

HOME PREACHER OR CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK.

MORNING WORSHIP.

ALMIGHTY God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy name, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm cxix.* 164-168.

COME to a desert place apart,
And rest a little while;
So spake the Lord, when limbs and heart
Waxed faint and sick through toil.

High communing with God he sought;
But, where He sought them, found
The restless crowd together brought,
And labour's weary round.

Then not a thought to self was given,
Nor breathed He word of blame;
He fed their souls with bread from heaven,
Then stayed their sinking frame.

Turned He, when that long task was done,
To sleep fatigue away?
When on the desert sank the sun,
The Saviour waked to pray.

O perfect Pattern from above!
So strengthen us, that ne'er
Prayer keep us back from works of love,
Nor works of love from prayer.

I. SAMUEL XII. 1-25.

AND Samuel said unto all Israel, behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. 2. And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and gray-headed; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. 3. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed; whose

ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it to you. 4. And they said, Thou has not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. 5. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness. 6. And Samuel said unto the people, It is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. 7. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and your fathers. 8. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. 9. And when they forgat the Lord their God, he sold them into the land of Sisera, &c.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, who in the beginning didst say, Let there be light, and there was light, shine, we pray Thee, into our hearts on this holy morning, and give us the knowledge of Thyself in the face of Jesus Christ. Scatter the clouds of unbelief, ungodliness, and sin; waken the ear, enlighten the eye, quicken the heart, of each of us; and grant us grace to bend all the energies of our souls to the work of confession and supplication, of thanksgiving and praise.

O God, we have sinned and rebelled against Thee; we have done amiss and gone astray. From time to time, yea, times without number, we have forgotten, we have forsaken, we have despised Thy commandment; we have brought upon ourselves the guilt or condemnation of a neglected gospel. O God, we are ashamed of ourselves; we are grieved and burdened with the remembrance of our transgressions; and we know that Thou art greater than our hearts, and seest many things in us which we have overlooked or forgotten. There is no health in us; we are full of sin, and without excuse.

O Lord, we bless Thy holy name for having taught us that Thy word is for sinners, and that thou art full of

compassion to those who humbly cast themselves on Thy forgiveness. We come to Thee, trusting not in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. In the name of Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, we ask of Thee pardon and peace; we ask the cleansing of the conscience, and the gift of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. We bless Thee, O Father, we bless and glorify Thy unspeakable love and mercy, that Thou hast sent to us the word of reconciliation, even the message of a crucified and risen Saviour, in whom sinners may find rest and life for their souls. Give us grace to flee for refuge to this blessed hope, and to know for ourselves that the Lord is gracious. Grant that this day we may hear, with deep thankfulness, that life-giving voice which is able to save our souls. May the words of our lips and the meditations of our hearts, in Thy house this day, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

Vouchsafe, Lord, to Thy ministers the spirit of wisdom, that they may both convince the gainsayers, and awaken the thoughtless, and reclaim the wandering, and instruct the ignorant, and edify the faithful, according to Thy will, and according to the spiritual need of each. And do Thou, Almighty God, make the word powerful, by the alone efficacious aid of Thy blessed Spirit.

Be pleased, O Lord, this day to enlarge the borders of Thy true spiritual church at home and abroad. Suffer not the light of the pure gospel to be quenched or dimmed amongst us. Suffer not our sloth and unfaithfulness to prevail over Thy purpose of love towards us. Make the truth real and powerful in our own souls, that we may become Thy witnesses and Thy messengers, in humility and boldness, by word and deed, to others still sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

We beseech Thee, O Father, to grant an abundant blessing to this household, and to all its present or absent members. If there be any one still a stranger to Thee, make Thyself known to him, we pray Thee, in Thy reality and in Thy love. Keep steadfast in Thy service all who have once entered it in will and devotion. Suffer not any lust of the flesh, or any allurements of the world, to mar or destroy Thy work once begun in us; but may we, day by day, so walk in the light of Thy truth, that we may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, see Thee as Thou art, dwell with Thee in Thy very presence, and be satisfied with Thy very love and with Thy likeness for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

O MERCIFUL God, who hast written Thy holy word for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of Thy holy scriptures, might have hope; give us a right understanding of ourselves, and of Thy warnings and promises, that we may neither cast away our confidence in Thee, nor place it anywhere but in Thee. Give us strength against all our temptations, and heal all our infirmities. Shut not up Thy tender mercies in displeasure, but lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us, and give us peace, through the merits and mediation of Thy most dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm xxxvi.* 5-9

I HEARD the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast.
I came to Jesus as I was,

Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold I freely give
The living water -- thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live.
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's light;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright.
I came to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done.

MARK IX. 14-37.

AND when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. 15. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and, running to him, saluted him. 16. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? 17. And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; 18. And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. 19. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me. 20. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming. 21. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. 23. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and

deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. 28. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29. And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting. 30. And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. 31. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. 32. And they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him. 33. And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest. 35. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and the servant of all, &c.

SERMON XXXVIII.

“BRING HIM UNTO ME.” -- Mark ix. 19.

IT has sometimes happened in military history that a defeat has been sustained, in the absence of a great general, by an army that he has a hundred times led to victory. There was that in his eye, in his voice, in his bearing -- there was that (to speak more truly) in his presence, in the man -- which unawares breathed spirit into his officers and confidence into his troops. The want of this presence just made the difference between success and failure. How or why they know not, the battle goes against them; and a bitter self-reproach, of which the chief ingredient is the expectation of his just displeasure, is the punishment of a discomfiture which may have cost them much both in life and honour. At that moment the well-known form re-appears; the man whom all trust heads them, sword in hand; the broken ranks reform themselves, the panic-stricken fugitives rally, the tide of fortune turns, and the lost day is won.

Thus was it on the occasion to which the text points.

The Captain of our salvation, Scripture calls Him so, had been for one night absent from His own. Three of His apostles He had taken with Him. On the holy mount, as St. Peter in his old age called it, the mount made holy by this one transaction, Jesus had been transfigured before the three. They had seen for one moment something of that which in heaven they shall see for ever, the glory of the resurrection body. They had seen the two great representatives of the law and the prophets coming back from the world of spirits to bear witness to Him of whom in life they had spoken, and to talk with him of his decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. They had heard that voice which came to Him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus the prophetic word was made, as St. Peter says again, more sure to them; they saw it visibly confirmed by this glimpse of their Master's glory.

These were the privileged few: what of the rest? In their Master's absence a miserable demoniac boy was brought to them by his father. He had heard of dispossessions wrought by Jesus; he had come for the chance of some alleviation of his life-long wretchedness; and finding the Lord Himself absent he had applied to the nine disciples, beseeching them to compassionate and to help. But they could not. In earlier days, indeed, the third

chapter tells us, they had gone forth under Christ's express commission, not only to preach, but to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils. But now, taken by surprise, some of their number absent, and no express charge left with them, and Christ Himself away, their faith failed them, and they stood helpless and powerless in the face of this great emergency. "I spake to thy disciples," the poor father says afterwards in relating the occurrence, "that they should cast him out; but they could not." They can only stand and look upon it, accused and self-accusing for an impotence which was all want of faith.

At this moment of defeat and disgrace the Divine Leader unexpectedly shows himself. He comes back from the holy mount; there is a solemn pause of astonishment and awe. "The people," St. Mark says, "when they beheld Him" -- doubtless there was upon His very countenance, as of old upon the face of Moses, some trace of the glory of that night-long converse -- "the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed." They gather around Him with an eager reverent greeting. A brief question places the exact situation before Him. One sound of sorrowful remonstrance falls from Him, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?" and then He calmly addresses himself to the painful task proposed, the casting out of the strong man armed from the fortress of a sin-bound and sin-ruined soul.

The narrative is full of beauty, nowhere so given as in the graphic narrative of this second Evangelist. Each verse, each clause, might suggest a sermon.

I. Notice, first, that unexpected question, “How long is it ago since this came unto him?” We might have said, The malady is too evident, the case is too pressing, for any preface or prelude: the child bound by Satan no sooner approaches than, in the very sight of Jesus, the spirit tears him, he falls on the ground, and wallows foaming: can there be any need of questioning? He who reads the hearts must know, nay, he sees the malady in its infallible signs. He does, and yet the father must tell it Him. A few moments delay is as nothing in the face of such a malady, and in the prospect of such a cure. And if a “miracle” is to be a “sign,” It is needful that they who stand by should fully apprehend the magnitude of the difficulty: and if a miracle is to be also a record, an example for all time, of Christ’s manner of working, it is needful that it should be wrought in order, not in precipitation; wrought as Christ would have us expect Him to work, and wrought as Christ would have us ourselves seek His working. “He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him: And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him.”

So it is still. When we kneel seriously before Jesus Christ for help his first answer to us is a question. *Tell me*

all: Is this some slight, some small, some recent trouble, to which thou wouldst have me minister? Thou speakest of *sins*. What sins? What hast thou done so much amiss? Has thou any besetting sin? any special root of bitterness within, sprouting and growing up into stalks and leaves and berries of poisonous speech and act? Look back upon the years, few or many, of thy past life, and tell me how long is it ago that this sin has held thee? My healing is a real healing, and I have no healing but for real sins. Is thine a real sin? Hast thou felt it, hast thou smarted under it, hast thou tried other remedies and found them fail, hast thou come to me because thou wantest me, because without me thou art wretched, and without me thou art lost?

There is in some of us a strange reluctance to this reality in prayer. We are frightened to see ourselves as we are. Just as some men would rather go about with an undiscovered, unascertained disease, even though it be incurable and mortal, than risk the physician's diagnosis which must go before the cure; even so it is in the things of the soul. "Miserable sinners" we can call ourselves without alarm, but when Christ stands and says to us, "*What* is thy sin, and how long ago is it since this came to thee?" then we shrink back and say, "What have I to do with Thee? Art Thou come to torment me before the time?"

Amongst the few here present are those of different ages and circumstances. But do we speak to any who has

not upon him some special disease? something which makes him absolutely require Christ? something which will be his death if he does not bring it to Christ? And O how reluctant we are to do this! how few are really honest, really thorough, in the self-confession! how few answer the heart searching question, when Christ, listening to their general prayer and taking it at its word, stands still, as it were, on his daily round of mercy, and says, *What* is thy malady? and how long ago is it since this came to thee?

II. Notice, again (we can take but a point here and there out of the story), the exact state of the man's faith as shown in his first answer -- "*If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.*" You may regard this as a first principle, as an axiom of the gospel, that it is better to come to Christ in any manner, than not to come. It is better to come to Christ in half belief -- it is better to come to Christ (if that were possible) in unbelief -- than not to come.

If you can say nothing else to Him, say this, which is here written for our learning -- this which has been the beginning of accepted prayer, the beginning of eternal life, to thousands and tens of thousands before you -- "*If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.*"

"If Thou canst do anything." Christ loves sincerity. If a man will express to Him just the exact present state of his faith and of his hope; if he will but send forth after Him, as

into the distant heaven above, the cry which seeks and searches for Him as for hid treasure, even though it be mixed with much uncertainty and much misgiving, with many an “if” and many a “peradventure;” still He who breaks not the bruised reed nor quenches the smoking flax, will not altogether cast it out; the Desire of all Nations will read here the longing of a heart after Him; He will draw it out and draw it on by long-suffering grace, till he who came to supplicate shall stay to praise.

“If Thou canst do anything.”

There is a great difference between saying this *of* Jesus Christ and saying this *to* Him. As long as men can find it in their hearts to discuss and argue and conjecture about Him, what He is and who, without ever coming to Him, so long there is no faith. Thousands of persons wonder whether Christ can do anything, for one who speaks to Him and says, *“If Thou canst.”* There is no beginning of a distinctly Christian hope, until, like the father before us, we address ourselves to Christ Himself, and breathe our very doubts concerning Him into His own ear and heart.

Sometimes an intense anxiety for the help of Christ may diminish for the moment the confidence of its certainty. At a distance this man had heard of Christ’s power over evil spirits, and he came to Him. but now the very urgency of his need makes him speak doubtingly. He has come, and Christ can help; and yet, when he comes, he says, “If thou

canst.” So is it with us. It is an easy thing to talk of “our Saviour” while all goes well with us; it is not so easy to use Him as such when we have some on heart-sorrow, or some one soul-deep in sin, which we would bring for the actual touch of His healing and life-giving hand. Then “if” comes in; happy he who brings indeed his “if” with him, but yet comes.

III. Notice, once again -- it is a dialogue: we take two words from each speaker. Notice then the rejoinder of Jesus.

The man says, “If thou canst do anything.” Jesus takes the word from him, and replies, “If thou canst believe.” As though He would say this, The question is not what I can do, but what thou canst do. There is no limit to my power; but how is it with thy faith? “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

The limit of Christ’s help is not the power of the Giver -- that is unbounded, infinite -- but the faith of the receiver. It is one of those half-repelling, half-encouraging answers, by which our Lord upon earth at once tried and strengthened the faith of those who sought Him.

“If thou canst believe.” Without faith Christ Himself can profit us nothing. Do we ask, Why not? Do we ask, as some have asked, Why did not Christ save first and we believe afterwards? This inquiry betrays a total ignorance of the nature of salvation. Salvation is not an excusing of

punishment, not a deliverance from eternal ruin, as an act of relief from the consequences of sin, the state of sin remaining unaltered: not this -- it is the communication of everlasting life, which is everlasting happiness, to a soul for ever dead without it. We may ask, as Christ Himself asked, How is it that we have no faith? how is it, that, with evidence so clear, experience so decisive, of the truth of Christ, of the power of the gospel, any man should live upon the earth hearing and disbelieving, hearing and trifling with, so great salvation? We may ask this, and the question is to be answered out of the condition of the heart and of the will, out of the dullness of the spiritual ear, and out of the inscrutable deceitfulness of sin. We may bow our heads before the mystery of evil, and humbly search -- humbly, yet vainly too -- into the strange marvel why it is that an Almighty God does not force, nor drive, nor compel, but only remonstrate, and entreat, and persuade; but one thing we cannot reasonably question, why does God not dispense with faith in those whom He is to bless and save -- why Christ should prefix this condition to the assertion of His own omnipotence, "If thou canst believe, : so, and not otherwise, "all things are possible." Faith is, in other words, the receptive will, the outstretched hand, which must take the gift, without which the gift would drop upon the ground, without which salvation itself would be none, the healed man would be still possessed, and heaven itself,

could it be entered, would be no heaven, would be hell, to its inmate! But O, remember -- remember jealously, whosoever would be saved -- what faith is. Faith, the condition of Christ's help, is not faith in myself, it is faith in Christ. It is not the being inwardly persuaded of His peculiar favour towards me; it is not faith in my own individual election to be an object of His saving love. This, where it is indeed given of God to any man, is a later grace than that of which Christ speaks here: it may be a comfort sometimes -- far on -- vouchsafed to the saint; it is never a condition imposed upon the sinner. "If thou canst believe." is not, If thou canst believe thine own election, but, If thou canst believe in Christ's power, then "all things are possible:" "all things are possible to him that believeth." No guilt is too heinous to be washed away: no sin too inveterate to be rooted out: no duty is too difficult to be done in Christ's strength: no obstacle is too great to be rolled away by His Providence. No grace, however opposite to nature, is unattainable by prayer and watching: and no enterprise, however disproportioned to the ability of man, is impossible or desperate to the might of grace. The very devils within believe and tremble; the demoniac himself, if he will only kneel before Christ, shall be seen ere long sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind!

IV. Notice, fourthly, in the last words of the man, the progress towards perfection of this grace of faith. We saw

the beginning of it; we saw Christ's treatment of its elementary state; we shall not see it perfected. Neither here in this narrative, nor yet in human life anywhere, is it given to us to see this. Progress, not perfection; effort, not victory; the cross, not the crown; is the attainment here of the fallen -- the infallible sign below of Christ's redeemed. Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief." Lord, I believe, -- yes, or I were not here: if I did not believe, I should not be kneeling before Thee -- I should be sitting in the gloom of my harrassed tortured home, watching in hopeless anguish a frenzy which I could neither bear nor soothe. And yet, now that I am come -- come, because I believe -- come, because I hope, because I know, that even this malady is not beyond the reach of this one Physician -- I feel within myself, too, the workings of an opposite thought, Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief." I shall stay, I shall kneel on, I shall cry out to Thee with tears -- if I must disbelieve, it shall be in Thy presence, it shall be as Thy suppliant, it shall be against my will, against my judgment, against my true self within. I believe, and therefore I came; I believe, and therefore I kneel; I believe, and therefore my very unbelief must be made to pray; faith shall drag unbelief with it to Thy footstool, arraign it there, and pray Thee to judge it, and to condemn it, and to execute

it, nailing it to Thy cross -- “Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.”

Let no man say that he is what he is not. Let no man say that he has faith when he has none; let no man say that faith is strong in him when it is weak. **Christ loves not the untruthful man;** He would have each man know himself, see himself, and describe himself, as he is. But do this. Bring your unbelief with you (if it must be so) to Christ. Make it kneel down -- make it pray. Then it will have lost its sting! Then you yourself -- you, the real “I” of the will and of the being -- are on the same side with Christ in the conflict within, and you can appeal to Him, as the Author and Finisher of our faith, to cast out of you this lingering, this obstinate, this oft-rebelling foe. You can say, “Lord I believe,” or I should not thus seek Thee: “help Thou mine unbelief;” for it is as much Thine enemy as it is mine. Reveal Thyself to me in Thy love and in Thy power, and then faith will prevail. “Show me some token for good, that this thing which hates me may see it, and be ashamed!” Lift up the light of Thy countenance upon me, and so all shall be peace -- peace now, from a wavering, divided, warring mind; peace at the last, from temptation and conflict, from doubt and sin! -- C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE.

HOW A GREAT KING CAME TO EAT GRASS LIKE A BEAST.

A LONG time ago, far away in the East, there lived a great king, with a very long name. He had a grand palace, and the city where the palace stood was wonderfully spacious and splendid. Its streets, its gardens, its walls, were such as were not to be seen anywhere else. The king had been a great warrior, and fought against a number of nations, had taken many cities, and brought their spoils to his own capital. He had laid out vast sums of money in adorning and beautifying it, and was extremely proud of its grandeur. But he was a bad king to his subjects. He was careless of poor people's state; he oppressed and wronged them for his own ends; he was a selfish tyrant. He was very fond of flattery, and hot and hasty in his passions as fire. I have told you already how he cast three captive Jews into a blazing furnace because they would not worship the golden

image he had set up in the plains of Dura. Even before I said this, I think you knew that I was speaking Nebuchadnezzar. I have another very strange story to tell you about that king.

Nebuchadnezzar was full of wonder, as we saw, at the escape of the three Hebrew friends from the death by fire to which his rage had doomed them. He felt that the God whom they feared was far stronger than he was, with all his pride and power. He was convinced that he must be God indeed. So, while the fit of wonder was on him, he made a decree that all the people of his great realm should respect the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; and that anyone who should dare to speak against him should himself be slain, and his house made a heap of ruins. He said there was no other God that could deliver in the manner in which the God of the Jews had saved his servants. Yet he did not himself serve him. He went on in his bad proud ways, after a time, the same as before. He needed another and severer lesson, and he tells us in his own words how he was first warned of the coming stroke, and then how it fell. The story is given in a letter sent to all his people, and it makes a very striking sermon on the words with which it closes -- "Those that walk in pride God is able to abase."

In this sermon the king says he was very prosperous, and quite at ease in his grand palace. All his foes had been subdued. Every thing went well with him. He thought

there was no one so great and happy as himself. But one night he had a dream that troubled him. He thought he saw a great tree, growing in the midst of a wide field. Its top towered up to the very sky, and its branches spread out on every side, as if they would reach the very bounds of the land. Its leaves were freshly green and beautiful to look on, and rich fruits hung among them in great abundance. The birds of the air flocked to lodge in its boughs, and peck its fruit, and the beasts of the field came and lay under its broad shade. As the king in his dream looked at it, he thought he had never seen so fine and grand a tree. But just as he was admiring it, he saw one come down out of the sky, and heard him say with a loud voice, "Hew down the tree; cut off its branches; throw its leaves to the winds, scatter its fruits; let the birds fly away from it; let the beasts go from under it; leave nothing but a stump of it in the earth." The voice went on to say "Yet let the stump remain -- let the dew of heaven come down on it for seven years; and let it lie among the grass. The Holy Ones, who watch men from the sky, say that it must and shall be so, in order that all the world may know that the Most High rules in the earth." Such was the voice that the king heard about the tree that he saw in his dream. He does not tell us whether he saw the thing done; perhaps he did, and woke up with what seemed the crash of the falling tree. At all events, when he rose from sleep and remembered his dream,

he was very much struck with it, and wished eagerly to know what it meant. So he sent for his wise men, and told them what he had dreamed; but there was no one among them that could guess at its meaning. At last the king called for Daniel and, using his Chaldean name, said, O Belteshazzar, I know you have the spirit of the holy gods in you; hear what I have dreamed last night, and explain the vision to me. None of my musicians can tell me, but I am sure you can. Then he related his dream to him. Daniel heard it with pain and wonder, and he was not able to speak a word for an hour, he was so distressed about the matter. The king saw that he was vexed, and bade him not to fear to speak out the truth. He went on, then, to tell the meaning of the dream, but began by wishing that it might be applied, not to the sovereign himself, but to his enemies. This however, he said was the meaning: -- The dream was a warning from God. The great tree was Nebuchadnezzar, whom God had prospered till he had grown very great and strong, spreading his power, like the tree's shadow over the plain, all round the world. The cry of the Holy One from heaven, to cut it down and leave only the stump among the dewy grass, was God's voice telling the king that the kingdom would be taken from him, and that he himself would be driven out to the fields, and would lie down among the cattle, and eat grass as they did, with a beast's tastes, and a beast's heart. This was to last long enough to teach

the king his pride and folly, and to show him that there was a far higher King than himself, who ruled over all men, and gave power and thrones such as he pleased. But as the stump remained in the ground, so Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was to be kept for him, after he came to know that God was king of kings. When Daniel had told thus the meaning of the dream, he went on to say that it had come for a warning, and he prayed the king to take heed to it, and to his great empire, and be kind to the poor; perhaps God would give him longer peace, or turn from his anger.

The king did not take the prophet's good advice, and all the things foreshown to him in his dream happened exactly as they were foretold. About twelve months from that time he was walking on a terrace in his palace, from which he could see a great part of the city round about him, and his heart began to swell with proud thoughts, as he said aloud to himself -- Is not this great Babylon, and have not I built it? Have not I made it for my honour and glory by the might of my power? Who ever could do anything so grand? Just as the vain word of boast was in his mouth, a voice called out to him from the sky, saying, O Nebuchadnezzar, this word is for you; your kingdom is gone from you; you will be driven to the fields, and eat grass like the cattle, for seven years, till you know that God reigns. All this happened now at once. That very hour the king became mad; he had a beast's heart given him, was chased

away from the homes of men, and lay and ate among the oxen, till his hairs grew long like eagles' feathers and his nails like the claws of birds. Many a shower wet him, and many a night's dew. Yet he was preserved in life, and what was still more wonderful, no one was allowed to take his throne. God kept it waiting for him, for he had mercy in store for him. No doubt, good Daniel helped to keep all things quiet and right, till the day should come for God to bring the king back.

It came at length: the Bible says, "after seven times," and I have called these seven years. Perhaps, however, it was not quite so long. Perhaps the seven times were shorter periods. Be this as it may, the hour of mercy came. One day the king rose up from his crawling posture, gave up going on all-fours, stood on his feet and looked up at the sun, felt that his reason had come back, and returned to his palace. You may be sure he soon had his shaggy body washed and trimmed and dressed. Then his old servants and nobles came about him, and bade him welcome back to his throne, and were eager to serve him as before. His kingdom prospered after that as much as ever, and the honour of the king shone out again, like the sun after a dark storm or an eclipse, as bright as before.

God did more than all this, I think, for King Nebuchadnezzar. He not only gave him a man's heart again, but a new heart. For he was at pains to tell all men

about what the Lord had done to him, and in the end of his letter to his people he says, that when his understanding came back to him he blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured Him who liveth for ever and ever. His closing words are these, “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” So it seems that we may safely conclude, that he who once lay among the beasts now sings among the angels.

QUESTIONS FROM THE BIBLE STORY.

1. What two psalms, almost in the same words, contrast the living God with idols that are no gods?
2. Who was it that proudly and blasphemously likened the living God of Israel to the gods of other nations, and defied him to deliver his people?
3. What great king, before the time of Nebuchadnezzar, was ten times warned of God before his destruction came?

4. What very prosperous person, who thought himself a happy man, is spoken of in the Gospels as called to meet sudden death?

5. Where is Jesus represented as a spreading and fruitful tree, giving refreshment to his people?

6. On what three great occasions did a voice from heaven speak to Jesus, not in warning, but in witness?

7. What king was it to whom his servants on one occasion were afraid to tell the truth about a trial that had befallen him?

8. What Jewish king was changed from a cruel tyrant to a just and holy man, being taken far away from his kingdom, while his throne was kept for him?

9. What king turned away God's anger from his people and himself by timely repentance?

10. Who was it that in dreadful madness staid, not among the beasts, but in the midst of the dead?

11. What signs of seven years were once seen by a great man in a dream?

12. Who was it that saw a time of double prosperity, after a period of terrible affliction?

13. Can you give an instance in which Jesus gave both bodily and spiritual blessings to one whom he healed.

ANSWERS to these questions will be readily found by turning to the following chapters: -- Ps. cxv. and cxxxv.; Isa. xxxvi., Exod. vii. and xii.;

Luke xii.; Song ii.; Matt. iii., Luke ix., and John xii.; 2 Sam. xii.;
2 Chron. xxxiii.; Jonah iii.; Mark v.; Gen. xli.; Job xlii.; John ix.

Prayer.

O GOD we thank Thee for giving us more understanding than the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field. Help us to serve Thee with the powers of mind which Thou hast given to us. We thank Thee for preserving us in sound reason, and we pray for all who have lost this precious gift. We thank Thee that so much is now done to make such persons comfortable and beseech Thy blessing on all the officers of asylums for the insane, in their kind and difficult work. We beseech Thee to keep us from pride in strength, or beauty, or wealth, or rank. Thou, O Lord, art great; all creatures are little and as nothing before Thee. Thou givest us all good things that we enjoy. Let us praise Thee for all; and most for Jesus Christ our Saviour, to whom, with Thee and Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. *Amen.*

EVENING WORSHIP.

O ALMIGHTY God, whom to truly to know is everlasting life, grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life; that, following the steps of Thy blessed saints, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life, through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm* lxii. 5-8.

My God, my Father, while I stray
Far from my home, on life's rough way,
O teach me from my heart to say,
Thy will be done!

If Thou shouldst call me to resign
What most I prize, it ne'er was mine;

I only yield Thee what was Thine,
Thy will be done!

Should grief or sickness wear away
My life in premature decay,
My Father! still I live to say,
Thy will be done!

If but my fainting heart be blest
With thy sweet Spirit for its guest,
My God! to Thee I leave the rest,
Thy will be done!

Renew my will from day to day;
Blend it with Thine, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say,
Thy will be done!

Then, when on earth I breathe no more
The prayer, oft mixed with tears before,
I'll sing upon a happier shore,
Thy will be done!

MATTHEW XVIII. 1-14.

AT the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2. And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3. And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself, as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. 6. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! 8. Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. 9. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire. 10. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. 11. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. 12. How think

ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine which went not astray. 13. And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. 14. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

MATTHEW XX. 17-28.

AND Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, 18. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, 19. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. 20. Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. 21. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom, &c.

Prayer.

O FATHER of mercies, the close of day brings us again to Thy footstool. We cannot lay us down to sleep without Thy blessing: O grant it to us, of Thy great goodness, and watch over us, in pity and in love, through the hours of sleep and darkness.

Almighty God, even Thy holy day brings with it no exemption from infirmity and temptation. Even in Thy house of prayer our thoughts have wandered, and our holy things themselves have been stained with many defilements of sin. Have mercy upon us, and grant that our great High Priest may so bear away these our transgressions that Thy face may be hidden from them, and that we may stand before Thee, in Him and in His righteousness, without spot and blameless.

Vouchsafe, Lord, Thy blessing to the words which have been spoken in Thy name, this day by the ministers of the sanctuary. Suffer not the good seed to be caught away out of our hearts by the fraud and malice of the devil, or choked within us by our own negligence and worldliness. Cause it to take deep root, and in Thine own good time to spring up and bear fruit in us, to Thy glory and to our everlasting good.

Give us a deeper knowledge of the state of our hearts and souls, as in the sight of Him from whom no secrets are

hid. Make us more earnest to grow in grace. Give us no rest, O God, in our sins; but make us willing to take up the cross, mortifying the flesh with its sinful passions and lusts, and living here below a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Open our eyes, O Lord, that we may see the wondrous things of Thy law. May we enter more seriously, and with a wiser understanding, into the mysteries of Thy grace as they are unfolded to us in the gospel of Thy Son. Grant that we may never rest in that whereunto we have attained, but be ever pressing forward to that ripeness of knowledge and obedience which becomes the disciples and servants of the holy and divine Master.

If any have this day wilfully forsaken the assembly of Thy people, touch their hearts, we beseech Thee, with the compunctions of the Holy Spirit, and make them feel the ingratitude of despising so great salvation. Have mercy on all those who are walking in the way of their own hearts, and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to thy flock, that they may see the felicity of Thy chosen, rejoice in the gladness of hy people, and give thanks with Thine inheritance.

Into Thy hands, O Lord, who neither slumberest nor sleepest, we now commit ourselves; beseeching Thee so to bless our sleep to us that it may fit us for a more earnest and faithful service, and be to us a foretaste of that blessed

rest which is the paradise of Thy saints, and from which Thou wilt call them to a glorious resurrection at the appearing of the Lord and Saviour, who, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

MORNING AND EVENING MEDITATIONS.

MONDAY.

Morning.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and breakdown the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.

And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he

looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Isa. v. 3, 5, 6, 7.

Evening.

He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard: and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three year I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it;

And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Luke xiii. 6, 7, 8, 9. Matt. iii. 10.

TUESDAY.

Morning.

And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and

many others, and cast them down a Jesus' feet; and he healed them.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Matt. xv. 30. John v. 21. John vi. 39.

Evening.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Matt. xv. 30. John v. 21. John vi. 39.

WEDNESDAY.

Morning.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.

Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Rev. xvi. 15. Matt. xxiv. 40, 41. 42. 43.

Evening.

For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is Son of man.

Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the

Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

John v. 26, 27. Matt. xix. 27, 28.

THURSDAY.

Morning.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Cor. xv. 20, 22, 56, 57, 58.

Evening.

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you:

To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Rom. xiv. 8, 9. 1 Peter v. 10, 11.

FRIDAY.

Morning.

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repaid.

But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing.

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have company with him, that he may be ashamed.

Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Ps. cxix. 63. Prov. xiii. 20. 2 Thess. iii. 13, 14, 15.

Evening.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours.

1 John v. 2. James iv. 4. 1 Cor. iii. 19, 20, 21.

SATURDAY.

Morning.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom. vii. 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25.

Evening.

God will render to every man according to his deeds:

To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations:

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Rom. ii. 6, 7. 2 Tim. ii. 15. 2 Tim. iii. 17. James i. 2, 3, 4.