

“AS THE SMALL RAIN”

by

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CHAPTER NINE

“WHAT SHALL I RENDER UNTO THE LORD”

(Psalm 116:12)

FATHER KNOWS BEST

IT IS a good thing that God does not always answer our prayers in just the way in which we take for granted that He will. Sometimes we expect Him to say, “Yes,” but instead He says, “No.”

We are often like children who are conscious only of the fact that we want something, and because we want it we ask God for it. If a little son should ask his father for a knife, of course, a wise and loving father would not give it to him since he might be injured by it. God, who is not only infinite in His love but who is also infinitely wise, knows that the thing we sometimes desire would not be for our good. In His mercy He refuses us that which, while desirable from our standpoint, He knows would be harmful. We know the immediate desire; God sees the eternal result.

Elijah, discouraged, thought he was the only one left alive who loved and honored God, and he prayed to die. Instead of sending death to the prophet, the Lord made him know that there were seven thousand faithful servants of God left, and Elijah’s petition was never granted then or later, for he never died. Instead, he was taken into heaven by a whirlwind and a chariot of fire.

Elijah, under the juniper tree, was ready to give up the struggle, but God had further work for him to do. Elijah, depressed and discouraged, made an unwise request. God, who saw rich ministry stretching out ahead, who planned to send a heavenly chariot to take the prophet home when that work was completed, would have been unkind had He answered Elijah’s prayer by granting him his request for death. The trouble with Elijah’s prayer was this: it was not in the will of God. We should be sure that our prayers are always in line with His will.

Christ Himself set us the example when He prayed, “**O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt**” (Matthew 26:39).

Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out for me;
The changes that are sure to come
I do not fear to see;
I ask Thee for a present mind
Intent on pleasing Thee.

I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And wipe the weeping eyes;
A heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathize.

I ask Thee for the daily strength,
To none that asked denied,
A mind to blend with outward life
While keeping at Thy side;
Content to fill a little space,
If Thou be glorified.

And if some things I do not ask
Among my blessings be,
I'd have my spirit filled the more
With grateful love to Thee;
More careful, not to serve Thee much,
But please Thee perfectly.

In service which Thy love appoints
There are no bonds for me;
My secret heart is taught the truth
That makes Thy children free:
A life of self-renouncing love
Is one of liberty.

— Anna L. Waring

IN “MITE-Y” MEASURE

STANDING one day in the Temple, the Lord Jesus Christ watched the crowd pass by and cast their offerings into the treasury. Rich men passed by casting in large gifts. Then came a poor widow who dropped in two mites, about a quarter of a cent in our money. The Saviour called His disciples unto Him and said to them,

“Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living” (Mark 12:43, 44).

A gift is to be judged not by its value but by the spirit in which it is given. An offering is to be measured not by the amount given but by the amount left after the gift has been offered. In the Temple that day, rich men brought rich gifts. Doubtless some gave because their social position demanded it. Some gave out of compliance with tradition. Possibly some gave to be seen of men and admired for their beneficence. Some may have given out of a natural generosity of heart. But all of them had infinitely more left over for themselves than they gave to the Lord.

A poor widow, who must have made her offering out of a heart full of love for God, since her circumstances were such that no one could have expected her to give, nevertheless cast in her offering. Having given, she retained nothing. Her gift was greatest because she alone of all who made offerings that day did not consider herself.

It is fine to give generously to the Lord's work. Sometimes, however, our gifts come not from hearts full of love but from either a cold sense of obligation or from fear of what people will think of us if we do not give. Judged by the standard which Christ fixed that day in the Temple, most of us give poor gifts because we keep much more than we give away.

God wants our gifts, but He wants more than the gifts. He wants the giver. Our money is not enough. God wants our hearts. The truly surrendered child of God considers all that he has—possessions, family, life itself—not his but God's. He has given to God everything that he possesses. The gift is given and the giver also.

Lord, in the strength of grace,
With a glad heart and free,
Myself, my residue of days,
I consecrate to Thee.

Thy ransomed servant, I
Restore to Thee Thine own;
And, from this moment, live or die
To serve my God alone.

— Charles Wesley

A PIECE OF ROPE

WICKED men were waiting at the gates of Damascus to kill the Apostle Paul. Since it was impossible for him to get out of the city by means of the gates without falling into the hands of these men, friends let Paul over the wall in a basket.

A man's life depended upon a piece of rope and a wicker basket. These were little, inexpensive things, but very important in that situation. They sustained more than the physical weight of the man. On that rope depended the future ministry of Paul to Israel and his preaching to the Gentiles. On that piece of cord hung suspended the blessing which was to come into thousands of lives through Paul's work and words.

In that basket were all the churches Paul was to found in Asia Minor and in Greece. In that basket were all the converts Paul was to make throughout the ancient world, and all the epistles which he was yet to write—full of instruction and blessing to every generation that has opened the Word of God and read them.

Little things — a life preserver for a drowning man, a glass of water for the desert traveler faint with thirst, a crust of bread for one dying of starvation—are tremendous things! A train may be wrecked because of a small flaw in the steel of the rail or because one spike has become loosened from the crosstie; one match can start a fire which destroys a city. Trifles can change the course of history. A few words can ruin a reputation. One act can wreck a life.

A great universe is made up of atoms and electrons. The God who is the God of the universe is also the God of little things. The God who used the rod of Moses to bring plagues on Egypt and who took five loaves and two fishes from the lunch basket as a little boy and fed thousands can use our little talents and these poor lives. Upon one word of ours may hang the eternal destiny of some soul. Upon some thoughtless act may hinge the course of a life.

If we surrender to God all we possess, however weak and unimportant and useless it may seem to us, He will bless and use it beyond our expectation and in excess of all we can imagine.

What will it matter in a little while
That for a day we met and gave a word,
A touch, a smile upon the way?
What will it matter whether hearts were brave
And lives were true, that you gave me
The sympathy I craved, as I gave you?

These trifles, can it be
They make or mar a human life?
Are souls as lightly waved as rushes
Are by storm or strife? Yeah! Yeah!

A look the failing heart may break,
Or make it whole.
And just a word said for love's sweet sake
May save a soul.

— Anonymous

PRESUMPTUOUS ARGUMENTS

IT IS strange how men will argue with God. He spoke to Moses from the burning bush, telling him He had chosen him to lead Israel out of the Egyptian bondage. One would expect that Moses would have been willing to trust the Lord's judgment to choose the right man for the job. Was he? If you will turn to chapters 3 and 4 of Exodus you will find the answer.

Those two chapters are filled with the arguments of Moses used in an effort to convince God that He had made a mistake. Gideon was guilty of the same attitude. God sent an angel to him with a divine commission to free the people of Israel from the oppression of the Midianites. Instead of being humbly grateful that God had chosen him for such a task and going forth with confidence to accomplish the work which God had selected him to perform, he was full of mealy-mouthed protestations that his family was "**poor in Manasseh,**" and that he was "**the least in his father's house**" (Judges 6:15).

Look at Jeremiah. Courageous soul and uncompromising in his loyalty to the Lord in the face of persecution and oppression though he was, he, too, when he first heard the voice of God calling him for the special service argued that he was not the right man. "**I am a child**" (Jeremiah 1:6), he said. What he meant was, "I am not big enough for the job. You had better choose somebody else."

How greatly God used these three men! What triumphant plans He had in mind for each, and how fully those plans were realized, but first He had to overcome their objections as each said in effect when He called him, "I am not the right man. You had better get somebody else."

God knows the need, and He always chooses the right man to meet the need. God is not so much interested in great talent and ability as He is in simple obedience. He will provide the skill and the power. He asks the man or the woman whom He selects and calls to provide a yielded heart and a surrendered will.

Time was, I shrank from what was right
From fear of what was wrong;
I would not brave the sacred fight,
Because the foe was strong.

But now I cast that finer sense
And sorer shame aside;
Such dread of sin was indolence,
Such aim at heaven was pride.

So when my Saviour calls, I rise
And calmly do my best;
Leaving to Him, with silent eyes
Of hope and fear, the rest.

I step, I mount where He has led;
Men count my haltings o'er:
I know them; yet though self I dread,
I love His precept more.

— John Henry Newman

"CHOOSE YE THIS DAY"

"GOD is on our side," said the counselor to the statesman. "I am not eager to have God on my side," he replied. "My concern is to be sure that I am on God's side."

The man who takes his place on the side of the almighty God is the man who chooses victory and immortality. "**He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever**" (I John 2:17). God's plan shall be perfected. God's will shall be performed. "**The battle is the Lord's**" (I Samuel 17:47). The triumph shall be His and the man who puts himself on the side of the Conqueror will share in the glory of the conquest.

The man who does God's will has at his command all the omnipotence of Deity. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great preacher, declared, "Luther's strength lay in the way in which he laid the burden of the Reformation on the Lord. Continually in prayer he pleaded, 'Lord, this is Thy cause, not mine. Therefore, do Thy own work: for if this Gospel does not prosper, it will not be Luther alone who will be a loser, but Thine own Name will be dishonored.'"

Queen Elizabeth once said to a merchant whom she sent abroad in her service and who was worried about what would happen to his business in his absence, “You mind my business and I will mind yours.” The man who is busy about God’s business most successfully takes care of his own.

The life that is successful is the life that joins itself to the program of God. Our prayer should not be for God to go with us, but rather for grace to go with Him. Enoch did not choose a path and invite God to join him. Enoch sought out the direction in which God was going and joined himself to Deity. Enoch walked with God. It is not the business of the servant to plan the journey. It is not the business of the soldier to order the campaign. It is the servant’s task to follow the master and the duty of the soldier to obey the orders given him by his commander. The successful life is the life planned and directed by God.

In the still air the music lies unheard;
In the rough marble beauty hides unseen;
To make the music and the beauty needs
The Master’s touch, the Sculptor’s chisel keen.
Great Master, touch us with Thy skillful hand;
Let not the music that is in us die!
Great Sculptor, hew and polish us; nor let,
Hidden and lost, Thy form within us he!
Spare not the stroke. Do with us as Thou wilt.
Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred.
Complete Thy purpose, that we may become
Thy perfect image, Thou our God and Lord.

— Horatius Bonar

HANDS OFF!

SOLOMON, the wisest of men, nowhere demonstrated his wisdom better than in the blessing which he bestowed upon Israel after the dedication of the Temple, which he had built. He said to Israel, “**And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require**” (I Kings 8:59).

Solomon demonstrated his wisdom in not trying to dictate a method to the Lord as to how He should maintain the cause of His people. He was wise enough to realize that as the matter should require the Lord would know how to deal with it.

How much happier men would be if they would commit their lives to God, completely trusting Him to do in His own way the thing which is best. A man who seeks to run his own life, leaving God out and trying to have his own way, will sooner or later find himself in trouble. Some people realize this and seek God’s protection and guidance. They go so far as to ask that God’s will may be done in their lives, but they then make the mistake of trying to tell God how He should accomplish His purpose and of deciding for Him what method is best. God’s judgment needs no help from us.

- He knows that the method which will solve today's problems will be inadequate for the problems which tomorrow brings.
- He knows that those things which seem good to us today may prove a curse tomorrow.
- He knows that those things which we find attractive now we may turn from with repugnance later.
- He knows that what seems a sure way to victory now may prove a trap to defeat next year.

The wise man commits his life to God and leaves it in the care of His love and divine wisdom, assured that the Lord will maintain his cause **“as the matter shall require.”**

O Lord, fulfill Thy will,
 Be the days few or many, good or ill:
 Prolong them, to suffice
 For offering up ourselves Thy sacrifice;
 Shorten them if Thou wilt,
 To make in righteousness an end of guilt.
 Yea, they will not be long
 To souls who learn to sing a patient song:
 Yea, short they will not be
 To souls on tiptoe to flee home to Thee.
 O Lord, fulfill Thy will,
 Make Thy will ours, and keep us patient still,
 Be the days few or many, good or ill.

— Christina G. Rossetti

THE PRAISE OF WRATH

THERE is no such thing as “blind chance” in the life of God’s surrendered children. If there was ever a man who seemed “a victim of circumstances,” that man was Joseph. Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, unjustly imprisoned, he had from the standpoint of the world every reason to complain of “hard luck” and “tough breaks.” Yet nowhere in the record of his life does the Bible mention that he felt discouraged and dissatisfied. Always he was upheld by the assurance that God directed his life and led his steps. Finally, when the hour came that as the prime minister of Egypt he revealed his identity to the brothers who had sold him into slavery, he said to them, **“So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God”** (Genesis 45:8).

Joseph looked upon the unkindness and hostility of his brothers not as misfortune and hardship that came into his life, but rather as God’s means of bringing him to Egypt, that there as God’s instrument he might preserve many lives through his administration and wisdom in the day of famine. With this point of view there was no place for bitterness toward his brethren, no desire to “get even,” only a kindness of heart and a forgiveness of spirit.

Such faith in the leadership and direction of a sovereign God in our lives should characterize all of us today who love the Lord and believe His Word, and with such faith in God’s wisdom, love, and guidance there is no place for worry or unhappiness when the circumstances are not those which we would have chosen, and no place for bitterness against those who wrong or abuse us. All the apparent hardships in Joseph’s life worked together for God’s purpose and Joseph’s good.

Joseph committed his way unto the Lord and trusted in Him, and God directed his path. We have the promise that He will do the same for us (Psalm 37:5). The hatred of Joseph's brethren started him on the path to a throne. God turned the evil which they did Joseph into a blessing. A sovereign Lord still makes "**all things work together for good to them that love God**" (Romans 8:28). In our lives He can make the wrath of men to praise Him (Psalm 76:10) just as surely as He made the wrath of Joseph's brethren abound to His own glory in the life and testimony of that remarkable man.

Clouds, then the glory of sunset;
Darkness, then burst of the mom;
Dearth, then the gentle shower;
Sacrifice—Truth is born!

The earth-throe, then comes the harvest;
Silence, and then the word;
Mist, before the full starlight;
Discord, ere music is heard!

Erring, and then the forgiveness;
Heart's-ease, after the strife;
Passion, and then the refining—
Death, then the wonder of life!

— Henry Meade Bland

FORWARD MARCH

IT IS to be doubted if any group of people were ever more "on the spot" than were the Israelites on the occasion described in the fourteenth chapter of Exodus. As the Lord had promised, they had been led by Moses out of Egypt and were camped upon the shores of the Red Sea. Pharaoh's army had followed them to slay them or bring them back. It looked as if there was no escape. They were between Pharaoh and the Red Sea.

Moses, the leader, was a man of great faith. He knew the Lord had not freed the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt to let them fall victims of the Egyptian army on the beach. "**Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord,**" he said to the trembling, frightened multitude, adding, "**The Lord shall fight for you.**"

The Lord did fight for them, but not while they "**stood still.**" God said to Moses, "**Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward,**" and Moses, following the instruction of God, lifted up his rod over the waters of the sea, and they divided and the children of Israel went through on dry ground.

When they were safely across, Moses again lifted up his rod, and the water rushed in to engulf the pursuing Egyptians. The Lord fought for Israel, but the battlefield was in the midst of the divided sea through which they had passed — not where they had encamped and where Moses had instructed them to stand still.

It is a great comfort and a strong source of confidence to know that the Lord will undertake and fight for His own—that the place of our seeming defeat is the place where He can best show His power. But God does not want us to stand still. His command to His children in this day is, in the face of seeming impossibilities, to trust and move forward.

Of course, there are moments when we have to stand still a little while and wait on the Lord, but when the Lord wants a man in a certain place to do a certain job, He will open the way, even if it takes a miracle as great as the dividing of the Red Sea. God wanted Israel in the Land of Promise. He was to show them His salvation many times there, and on the way there, but He did not intend for them merely to stand still by the Red Sea, and when He said, “**Go forward,**” He made the going possible.

Lord, carry me—“Nay, but I grant thee strength
To walk and work thy way to heaven at length.”

Lord, why then am I weak?—“Because I give
Power to the weak, and bid the dying live.”

Lord, I am tired.—“He hath not much desired
The goal, who at the starting-point is tired.”

Lord, dost Thou know? — “I know what is in man;
What the flesh can, and what the spirit can.”

Lord, dost Thou care?—“Yes, for thy gain or loss
So much I cared, it brought me to the cross.”

Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.
“Good is the word; but rise, for life is brief.
The follower is not greater than the Chief:
Follow thou Me along My way of grief.”

—Christina G. Rossetti

HIDDEN THINGS OF TOMORROW

I AM glad that as a child of God I do not have to plan my own future. I am quite content to leave it in the hand of Him who knows the end from the beginning. That which looks very wise to me today may, in the light of tomorrow’s now unborn moments, prove to have been foolish in the extreme.

The man who trusts God completely and who accepts with unquestioning obedience the will and commands of God will always find that those things which happen to him today, though they may seem today unfortunate, will tomorrow be golden links in a chain of blessing. Illness, which may necessitate a move to another climate and which seems from the viewpoint of the moment almost a tragedy, may be God’s way of putting His child in the place where special blessing awaits him. The bitter waters of sorrow forced to my lips may cause me to cry out for relief to God and in new reliance upon Him I shall find crystal streams of abundant joy.

No man knows what tomorrow will bring forth. The Christian does not need to know, for whatever it brings forth will prove a blessing for him. **“All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”** (Romans 8:28).

The darkness of sorrow brings to the ear of the Christian the melody of songs which were drowned by the laughter of the day, and the flames of a martyr’s death become the wings of a fiery chariot bearing a victorious saint to glory. How wise to leave our tomorrows with Him who orders all our ways!

I have nothing to do with tomorrow,
My Saviour will make that His care;
Its grace and its strength I can’t borrow,
So why should I borrow its care?

* * *

Jesus, Fountain of my days,
Well-spring of my heart’s delight,
Brightness of my morning rays,
Solace of my hours of night!
When I see Thee I arise
To the hope of cloudless skies.

Lord, Thy presence on the deep
Calms the pulses of the sea,
And the waters sink to sleep
In the rest of seeing Thee,
And my oft rebellious will
Hears the mandate, “Peace, be still!”

Now Thy will and mine are one,
Heart in heart and hand in hand;
All the clouds have touched the sun,
All the ships have reached the land;
For Thy love has said to me,
“No more night!” and “No more sea!”

— George Matheson

SHOES TO FIT

To understand the Bible properly one needs some knowledge of the geography of Bible lands. Without it some verses can mean little to the reader. For example, in Deuteronomy 33, Moses in blessing the tribes of Israel says of Asher, **“Let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass”** (Deuteronomy 33:24, 25). The significance of this prophetic blessing is realized when we know something of the territory which Asher received when the tribes of Israel came into possession of the Promised Land.

Asher's territory combined fertile land near the base of Mt. Lebanon and rocky hills along the coastline. The fertile country was rich in olive groves and the people trampled barefoot upon the olives in the vats to press out the oil. In the rocky hills they needed shoes reinforced with iron and brass. Ordinary leather shoes would not last long against the sharp stones of the rocky mountain passes. Knowing the topography of the land which Asher came to possess, we understood the meaning of the words of Moses' prophetic blessing upon Asher.

God's children may encourage their hearts with the spiritual significance in these words: "**Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.**" It is this: God provides abundantly for that which we must meet. He knows when we shall have to walk rough mountain trails along the road of life. He will not send us there unshod. God knows when sorrow will come. He will prepare us in advance to endure the sorrow.

God knows the temptation which lies in wait. He will "**not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape**" (I Corinthians 10:13). The last clause of the verse we should take with the first, "**Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.**"

Years ago, when I
Was jest a little lad,
An' after school hours used to work
Around the farm with Dad,
I used to be so wearied out
When eventide was come, That I got kinder anxious-like
About the journey home;
But Dad, he used to lead the way,
An' once in awhile turn 'round an' say,
So cheerin' like, so tender, "Come!
Come on, my son, you're nearly home!"
That allers used to help me some;
An' so I followed Father home.

I'm old an' gray an' feeble now,
An trembly at the knee,
But life seems just the same today
As then it seemed to me.
For while I am still so wearied out
When eventide is come,
An' still git kinder anxious-like
About the journey home,
But still my Father leads the way,
An' once in awhile I hear Him say,
So cheerin' like, so tender, "Come!
Come on, My son, you're nearly home!"
An' same as then, that helps me some,
And so I'm following Father home.

THE MARKET PRICE

A FEW days before His crucifixion, as our Lord was sitting at meat in the house of His friends in Bethany, Mary came with an alabaster box of precious ointment. She broke the box, poured the ointment upon His head and so anointed Him with it that its perfume filled the room.

Mark says of the incident, “**And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence**” (Mark 14:4, 5).

These people were right about the value of the ointment. It could have been sold in the market for more than three hundred pence. No one can blame them for knowing the market price of ointment. But Jesus Christ Himself showed how wrong they were in thinking it was being wasted.

He said, “**Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me**” (Mark 14:6).

Nothing is wasted which is given to God. No treasure is so valuable as when it is broken as an offering to Him. “**It might have been sold,**” but one of the sweetest acts in the whole New Testament would have gone unperformed if it had been.

I was talking not long ago to a woman about her profession. I said, “I should think you’d enjoy your work. It seems to me that it affords a wonderful opportunity for service.”

She replied, “I studied for this profession because it was the easiest way I could think of to make a living.” A man or a woman should try to make a living, but what a poor reason for choosing a lifework! That is simply a selling of one’s talents and abilities.

There are some people who cannot understand why a man should preach the Gospel since it pays so little. Men who love money and who judge success by the size of a man’s income are at a loss to understand why a man will go to Africa as a missionary when he could stay home and become a wealthy man. They are like those who said at Bethany that day, “**Why was this waste of the ointment made?**”

No life is wasted which is offered in service to Christ. The only life which is well invested is that which, like the offering of the alabaster box of ointment, is broken for His sake and offered as a tribute of love to Him.

Five broken loaves beside the sea and thousands fed,
As Thy hand, Lord, in breaking, blessed the bread.
Men would the throng in emptiness have sent away
Whose need was met with broken bread that day.

A broken vase of priceless worth rich fragrance shed
In ointment poured in worship on Thy head.
A lovely thing all shattered thus—What waste, they thought.
But Mary’s deed of love Thy blessing brought.

A broken form upon the cross and souls set free.
Thy anguish there has paid the penalty—
Sin's awful price in riven flesh and pain and blood—
Redemption's cost, the broken Lamb of God.

Oh, break my life if it must be.
No longer mine, I give it Thee.
Oh, break my will; the off'ring take.
For blessing comes when Thou dost break.

— Bob Jones, Jr.

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