

## The Gain of Giving.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it," was the minister's text that day, and Eleanor seemed to listen, though her thoughts were far away; in a week it would be vacation, and she longed for the time to come that would take her away from the city to her beautiful seaside home.

"He that loseth his life shall find it." Though the words bore a meaning plain, they had none for the child who heard them, with restless eyes and brain; but the sermon at last was ended, and the preacher slowly said, "Our contribution this morning will be for the children's aid."

Eleanor's heart beat faster, her face wore a troubled look. As her hand closed softly over her little pocket-book, where she carried a birthday present, a bright, new piece of gold, and the look of trouble deepened while her hand took a firmer hold.

"I can't give this," she was thinking, "though it's all I have to give, and I wish that the children all could go to a pleasant place to live." But she saw, with a little trembling sob, that the basket was on its way, and when it passed her the gold piece in the midst of the silver lay.

'Twas an August day at the seashore, and Eleanor raced along. Where the heavy waves were rolling, and the tide was running strong; she stooped for a sea shell, lying on the hard and shining sand, when a mighty breaker caught her, and swept her away from land.

But, before she could cry or struggle, she was seized by a little lad, who dragged her out of the water with all strength he had; and he said, to her look of wonder, as soon as he'd breath to speak, "I'm one of the Fresh Air children, a-stayin' here a week."

Eleanor thought of the gold piece she had sadly given away; "Why, perhaps if I'd kept that money he wouldn't be here to-day!" Weren't you afraid of drowning? He slowly shook his head, "I didn't think of myself at all, but of seeing you," he said.

And she suddenly thought of the sermon; its meaning grew clear and plain, about the finding and losing, the giving that's greatest gain; that the life which is lived for others is the only life to lead, and, instead of our vain self-seeking, we should care for another's need.

—CAROLINE B. LEWIS, in *Congregationalist*.

## Not Exempt from Suffering.

To be identified with "the people of God," is to "suffer affliction" with them. While they have their superior joys they also have their peculiar sorrows. To all the godly, sin is a source of profound grief. They know and feel that "it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God." Such was David's experience when in speaking unto God, he exclaimed, "My sin is ever before me." "Against thee, and thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." Of nothing else did Paul complain as of indwelling sin. In the jail at Philippi, with his flesh lacerated with scourges, and his feet made fast in the stocks, he sang praises to God, so that the prisoners heard his "songs in the night;" when variously impelled in the service of Christ, and assured that "in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him," he could say, "None of these things move me;" but when pierced with a sense of sin, he cried in anguish, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Evidently his sinfulness was the greatest of all his grievances.

The realized condition of impenitent sinners is also a source of affliction to the truly penitent. With Lot their souls are vexed from day to day with the unlawful deeds of the ungodly. With Moses they cry unto God with intensity of opportunity, concerning the idolatrous Israelites, "Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin; if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of thy book." With Isaiah, they deplore the condition of the sinfully perishing in the most pathetic tones, saying, "Look away from me; I will weep bitterly; labor not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people." With David they are overwhelmed with the spectacle of surrounding impiety and cry out, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." With Jeremiah, in a similar strain, they exclaim, "O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" With Paul they are in "great heaviness and continual sorrow" in their hearts for their unbelieving kindred and friends. With Jesus, as when He wept over Jerusalem, they look with tearful eyes upon a world lying in wickedness.

Nor is the low state of religion least among the afflictions of the people of God. Evil times in Zion have always

been sorrowful times to those who "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." The Jews in their captivity wept when they remembered their beloved city, and they were unable to sing their joyful songs while sojourning in a strange land. Nehemiah wept and prayed and fasted because of the desolations of the holy city. Days of adversity, through which the cause of God is left to struggle, as if for very existence, are distressing days to those who are suitably identified with that cause; and not to care for languishing religious interests is no evidence of true godliness. It is represented as the climax of unworthiness not to be grieved for what is denominated "the affliction of Joseph." Those who are sorrowfully afflicted by existing ungodliness are spared by a compassionate God from the impending doom of evil-doers as appears from His saying, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof."

All who would be identified with "the people of God" must expect to "suffer affliction" with them. Of such experience, however, an apostle might well say: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In the same strain, Jeremy Taylor says: "When a Christian has finished his state of sorrows and sufferings, then God opens to him never-ceasing felicities. As much as moments are excelled by eternity, and the sighing of a man by the joy of an angel, and a salutary frown by the light of God's countenance, a few groans by the infinite and eternal hallelujahs; so much are the sorrows of the saints to be undervalued in respect to what is deposited for them in the treasures of eternity. Their sorrows can die, but so cannot their joys."

Every chain is a ray of light, and every prison is a palace, and every loss is the purchase of a kingdom, and every affront in the cause of God is an eternal honor, and every day of sorrow is a thousand years of comfort, multiplied with a never-ceasing remuneration; days without night, joys without sorrow, sanctity without sin, charity without stain, possession without fear, society without envying, communication of joys without lessening, and they shall dwell in a blessed country where an enemy never entered, and from whence a friend never went away.

The redeemed in heaven go forth "out of great tribulation," bearing palms of glorious victory. As we rise on "wings of faith" to the contemplation of the untold joys of "the saints above," we are reminded that "Once they were mourning here below, And bathed their couch with tears, They wrestled hard as we do now With sins and doubts and fears."

—The Watchman.

## The Two Talents.

One of the most common excuses for inactivity in spiritual work is a want of ability; not a total want of ability, but the absence of the great ability which is possessed by some of the more favoured members of the Church. No one is willing to acknowledge that he is altogether without mental strength and moral influence; he would vigorously resent such an imputation. But he compares himself with others, and he sees, or thinks he sees, that they are "head and shoulders" above him in this regard. He expects them to do the necessary work, while he lives in idleness. Such thoughts as these may not be expressed in words, but they often have a place in the heart: If I could speak with eloquence of such a minister, I would preach the Gospel in season and out of season; if I could exhort with the power of such an evangelist, I would never grow weary in telling the story of the cross; if I could teach with the skill of such a teacher, I would always have a class in the Sabbath school; if I had the learning of such a scholar, my pen would never be idle in defending Christianity against its enemies.

It ought to be remembered that in the sacramental host of God there is a place for those who are private soldiers, as well as for those who are officers, and that in the family of the Heavenly Father there are errands for the children, as well as tasks for the adults. In fact, a large part of the work required to build up the Church is adapted to medium ability. A man may not be a Samson, and yet in certain lines he may be more useful without miraculous strength. All the early Christians did not have the natural talents and education of Paul, and yet Paul did not do all the spiritual work of his day. A few rifled cannon of long range are essential in a campaign, but unless the rank and file have their guns and sabres and use them as they were intended to be used, it is not likely that the army will be victorious.

Mr. Spurgeon cannot preach the Gospel to all the world. There is work to be done which Mr. Moody cannot do. The fact that there is but one living Spurgeon and one living Moody is conclusive evidence that God does not intend to convert the world through men of extraordinary ability. The greater part of the necessary work in the home, in the Sabbath school, in the social meeting, and in personal intercourse has always been done, and probably always will be done, by those whose praise is not in all the churches. Until the Lord appoints an entirely different plan of service from that which has been followed ever since the ascension, there will be abundant room among the workers for men and women of limited education and moderate ability.

Those who possess only a small ability will be called to as strict an account as their more favoured fellows. In the parable of the talents, the servant who had received two talents had to pass through the same examination as the servant who had received five. We are accountable for what we have, and not for what others have. Because a man had few opportunities and limited abilities will not excuse him from appearing before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. It is worthy of special notice that the servant who was faithful with his two talents received precisely the same commendation as the one who had been faithful with his five talents. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The history of the Church is filled with illustrations in which God has honoured moderate ability when consecrated to his service. The reason of this is among the things revealed. God would take away all ground of boasting; he would magnify himself; he would show the groundlessness of every excuse for inactivity. He uses the weak ones of the world to confound the mighty, to show that it is not by might or power, but by His Spirit that sinners are to be converted.

The common excuse of want of ability is not a valid one. Whatever else the parable of the talents may teach us, it certainly puts emphasis upon this lesson: the man with one talent, was punished, not because he had only one talent, but because he did not use the one talent which he had. The same parable seems to imply that those who have the fewest talents are the ones who are most likely to hide their talents in a napkin. This is the case at the present time if we may judge from the frequency with which self-styled unfitness is urged as a reason for doing nothing for the Master. No one can tell how much he can do with a single talent till he has tried.

There is to be a redistribution of the rewards of the great king, and that redistribution will be made, not according to the number of talents a man received, but according to the way in which he used them. The rule by which the crowns of the future will be bestowed will not be ability but faithfulness. When that rule is applied by the impartial Judge, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first."—United Presbyterian.

## "Pray Without Ceasing"—How?

There is a right way to do everything that is proper to be done in this world, and the right way is always the easiest and the best. Some things may be substantially accomplished in different ways and by varying methods, but never with such satisfying results as when right methods are employed. The wisdom of men and their success in life is most clearly manifested by discovering and using the correct method for doing whatever belongs to them to do. It often occurs that what seems impracticable to us, before we learn the right way for doing it, becomes easy and pleasant to us when we learn how to do it. And this is as true of religious duties as of any other thing undertaken by men. It is eminently true of the duty of constant prayer. The command to "pray without ceasing" is a hard saying to many, and they cannot "receive it gladly." At the mention of it many formidable difficulties at once arise in the mind. The thought is that the only way to pray is to stand on the knees and talk with God, and the conclusion is at once made that a person who prays all the time can do nothing else. This would prevent all business activities among Christians, and in a brief period exterminate them by lack of subsistence; therefore, they say, the command can not be interpreted as meaning just as it reads. But to explain so plain and positive a command as requiring less than what it says would be taking undue liberties with the word of God and "make void the law" through human tradition. It would

be to set up a standard in opposition to the plainly declared will of God, and so far as human authority could go, dethrone the divine Law-giver and cast doubt upon all the teachings of the sacred Scriptures. For if an impracticable duty has been enjoined and man has to revise God's law to make it operative in one particular, may it not be so in many others?

Thirsty men are always ready to drink, whether standing upon their knees in some favorite resort, travelling upon the highway, at work in the field, or in any other position, and, if need be, "lap" like the chosen soldiers of Gideon. The condition of the appetite fits them for grasping the cooling draught anywhere, whether in a gold, silver, earthen, tin or wooden dish. And the weary and hungry are always ready and eager for rest and refreshment.

"So the soul that's born of God, Always pants to see his face, Upward tends to his abode, To rest in his embrace."

The heart that has an abiding consciousness of its perilous condition from the surroundings of sin, will be constantly seeking for guidance and protection. Its supreme desire will be for constant communion with God. "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, Uttered or expressed."

When men feel their lost condition, and really desire to "flee the wrath to come," they will be constantly "feeling after God, if haply they may find him," and inquiring, "Saw ye him whom my soul desires to love?" Only the spiritual dead and self-sufficient are without anxiety for "a closer walk with God." When Enoch was walking joyfully with God, it is to be supposed that he asked for nothing only when at the Thursday night prayer-meeting? Or, like familiar friends, did they talk with other all along the way? And by this means Enoch was strengthened to endure the scoffings of the wicked, and he learned of "the coming of the Lord with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon the ungodly" in the last day. When David "communed with God in the night season upon his bed," did he do anything unusual for a devoted child of God? When human hearts are thus filled and overflowing with loving devotion, are they not constantly sending up to God the sweet incense of prayer as well as praise? How, then, can a loving disciple avoid praying without ceasing?—Rev. E. A. Wheat, in *Methodist Record*.

## Needed at all Times.

There is a popular mistake that religion is only necessary to prepare for death and give a safe transit to the other world. Some people speak as if religion could be safely dispensed with, only for the fear of dying unprepared and being lost. No doubt, the need of religion is more deeply felt in the great trials and emergencies of life; but religion is needed at all times. The main idea of religion in the New Testament is deliverance from the slavery of sin and consecration to the service of God. If religion means the new life of faith and love, which gives peace to the soul and power over sin, there is no condition in life in which it is not needed.

We need the comfort of religion in times of adversity and sorrow. Nearly all earthly sorrows come from the failure of some earthly source of comfort. When health fails and sickness enfeebles the body—when wealth gives place to poverty—when friends are smitten down by the hand of death—when those we love go astray in the paths of sin—when those in whom we have trusted deceive us—in all these cases the soul yearns for a strength and light greater than earth can supply.

We need religion in the prosperity which tends to make us forget God and our need of his help. It is when the pleasures and satisfactions of this life are accepted as sufficient that men are in danger of forgetting that none but God can fully satisfy the soul.

It is only the strength which a living union by faith with God yields that can nerve for the work and temptations of life. The work of life requires strong faith in Christ and tender sympathy for men. We cannot have these without a personal experience of renewing and sanctifying grace. There are fierce temptations which none but God can strengthen us to resist, and daily duties that we cannot perform aright until the love of Christ frees us from the power of selfishness. Every day and every hour life's opportunities shall be wasted, unless we are so living by faith as to receive grace to help in every time of need.—Guardian.

## Half-Hearted Preaching.

Time was—and I hope the time has gone forever—when there were professed ministers of Jesus Christ whose hearts were in the hunting-field. Do you wonder that their ministry was a scandal? Others have been naturalists

first, and divines afterwards. Do you wonder that their ministry was a failure? Time was, and time is, I am sorry to say, when many professed ministers of Christ have their hearts more set upon criticising the gospel than preaching it; they are more at home in scattering doubts than in promoting faith. They preach what they are not sure of, and what they have no interest in. It is not their meat to do the Lord's will, for he never sent them. They get their meat by preaching, but it is not their meat to preach. Surely it must be misery to them to have to tell out an old tale which in their souls they despise. Wretches that they are! I cannot call them better. It seems an awful thing to me that a man should profess to be a servant of Christ and not put his heart into the Redeemer's service. You may go and sell your calicoes, and your teas and your sugars, if you like, half-heartedly, it will not spoil your calicoes or your teas; but if you preach the gospel half-heartedly, that is another business. You will spoil every bit of what you preach. What good can come of half-hearted preaching?—Spurgeon.

## The Laws of Sorrow.

Every one must have noticed, in passing through a railroad tunnel in the daytime, how the light gradually fades out, the darkness culminates, and then shades into a gray pallor, which gradually increases, until the full light is restored again. It is so with human sorrow. Mere self-pity at first, it gradually increases as the soul is able to bear it, culminates at a point of utter darkness, and then yields to the returning light again. Thank God! it is not in the nature of sorrow to be enduring. If it were so, with all the accumulating troubles of life, humanity would be crushed to the earth. Be assured, O suffering heart that as surely as the glow of morning returns upon the mountains; as surely as the tide comes back to cover the unsightly drift and rocks; as surely as the storm-stript plant puts forth another flower, so surely shall God's peace return unto thee. This is a law no less calculable than that which governs the procession of the equinoxes.—Zion's Herald.

## Random Readings.

God always has an angel of help for those who are willing to do their duty. Dr. Cuyler.

When it strikes you that a thing ought to be done, just then is the time to do it, lest neglecting you forget it and never do it.

The strongest element of power is love for humanity. Christ loved men so much that he gave himself to die for them.—Bishop Simpson.

More dear in the sight of God and his angels than any other conquest is the conquest of self, which each man, with the help of heaven, can secure for himself.—Dean Stanley.

Life is much reduced in simplicity when we resolve to live one day at a time, and to make that day blessed to others. The cares and the vexations and the troubles of life are allayed or banished under the spell of this central purpose.—Christian Register.

Let us serve God in the sunshine, while he makes the sun shine. We shall then serve him all the better in the dark when he sends the darkness. The darkness is sure to come. Only let our light be God's light, and our darkness God's darkness, and we shall be safe at home when the great night-fall comes.—F. W. Faber.

One of Solomon's wise sayings is that a good man shall be satisfied from himself. (Prov. xiv. 14.) Such a man has the sources of happiness in his own spiritual condition; and these he carries with him wherever he goes. He is anchored in God, and on good terms with him; and this one fact is to him a perpetual fountain of joy.

Enjoyment is good for its own sake, and Providence wishes us to have it. But it is good because, if rightly regulated, it assists us in all our useful work. He who has a cheerful spirit, who can laugh and sing, who has a soul open to the beauty and charity of the world, has an endowment that is worth more to him than gold.—United Presbyterian.

What a very Paradise earth would be if all men believed and practised the precepts of the Bible. There would be no Davids lamenting in the little chamber over the gate; no aged parents weeping over fallen daughters and profligate sons; no divorce suits; no unfaithfulness to marital vows; no domestic discords; no wives waiting at midnight for drunken husbands; no bacchanalian revels; no gilded saloons no haunts of vice; no dishonesty in high places; no defaulting cashiers. Surely, from heaven the Bible came, since to measure up to its standard is to make heaven here.—Methodist Protestant.

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