

## The Prodigal Son at Home.

I am forgiven; and am within  
My Father's house again,  
With love and gladness in the place  
Of loneliness and pain;  
Joy fills the sweet long day with praise,  
My heart sings out its bliss  
For, a new life is given me, with  
My Father's welcome kiss.

So sheltered, and so safe from storm  
And pardoned utterly,  
Glad should I be could I undo  
My works of vanity;  
My Father's love is wonderful,  
It crowns my life—and yet  
A shadow dims my lighted way,  
For I cannot forget.

Even His love, though strong, must fail  
My lost things to restore,  
I wanted all my substance once,  
I have it nevermore.  
My health and youth and wealth are gone  
Nor prayers, nor bitter tears,  
Can bring me back a single day  
Of all my wasted years.

This must remain to burden me  
With sorrow and with shame;  
I grieved my Father's heart, and brought  
Dishonour on His name  
Freely forgiven, and amply blest,  
Yet how much happier yet  
Who never left the Father's house,  
Nor strayed from His away!

MARIANNE FARNINGHAM.

## Opportunities.

Christian service is largely employed in taking advantage of opportunities brought to our doors in the circle of God's providence. And would we fill the places marked out for us in the Kingdom of God we shall frequently find ourselves "redeeming the time" at our disposal.

Let us be persuaded that there are God-given opportunities in life's occasions when the God of Heaven opens up special ways for our feet, times when the Almighty particularly invites us to take cognizance of His guidance. While assenting to this, however, it is well to remember that what we conceive as the ordinary course of life furnishes innumerable opportunities as divine as those in which we unmistakably perceive the beckoning hand of the Lord. Indeed, too often we think an opportunity of little value unless accompanied with signs which, without doubt, stamp it with divinity, whereas every opportunity of whose obligation we are convinced should be as divine to us as though we heard the very voice of God.

Yet who doubts that God frequently visits with special and gracious opportunity the souls and lives of men and women—opportunities which, if improved, time which if redeemed, where in they may rest assured of having performed the will of God? It seems to be God's way of working, through us, to bring within our reach opportunities for service, work and faith that issue in the fulfilment of His will, the advancement of His kingdom, our growth in grace, and the blessing of our fellowmen. And if we are convinced of the presence of the Lord in the affairs of life, we should be on the watch for indications of God's providence in the matter of furnishing opportunities for glorifying His name among men. Who doubts that God furnished the opportunity for that man of God to entertain the three angels unawares? The opportunity of showing brotherly hospitality was improved, and afterwards came the assurance to Abraham that he had taken advantage of an occasion that God had brought to the door of his tent. Such may be the experience of every man who seeks to do the Father's will, and this without waiting to entertain angels other than come to us in the ordinary opportunities of life. Take the occasion of trial of faith as an opportunity for manifesting the height and depth to which our faith can reach—an opportunity in which to measure our confidence in God. Take the occasion of our trial of patience as an opportunity, God-given, in which to evidence the length to which Christian endurance can proceed. Take the occasion furnished for a special display of charity as an opportunity for showing the length and breadth, the height and depth of love that has its birth and nourishment in the love of God manifested through His only begotten Son. Take the occasion of our affliction as an opportunity for rising above the clouds of life and for beholding the glories of the unseen—as an opportunity for beholding the exceeding and eternal weight of glory which grievous affliction brings to faith in exercise. Take the occasion which demands vigorously upright action as an opportunity in which to manifest the dignity and grace of that righteous character inspired and developed according to the power and measure of Christ and Christianity. Take the occasion of service in the name and for the sake of the Master as an opportunity furnished by God in which to manifest the loyalty and obedience that should be characteristic of every one who claims allegiance to Him.

the Lord, as an opportunity of manifesting how cheerfully the Christian can render service unto Him. "Who came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." Take the opportunity of exemplifying practical Christian life as a God-given occasion in which effectually to speak the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Take the opportunity of speaking words in favor of the Son of God and His glorious work, as a God-given occasion wherein to declare the abounding grace of God.

It may be well, too, to observe that opportunity has its relations to men also who may not call Christ, Lord. Let them take the opportunity furnished by Providence as the best time in which to be reconciled to God. Let them take the occasion of conviction of sin and the desire (small or great) for peace with God as the opportune time in which to come back to God. Let them take the drawing of surrounding influences that are inclining towards God, the striving of the Spirit, the fascinations of heavenly allurements, the graces and glories of Christ, that are so evident to the eyes of their souls—let them take all these as opportunities given by the Lord of Heaven, and as favorable to their salvation. Let them seize them. Let them hold them. Let them improve them. They hear to the priceless boom. They are gifts of God, gifts that He has sent to enrich their souls. Let the words be written large and in shining letters—"BUY UP THE OPPORTUNITY."

To know that the Lord has condescended in the course of His sovereign rule to bring opportunities to our doors, should be sufficient to inspire us with earnest activity towards their redemption. But not until we are more fully and more seriously seized with a realization of the divinity of the opportunities for manifesting Christian character, and for expending energy in the interests of the Kingdom of God shall we act as expeditiously as we ought. And we shall come more readily into such realization by studying and re-studying the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose hours and days were filled with responses to opportunities as He attended to His Father's business. Consider from this standpoint two examples from the life and work of Christ. Jesus went to Jerusalem to a feast of the Jews. While there, He had occasion to be near the pool of Bethesda. Near that pool for a long time had lain an infirm and friendless man who from time to time had beheld others step down before him into the pool at the troubling of the waters, Christ might have done as many others had done, passed on regardless of the case of need and the call of God in the opportunity of helping a helpless man. But no. He stops; He speaks; He blesses, and the man once infirm rises whole from his disease.

Another day a multitude of thousands has followed Christ until, footsore and hungry, at night they are without food and without the privilege of procuring it. Having compassion on the multitude, He commands the disciples to set food before them, and they eat to their satisfaction. In these instances—as well as in others that space does not permit us to mention—it is not a complete explanation to say that Christ wrought the works to manifest His divine power, nature and office. In both instances He was appealed to by opportunities, and He redeemed the time by manifesting gracious and astonishing power. To Him they came as from God, and He improved the occasions. Would that in this respect we might follow our Lord, exercising wisdom in the quick, unhesitating action that God given opportunities demand when they appeal to Christian love and benevolence.

God given opportunities should be seized without delay, for many of them come to us but once, and others of them, though repeated, have their last presentation to us. Too often are we blinded by the hope that the future may furnish just the same opportunity as that now offered. The hope is too large, for in many ways have we been taught already that some things are made possible to us but once in life, and that eternity gives no promise of their repetition. Said the Rabbins with great truth,—"Every man has his hour; and he who oversteps his seasons may never meet with the like again." Put side by side with this some words of the Master—"The night cometh when no man can work."—"The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you."—"I will remove thy candlestick out of his place." Thus did warnings fall from the lips of Jesus as He sought to induce men to embrace the opportunities afforded them. And we know the awful woe pronounced upon Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Jerusalem, because they heeded not the opportune time and opportune offers of the grace of the Son of Man.

On the other hand, the Gospels furnish us with instances of men who were greatly blessed by taking advantage of the opportunities. The trumpeting

of the multitude awakened questioning in Bartimeus who was sitting near the gate of Jericho. Informed as to the cause of the noise that fell upon his ears, "As Jesus passed by," the moment of supreme importance to him, he sought with persevering earnestness what the opportunity afforded, and received sight for blindness. The centurion, "when he heard of Jesus," embraced the opportunity, and besought him through another servant to heal the sick. His wisdom was rewarded. The multitudes when they heard where He was, brought their sick, and as many as touched Him were made whole." Let the Spirit of God write the words on our hearts, "BUY UP THE OPPORTUNITY."—Can. Baptist.

## Lessons From the Barren Fig Tree.

God does not desire the destruction of men; but that they bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Everything is planned by Him with this in view. Opportunity. "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard." The location was favorable. The enclosure of the vineyard secured protection. The soil was adapted to growth. The "keeper" of the vineyard was there to give needed care and culture. Everything was favorable to growth and fruitfulness.

So it is in the case of the professor of religion, or of the man who enjoys the blessings of the gospel. The conditions of spiritual growth are about him. The ordinances of religion, like the sunshine and rain, the nurture of God's house, the helpful influences of the Spirit, are all fitted to move the soul, to purify it, and to incite it to activity in the works of righteousness. While a man cannot be expected to do without knowing the way, yet here is knowledge; or to work without motives, yet here are the most powerful of all motives. Everything is favorable—there is no lack of opportunity. Is not this true of us? Have we not had a thousand chances to do good? Have we not known the way of virtue, patience, kindness, and every other Christlike disposition and grace? If then we have not been charitable, forgiving, self-sacrificing, diligent,—in a word, fruit-bearing it is not for want of opportunity.

Inspection. "He came seeking fruit." After all he had done for his tree, he had the right to expect fruit. How does he come seeking fruit? By temptation is one way, whereby he tries courage, fidelity, truth, and the other professed qualities of the Christian. Affliction is another way, as in the case of Job. Many a man appears a model of religious excellence, till adversity comes along and tests the stuff he is made of. Opportunities and calls for service furnish another way of looking for fruit. The Christian says, "I want a chance to do good and serve God." Here is an opening in the Sunday-school, or in giving of his means for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. But how often he begins to excuse himself just when the Master was giving him the chance to do the thing he had professed to desire to do!

Deserved judgment. "Three years I came seeking fruit, and find none. Cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground?" What word can we say why judgment should not be pronounced? It is even as the owner has declared. We do not deserve any longer time, any further forbearance.

Persistent spiritual effort. "Let it alone this year also till I shall dig about it," etc. Still God spares the fruitless, and gives new opportunities, uses new means of culture, that perchance the tree will yet become a fruit-bearing. Such is the long-suffering of our God! But let us not presume, for there is a limit, "After that thou shalt cut it down."—The Interior.

## Infidelity Cured.

A young man was inclined toward infidelity, and like others of his age who have imbibed such notions, he was more or less proud of his advanced ideas. He took occasion one day to go to the study of a minister of his acquaintance and state to him his doubts and disbelief in Christianity. He expected, of course, that the minister would make an elaborate argument to prove the truth of the Scriptures and the reality of the religion founded on them. This would give him just what he wanted, the opportunity to argue and combat.

But the pastor with a wisdom not born of earth, after listening until he had concluded his harangue, said quietly, "Let us tell Jesus about it," and dropped on his knees. The young man would be infidel was surprised in the following his example. As the two knelt side by side, the man of God poured out his petition from a full heart, for the young man beside him, but without any allusion to his condition of skeptical unbelief. He said

pleaded for him as a sinner needing salvation.

The prayer was answered. Before he rose from his knees the doubter doubted no longer. Instead he was convinced and converted and ready to ask with Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The answer came and that young man now preaches the gospel he once sought to destroy with his infidel arguments. That quiet, "Let us tell Jesus," followed by the simple, earnest prayer, did what argument would have failed to do.

There is the lesson. Will soul-winners learn it? Go tell Jesus—alone, if need be, with those you would win if you can—but tell Jesus and ask of him the needed grace. It is not argument with man that is needed so much as telling Jesus. Take him at his word; "Ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." Go and tell Jesus!—Mid-Continent.

## Too Much Hurry.

Our church is in a hurry. The ancient mourners' bench has been hurried and hustled away. Alert young men and women "pass around the cards," and if a sinner's soul is bursting with honest conviction, breaking down under a load of unforfeited sin—if all heaven's host is waiting until that soul be born again—"Just put your name on the card—this is perfectly confidential." Then the audience sings the doxology and goes home.

The blessed old class-meeting could not keep step in the race, and has been left in the rear. In prayer-meeting we are hurried. "Just a few words of Scripture." "Sentence prayers, please." "Brief testimonies—let fifty speak in five minutes." "Let every moment be occupied—what if several do speak at once?" "Omit the second, third and last stanzas." "Sing faster, please!"

Once on a time—the childish phrase comes naturally, for that sweet past is like a fairy tale—there was a church that took time. The pastor understood the value of thought. Minutes spent in holy silence in God's house were never counted as "lost" or "wasted," and out of these golden silences came many a precious bit of heart history. Testimony was not shorn of individuality. Whole chapters of the Word were fed upon. Men and women talked earnestly with God. The old hymns were sung as written, in their wholeness and stateliness as becomes melody rendered unto God.

Oh, for a time to breathe deeply the still, sweet air of a spiritual atmosphere not surcharged with the electricity of irreverent haste!—Zion's Herald.

## "Drifting Away."

A gentleman standing by Niagara saw an eagle light upon a frozen lamb encased in a floating piece of ice. The eagle stood upon that dead carcass and feasted upon it as it was "drifting" on towards the rapids. Every now and again the eagle would proudly lift his head into the air to look around him, as much as to say I am "drifting" on towards danger, but I know what I am doing; I will fly away and make good my escape before it is too late. When he neared the falls he stooped and spread his powerful wings and leaped for his flight; but alas! alas! while he was feasting on that dead carcass his feet had frozen to its fleece. He leaped and shrieked and beat upon the ice with his wings until the ice-frozen lamb and eagle went over the falls and down into the foam and darkness below. This is the picture of every soul that is playing with and feasting upon sin. Many a young man intends after a little more indulgence in, to turn from his sins and be saved; but alas! when he would turn he finds himself filtered by sinful habits, his affections have been poisoned by sin, his will paralyzed, his soul has frozen to the decaying mass of rottenness upon which he has been feasting. Turn, my young friend, ere it be too late!—Rev. A. M. Croxton, in Baptist Argus.

## "For Valour."

Such is the simple but eloquent inscription on the Victoria Cross, which is bestowed upon British soldiers and sailors who perform heroic deeds in the service. To wear that emblem of bravery is the ambition of thousands of men, and whenever the opportunity to earn it comes they do not hesitate to risk all, even their lives, in order to win the coveted prize. The consequence is that every campaign in which the British forces engage is sure to have its difficulties, hardships, dangers, and disasters mellowed by the glory of deeds of conspicuous heroism performed by officers and men in behalf of their fellows.

The Victoria Cross is the gift of an earthly monarch for a valorous deed, and a worthy and honourable recognition

it is. But upon those who respond to the call of the divine Master, for service, who do faithfully whatsoever He commands, whether the duty performed be conspicuous or humble, and who are willing to surrender all, even their lives, in rendering that service, there will be bestowed a reward far richer, more enduring, and more satisfying than any decoration of queen, king, or prince. To him will be given a "crown of righteousness," and there will be spoken to him these words of divine approval: "Well done, good and faithful servant; \*\*\* enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—Chris. Advocate.

## Jesus a Constant Companion.

Make Christ your constant companion. Be more under his influence than any other influence. Ten minutes spent in his society every day—aye, two minutes, if it be face to face and heart to heart—will make the whole day different. Every character has an inward spring; let Christ be it. Every action has a key-note; let Christ set it. Yesterday you got a certain letter. You sat down and wrote a reply which almost scorched the paper. You picked up the crudest adjectives you knew, and sent it forth, without a pang, to do its ruthless work. You did that because your life was set in the wrong key. You began the day with the mirror placed at the wrong angle. To-morrow at daybreak turn it toward him, and even to your enemy the fashion of your countenance will be changed. Whatever you then do, one thing you will find you could not do—you could not write that letter. Your first impulse may be the same, your judgment may be unchanged; you will rise from your desk an unavenged, but a greater and more Christian man.—Henry Drummond.

There are many who would die for Christ, but in these times he calls for men willing to live for him. What is needed to-day is a higher heroism, a nobler, more costly martyrdom—that of the living sacrifice, the sustained resolve, the renewed self giving, the daily consecration.—Josiah Strong, D. D.

If you want to pull a sinner out of the ditch don't take him by the hair of the head. There is a great deal of so-called Christian work that is nothing more than cruelty to animals. What the sinner needs is the Gospel of Christ, and not the gospel of abuse. No man has ever yet been kicked into the kingdom of God.—Bible Reader.

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