ€hand.

The rule for determining the true worth of the advice which our friends proffer us, is to ask, first, whether it conflicts with our own deepâ€seated conviction of God's will; and, secondly, whether it tends to the ease and satisfaction of the flesh, as the old prophet's suggestion certainly did. Beware of any one who allures you with

the bread and water that are to break your fast. That bait is likely enough to disturb the balance of your judgment. When a voice says spare thyself, be on the alert; it savors the things that be of man, not of those that be of God.

Learn to deal with God at firstâ€‘hand. Do not run hither and thither to human teachers, or to the Church. Be still before God, and what He says in the depths of thy soul, do. His Holy Spirit shall guide you into all truth; and when once his way has been revealed to thee, go straight on, listening to no other voice, however much it professes Divine inspiration.

I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. 1 Kings 14:5

HOW foolish! Jeroboam thought that the old prophet could penetrate the veil that hid the future, but not the disguise in which his wife wished to conceal herself. As we might have expected, the aged prophet's inner sight read her heart. From God no secrets are hid. Immediately on his accosting her by her name there came the dread announcement of inevitable disaster.

We must not hesitate to unfold all the consequences of sin. As watchmen on the walls, we are bound to tell men of the certain fearful looking for of fiery indignation which shall devour the transgressors. None of us should flinch from declaring the whole counsel of God. We should specially insist on the guilt side of sin. Not only that it is a misfortune, a mistake, an error, a disease, a tyranny; but a crime. The sinner is a criminal, who has incurred the just wrath and anger of a holy God: for which he must suffer a due recompense.

Oh for more tenderness that we may with tears warn men of their doom! We are so selfâ€‘possessed, so stolid ; we need to ask that our eyes, like Jeremiah's, should be fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night. If the tidings are heavy, let us first feel their pressure on our own hearts; let us bend over the regions of despair and darkness, and hear the bitter weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and come back to warn our brethren, lest they also come to that place of torment. Though it was with fear and much trembling that Paul preached the Gospel, yet he did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. And while we go to men with the good tidings of salvation, we must not withhold the heavy tidings from those who persist in unbelief

Asa did . . . right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. 1 Kings 15:11

IT is a great thing to have such a testimony as this. We may do right in our own eyes; yet the eye of the Lord may detect evil which neither our associates nor we have seen. We may deceive ourselves, we may deceive others; but we cannot deceive God. In the home or business, in situation or factory, let us live as under the searching gaze of God.

Asa's life was one of religious activity: he destroyed the idols of his father, and even deposed his queenâ€‘mother, "because she made an idol in a grove." It needs Divine courage so to live for God that at home or afield men shall take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. This is what the world is languishing for â€‘â€‘ reality, consistency under all circumstances, and before all men.

There are, however, two clouds overhanging this otherwise bright life. "The high places were not removed" (14). Though idols were destroyed, the groves in which they were erected remained. They were no snare to him; and he took care that during his life they should not ensnare others; but after his death, in the reign of Jehoshaphat his son, "the people offered and burnt incense" in them (xxii. 43). We must not only cleanse our way before the Lord, but remove any evil thing which may cause others to stumble.

The other cloud is indicated in 2 Chronicles xvi. 12: "He was diseased in his feet. . . Yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." Strange that in affliction he should not have turned to the Great Physician. The enemy of souls is ever on the watch. Pray that amid the pains of death you may not act unworthily.

Ahab did more to provoke the Lord to anger than all the kings. 1 Kings 16:33

HIS sin was very aggravated, largely through the influence of Jezebel, his young and beautiful wife, who introduced the abominations of Phœnician idolâ€‘worship. This is why he is said to have exceeded his predecessors in wickedness. They broke the second commandment, and worshipped Jehovah under the form of a calf. Ahab and Jezebel broke the first, and chose other gods â€‘â€‘ Baal, the sun, and Ashtoreth, the moon. The inveterate love for this idolatry was connected with licentious rites with which these deities were served. What wonder that the land became corrupt when the fountains of its religious life were polluted at the source?

The connection between the indulgence of impurity and the declension of the spiritual life, is very close. As the apostle Paul tells us in Romans i., the men that refuse to retain God in their knowledge are given up to the working of passion; and as they yield to passion they lose the sweet, clear impression of the truth and nearness of the Christ. The first, second, and third thing to be said to young people on venturing out into the world, corrupt through many deceitful lusts, is, Be pure. Wear the white flower of a blameless life. If you cannot be faultless, be blameless. If you cannot realize all the good you know, at least refrain from all the evil. Keep your robes unspotted from the world. Then through purity of heart and obedience in life, you shall see God. As the living Christ enters the heart, He will drive before Him the brute forms of evil, overthrow the tables of the money-changers, and will sit to teach of God. Give yourself unreservedly into his keeping, that He may govern and control every avenue of your life.

I have commanded the ravens . . . a widow women . . . there. 1 Kings 17:4,9

WE must be where God desires. â€ˆâ€ˆ Elijah spoke of himself as always standing before the Lord God of Israel. He deemed himself as much a courtier in the royal palace as Gabriel (Luke i. 19). And he could as distinctly stand before God when hiding beside Cherith, or sheltering in the widow's house at Zarephath, as when he stood erect on Carmel, or listened to the voice of God at Horeb. Wherever you go, and whatever ministry you are called to undertake, glory in this, that you never go to any greater distance from God.

If we are where God wants us to be, He will see to the supply of our need. It is as easy for Him to feed us by the ravens as by the widow woman. As long as God says, Stay here, or there, be sure that He is pledged to provide for you. Though you resemble a lonely sentinel in some distant post of missionary service, God will see to you. The ravens are not less amenable to his command than of old: and out of the stores of widow women He is as able to supply your need as He did Elijah's, at Zarephath.

How often God teaches best in seclusion and solitude! It is by the murmuring brooks of nature that we have our deepest lessons. It is in the homes of the poor that we are fitted for our greatest tasks. It is beside couches where children suffer and die, that we receive those preparations of the heart which avail us when the bugle note summons us to some difficult post.

God leads through death to life. â€ˆâ€ˆ It was needful that the child should die, that sin might be remembered and dealt with; but through Death's portal the trio entered a richer, fuller life. Fear not that gateway!

So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel. 1 Kings 18:42

SUCH differences obtain still. The children of this world and the children of light are manifest. What though the bodies of four hundred and fifty prophets lay slain in the gorge of the Kishon; or that by one great act Elijah had hewn down the upas tree, the deadly influence of which had corrupted Palestine; or that the longâ€ˆexpected rain was in the air â€ˆâ€ˆ yet Ahab must eat and drink. These are the things which the children of the world seek after. Watch and pray, lest you enter into this temptation. Let appetite be kept well in hand â€ˆâ€ˆ your servant, not your master; and see to it that you are capable of such profound and absorbing interest in the things of the Kingdom of God, as to count the gratification of physical desire unworthy to be compared with the high delights of service, prayer, and communion with the unseen.

Though he must have been exhausted with the excitements and efforts of the day, Elijah must spend the evening hour with God. Though he knew that the rain was near, he felt that his prayers were a needful condition for its bestowment. Though any part of Carmel might have become his oratory, he sought the lonely solitudes of the summit with the outspread sea before him, that his soul might hold undisturbed vigil, and that he might see over the wide expanse of the ocean the first tokens of the coming answer. His attitude denoted his humility. His repeated injunction to the lad, his perseverance. His success approved his faith.

Stand, O suppliant soul, on the highest point of expectant hope; see the hurrying answer, which was being prepared from pools and lakes and seas, long ere thy prayer began. "Before they call, I will answer."

Behold, an angel touched him. 1 Kings 19:9

IN all probability the angels often touch us when danger is near, threatening our health and life, or when foul fiends step up to us with hideous temptation. They find us out, especially when, like Elijah, we are alone and depressed; when nervous depression has crept about our hearts; when we seem to have failed in the conflict against evil, and long for death to end our long and weary strife. It was the lament of a holy soul on the verge of

eternity, that he had made so little of the ministry of God's holy and tender angels.

It was very gracious for God to deal thus with his servant. We might have expected rebuke or remonstrance, chiding or chastisement; but we would hardly have expected such loving, gentle treatment as this. Is this the man who defied Ahab and all his priests? He is as frail and impotent as any! Nay, but God looked beneath the surface depression, and detected the strong fountains of courage and devotion that lay beneath, only capable of being called again into intense manifestation. He knew his servant's frame, and recognized that he was dust. He knew how to distinguish between the passing overstrain of the body and the heroic temper of the spirit. So, he understands us in our fits of depression and despair.

Whenever these angel's fingers touch you, whether directly or through the medium of loving mortal hands, you will always find the cake and the cruse of water. God never awakens to disappointment. It is an infinite pleasure to Him to awaken his loved ones to good things, which they had neither asked nor thought. Will not dying be something like this? The angel of life will touch us, and we shall awake to see what love has prepared.

As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. 1 Kings 20:40

THIS was likely enough to happen on a battlefield. It would not be possible to hold your prisoner, and to busy yourself about other things at the same time. This man, in the prophet's parable, made a great mistake to concern himself about a number of trifles, when so serious a matter as his own life depended on giving all his attention to the custodianship of the prisoner entrusted to his care. But is it not thus that men miss the main end of life?

Busy here and there, and life is gone. Many spend their days in mere trivialities. Like children they dig in the sand; like the butterfly, they flit from flower to flower. A round of visits, a few novels, a good many hours of light gaiety; vanity, fashion, and amusement these fill their hours, the days flash by, and life is gone. They have nothing to show for it.

Busy here and there, and the chance of saving others is gone. Lives touch lives, for the chief purpose that one should influence the other. But too often we deal only with superficialities, busying ourselves in the slightest interests, but not seeking the salvation of those with whom we associate. The dance, the game, the business relationship, monopolize our thought, and our friends are swept from us in the eddying whirl of life's battle, and are gone.

Busy here and there, and the knowledge of God is gone. Remember how the birds caught away the seed of the Kingdom; and be sure that, in the same way, the cares and riches of this world, and the lusts of other things may enter in, and destroy the impression made on the heart. The ephemeral interests of life press hard on its real interests. Like boys, we squander in trifling the hours given to prepare for an examination on which all the future must turn.

And Ahab said to Elijah, hast thou found me, O mine enemy? 1 Kings 21:20

AHAB got his garden of herbs, but he had Elijah withal, who stood at the gate like an incarnate conscience. Men may get the prize on which they have set their heart; but if they have obtained it wrongfully, the conscience of the wrong done will haunt them, and take away the pleasure on which they counted, and ultimately bring them like a quarry to the ground.

We turn our best friends into enemies, as Ahab did Elijah. The cloud that lights Israel is darkness to Pharaoh; the angel that protects Jerusalem, slays the host of Sennacherib; the gentle love which anoints the Saviour, instigates in Judas a jealousy which ends in murder. The God who shows Himself merciful to the merciful is froward to the froward. The cause of the alteration is to be sought within ourselves. The sun that melts wax hardens clay, but the difference is in the clay. To the widow of Zarephath Elijah was an angel of light; whilst to Ahab he was an enemy. The difference lay in their hearts; the one being holy and loving, the other dark and turbid. What you are, determines whether Elijah will be your friend or your enemy.

This word "sold thyself" is very awful. It underlies Goethe's tragedy of Faust, in which the soul sells itself to the devil for so many years of worldly pleasure. A few promises which are never kept; a mirage that is dissipated in thin air when we approach it; a bribe of gold or silver that burns the hands which receive it such are the price for which men sell themselves. "They sell themselves for nought." Truly the devil drives a hard bargain. When he gets the soul into his power, he laughs at his former promises, and pays as wages, death.

A certain man . . . smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness. 1 Kings 22:34

EVERY man we meet is clothed in amour; in other words, we all cover ourselves with plates on which to receive the thrust of accusation and reproach. "I only do as others." "I do not see any special harm in it." "My father did it before me." "I cannot help it." Such are some of the plates in the amour of the soul; and our work as Christian workers becomes abortive in so many instances, because we are content to belabor the plates, instead of striking home to the one place where the amour joints are. Successful soul-winning depends on discovering the vulnerable part of a man, and striking there. But all this demands a very special discernment of spirits, and anointing of the Holy Ghost. Only so can we detect where best to bring about conviction, and make men know their need of the Gospel of God's grace. The great need of the present day is a sharper and more searching analysis of sin. Men need to be shown how they are violating the laws of God. They assent generally to the Scriptural statements of what God requires, but fail to realize how greatly they have come short. You are almost sure to hit, if you begin to show the various ways in which respectably living people are coming under the Divine sentence.

But several conditions must be fulfilled. (1) Study well your own heart. (2) Be a deep student of the biographies of Scripture; because every type of human character is delineated in Holy Writ. (3) Open your heart to the Holy Ghost, through whom alone you can discern spirits. He is a discerner of the thoughts of the heart, and will teach you to cut to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.