

HOME PREACHER OR CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK.

MORNING WORSHIP.

O LORD, having boldness to enter into Thy holy presence through the blood of Jesus, we implore the aid of Thy Spirit as the Spirit of prayer and supplication. May He help our infirmities, and make intercession for us according to Thy will, that we may worship Thee, the Father of our spirits, in spirit and in truth. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm* xliii. 3-5.

ON this day, the first of days,
God the Father's name we praise;
Who, creation's Fount and spring,
Did the world from darkness bring.

On this day th' Eternal Son
Over death his triumph won;
On this day the Spirit came
With his gifts of living flame.

Oh! that fervent love to-day
May in every heart have sway,
Teaching us to praise aright
God the source of life and light.

Father, who didst fashion me
Image of thyself to be,
Fill me with thy love divine,
Let my every thought be thine.

JEREMIAH XXV. 1-14.

THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; 2. The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 3. From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day (that is the three and twentieth year), the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. 4. And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and

sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. 5. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and your fathers for ever and ever; 6. And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands, and I will do you no hurt. 7. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. 8. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, because ye have not heard my words, 9. Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadressar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, and sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. 11. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it

perpetual desolations. 13. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. 14. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also; and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

Prayer.

HEARKEN unto the voice of our cry, our King and our God; for unto Thee will we pray. Many and strong are the foes which seek after our souls to destroy them; deliver us, O Lord, from our enemies: we flee unto Thee to hide us. Teach us to do Thy will, for Thou art our God; Thy spirit is good, lead us into the land of uprightness. Quicken us, O Lord, for Thy name's sake; for Thy righteousness' sake, bring our souls out of trouble.

Our iniquities, O Lord, are gone up over our heads, and the cry of our trespass has reached unto the heavens. We cherish no thought that is not mixed with sin, nor do we ever render Thee any service which is wholly pure from self-love. O blot out as a thick cloud all our transgressions,

and as a cloud our sins; for Thou hast redeemed us. We thank Thee that Thy sinless Son was made sin for us; we bless Thee that the Light of the world submitted to darkness in our stead, that the Life of all things died on our behalf, that the Almighty became as weakness, and the King of kings a servant of servants, to redeem our ruined race. At Thy footstool, O Father of mercy, we humbly bow: with no plea but that Christ hath died for our offences and risen again for our justification, we entreat Thy pardon. Deny it not, O God, lest we be counted with those that go down into the pit, and be as men that have no strength, and who are cut off from Thy hand for ever.

The thought of Thy superabounding mercy toward us, notwithstanding all our unworthiness, may well fill our hearts with adoring gratitude and praise. When we were held in hopeless captivity by the law of sin and of death, from which we could do nothing to relieve ourselves, Thou didst bring us out of darkness and the shadow of death, and didst break our bands in sunder. O that we could praise Thee as we ought for Thy goodness, and for Thy wonderful works unto us the children of men. Even when we perverted Thy gifts to the service of our own sinful hearts, and the gratification of every passing thought, Thou, O Lord, didst not withdraw them, but didst bless us still. Humbly and most thankfully do we acknowledge that Thy

ways are not as our ways, nor Thy thoughts as our thoughts.

And now, O Father, we beseech Thee to be with us this day, giving us a child-like faith and trust in Thy blessed grace and guidance, in Thy heavenly counsel, and in Thy mighty protection. Consecrate us all with the blessed influences of Thy Holy Spirit, causing us to rejoice in the gladness of Thy people, and to glory with Thine inheritance. Make the gospel of Thy grace to come into our souls with the demonstration of Thy Spirit and with power. O send forth Thy light and Thy truth everywhere among the assemblies of Thy people, to gladden and to guide them; and among those who forsake Thy sanctuary and profane Thy holy day, to turn them from the error of their ways, unto Thy worship and service. Make all those who bear Thy Son's name to be living epistles, testifying by lives of charity and well-doing that they have passed from death unto life, and therefore, love the brethren.

These, and all our prayers, we offer in and through Him who has taught us to say, Our Father, &c. *Amen.*

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

O LORD, seeing that our life is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away; so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom, and may be found of Christ in peace, without spot, and blameless, at His glorious appearing to judge the world. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm lxxi.* 15-18.

IN vain the erring world enquires
For some substantial good;
While earth confines their low desires,
They live on airy food.

Illusive dreams of happiness
Their eager thoughts employ:
They wake, convinced their boasted bliss
Is visionary joy.

Not all the good which earth bestows

Can fill the craving mind;
Its highest joys have mingled woes,
And leave a sting behind.

Grant, O my God, this one request --
O be thy love alone
My ample portion ! -- here I rest,
For heaven is in the boon.

ECCLESIASTES XII. 1-7.

REMEMBER now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; 2. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: 3. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease, because they are few, and those that look out at the windows be darkened; 4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low; and he shall rise up at the voice of a bird; and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low: 5. Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail;

because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern: 7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

2 PETER III.

THIS second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2. That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: 3. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4. And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and

perdition of ungodly men. 8. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. 11. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; 12. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless: 15. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you: 16. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures,

unto their own destruction. 17. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye now these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness; 18. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLVII.

(Addressed specially to the Young.)

“AND THE KING SAID UNTO BARZILLAI, COME THOU OVER WITH ME, AND I WILL FEED THEE WITH ME AT JERUSALEM. AND BARZILLAI SAID UNTO THE KING, HOW LONG HAVE I TO LIVE, THAT I SHOULD GO UP WITH THE KING UNTO JERUSALEM? I AM THIS DAY FOURSORE YEARS OLD; AND CAN I DISCERN BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL? CAN THY SERVANT TASTE WHAT I EAT OR WHAT I DRINK? CAN I HEAR ANY MORE THE VOICE OF SINGING MEN AND SINGING WOMEN? . . . LET THY SERVANT, I PRAY THEE, TURN BACK AGAIN, THAT I MAY DIE IN MINE OWN CITY, AND BE BURIED BY THE GRAVE OF MY FATHER AND OF MY MOTHER.” -- 2 Sam. xix. 33-37.

ONE word of explanation is all that is necessary, in order to feel the full force and beauty of this little story. King

David, in the rebellion of his beloved and treacherous Absalom, has been driven from the monarchy, his crown is in peril, a price is set upon his head; he crosses the Jordan into the wild desert-like regions on the other side, and, whilst old friends are dropping away from him in their haste to worship the rising sun, two or three of the more simple loyal chieftains of that half-barbarous country -- Barzillai among them -- bring to him, in the time of his necessity, seasonable supplies for himself and his men. And then, when the tide turns, and poor Absalom is hung up there in the oak tree by the hair; and everybody is flocking back, fawning at the feet of the man they had been cursing -- his staunch old friend, Barzillai, comes out to meet him again on his triumphant return, and attends him a little way across Jordan, till he fairly stands on the soil of his recovered kingdom. The king offers to carry the aged chief to court, and bring him to honour there. But the old man answers in the language we have selected for our text. Now, I take these words for the sake of the picture of old age which they give us. Clearness and quickness of intellect are gone; all taste for the pleasures and delights of sense is gone; ambition is dead; capacity for change is departed. What is left? The old man lives in the past and in the future. The early child-love for the father and mother, who hung over his cradle eighty years ago, remains fresh. He cannot "hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women;" but

he can hear, stealing through almost a century, the old tones, thin and ghost-like, of the dear ones whom he first learned to love. The furthest past is fresh and vivid, and in memory of it is half his life. Also he looks forward familiarly and calmly to the very near end, and thinks much of death. That thought keeps house with him now, and is nearer to him than the world of living men is. Thus, one half of his life is memory, and the other half is hope; and all his hopes are now reduced and simplified to one -- the hope to die, and then to be laid down and go to sleep again beside his father and mother. And so he returns to his city, and passes out of our sight.

I address young people chiefly, in this sermon: Why should I speak to you about old age? It is because some of you will come to that. Some of you, perhaps, will have to die young; the most of you will come to middle age and maturity; and to some of you silver hairs will be granted, and you may see your children's children. And what I want to put before you now is the lesson of what life -- if life be spared -- is sure to do to you; that upon these certainties I may build the old, old appeal, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

I. In the first place, then, looking at this picture of old age, we gather this simple thought: *Life as it goes on, is*

sure to rob us gradually of our interest in earthly things.

“Can I discern between good and evil any more?” says the old man. That does not refer to conscience but you will find that, in the Old Testament generally, the phrase, “discerning between good and evil,” applies rather to what we should call judgment or understanding. A gradual dimness or feebleness, or at least a want of mobility and elasticity, has come over the mind of the old man; can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink?” All the things that please the senses have lost their power of delighting, if not altogether, yet to a great extent. And more than that -- ambition is deadening too. “What do I care to go up to Jerusalem, to go even to court? The hills of Gilead are better for me than that; I will stop where I am!” Sixty years ago he would have been glad to have the offer, but he has found out that in much wisdom is much sorrow; he has found out that “the world passeth away and the lust thereof;” and he has found out that ambition and advancement are but hollow things after all. And so, with his dim old eyes, he looks past them and through them; and says, Let me alone; I don’t care about those things any more!”

Now, I do not mean to say that that is what all people come to; but this certainly is true -- you will never be so enthusiastic again as you are in your youth; you will never feel as if the world was so full of a boundless treasury of

joys and delights, as you do in the budding freshness of your early days. There is a glory in everything to the young man's and to the young woman's eye, not so much belonging to the objects themselves, as reflected on them from the unworn buoyant heart that opens to receive the new experiences of unfolding life. You have but stepped across the threshold into life. Like a child waking from sleep, and running into some fair garden, the first moment is all bright and beautiful to you. You have your sorrows, I well know, and your times of dark and deep despair, which, perhaps, are as sad and dark as those of the more experienced in the vanities of this life. But, on the whole, thank God! all young things are happy and lithe in their early life, and you amongst the rest.

I speak here, then (following the guidance of the passage before us), mainly to three classes. I make my appeal, first, to those of you, who, stung by a true and lofty Ambition, are seeking to gain wisdom and knowledge -- to intermeddle with all truth, to know the causes and reasons of things, and to order, in your thoughts, this confused and chaotic world that lies all round about you, into something like a system and a whole. All honour to you for it. But young man, thinker, student, reader, to whom truth is the loftiest word, wisdom the grandest thought, whose spirit is yearning "to follow knowledge like a sinking star, beyond the furthest bounds of human thought," -- let me give you a

caution. The well of truth is not a fountain. Though it is the divinest, perhaps, of created occupations, all but one excepted, to learn and to think, and ever to be piecing together that which we know not by that which we do know -- that is not enough for you. You will tire of it.

Knowledge, wisdom, has its pains and its limitations. As the days creep on, you will find that life is something more than a library; that there is something else to be done in the world than to *know*; that a man with a brain and nothing else is a monster; and that precious sympathies, and human loves, and large duties, are all neglected and tossed aside, when once the overmastering, unbridled diseased love of knowledge has marked you for its own. Ah! who knows in how many ways it is true, "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God?" Learn, study, think, task your mind on knotty and difficult subjects; but, oh! remember to purify your consciences; remember this fact -- you are a sinner, and a wise sinner may be none the less a lost sinner after all! "With all thy getting, get understanding;" and above all, remember that a time will come -- here, perhaps -- yonder, certainly -- when "tongues shall cease, knowledge shall pass away," favourite subjects will begin to seem "flat, stale, and unprofitable;" and the wise man, who is nothing more, will wake up to understand that, with all his wisdom, he is a fool. "Can thy servant discern any more between good and evil?"

Then, again, there is another class to whom these words point an appeal. I speak to some, who, in the flush of their early days, and the buoyancy of the strong new life that is in them, feel as if *the delights that can be felt, and tasted, and handled*, were the grand things that they had come to inherit. And my appeal to you, dear friends, is still more emphatic, I am not speaking now only to persons who, in the pursuit of sensuous pleasure, step across the golden limit of morality and of duty, and plunge themselves into the seething pool of sin. There will be a word to say to them presently. But I appeal, rather, to the far wider class, to whom life in its outward forms, the delights of life, are, thus far, sufficing. And, my friend, if God, in his grace and mercy, keep you in this world for a few more years, when the sinews begin to get relaxed, and the palate insensible, and the hand hard and horny and rheum and mist begin to creep over the eyes, and the brain works sluggishly, and all the physical powers show tokens of giving out, what will you have of it all? “He that soweth to the flesh shall, of the flesh, reap corruption.” There is no evading that law. You cannot go on living in sensuous delights for ever. Excess in these soon tells on the physical frame. They soon pall on the jaded sense, which needs a stronger stimulus each time, and each time receives a less gratification: and if nothing else will check you, days are coming “when there will be no more pleasure in them.” Ay, and the faster you gallop, the

sooner you will come to that point! The author who made it his business in England to sublimate and spiritualize voluptuousness, said, when he was about thirty, “Man delights me not, nor woman neither.” It did not take *him* eighty years to come to Barzillai’s place; he could not “taste what he ate or drank,” and “the voice of singing men and singing women” was no delight to the jaded, palled senses of the wild voluptuary. Take care!

Lastly, in this part of my subject, here is an appeal pointed to you who are making your object in life *self-advancement*. The glittering prize looks wonderfully less glittering when you come to stand with one foot groping out from the solid land of life into the misty sea of death. Four-score years taught this man, that it was not worth while to be at the trouble of going to Jerusalem, for all that a court could give. And it might be as well for you and for all of us, to learn that lesson before experience, for it would save us many a bitter disenchantment.

The lesson, then, of the whole is just this: do not sell your souls to objects which in their true nature are transient; but as you have got to live for ever, take an everlasting portion for our portion, and make an everlasting Friend for your friend. Make Christ your love, your joy, your trust. Go to Him, young man, young woman, little child, old man, and all, go to Him with our heart in your hand, and trust Him for this mercy, and rely upon his

sacrifice for your forgiveness, and upon his grace for our salvation and then, “when heart fails,” and no longer is the understanding quick to discern between good and evil, it shall be wise “to know the Lord;” and when flesh fails, and sense is no longer a minister of delight, God will be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever more.

II. There is another feature of old age which comes out here, upon which we may also found a similar lesson: *Life will certainly rob you of the power of change.* This poor old man felt that he could not go up to Jerusalem. He is too old to be transplanted. He had been bred upon the mountain side, and brought up amongst his flocks; and he could not fit into a court. But,” says he, “there is my boy, ‘behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king, and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.’” The lad is young enough to be moulded; take him with you, and put the kindness that you want to do to the father upon the son’s head; because I am too old to change.”

Ay, that is a sad solemn truth for many a man -- too old to change! God be thanked, there is no point on this side of death where the great change of all is absolutely impossible. But yet whilst this *is* true, and whilst all life is the region within which we may accept the gospel, yet it is also true that, if you let your early days pass also true that, if you let your early days pass by without giving your heart to Christ, you are running a terrible risk, and it certainly

will be an infinitely harder thing for you to come back to Him in your maturer age. When the clay is soft, touch it with a straw, and the mark will remain; but when it is burned into brick, hammer it with iron and you will only break it. You are at the time of life when habits are made. That strange and awful power of habit may become your deadliest enemy, or your best friend. You may get into the habit of wrong-doing, and then it clings to you like a cleaving, leprous curse; or you may make custom an ally of all goodness, and habit the guardian shield around all righteousness and holiness and faith. You are making your characters every moment. You are not only living in these young days of yours, but you are settling how you are going to live in all the time that comes after.

You say to yourself, perhaps, "I'll have my fling; I'll sow my wild oats; I'll wait a little while; time enough yet; and then when I get steady and grave, and middle-aged, I'll begin to think about being a Christian!" Perhaps you will; I do not say you will not, but I am quite sure of this, that you will find it a dreadfully harder task. Whilst you delay, the forming-time of your life is slipping away. Whilst you delay, you are getting into habits of evil, and of rejecting God's love. Whilst you delay, you are hardening your conscience. Whilst you delay, you are weakening the power of the gospel upon you. You are *loading the dice*, so as to make it a million chances to one against your ever changing.

You may, you may, but in all probability you will not. The experience of a good many years now has taught me this, that for one man that truly turns to God after he is five and twenty or thirty years old, there are a hundred that intended to do it when they were children, and put it off for a little while, and let the time slip, and at last -- at last -- fell into the desperate thought, "The time is gone! I'm too old to change now." I have little hope that middle-aged men who are not Christians will ever become so; and I turn to you, dear young friends, plastic and flexible, who can shape habits, who are making your characters, who have not the clog of years of rejection on your feet, with the entreaty, "Will you not from this time say, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth."

III. Once more, *Life will certainly deepen early memories*. It is very beautiful to see how this old man, who was living, as we said, half in the future, was living the other half in the early childish past.

We have all seen instances of the same sort, how, when people begin to lose the power of remembrance, the thing that goes out of their memories last, is the thing that was put in their first. When all the strife and sorrow of middle age are gone, and when all the turbulence of youth is forgotten, the childish days remain; and as with Barzillai, the father's and mother's faces are found imprinted, never to be erased, on the heart of the grey-headed child. I

remember once seeing an old Christian man dying, who forgot all the years of activity (he had been a preacher of the gospel) and of faithful service, forgot all the sorrows and disappointments of his poverty-pinched life, and remembered only his boyish days, and babbled on his death-bed the old names that he had learned at his mother's knee. The eastern sky often catches on its tints a pale rose tint from the setting sun, whilst all the upper heavens are colourless and dull. Just so, life at the end looks toward the beginning, and we remember best our youthful days. Well, then, do not lay up in your hearts now things that will torture you then. Young men in our great commercial cities! tempted by companions, tempted by loneliness, tempted to prove your manhood and liberty by indulging in forbidden things, do not you do what would rack your fathers' and mothers' hearts if it were told at home! If you do, it will be the bitterest, blackest memory that you have (should you ever come to be an old man and a father yourself), that you brought the silver hairs of your father, and the deep tenderness of a mother's heart, with a burden of added sorrow, to their grave.

Oh! there are many of us, I am sure, who can remember things in our childish past that, a hundred times since, we would have given the world that we had not done, when we think of the loving dead faces to which we once brought tears. Children! children of many prayers, children

of Christian parents, cast upon the world now, and shaping your course, lay this to heart, and resolve that you will not heap upon your souls memories of profligacy, memories of wickedness, memories of godlessness, memories of disobedience, that will burn with baleful light when many other things are forgotten in your aging hearts!

And more than that, let Christ come to you now with his promises of peace and of pardon, and beginning to be His now, believing in His love and resting in His mighty work, lay up for yourselves the treasure of a youth which, with all its imperfections and with all its sins, was yet a youth of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ; that when the days come in which the present is nothing, and memory is half your being, you may remember then a long course of humble dependence upon God, and be able to say in the retrospect of it all, "I, thy servant, feared God from my youth."

IV. Last of all, *Life will more and more confine our hopes and vision to the grave.* This man's hopes are all, as I said, dwindled down into one -- the hope to die, and be laid in the burial place of his father and mother. Quietly familiar with the end, he waited for it patiently. Will you, will you, dear young friends, take that blessed Saviour for your Saviour; that if God spare your lives to those quiet days, at the end of a long course you, with like tranquillity -- as a traveller that has packed his goods and got his cloak on, and has nothing to do but to walk up and down the dock-side till

the ship is ready -- may be able to feel, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait," and I am ready to go when He will. There is nothing in the whole world more beautiful than the calm tranquillity of an aged Christian waiting till his change come. Whether the understanding be bright to the end or clouded and darkened, whether the flesh and sense fail or keep strong, it does not matter much. And what solemn sweet beauty there is in the calm close of such a life which goes down so slowly, like the lingering midsummer sun living in softened light in the western heaven, out of which it has set, long after it has risen in the ampler sky of the other world!

Let Jesus guide you, and it will be all well. Then, like some river that rises up among the hills, and comes at first leaping and sparkling down the valley sides, infantine in its thin rill, and jubilant in its quick march; and then gradually, as it gets into the plain, moving more slowly and more sedately, broader and deeper and calmer, and doing work amongst the "haunts of men," and carrying merchandise on its hospitable bosom, and gliding on at last, never so calm as when it is just opening into the sea, and blending its waters with the shoreless ocean; so our life will roll on: and though it may lose much of its early brightness, and pass through man scenes of hard toil, will be come deeper and worthier as it becomes calmer and slower, and will then be fairest when the rolling of the great waters into which it is soon to flow

begins to be heard; and then, with a little sock and jar, you will mingle with the broad ocean, and dwell in God for evermore! Then shaking off the oppression of weariness, and age, and weakness, and decay, you the first born of heaven and the youngest angel before the throne, will renew your youth, and enter upon a being in which the buoyancy and novelty and irrepressible spring, and endless hope of early days, shall more than come back to you again. The lesson of lessons is, “Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole of man.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and if you die young you will be ripe enough for heaven, and if you linger, till you are old you will pass into His presence, and be young again there for ever.

-- ALEXANDER MACLAREN, B.A.

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE.

THROUGH WHAT PERILS PAUL PASSED ON HIS WAY TO ROME.

AT the time when it had been resolved to send Paul to the emperor in Rome, there came a merchant-ship into the harbour of Caesarea, belonging to the town of Adramyttium. As this vessel was to sail along the coast of Asia, it was thought to offer a good opportunity for sending the apostle so far on his journey. So a centurion, with soldiers under his command, was directed to take charge of Paul and his companions, along with other prisoners; and to go on board, and sail to some convenient port where another ship might be met with on her way to Italy. A short time brought them to Myra, and there a corn ship was found that had come from Egypt, laden with grain, and was going on to Rome. The centurion, accordingly, put Paul and the rest aboard this vessel, and she proceeded on her voyage.

At first the progress of the ship was very slow, the wind blowing from the west and keeping it back. At length, by yielding to its force, and taking a round-about course, the sailors managed to bring their vessel to a place on the south side of the island of Crete, where they had to stay so long

that the time for safe sailing had passed for that year. Here it was that Paul warned the captain of the ship and others on board, that if they put to sea again, the voyage would be very dangerous. But the harbour at Fair Havens, where the ship now was, was not a convenient place to be all winter in; and the shipmaster and the owner of the vessel were both resolved to try and get to another port in Crete further to the west. So one day when a soft south wind was blowing, they thought a favourable time for accomplishing their purpose had come, and they gave orders to set sail. Away they sped, lightly and happily at first, keeping near to the coast, and hoping soon to reach the safe harbour where they could spend the winter. But though it was not afar off, they were not then to see it. For all of a sudden, a strong wind, blowing quite fiercely, came down from the land, and struck the ship till it reeled in the blast. All the sailors could do was vain, to enable the vessel to make head-way in the storm; and they had just to let her drive before the tempest. Away the ship went like a helpless thing, and the seamen began to think that she would be driven ere long into a very dangerous part of the sea, known as the Quicksands. They set themselves in every way they could to lessen their peril. They got into the boat with hard work, and passed ropes round the body of the ship, girding it firmly, to make it stronger. They afterwards put the sails so, that they could let the ship lie to. Then they began to

lighten it by heaving a number of things out into the sea; for valuable as property was, it was nothing to hundreds of lives. After a day or two they lightened it yet more, by throwing overboard the spare tackling and gear. All this while the wind blew as fiercely as ever, and continued to do so day after day. The whole crew, with passengers and soldiers, were at length in despair. They had not seen sun, or moon, or star for many days, and the storm had never abated, while the ship had been drifting away to the west, they could not tell how far. They had not the least hope now of being saved, and had not heart enough even to take food.

But just when they were all in this state, Paul had one night a visit from an angel, sent by God to tell him that he need have no fear, for he was to stand before Caesar, and that for his sake God would spare also all the lives on board. No doubt Paul had prayed for God's help, and for the two hundred and seventy-six persons that were in all the ship and now God grants him his desire. Next morning Paul told his vision to the people, and assured them that not a man of them would be drowned. He said he quite believed God that it would be as he had said: the ship would be lost, and they would be cast on an island, but not one life would perish.

The sailors were a good deal cheered by what Paul had said no doubt; but the storm still blew. At last, on the fourteenth night of the hurricane, they thought they must

be coming near land. So, having found that it was really so, by sounding the depth of the sea, and seeing that it was growing less, they cast four anchors out of the ship, and began to wait anxiously for the light of day. At this time the seamen behaved ill. They lowered the boat, and pretending to be preparing for casting additional anchors, they were going to get into the boat and leave the ship. But Paul told the Roman officer about their preparations, and said that, unless they continued on board, the rest would perish. On that the centurion ordered the soldiers to cut the ropes, and the boat fell into the sea. At length the morning dawned, and Paul standing forth before the whole company took some food; and giving thanks to God, he began to eat in their presence entreating them to do the same. His words and example put heart into them, and they took some food also, and began to be cheerful and in good hope. When their meal was ended, the daylight was now clear, and they set themselves to run the ship into a little opening in the land, where they could see a gently sloping beach, hoping that it might go aground there. So they threw the cargo of wheat into the sea, to make the vessel as light as possible; then raised the anchors, and spread the mainsail, and untied the helm, and made for the shore. They did not succeed, however, in their aim. Before they could reach the little creek, the ship went aground at a point where two seas met; and though the fore part stuck fast, the under part was

broken to pieces. But the centurion, refusing for Paul's sake to kill the prisoners, took command, and ordered those who could swim to throw themselves into the sea, and make for land, Afterwards, by the use of boards and other fragments of the ship, those who could not swim were floated safe to shore, and as Paul had said, not one of all the crew or passengers was lost.

The island on the shore of which the shipwrecked company were now standing under heavy rain, they knew now to be called Melita. It is generally believed to be the same as modern Malta; and the very place where the shipwreck took place may be said to be well known. The people on the island were very kind to Paul and the rest. They gathered a large bundle of firewood, and made a huge fire, and asked them all to come near. It was when this was being done that a striking circumstance happened. A venomous viper had been gathered along with the sticks from the woods. When the fire began to burn, and the creature felt the heat, it darted out, and fastened on Paul's bare hand, as he stood near warming himself. The people seeing this, and knowing that the snake was a poisonous one, and observing that Paul was a prisoner, said to themselves, This man is no doubt a murderer; he has escaped the sea, but the gods are pursuing him, and have sent the viper to kill him. Meanwhile, Paul shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. When the people saw

that after a time he stood there quite well, without a trace of hurt about him, they changed their minds, and said he was a god. We need not doubt, however, that the good apostle would teach them that he was just a man like themselves, and would preach Christ to them. Paul staid for three months at Malta, and performed a great many miracles of healing; and was so much liked by the people, that when he and his companions left in another ship to go to Italy, they quite loaded them with presents. The voyage was safely accomplished, and then a short journey by land brought Paul to Rome. There he was kept a prisoner; staying, however, in his own hired house, watched by a soldier, for two years, having numerous opportunities of preaching the gospel. He was set free after appearing before the emperor, and made journeys to tell men about Jesus. At last, however, he was made prisoner in Rome again, brought before Nero a second time, and condemned to die. And one day they took him from his dungeon out through the city gates, and an executioner beheaded him. His soul went to Jesus, whom he had so loved and served. He had fought a good fight; he had finished his course; he had kept the faith; and he was now called home to receive his crown.

QUESTIONS FROM THE BIBLE STORY.

1. From what harbour did a merchant-ship once sail to be caught in a storm which in the end became calm in a moment?

2. Where do we read of wind sweeping down upon an inland sea, from the hills round about it, and raising the water into great waves that nearly sunk a boat?

3. In what psalm have we a description of a storm at sea, with the rolling waves and staggering sailors?

4. When was there a great famine which a prophet foretold would be followed in a day by great plenty?

5. Was this the only time that Paul suffered ship-wreck?

6. What king of Judah was it that sent ships to sea to bring gold from Ophir, but they never reached the place?

7. Where is it said that God blew with his winds, and many persons perished in the waters of the sea?

8. Who was it that was carried from sea to shore by a strong swimmer?

9. What special miracle do we read of as performed by Paul while he was staying in Malta?

10. What promise of Christ was literally fulfilled by the incident of Paul's being bitten by the serpent, without any harm following?

ANSWERS to the foregoing may be found by consulting the following chapters. -- Jonah i.; Matt. viii.; Ps. cvii.; 2 Kings vii.; 2 Cor. xi.; 1 Kings xxii.; Ex. xv.; Jonah ii.; Acts xxviii.; Mark xvi.

Prayer.

O LORD, Thou hast made heaven and earth, and sea, and all that is in them. Thou art the Lord of winds and waves, sending forth storms and hushing them to calm again according to Thy will. Thou seest at the very moment all the ships that are at sea, and all the dangers to which any of them may be exposed. O God, bless all sailors that brave the perils of the deep. Teach them to see Thee in the wondrous things they meet with. In storms may they trust Thee, and pray to Thee, and do Thou graciously hear them, and preserve their lives. O God, we pray that wherever ship-wrecked persons may be cast, they may receive kindness and help. May we be preserved from the dangers which encompass us on land, and ever feel truly thankful for the fatherly care with which Thou watchest over us day by day. Amid all perils may we seek to Thee for safety; under all trials may we find in Thee help and comfort. Under the covert of Thy wings do Thou hide us, so shall we ever be in security and peace. May we, who, wherever we live, are

like people on a voyage, be all brought safely at last into the harbour of Thy love in heaven. This we ask in the name of our Lord Jesus, whose voice once calmed a storm, whose steps were once on the billowy waters, and whose word the winds and seas still obey. To Him be glory for ever. *Amen.*

THE EVENING SERVICE

FATHER of mercies, let our prayer come up before Thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Thou knowest our wants; give, O Lord, grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from us: for this our prayer we present in the name of Him whom Thou hearest always. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm* xxiii.

O GOD, unseen yet ever near,
Thy presence may we feel;
And, thus inspired with holy fear,
Before thine altar kneel.

Here may thy faithful people know
The blessings of thy love,
The streams that through the desert flow,
The manna from above.

We come, obedient to thy word,
To feast on heavenly food;
Our meat, the body of the Lord,
Our drink, his precious blood.

Thus may we all thy words obey,
For we, O God, are thine;
And go rejoicing on our way,
Renewed with strength divine.

JOHN XIX. 31-42.

THE Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, on the sabbath-day (for that sabbath-day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. 33. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. 35. And he that saw it bear record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. 36. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37. And again another

scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

38. And after this, Joseph of Arimethea (being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews), besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

39. And there came also Nicodemus (which at the first came to Jesus by night), and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. 40. Then took they

the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. 41. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

42. There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews' preparation-day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

I CORINTHIANS XV. 1-20

MOREOVER, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain: 3. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4. And that he was buried, and

that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; 5. And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7. After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8. And last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time. 9. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain: but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11. Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed, &c.

Prayer.

O GOD, humbly and reverently we again come into Thy presence, beseeching Thee to bless us, and we shall be blessed. Give us a firm and stable faith in Him who is the way unto the Father. May we trust him with all our confidence, and love Him with all our hearts; and seeing that he hath bought us so that we are not our own, may we regard all our time below as too short to show our gratitude

by a conversation becoming the gospel. Amid all our goings out and in, may we ever remember that we are strangers and pilgrims here, and so be looking and waiting for a better, even a heavenly country. May we be found upon our watchtower until our Master comes; and seeing that we know not whether He shall come at evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning, may we so watch and pray, that whensoever he cometh He may not find us sleeping.

O God, who knowest our infirmities, we beseech Thee to grant us such a portion of the good things of this life as may be best fitted to prepare our immortal souls for heaven. We ask of Thee neither poverty nor riches, but a new heart and a right spirit. Suffer us not to be elated to pride by prosperity, nor cast down to despair by adversity. Keep every one of us from the shame of the ungodly and the doom of the scorner, and the peril of unrepented sin, and from all that defileth and maketh a lie. Dispose us unto humility, faith, and fervency; unto purity of motive and singleness of purpose; unto charity and brotherly-kindness and deeds of love to the brethren for Christ's sake; yea, whatsoever things are pure and honest and lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, let us think on these things.

May the services of the sabbath be abundantly blessed unto us, and unto all who have been engaged in them. May

those who are weakened by doubt do Thy will, and so learn that Christ's doctrine is of God. Confirm in the truth all those who are halting between two opinions; and enable all Thy people to show by their holy example that, though they are in the world, they are not of it. Extend the kingdom of Thy Son, until from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof Thy name shall be great among the Gentiles. Unite in the fellowship of charity and good works all branches of Thy church in our land. Weaken the influence of those which hinder the progress of Thy cause, and greatly prosper those whose prosperity causeth Thy kingdom to come. May all iniquity, as ashamed, hide its head, and truth and righteousness and peace prevail to the uttermost ends of the earth.

And now, O God, we commend all who are this house, and all our dear friends and kindred, unto Thy holy and merciful care. Through the night defend us from all danger, and after a peaceful and refreshing sleep, grant that we may awake in the morning prepared for all Thou hast prepared for us. These our humble prayers we beseech Thee to hear, for Christ's sake, unto whom be glory for ever. *Amen.*

MORNING AND EVENING MEDITATIONS.

MONDAY.

Morning.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Then one of them, a lawyer, asked, tempting him and saying,

Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Ps. cxi. 10. Matt. xxii. 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40.

Evening.

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.

Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

For I am become like a bottle in the smoke: yet do I not forget thy statutes.

Quicken me after thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

Ps. cxix. 75, 76, 77, 81, 82, 83, 88.

TUESDAY.

Morning.

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.

And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of the hosts hath sent me unto thee.

And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.

Be silent O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

Zech. ii. 10, 11, 12, 13.

Evening.

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

And I will give her the vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi, and thou shalt call me no more Baali.

And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies.

Hos. ii. 14, 15, 16, 19.

WEDNESDAY.

Morning.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded or the witness of Jesus, and for

the word of God; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev. xx. 4, 13, 14.

Evening.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;

Having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

Rev. xxi. 2, 11, 23, 24.

THURSDAY.

Morning.

The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions which he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

O house of Israel, are not my ways equal?

Ezek. xviii. 20, 27, 28, 29.

Evening.

But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

Ezek. xviii. 24, 26.

FRIDAY.

Morning.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil-concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Col. iii 5. Rom. viii. 13. 1 John iii. 3. Tit. ii. 10.

Evening.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on

their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

2 Cor v. 20, 21. 1 Pet. iv. 14.

SATURDAY.

Morning.

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble:

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abide which he hath built there-upon, he shall receive a reward.

1 Tim. vi. 19. 1 Cor. iii. 11, 12, 13, 14.

Evening.

Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west.

I, even I, am he that comforteth you.

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

And the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

Isa. xliii. 5. Isa. li. 12. Isa. lv. 2, 3. Zech. i. 17.
