

Seventh Week

First Day

Dreams that Come True

As a youth Alexander the Great slept with a copy of Homer's story of Achilles beneath his pillow. Napoleon slept with a copy of the life of Alexander the Great under his pillow. Both these men looked into the timeless past for their inspiration; they visioned the years of future victory as already theirs. When Alexander set forth with a small army to conquer the world an adviser said, "If you go forth to conquer, these men are too few; if to be conquered, they are too many." And to him Alexander replied, "You forget I have my hopes!"

If we follow the Lord with our whole hearts, trust Him truly, have the courage to ask for difficult tasks and heroic accomplishments, it is because we have much HOPE. When Dante reached paradise with Beatrice he was told that others may have surpassed him in love and faith, but he surpassed them in hope. Yet hope is greatly neglected and little understood. There are two kinds of hope. There is the Mr. Micawber kind; he waited always for "something to turn up." And then there is the St. Paul kind. "In Christ is our hope" he said. The first is based on the weakness of wishful thinking. The second is based on the strength of God.

To gain Paul's kind of hope, it is helpful to try to step outside of the limits of space and time and think of ourselves as having been in some way present during all the moments of the past before Now and in all the moments of the future after Now. This view is like seeing a movie, made up of thousands of "stills" rapidly passing in sequence before our eyes; it is very different from the view of a Micawber, who sits staring at one slide at a time, projected by an old-fashioned magic lantern!

I will praise thee;
For I am fearfully and wonderfully made:
Marvellous are thy works;
And that my soul knoweth right well.
My substance was not hid from thee,
When I was made in secret,
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect;
And in thy book all my members were written,
Which in continuance were fashioned,
When as yet there was none of them.

(Psalm 139:14-16)

Seventh Week

Second Day

Seeking the Quiet Space

The practice of Stillness is cumulative, like a snowball growing upon itself. It creates great Quiet Spaces in a man. "Do thou thyself but hold thy tongue for one day," writes

Carlyle, “and on the morrow how much clearer are thy purposes, and duties; what wreck and rubbish have the mute workmen within thee swept away when intrusive noises were shut out!”

To achieve Silence within means training in relaxation, in effortless motion, in selflessness, in complete self-effacement. There should be no seeking, no striving, no directed thinking whatever. There should be no striving even to see God. Rather, rest in the presence of God—yes, in His very bosom—and be cleansed of hypocrisy, anger, fear, jealousy, through the purifying, penetrating power of His Love. After ten, fifteen, even thirty minutes of purgation we are ready to reach for, and take, all that is good, beautiful and true. Reach up to the heavens, reach for all that the heavens hold!

Every seed of life had its beginning in the place of Silence. The world of work and noise is all about us, despotic and uncompromising. Yet the world of Silence is all about us also. We can slip into it instantly, and when its mantle drops over our spirit we feel release, calmness and enlightenment. Silence will do this, but not reverie and vacant musings. It will be the Silence of the lone Figure of Gethsemane, girding Himself with equipment for every Victory.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. (Psalm 121)

Seventh Week

Third Day

Riding on God's Train

Let us imagine that we are on a train which is carrying us to distant parts. Everything about the trip has been arranged according to law and order. When the time comes to eat, a waiter gives the call and dinner is served. When the time comes to sleep, a porter makes our seats into beds. The schedule is arranged so that we pass through beautiful scenery in the daytime and less interesting portions at night. We may even anticipate some of the excitement ahead, by reviewing the maps of the terrain.

But suppose now that we do not trust our Master Planner, who arranged the journey? We shall then lie awake half the night trying to peer behind a curtain of darkness at scenery which we think we should not miss. In consequence we shall be so drowsy during the daytime that we must nap when the train moves through great canyons or along beautiful mountainsides. We may not even trust the sufficiency of the table d'hôte dinner promised for the evening, and begin to nibble upon popcorn and candy during the afternoon, and thus be unable to eat the banquet when it is laid before us.

No matter how we try to rearrange the Plan it remains a perfectly ordered one. And others will find it so. Just because we happen to be asleep when the most magnificent

scenes come into view does not mean they were never there. Just because we are unable to eat the dinner when it comes does not mean there was any insufficiency in the menu. Just because we cannot always read the road map does not mean it is inaccurate.

Why try to disarrange or avoid the Plan of God, or to supplant it with little insufficient, spiteful schemes of our own? Why not simply sit still and rest in peace and assurance while we move easily, smoothly, rhythmically onward according to the arrangements of the Master Planner?

Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him: and he shall bring it to pass. (Psalm 37:5)

Seventh Week

Fourth Day

Establish Ground Wires

Once upon a time a man attached a lightning rod to the chimney of his house and thought he would be safe from lightning in the skies. To his horror the house was struck during the next electric storm and burned to the ground. A stranger, hearing of this misfortune, advised the man: "Lightning is not confined to the skies; it is everywhere—in the ground under your feet and in the clouds over your head. So when you raise a lightning rod to the skies, sink another one into the earth, and you will be protected." The man heeded this advice and when he rebuilt his house it was safe.

Now many years later this same man fell ill with a disease for which his physician said there was no man-made cure. He advised his patient to seek God's healing aid. But the sick man had no faith in any kind of help that man could not administer and so he lay in bed and his condition grew constantly worse. At last he could scarcely move, and in desperation wrote to a stranger—a man of whom it had been said: "God works through his prayers." And he begged this man to pray for a cure. The stranger came to the bedside of the dying one, and took his hand. Then very kindly he spoke: "My friend, God's Love, expressed in healing power, is not limited to my little prayers, or my presence, or any particular creed or church. God, and all that He is, is available everywhere. He abides in you as He abides in me. You have been looking to others for help. Now sink your shafts of faith deep in your own heart. Establish ground wires to the Eternal Source of Life which may be tapped instantly with faith, to meet any real need."

The sick man remembered the advice of another stranger, and wondered at what he now heard. But he did obey, as before; he found that reservoir of Divine Power which is in the very ground beneath us as well as in the clouds overhead. Soon he was healed, and ever since he has longed to help others find their "ground wires."

Thy faith hath made thee whole. (Matthew 9:22)

Seventh Week

Fifth Day

Angels Shall Bear Thee Up

There is only one way to overcome fear and that is to keep in balance. Fears of physical injury are overcome when we learn how to move rhythmically and with easy coordination. Muscles at the back of the neck must be relaxed so that the head is kept in easy balance at the top of the spine. Skilled gymnasts and trained athletes are never afraid of falling because they know how to fall into balance.

Fears of the mind are overcome when the imagination is well-balanced. An arrested and inhibited imagination continually creates tensions by falsifying reality. When we can view life as a whole instead of in segments, when we can see beneath the appearance of evil to the divine progression toward fulfillment of needs, quietness and calmness is our portion. And then our ideas come to us in perfect order and perfect sequence.

Fears of the soul are overcome when the spirit is brought into balance. As tightened neck muscles unbalance our bodies, constricted love unbalances the spirit. When we can see all other persons as they really are—inherently perfect beings in a perfectly planned universe governed by a perfectly loving God—we have lost all fears. For Love is such a strong force that it needs no other forces to support or sustain it.

When we are balanced in body, mind and soul we are ready to “rise up on wings as eagles” to the heights of living where we truly belong. And then as we “fall” according to the pull of divine forces, we are safe and all our relationships are perfectly adjusted and harmonious.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
(Revelation 21:7)

Seventh Week

Sixth Day

Let Us Share Our Brother's Burden

Every time you sit down to eat a meal without a thought, word or act of blessing for those who are without food, you are a partner in sin. Every day that you accept comfortable living without making protest or offering prayers regarding an economic order that begets tyrants, criminals and wars, you are a co-creator of those criminals and those wars. Every time you hold prejudice or contempt toward any race or class or nation, you are planting seeds of death and decay. Every time you harbor anger and resentment in your heart toward any living creature, you are pouring into the pure air about you poisons that will infect murderers. Every time you look with lust upon a woman you are adding to the danger that a less-controlled one may commit folly.

Therefore I say unto you, repent of the crimes in which you are an unconscious and unwitting partner. Take upon your shoulders the world's vast crime of indifference,

inertia and selfish complacency, and kneel to repent for all. Jesus, who committed no sin or folly, will bless you for sharing the sins of the world and lifting them up to Him.

If I have withheld the poor from their desire,
Or have caused the eyes of the window to fail;
Or have eaten my morsel myself along,
And the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;
If I have seen any perish for want of clothing,
Or any poor without covering;
And if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless,
When I saw my help in the gate:
Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade,
And mine arm be broken from the bone.

(Job 31:16-22)

Seventh Week

Seventh Day

Everyone to His Place of Prayer!

“If I could find an Object worthy of my utmost allegiance,” writes Thomas Kelly, “if I could find a Mark worthy to be the aim of the bow of my life, I should gladly pull the arrow back to its head and let all fly upon a single shot.”

Did you ever thrill with the desire to venture forth with sublime audacity? Did you ever wish to “bet your life” on God, and yet it seemed you had no place to go and no armor for the battle?

In ancient times usually there was one trumpeter and one light-bearer for each army of several hundred men. The trumpeters and light-bearers stood back while the army moved forward to do battle.

Now prayer is like that. The man who prays cannot always lead in the fight. And yet prayer scatters the forces of evil faster and more completely than *any* mere action can do! That is the lesson of Gideon.

Oh, do not be ashamed if you seem chained and impotent when the enemy approaches and the darkness deepens! Just light your torches and blow your trumpets and stand every man in his place of prayer.

Our dear heavenly Father, though forces of evil about us be legion, let Thy power of Love scatter them as dust before the wind. Amen.

And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do? And he answered, fear not: For they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. (2 Kings 6:15-17)

