

DAILY
COMMUNION WITH GOD

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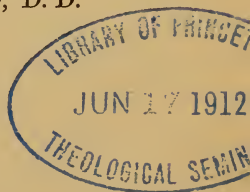
THE PLAN RECOMMENDED

BY REV. MATTHEW HENRY, V. D. M.

FOR

BEGINNING, SPENDING, CONCLUDING
EACH DAY WITH GOD.

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Daily communion with God

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

IN the following pages is presented the important and too much neglected subject of daily communion with God, on the plan pursued by the Rev. Matthew Henry, the celebrated commentator on the Scriptures, in three discourses, delivered at a morning lecture in the year 1712. A free use has been made of the thoughts, and also of the language, often quaint and pithy, of that eminently practical and godly writer, in the hope of thus more certainly persuading the attentive reader of these pages to the adoption and pursuit of the spiritual course of life herein proposed.

The writer has also employed some pains in selecting and in disposing throughout the work, the best passages of devotional poetry he has been able to find, illustrative of the topics discussed, and adapted

to impress them upon the memory, the heart, and the life.

The daily life of Matthew Henry furnishes a beautiful and instructive commentary upon what he has recommended in the discourses which form the basis of the present work. The late Dr. James Hamilton of London has written an admirable biographical sketch of this great and good man, some extracts from which, chiefly composed, however, of portions of his Diary, and here subjoined, will prepare the reader to regard with deeper interest, and to receive with greater confidence and favor, the counsels which are offered upon the best method of passing our days on earth.

“The great business of Mr. Henry’s life was the cultivation of piety in himself and others. His religion was not the less profound that it was mild and lowly; nor is it the less fitted for imitation that it adorned and cheered a life of tranquil tenor. His own practice was a constant effort to ‘begin, and spend, and conclude each day with God.’ Besides the full and deliberate worship of God in his family, he abounded in secret prayer. It was his recourse in every undertaking. His sermons were begun, his books were published, his journeys were commenced, and the important steps of his history were taken with prayer.”

“What incomes of grace,” he wrote, “yea, and outward good things, as far as they are indeed good for

us, have we by an access to God in Christ! Such have a companion ready in all their solitudes, a counsellor in all their doubts, a comforter in all their sorrows, a supply in all their wants, a support under all their burdens, a shelter in all their dangers, strength for all their performances, and salvation insured by a sweet, undeceiving earnest. What is heaven but an everlasting access to God? And present access is a pledge of it."

"And as he had devout and confident recourse to the throne of grace, so he was an alert and thankful observer of those providences which answered prayer. He could say that the good things of God's children 'are not dispensed out of the basket of common providence, but out of the ark of the covenant;' and 'those mercies are the sweetest which are seen growing upon the root of a promise.' Like his contemporary in Scotland, Thomas Boston, his diary is full of recognitions of God's superintending care and kind interposing hand. Gratitude for mercies was constantly irradiating his path and sweetening his spirit; and if he sometimes sought the prayers of his friends, he also sought the help of their praises. On special occasions he invited them to his house to join in thanksgiving for recent deliverances or distinguishing favors. 'O magnify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.'

"In a prominent degree Mr. Henry possessed a spiritual mind; and of that spirituality one great

secret was his devout and delighted observance of the Lord's day. On it he accumulated all the endearment and veneration of a grateful and conscientious spirit, and in it he collected patience and impulse for the days to come. To him the Sabbath was like a reservoir on the summit of a hill. He was sure that if this day were filled with heavenly things, it would send down its bright and refreshing streams through all the week."

"The better to 'fix his heart' and help his memory, he kept an occasional journal. As affording the most intimate view of his character, we may give a few extracts from it :

"January 1, 1701. 'Being more and more confirmed in my belief of the being and attributes of God, of the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ between God and man, and of the reality and weight of invisible things, and being more and more satisfied that this is the true grace of God wherein I stand, I do solemnly resign and give up my whole self to God in Jesus Christ. I commit my soul and all the concerns of my spiritual state to the grace of God and to the word of his grace, subjecting myself to the conduct and government of the blessed Spirit, and to his influence and operations, which I earnestly desire and depend upon for the mortifying of my corruptions, the strengthening of my graces, the furnishing me for every good word and work, and the ripening of me for heaven. I commit my body and

all the concerns of my outward condition to the providence of God, to be ordered and disposed by the wisdom and will of my heavenly Father. Not knowing the things which may befall me this year, I refer myself to God. Whether it shall be my dying year or not, I do not know; but it is my earnest expectation and hope that the Lord Jesus Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death, by health or sickness, by plenty or poverty, by liberty or restraint, by preaching or silence, by comfort or sorrow. Welcome, welcome the will of God, whatever it be.'

"January 1, 1705. 'Lord, grant that this year I may be more holy, and walk more closely than ever in all holy conversation. I earnestly desire to be filled with holy thoughts, to be carried out in holy affections, determined by holy aims and intentions, and governed in all my words and actions by holy principles. Oh that a golden thread of holiness may run through the whole web of this year !'

"'I know it is the will of God that I should be useful, and by his grace I will be so. Lord, thou knowest it is the top of my ambition in this world to do good, and to be serviceable to the honor of Christ and the welfare of precious souls. I would fain do good in the pulpit and good with my pen, and, which I earnestly desire to abound more in, good by my common conversation.'"

Such a man has the right and the ability to instruct

us *how to begin, how to spend, and how to conclude the day with God*, so that we shall make the most of this brief life, and render it a wise and ample preparation for the great hereafter.

GENEVA, N. Y.



PART I.



HOW

TO BEGIN THE DAY

WITH GOD.



COME at the morning hour,
Come, let us kneel and pray ;
Prayer is the Christian pilgrim's staff
To walk with God all day.

“At noon, beneath the Rock
Of Ages, rest and pray ;
Sweet is that shelter from the sun
In the weary heat of day.

“At evening, in thy home,
Around its altar, pray ;
And finding there the house of God,
With heaven then close the day.

“When midnight veils our eyes,
Oh, it is sweet to say,
‘I sleep, but my heart waketh, Lord,
With thee to watch and pray.’”



HOW TO BEGIN THE DAY WITH GOD.

DAVID, the royal Psalmist of Israel, has set an example worthy of universal imitation, in respect to the proper method of entering upon each day of life. In his fifth Psalm, after declaring to God the pious purpose, "Unto thee will I pray," he adds, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." We are not to suppose, however, that the morning was the only time which he employed in this way. In another psalm he writes, "Morning, and evening, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud." Psa. 55:17. Again he writes, (Psa. 119:64,) "Seven times a day will I praise thee." It would thus appear that prayer and praise en-

tered largely into the daily life and occupation of this great and good man—a man to whose inspired psalms the Christian world is indebted most largely for devotional feeling and expression, in all acts of worship and of piety.

From his example, we are to learn that *it is our wisdom and duty to begin every day with God.*

The expression, “My voice thou shalt hear,” may be understood in either of two senses: 1. Thou wilt hear, attend to, regard the prayer which I address to thee in the morning. Or 2. Every morning will I address thee in the language of supplication and of praise.

In regard to the first of these senses, it is a matter of great importance to believe fully that God is a prayer-hearing God; that whatever we ask of him as a Father, in the name of Jesus Christ the Mediator, according to the will of God revealed in the Scriptures, shall be granted us either in kind, or in an equivalent, according to the experience of the saints in all ages, and that God never said to the seed of Jacob, “Seek ye me,” in vain, but is “a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.”

In regard to the second of the above senses, David declares that every day—every morning—

God should hear the voice of his prayer. We may speak to our God either with or without the use of the voice ; for the substance of prayer consists in the lifting up of the soul to God, and pouring out the sentiments of the heart before him ; but the use of the voice greatly aids us in fixing our thoughts and giving distinctness to the feelings of devotion, and therefore should, for the most part, be employed when we seek to draw near to God, though he needs not any verbal utterances from us, to understand the desires and the affections of our hearts.

It should be our purpose also, daily to approach our God in prayer and in praise.

This he expects and requires ; not because he needs our religious services or can be benefited by them ; but thereby he seeks to maintain a proper sense of his sovereign authority over us, and to keep us continually in mind of our entire dependence upon him, and of our incessant and heavy obligations to honor, obey, and serve him.

Thus, also, he testifies his compassion towards us, and his kindly interest at all times in our affairs.

We have, or ought to have, something to say

to God every day. Multitudes there are, however, who do not seem to understand, or they never act upon this sentiment. Their sin and their misery it is, that they live without intercourse with God; they are not sensible of their dependence upon him, nor of their obligations, and hence they have nothing to say to him. He never hears from them; as the father of the prodigal son heard nothing from him, for months and years. They ignore the presence, the rightful authority, the paramount claims, the unceasing benefactions of their God and Saviour. But all right-minded persons will feel and acknowledge that every one should have something to say to God daily.

1. *As to a Friend whom we love.* The fellowship of believers is said to be with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; and have we nothing, then, to say to the Father and to the Son? Is there not occasion to express our adoration of the divine attributes, and our praise of the divine works, in creation, providence, and redemption? Have we not much to say in acknowledgment of his amazing grace and bounteousness to us? Is it not proper to express our affection and our submission to him, saying,

as did the apostle, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee"?

God has something to say to us, as a Friend, every day, by the holy Scriptures, by his providences, and by our consciences ; and if we have nothing to say, by way of response, do we not prove ourselves to be altogether wanting in friendship and love to him? When he says to us, "Seek ye my face," should not our hearts answer as to one we love, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek?" So when he says to us, "Return, ye backsliding children," should we not readily reply, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God"? If he speaks to us in the way of reproof, and charges us with our sins, should we not answer by a penitent confession of them? If he speaks in the language of comfort and of encouragement, should we not reply in the language of grateful praise?

"New every morning is the love
Our wakening and uprising prove ;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought.

"New mercies each returning day
Hover around us while we pray ;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

“Only, O Lord, in thy dear love,
 Fit us for perfect rest above,
 And keep us this and every day,
 To live more nearly as we pray.”

KEBLE.

2. *We have, daily, something to say to God, as to a Master whom we serve.* Most numerous and important are the concerns which lie between us and God. On him we are constantly dependent, and all our just expectations are from him. Our happiness is bound up in his favor and loving-kindness. Have we not then business to transact with God—to seek that favor with all our hearts, since it is the life of our souls? and to plead Christ’s righteousness, as the only medium through which we can hope to obtain God’s loving kindness?

Having offended God, and thus become obnoxious to his indignation, we have to confess our sin and folly, to ask for pardon through the blood of Christ, and to repent of our sins at the foot of the cross.

Further, as we have daily work to do for God, and for our own souls, we have to beg of him to show us what he would have us to do, to direct us, and to strengthen us. Besides, we are in continual danger. We are surrounded with diseases and deaths, and have occasion to put our-

selves daily under the protection of God's providence, to be the charge of his holy angels. Our souls also are in danger, from Satan and from temptation, and we need to supplicate the aid of God's Holy Spirit, and of his providence, that we may not be surprised into sin and overcome by strong temptations.

Again, we are drawing near to the period when our everlasting destiny shall be fixed, and have we not something to say to God in respect to our preparation for eternity?

Moreover, as members of the body of Christ, are we not bound to be living, active, useful members? Have we not business with God, to entreat him to make us such, and to offer intercession for the church, for its extension over the whole earth, its prosperity, its purity? Have we not also business with him, as the God of our national well-being, to pray for our beloved land, for its rulers, and its people?

Further, have we nothing to say to God, in behalf of our families, our relations, our friends, our community?

“Remember all who love thee,
All who are loved by thee;
Pray, too, for those who hate thee,
If any such there be;

Then for thyself in meekness
 A blessing humbly claim,
 And blend with each petition
 Thy great Redeemer's name.

“Or, if 't is e'er denied thee
 In solitude to pray,
 Should holy thoughts come o'er thee
 When friends are round thy way,
 E'en then the silent breathing
 Thy spirit lifts above
 Will reach His throne of glory,
 Where dwells eternal love.”

It should be borne in mind, however, that if we expect God to hear us, and to give a favorable answer when we speak to him, we must give attention to him when he speaks to us, as he does daily in his word, in his providence, and in our own consciences.

“In the morning,” says David, “will I direct my prayer unto thee, and look up.” This language denotes a close application of mind and heart, an earnest and elevated purpose in the suppliant. Not to men, nor to be heard of them, do we pray, but to God. We “look up to him” as dwelling in the heavens, yet as One whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. We must also “look up” for an answer to our prayers, and we must look around us to observe

how far Divine Providence operates in our favor, and what obstacles are to be removed, before a gracious answer may be reasonably expected.

“ When, streaming from the eastern skies,
The morning light salutes my eyes,
O Son of Righteousness divine,
On me with beams of mercy shine.
Oh, chase the clouds of guilt away,
And turn my darkness into day.

“ When to heaven’s great and glorious King
My morning sacrifice I bring,
And, mourning o’er my guilt and shame,
Ask mercy in my Saviour’s name,
Then, Jesus, sprinkle with thy blood,
And be my advocate with God.” SIR R. GRANT.

The time appropriated to prayer is in the morning; not then only, but prayer is to be one of our first employments in the day. Every Christian should commence the day with secret prayer, and every head of a family should, each morning, offer prayer in the presence of his family, and in their behalf. For this course several reasons may be mentioned :

1. The morning being the first part of the day, it is fit that He who is the First, should have the first, and be first served. The first fruits of the Hebrew fields were always to be devoted to God, and so were the firstlings of

the Hebrew flocks. By morning and evening prayer, we pay honor to him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. It seems then a most rational thing to begin and to end the day with him.

2. In the morning we are in the best condition, both of body and mind, for the proper service of God, and he is obviously entitled to the best service it is in our power to render.

3. We are then, ordinarily, least encumbered with the cares of life, the claims of business, and of society, so that we may secure, if we rise early enough, the time that should be employed in secret and also in family devotion. It is for the interest of those who have much to do in worldly matters, to take time in the morning, before worldly business crowds upon them, for the more important business of the future life, that they may attend to it with the more entire devotion and concentration of mind and heart.

“Morn is the time to pray ;
 How lovely and how meet,
 To send our earliest thought away
 Up to the mercy-seat—
 Ambassadors for us, to claim
 A blessing in our Master’s name !”

MRS. J. L. GRAY.

4. In the morning it is most fitting to acknowledge the great mercies of the night just passed, the protection of life and health, the invigoration of the body and the mind for new duties and enjoyments. Have we had a good night? Let us repair to the throne of grace with our cheerful thanksgiving. How many are the mercies involved in passing a good night! a comfortable house, freedom from sickness and pain, no occasion to watch with the sick or the dying, exemption from all causes of disturbance, refreshing sleep!

“In sleep’s serene oblivion laid,
I safely passed the silent night,
Again I see the breaking shade—
I drink again the morning light.

“New-born, I bless the waking hour,
Once more, with awe, rejoice to be ;
My conscious soul resumes her power,
And springs, my guardian God, to thee.”

HAWKESWORTH.

Have we a pleasant morning? Is the light sweet to us, the light of the sun, the power of vision? Are we still surrounded with the various accommodations and blessings of domestic life? Have we food and raiment in abundance? Are we in the enjoyment of health and ease?

Ought we not then to own, with glad hearts, our obligation to the great Father of mercies for all these and similar favors, which have, in whole or in part, been denied to multitudes of our race, and which we have ourselves forfeited by our ingratitude and disobedience towards Him on whom we depend for life, and breath, and all things? We know not, perhaps, to what great dangers we have been exposed during the night, and which have been graciously averted by our heavenly Father. The destroying angel may have been abroad in our neighborhood; the incendiary or the robber may have meditated mischief against us and our dwelling, but God has turned him aside, so that we have escaped all harm. And does such providential and distinguishing care merit no recognition and praise on our part? and should not the first morning hour see us on our knees before Him who has exerted it?

“While Nature welcomes in the day,
My heart its earliest hours would pay
To Him whose care has kindly kept
My life from danger while I slept.

“Wilt Thou this day my footsteps guide
And kindly all I need provide ;

With strength divine my bosom arm
Against temptation's powerful charm?

“Where'er I am, oh, may I feel
That God is all around me still ;
That all I say, or do, or mean,
By his all-searching eye is seen.

“Oh, may each day my heart improve,
Increase my faith, my hope, my love ;
And thus its shades around me close
More wise and holy than I rose.” FRISBIE.

5. If during the night we have had any wakeful hours, and they have been occupied in sweet meditations upon God and his good providence over us, we shall be all the better fitted in the morning to present to God a spiritual sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor. The word of God, also, will aid us in the morning to right thoughts of God, and arouse us to the exercise of pious feeling.

6. On the contrary, in the morning we may have occasion to recollect the indulgence of vain and sinful thoughts, affections, and imaginations during the night season, and upon that account a necessity arises for going to God, in the morning, with humble supplications for pardon and cleansing.

And dare we enter fully upon another day till we have renewed our repentance for wrongdoing by night as well as by day? We cannot, with propriety or safety, proceed to the business of the day under the guilt of unrepented and unpardoned sin. Hence, in the morning, prayer for pardon becomes a necessity as well as a privilege.

7. Before addressing ourselves to the work of the day, does it not concern us to ask counsel, direction, assistance, and success from God, whose providence may so greatly help us, and without whose blessing we have no reason to look for success?

If we have families to provide for, and if we desire to do well for them, it is obviously our duty and privilege to commend them and their interests, every morning, to that God from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.

In seeking opportunities of doing or of getting good, we should look devoutly to him for skill and wisdom, patience and perseverance. Every day has also its temptations, some of which may be foreseen, others not. It concerns us, therefore, as we learn from the prayer which

our Saviour taught us daily to make use of, to be earnest in supplication to be fortified against temptation, or to be delivered from it. We need Divine assistance also to pass unharmed, and especially to do good, through all the social intercourse of the day.

It should further be borne in mind, that we know not in the morning what the day may bring forth—what events it may unfold, deeply affecting our happiness or sorrow, and for which we need to secure preparation from above, that as our day is, so also our strength may be. Grace we need to furnish us thoroughly for every good word and work, and in like manner to preserve us from those of an opposite character ; that we may not think, or speak, or do anything in all the day which we may have cause to wish unthought, unspoken, and undone at night.

“Forth in thy name, O Lord, we go,
Our daily labor to pursue ;
Thee, only thee, resolved to know,
In all we think, or speak, or do.
Still would we bear thy easy yoke.
And every moment watch and pray ;
Would still to things eternal look,
And hasten to thy glorious day.” C. WESLEY.

In view of what has been said above arises the question, How often has our morning worship been neglected on slight and insufficient grounds; or if not altogether neglected, performed in a hasty, superficial, and unbecoming manner—in a manner unbecoming our wants, our dangers, responsibilities, and obligations—unbecoming also what we owe to the great Majesty of heaven and earth, to Divine care and beneficence? God has not been deficient in his regard for us as a Father, watching over us through the defenceless hours of the night; but how sadly deficient have we been in performing the duty of grateful and obedient children! How often have we brought to the altar of the great God no sacrifice at all, or presented to him the torn, the lame, and the diseased! How often have we robbed God of the honor, and ourselves and our families of the benefit, of morning worship duly performed! God has come to our closets—he has looked in upon our families, seeking this fruit; and has often found none, or that which is worthless.

Let none say that they cannot pray. If favors are needed from men, we have no difficulty in making known our requests, and that with an

earnestness and perseverance corresponding to our sense of the importance to us of securing these favors. But the favors which daily we need to ask from God, not only temporal, but spiritual, are not only more numerous, but vastly more important; yea, indispensable. If you know that you have sinned—that you have strong propensities to sin—that you are prone to indulge them—that you do indulge them, in opposition to the law and mercy of God and your own good, and that you are under condemnation as the result, and must turn to God and by earnest prayer obtain pardon and renewal through Christ and the agency of the Holy Spirit, can you not command words to express your condition, and to implore what your great necessities require?

Are you a Christian? Never, for shame, say you cannot pray, for that is as absurd as for a soldier to say he knows not how to handle a sword, or a carpenter an axe. What are you called for into the fellowship of Christ, but that you may have fellowship with God? If you cannot pray so well as others, pray as well as you can, and God will accept you.

Is want of time in the morning alleged as an

excuse for neglecting prayer, either secret or domestic? What is time given us for, if not for the care of our highest interests and the performance of our highest duties? Who or what has claims upon our time superior to God and the welfare of the soul? What is more needful than prayer? and what therefore is of sufficient importance to set it aside? How can time be spent to better advantage in the morning than in prayer and praise to God? The business of the day will not be hindered, but promoted, by beginning it thus with God; so that business cannot wisely be pleaded as a reason for rushing into it without previous communion with God.

“When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
 To do the like; our bodies but forerun
 The spirit’s duty; true hearts spread and heave
 Unto their God as flowers do to the sun;
 Give him thy first thoughts then, so shalt thou keep
 Him company all day, and in him sleep.

“Yet never sleep the sun up; prayer should
 Dawn with the day; there are set awful hours
 ’Twixt heaven and us; the manna was not good
 After sunrising; fair day sullies flowers:
 Rise to prevent the sun; sleep doth sins glut,
 And heaven’s gate opens when the world’s is shut.

“Serve God before the world ; let him not go
Until thou hast a blessing ; then resign
The whole unto him, and remember who
Prevailed by wrestling ere the sun did shine :
Pour oil upon the stones, weep for thy sin ;
Then journey on, and have an eye to heaven.

“When the world’s up, and every swarm abroad,
Keep well thy temper, mix not with each clay ;
Despatch necessities ; life hath a load
Which must be carried on, and safely may ;
Yet keep those cares without thee ; let the heart
Be God’s alone, and choose the better part.”

HENRY VAUGHAN.

It remains to add a caution against formality and want of earnestness and sincerity in our devotions. It is not enough to say our prayers, but we must pray our prayers—must pray in praying, as Elijah did. Jas. 5 : 17. Let us learn to labor fervently in prayer, as Epaphras did, (Col. 4 : 12,) and we shall find that it is the hand of the diligent in this duty that maketh rich. It is not the length, or the rhetorical beauty, or the appropriate phraseology of prayer, that renders it acceptable to God ; but the deep sincerity, the humility, the penitence, the faith, the holy love which every right prayer implies or expresses.

Having begun the day with God in the man-

ner recommended above, the next duty, and one more difficult to perform, is to spend the day with him, which forms the subject of the succeeding part.

“God of the morning, at whose voice
 The cheerful sun makes haste to rise,
 And like a giant doth rejoice
 To run his journey through the skies;

“Oh, like the sun may I fulfil
 Th’ appointed duties of the day ;
 With ready mind and active will
 March on, and keep my heavenly way.

“Give me thy counsel for my guide,
 And then receive me to thy bliss ;
 All my desires and hopes beside
 Are faint and cold, compared with this.”

WATTS.



PART II.



HOW

TO SPEND THE DAY

WITH GOD.



HOW TO SPEND THE DAY WITH GOD.

IT will be useful and safe to adopt, as in reference to the early morning hour, the motto of the great Hebrew king: "On Thee do I wait all the day." We are to understand this expression as implying an expectation of favors from God, and the act of seeking them so long as they are deferred. David had offered the prayer, "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me." Being in suspense as to the course of action he should pursue, he says to God: "On Thee I will wait all the day." He had also called Him the "God of his salvation;" the being on whom he regarded his deliverance from various dangers and difficulties as depending; the being from whom alone he expected a spiritual as well

as a temporal and outward salvation. So highly did he appreciate what he desired of God, that he expresses his willingness and his purpose to wait for it all the day until it should be granted.

It is not enough for us to begin the day with God ; but during and throughout the day we are to wait upon him.

1. *This implies a life of desire towards God*—not only towards the good things which are in his gift, but towards God himself, the manifestation of his glorious attributes, and the exercise of his grace upon us. The devout man waits on him as the beggar waits on his benefactor, with earnest desires to obtain needful supplies, or as the diseased at the pool of Bethesda waited for the stirring of the water and for the expected cure. The idea is most fully conveyed in the psalmist's own language : " O God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee : my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." " My soul followeth hard after thee : thy right hand upholdeth me." " Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel." " There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." " It is good for me to draw near to God ; I have put my trust in the

Lord God." Thus upon the wings of holy desire should our souls be ever soaring upwards towards God, and pressing towards the attainments—the spirit—of heaven. We should ever strive to know more of God, to become more like him, to be brought into closer fellowship, and into more active and useful service.

It is not sufficient to have a season of earnest worship in the morning, but that spiritual desire, which is the soul of prayer, should be kept alive through the day; the bent or inclination of the soul must tend towards God—towards serving him in all that we do, and enjoying him in all that he bestows. This state of mind is intended in the commands given us: to pray always; to pray without ceasing; to continue in prayer.

“Oh, could I find, from day to day,
A nearness to my God,
Then would my hours glide sweet away
While leaning on his word.

“Lord, I desire with thee to live
Anew from day to day,
In joys the world can never give,
Nor ever take away.”

2. *To wait upon God is to live a life of delight in God*, as the lover waits on the object of his affec-

tion. Desire is love in motion, as a bird on the wing; delight is love at rest, as a bird upon the nest. Though our desire must still be so towards God that we must be wishing for more of God, yet our delight must be so in God that we must never wish for more than God. Regarding him as all-sufficient, we must be satisfied in him. Is it a pleasure to us to think of God—of his existence, attributes, providence, and glorious sovereignty? Do we look up to him with conscious satisfaction? Do we glory in him as our God? Do we value him above all worldly good? Do we expect more from him? Is the heart so full of God and Christ and grace, that it now spontaneously says, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul;” here repose thyself; here alone look for thy chief and most permanent happiness? The regenerate and sanctified soul dwells in God—is in him continually pleased, and whatever disturbance is felt from external sources is more than balanced by what it finds in God.

3. *To wait on God is to depend on him for all needful good*, as the child waits on his father in whom he confides, and on whom he casts all his care. It is to expect all good to come to us

from God that he shall deem expedient and best to bestow upon us. Thus David explains the matter: "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him," Psa. 62:5; that is, to no other (independently of him) do I look for the good I need, for I know that every creature is that to me, and no more than he makes it to be. And our expectations from God, as far as they are guided by and grounded upon his word, ought to be humbly confident. The eyes of all wait upon him, for he is good to all; but especially may his saints direct their eyes to him, for he is in a peculiar manner and degree good to Israel.

4. *To wait upon God is to live a life of devotedness to him*, as the servant waits on his master, to learn his will, and to do his work, and to advance his honor and interest. To wait on God is to yield ourselves cheerfully to his disposal and guidance, and to acquiesce in his arrangements respecting us. We should have such supreme regard for him, such confidence in his wisdom, equity, and goodness, such a sense of our dependence and obligation, as to resolve our own will into his, and to accommodate our own will to his. As the eyes of a servant are to

the hand of his master, and as the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress, so must our eyes wait upon the Lord, to do what he appoints, to take what he apportions to us. "Thy will be done." "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" In like manner, the glory of God is to be consulted ; we are to do him honor. This is the part of a faithful servant.

The will of God, therefore, is to be our rule of action every day.

We must wait on him to receive his commands, as recorded in the Scriptures, with a resolution to comply with them, although they may contradict our corrupt inclinations, or interfere with our secular interests.

We are to make the will of God, as shown in his providence, the rule of our patience. We know it is God who performs all things for us, and should be assured that all he does shall be made to work for good to those who love him ; and in order to that, we ought to acquiesce in and accommodate ourselves to the entire will of God. To wait on the Lord is to say, "Let him do to me as seemeth good to him ;" because we know that nothing seemeth good to him that is not really good. It is to say, "Not as I will,

but as thou wilt." It is to bring our mind into accordance with our condition, so as to be calm and serene, whatever may occur that is fitted to render us uneasy. "I was dumb ; I opened not my mouth ;" not because it was of no use to complain, but "because Thou didst it," and therefore I had no reason to complain. And this sentiment, this state of mind, will reconcile us to every affliction, to one as well as to another ; because, whatever it may be, it is the will of God, and that is ever determined by supreme wisdom and goodness. Whatever disposition God shall make of us or of our affairs, we may be assured that as he does us no wrong, so he means no injury to us.

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be !
Lead me by thine own faithful hand,
Choose out the path for me.

"Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best,
Winding or straight, it matters not,
It leads me to thy rest.

"I dare not choose my lot ;
I would not if I might ;
Choose thou for me, my gracious God,
So shall I walk aright.

“The kingdom that I seek
 Is thine ; so let the way
 That leads to it be truly thine,
 Else I must surely stray.”

BONAR.

The duty of waiting upon God might be illustrated by referring to various other expressions of Holy Scripture that describe the homage which we owe to God, and the communion which it is our interest to maintain with him.

It is to set God always before us, (Psa. 16 : 8 ;) to look upon him as ever near to us, as always observing us and noticing what we do, as one to whom we are accountable.

It is to acknowledge him in all our ways, (Prov. 3 : 6 ;) to look to him, in all our undertakings, for direction and success ; to commit our way to him, saying, “If thy presence go not up with us, carry us not up hence ;” to notice his kind hand in all the comforts dispensed to us, and in all the crosses laid upon us ; to bless the name of the Lord, both when he gives and when he takes.

Having thus explained what is to be understood by waiting upon God, it is now to be shown that this must be our practice every day, and all the day long.

We must wait on God every day ; on Sabbath days not only, but on week days. The Lord's day is especially to be devoted to waiting upon God, in the sanctuary, in the family, in the closet ; but on all other days also it is our duty and our interest to wait upon him. Every day of the week, as well as on the Sabbath, we stand in need of the Divine mercies that are to be thus secured, and have work to do for God in which his assistance is thus to be sought. Indeed, our waiting upon him during the first day of the week is adapted and designed to fit us for communion with him during the other days thereof ; so that we do not really fulfil the design of the Sabbath unless the spiritual impressions then received abide with us, and regulate our minds and hearts in all the business and trials and moral dangers of the week. Thus from one Sabbath to another our souls are to be maintained in a proper Christian state. We must be so "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day, as to "walk in the Spirit" all the week.

Ever. when engaged in the details of some worldly business, our hearts may be waiting upon God by cherishing an habitual regard to him—to his providence as our guide, and to his

glory as our end ; and thus we may abide with him in our ordinary worldly pursuits and vocation. Even those who rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness in their worldly business, owe it to their interest as well as piety to wait on God, because otherwise their labor may be in vain. Psa. 127 : 1, 2.

“Vain were all our toil and labor,
 Did not God that labor bless ;
 Vain, without his grace and favor,
 Every talent we possess.”

LYTE.

Even on those days when ordinary business is laid aside, and we give ourselves to agreeable recreation, this business of waiting on God must not be laid aside ; for he must ever hold the first place in our regard, and we require his continual aid to guard us against the temptations which may cluster in the paths of social or of personal enjoyment.

Both in days of prosperity and adversity alike is it our duty and our interest to wait upon our God. Let our wealth be ever so increased, we are not thereby rendered independent of him. We are under obligations to make a proper use of it as his stewards. We are to ask his blessing on what we have, and to depend on his gra-

cious providence for the continued possession and comfort of it. It is also requisite that we supplicate wisdom and grace to use our wealth, or our worldly influence from all sources, for the high and holy purposes which our Maker had in view when he led us into our present possessions. Aware also of the precarious tenure by which we hold worldly goods of any sort, it behooves us to wait upon our God for better things than this world affords even to the most favored.

And when the world frowns upon us, and disappointments arise, and afflictions assail our comfort and our peace, we must not thereby be tempted to withdraw ourselves from the good habit of waiting upon God. One grand design, we may suppose, of afflictions, is to bring us more frequently and closely to the throne of grace, to teach us how to pray with a more childlike and humble spirit, and to make the word of God more precious in our estimation and more beneficial to our souls. Then we are taught to approach our God with greater satisfaction than ever, as the God of hope, of consolation, and of joy. Then we are led to appreciate our Saviour as the great High Priest who is

touched with our infirmities, and regards our troubles and our griefs with godlike sympathy.

“More moulded to thy will,
 Lord, let thy servant be,
 Higher and higher still,
 Liker and liker thee.

“Leave naught that is unmeet ;
 Of all that is mine own
 Strip me ; and so complete
 My training for the throne.” BONAR.

In the days of youth and in the days of old age alike, it is fitting and wise to wait upon God. The Scriptures set before us the beautiful picture of the child Samuel ministering to the Lord ; and they describe to us that memorable scene near Jerusalem, when our Saviour was delighted with the joyous hosannahs of the children, during his triumphal entrance into that devoted city. The more early in life we begin to wait upon God, the more honor we put upon him, and the greater benefit we procure to ourselves. And when old age approaches, we are concerned to continue our waiting upon him for support and comfort under its ever-increasing infirmities, and for a more abundant entrance, to be daily expected, into his everlasting kingdom and glory. Those who have done

the will of God, and are no longer capable of laborious exertion in his service, have need of a graceful patience in waiting for the time of inheriting the promises; and the nearer they approach to the happiness they are waiting for, the dearer to them should be that gracious and glorious God on whom they wait, and with whom shortly they hope to dwell in heaven, and that for ever.

Having shown how and why we should wait on our God *every day*, the next point is to show that *we are to wait upon him all the day*.

From early morning to latest night we must continue waiting upon God. Whatever changes of employment there may be in the course of the day, it must be the invariable attitude of our souls to attend upon him, and to regard his will and his glory in whatever we undertake and pursue.

1. *We must cast our daily cares upon him*, believing that his providence extends to all our affairs, and to all events in which we shall be concerned, and to all the circumstances of them, however minute and seemingly accidental. We are to believe his gracious promise that all

things shall work together for good to those who love him, and then to yield ourselves to him, to do with us and ours as may seem good to him ; and having done so, then to rest satisfied, and resolve to abide calmly the result. We are to bring our cares to God by prayer in the morning—to spread them before him ; and then to make it appear all the day, by the composure and cheerfulness of our minds, that we did leave them with him, as Hannah did, who, when she had prayed, went away and did eat, and was no more sad. 1 Sam. 1 : 18.

2. *We must manage our daily business for him,* with an eye to his providence that placed us in the situation and employment to which we are devoted, and with an eye to his precept, making diligence our duty ; with an eye, further, to his blessing, as that which is needed to make our occupation comfortable and productive ; and, above all, with an eye to his glory as our highest and noblest end. This dignifies our commonest actions, and brings them into a sacred relation to God, and it makes them more pleasant to ourselves. If Gaius, on parting with certain friends, accompanies them a short way upon their journey, (3 John, ver. 6,) it is but an

instance of common civility ; but if he manifests this respect to them because they belong to Christ, and for his sake, and further, that he may have religious intercourse with them for a longer period, it then becomes an act of Christian virtue. The apostle Paul has given us this general rule, applicable to every day, and to every hour of the day : “ Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,” (Col. 3 : 17 ;) and thus, through the Mediator, we wait on our God, and find acceptance with him. They who serve in households, or in other capacities, are instructed how to wait on the Lord in their common employments. See Eph. 6 : 5–8 ; Col. 3 ; 22–24.

3. *We must wait on God as our daily Benefactor,* look to him for our daily bread, for all the comforts and accommodations of our earthly state, and for his blessing so to rest upon them that our health, happiness, and usefulness may be subserved. No inducement to honesty and fidelity and moderation can be stronger, than the habit of regarding God as the source of what we possess, to whom we are strictly accountable as stewards for the right use of all that we have. It is not once a week that we

are to wait upon him for our temporal blessings, as people in some places go to market to buy provisions for the whole week, but we must wait upon him continually, as dependent on him for the blessings which are conveyed to us every successive hour.

4. *The temptations of every day are to be resisted, and the duties of every day are to be undertaken in reliance upon divine grace for the strength which is required.* Our Master has taught us to pray not only for our daily bread, but for deliverance daily from temptation. We engage in no business, we partake of no enjoyments, that have not snares attending them. Not only in the morning must we put ourselves under the protection of God's grace, but through all the day we must keep ourselves under the shelter of that grace, which will not suffer us to be tempted above our ability to resist and to overcome. Only in the Lord, and in the power of his might, can we be sufficiently strong.

Again, we have various duties to perform. Opportunities will occur, or should be sought, for speaking good words and doing good works, and we must look up to God for that light and fire, that wisdom and zeal which are needful for

the best improvement of such opportunities ; and to the same source must we look, in order to be fortified against the use of words and the doing of works, that are bad and injurious.

5. *Daily afflictions must be borne with a pious submission to the Divine will.* Something may happen each day to grieve us, something in our social or domestic intercourse, something in our occupations. Events relating to ourselves, or to our families, or friends, may occasion pain and sorrow ; we may be called to endure the visitations of bodily disease and suffering, or severe disappointment in some cherished object or pursuit. But Christ requires of all his disciples to take up their cross daily. Mat. 16:24. We must take it up when God lays it in our way, and not go a step out of the path of duty either to meet it or to avoid it. It is not enough to bear the cross ; we must acquiesce in the will of God laying it upon us.

We must see that every affliction is allotted to us by our heavenly Father, and for the purpose of salutary discipline and instruction ; and therefore we must wait on him to learn for what fault or omission of duty he is chastening us, that we may fulfil the end for which the

affliction has been sent, and so be made partakers of the holiness he would thereby produce in us.

“ Oh, thou, whose gently chastening hand
In mercy deals the blow,
Make but thy servant understand
Wherefore thou layest me low !

“ I ask thee not the rod to spare
While thus thy love I see ;
But oh ! let every suffering bear
Some message, Lord, from thee !”

We must wait on God for support under the burdens he imposes, and not seek to extricate ourselves by any sinful methods ; but patiently wait until God shall see fit to remove them by the use on our part of proper efforts.

6. *The tidings and events of every day are to be awaited with a cheerful resignation to Divine Providence.* We know not what a day, or an hour even, may bring forth, (Prov. 27:1,) and we are too apt to spend our thoughts in fruitless imaginings concerning the probabilities of the future in this life. Are we expecting good tidings? Let us wait on God as the giver of the good we hope for, and be ready to accept it gratefully from his hand. What God has prom-

ised us, we may with assurance promise ourselves, and no more. Our hopes in reference to other matters must be humble and modest, and regulated by his will, so that if the hope is deferred or disappointed the heart will not be cast down. Are we apprehending evil tidings and melancholy events? We may wait on God to deliver us from our fears, and from the things which we fear will come upon us, (Psa. 34:4,) or to support us, should our prayer in this regard be unanswered. Are we in suspense between hope and fear? Let us wait on God to whom belong the issues of life and of death, good and evil, and thus compose our minds into a calm and resigned posture, with a humble purpose to accommodate ourselves to the event. Let us humbly hope for the best, but prepare for the worst, and then accept what God may be pleased to send.

“Be tranquil, oh, my soul,
Be quiet every fear!
Thy Father hath supreme control,
And he is ever near.

“Ne’er of thy lot complain,
Whatever may befall;
Sickness or sorrow, care or pain,
’Tis well-appointed all.

“ A Father’s chastening hand
 Is leading thee along ;
 Nor distant is the promised land,
 Where swells th’ immortal song.

“ Oh, then, my soul, be still !
 Await heaven’s high decree ;
 Seek but to do thy Father’s will,
 It shall be well with thee.” HASTINGS.

COMMUNION WITH GOD IN VARIOUS SITUATIONS.

1. *In the family.* When we meet the members of the family in the morning, we are to wait upon God for the bestowment of his blessing upon them, and to thank him for the mercies experienced by them during the night, and to implore the bestowment of what may be needful in the future. In all our conversation with our families, the provision we make for them, and the arrangements we adopt, we must wait upon God as the God of the families of Israel, and have our eyes lifted to Christ as the One in whom alone the families of the earth are blessed.

2. *In the education of a family,* we need to ask counsel and assistance from God, and a divine

blessing upon our efforts and upon the corresponding efforts of our children, not only in those matters which pertain to godliness and salvation, but even in those which belong to the present life. The members of the family, also, that are in childhood or youth, should be taught to wait on God in all their daily studies and efforts at improvement, that they may fit themselves for usefulness in life, become ornaments to their families, comforts to their parents, benefactors to their country and to the world.

3. *In our places of daily business*, we are to wait on God for his presence and blessing. Our attendance on God in our several callings should be as constant as our attendance upon those callings. God's providence is to be observed in all the occurrences which we there meet with. It should be a frequent thought, "I am now in the way of my duty, and I depend upon God to bless me in it." When buying or selling, we are to remember that God's eye is upon us, observing whether we are just and honest in our dealings, and do no wrong to those we deal with. In all business operations, it honors God to look to him for that sagacity and prudence which lead to success, and for that honest profit

which may be expected in the way of honest diligence.

4. *In our reading*, we are to wait on God to guide us in our selection of books or periodicals, and to aid us in turning them to a profitable account. The Holy Scriptures are of course to occupy a portion of each day's reading matter, both alone and with our families ; and we need to wait upon God to assist us so to read and meditate upon them and apply them, as to derive the largest benefit in the way of religious impression and impulse. Time is too precious, and our accountability to God for the proper use of it too solemn, to permit us to waste it in frivolous, unprofitable, or demoralizing reading. When history is read, or even the daily papers, so far as they report events, we are to trace the hand of God's providence, and devoutly study the plans and the attributes of God so far as daily events serve to illustrate them.

5. *At our tables*, we are to recognize God's bountiful hand in spreading them with various articles of nourishing and agreeable food, so indispensable to comfort, health, and even life. We are to praise him for the health and social happiness that pervade the little circle sur-

rounding it. We are to restrain ourselves from all undue indulgence of appetite, and are to partake of food with such moderation, prudence, and caution, as a proper care for health and usefulness requires, remembering God's high command, that whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God.

6. *In our social visits*, made or received, we are to wait upon God with thanksgiving for valuable friends and for all their kind offices to us, and for our opportunities to reciprocate such offices; also for comfortable dwellings, with their various appointments, adapted to us and to our friends.

In social circles, we must so regulate our *conversation* that it shall be productive of good, and not of harm, to our friends and to ourselves. We need wisdom from God, to render our conversation edifying, and such as may bring honor to God and salvation to our fellow-creatures—remembering that an influence goes forth from our lips of great importance, and for which we must give an account to God. It is painful and humiliating to think on how different a plan from this social visits and conversation are most generally conducted.

7. *In acts of charity to the poor and wretched,* we are to wait on God, by performing those acts as unto him ; not to secure praise of men, but the approbation of God ; and by asking God to accept what we do for the good of others, as done in obedience to his will, and from love to his creatures, and in imitation of his benign example. We are also bound to ask the divine blessing upon what we bestow in charity, or in the grand operations of Christian benevolence, that it may promote the happiness of those for whose benefit it is given. To such acts the Scriptures hold out the powerful motive, that they shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just ; nay, sooner, for they speak of it as bread cast upon the waters, which after many days we shall find again.

8. *In inquiring after or reading the public news,* we are to wait on God. We are to do it with an eye to him as governing in the affairs of men ; we are to maintain an habitual concern for the interests of his kingdom in the world, and to observe its prosperity, or the reverse. We are to read the news, not simply to gratify an idle curiosity or to pass a pleasant hour, but that we may be better prepared to direct our prayers

and our praises, and to regulate our own conduct in reference to the kingdom of God and the welfare of our fellow-men. It would greatly ennoble and make more highly useful the reading of the papers, both secular and religious, if we should regard them as chronicles of the Divine movements in the affairs of our world. They would thus bring us into communion with God, and into sympathy with the grand movements of his all-comprehensive government. If public affairs are bright and pleasing, there is a call for grateful acknowledgment to the Most High, who ruleth in the affairs of men; if they are dark and threatening, there is a demand for humble prostration before him, in the confession of sin and ill-desert, and in the supplication of mercy to avert impending evils.

9. *In reference to the prosecution of a journey,* it is proper to wait upon God, to put ourselves under his protection, to depend on him to give his angels charge of us, that we may be carried safely through all the perils of the way. It is proper also to give thanks to God for providing us in this country with such uncommon facilities for agreeable and expeditious travel, so different from what was enjoyed a third of a century ago.

We must have our eyes uplifted to God in our setting out and on our way, that we may be prepared for all the events of the journey, and if it reach a prosperous issue, have our hearts overflowing with gratitude and praise to our great Preserver.

10. *In the hours of solitude*, when communing with our own hearts, we must still be waiting upon God. When we are alone, we must at the same time not be alone, but we must seek to have the Father with us, and we must commune with him. Even in solitude we shall find temptations that are to be guarded against. The Saviour himself was most strongly tempted by Satan to evil in a lonely wilderness. But in solitude we have also the best opportunity for devout reflection and contemplation, if we understand the method of improving such opportunity, so that we may never be less alone than when alone. If when we sit alone, withdrawn from business and conversation, we have but the art, or rather perhaps the heart, to fill up these vacant minutes with pious meditations upon God and divine things, we then gather up the fragments of time which remain, and so are we found waiting on God all the day.

Such a life of communion with God is a heaven upon earth. It is doing the work of heaven and the will of God as they do it who are in heaven. It is a foretaste of the everlasting blessedness of heaven, and a preparation for it.

“Oh, talk to me of heaven ! I love
To hear about my home above :
For there doth many a loved one dwell
In light and joy ineffable.
Oh, tell me how they shine and sing,
While every harp rings echoing,
And every glad and tearless eye
Beams like the bright sun gloriously.
Tell me of that victorious palm
Each hand in glory beareth ;
Tell me of that celestial calm
Each face in glory weareth.

“Oh, happy, happy country, where
There entereth not a sin ;
And Death, who keeps its portals fair,
May never once come in.
No grief can change their day to night,
The darkness of that land is light.
Sorrow and sighing God has sent
Far thence, to endless banishment,
And never more may one dark tear
Bedim their burning skies ;
For every one they shed while here
In fearful agonies,
Glitters a bright and dazzling gem
In their immortal diadem.” CAROLINE BOWLES.

SOME FURTHER DIRECTIONS FOR THUS WAIT-
ING ON GOD ALL THE DAY.

1. *Observe how much may be discovered of God in created objects around us; of his wisdom and power in their creation, and of his goodness in their serviceableness to us.* Look upon the wonders and the comforts that surround you, and let them all lead you to Him who is the Fountain of being and the Giver of all good. All our springs are in him, and from him are all our streams. It is said to have been a custom with the pious Jews of the olden time to give to God the glory of whatever delight they took in any creature. When they smelled a flower, they said, "Blessed be He that gave to this flower its sweetness." When they took up bread, "Blessed be He that appointed bread to strengthen man's heart." Thus may we taste that God is gracious in everything that ministers to life and comfort.

2. *Consider that all created objects are nothing without God.* The more we discern the emptiness of the world, and the insufficiency of all its enjoyments to make us happy, the more closely we shall cleave to God, and the more intimately

we shall hold converse with him, in order to find in him that satisfaction which in vain we seek from the objects of sense.

3. *Live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* We cannot with any proper confidence wait upon God, but in and through Jesus as our Mediator, by whom alone God speaks to us and allows us to speak to him. It is only by Christ that we have access to God and success in prayer, and therefore we must make mention of his righteousness, even of his only. We must exercise an habitual dependence on him who always appears in the presence of God for us.

4. *Be frequent and deeply serious in pious ejaculations.* In waiting upon God, we must speak to him on all occasions, even briefly and when there is no opportunity for a lengthened prayer. "Unto thee, O Lord," says David, "do I lift up my soul!" or, to thee do I direct it. In a holy ejaculation, we should supplicate pardon for this sin, strength against this evil tendency, victory over this temptation, and it shall not be in vain. This is to pray always and without ceasing. It is not the length, but the right sentiment and emotion and purpose of the prayer, that give it acceptableness and value.

5. *Look upon every day as one that may be the last you shall have to spend on earth.*

Death will bring us all to God to be judged by him ; it will bring all the saints to the fruition of him ; and the One we are hastening to, and hope to be for ever with, we are concerned to wait upon and to gain an acquaintance with. Communion with God here is an indispensable preparation for the more intimate and blissful communion which we hope to enjoy with him hereafter.

“ ‘T is not for man to trifle ! life is brief,
And sin is here.

Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.

We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earnest in a world like ours.

“ Not *many* lives, but only *one* have we—
One, only one.

How sacred should that one life ever be—
That narrow span !

Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil !

“ O life below ! how brief, and poor, and sad—
One heavy sigh !

O life above ! how long, and fair, and glad—
An endless joy !

Oh, to be done with daily dying here ;

Oh, to begin the living in yon sphere !” BONAR.

PART III.



• HOW

TO CLOSE THE DAY

WITH GOD.

“Sunlight has vanished, and the weary earth
Lies resting from a long day's toil and pain,
And looking for a new dawn's early birth,
Seeks strength in slumber for its toil again.

“We too would rest ; but ere we close the eye
Upon the consciousness of waking thought,
Would calmly turn it to yon star-bright sky,
And lift the soul to Him who slumbers not.

“Above us is thy hand with tender care,
Distilling over us the dew of sleep ;
Darkness seems loaded with oblivious air,
In deep forgetfulness each sense to steep.

“Thou hast provided midnight's hour of peace,
Thou stretchest over us the wing of rest ;
With more than all a parent's tenderness,
Foldest us sleeping to thy gentle breast,

“Grief flies away ; care quits our easy couch,
Till, wakened by thy hand, when breaks the day—
Like the lone prophet by the angel's touch—
We rise to tread again our pilgrim-way.

“God of our life ! God of each day and night !
Oh, keep us still till life's short race is run !
Until there dawns the long, long day of light,
That knows no night, yet needs no star nor sun.”

BONAR.



HOW TO CONCLUDE THE DAY WITH GOD.

IT will be to our advantage to refer again to the example of the spiritually-minded psalmist and king of Israel, one of whose psalms contains this language: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Psa. 4:8.

David having finished the work and passed the dangers of the day, having counselled his friends around him (verses 4, 5) to commune with their own hearts upon their beds, and to offer the evening sacrifices of righteousness, says to them on retiring, "I will lay me down in peace, and sleep." He concludes the day, as

he had opened it, with meditations on God, and sweet communion with him.

It is remarkable that the above language was used at the very time when his bitter enemies were seeking his destruction, and when his life was evidently in peril ; so that the language indicates a sublime confidence in God as his great Protector and Deliverer, and also an uncommon serenity of mind, and freedom from anxiety and dread.

These words may be adopted in reference to ourselves when we retire to rest ; and we should take care so to conduct ourselves all the day, that we may not be unfitted for the right performance of our evening devotions. If we finish well our daily work, it will be an earnest of our finishing our life's work well.

One rule for closing the day well, is to keep good hours ; to retire in good season, so that we may rise early, and make the most of life.

1. *When we retire to our rooms, we should lift up our hearts to God, the God of our mercies, and make him the object of our adoring and most grateful praise.* The Jewish evening sacrifice was a sacrifice of praise. The mercies of the day should be carefully reviewed, and unusual mer-

cies should be especially celebrated in our words of praise. We are to think of the numberless calamities we have been preserved or delivered from, and of the various forms of disease or hurtful accidents to which we might have fallen victims. We are also to review the providential advantages and comforts, personal and domestic, for which we are indebted to our heavenly Father. What we eat and drink, what we wear, the habitation that protects us, the satisfaction derived from the presence of endeared relatives, all the success that may have been attained in the labors and operations of the past day; these and other benefits are to be considered for the purpose of awakening grateful praise to our Maker and Guardian before we close our eyes in slumber.

Perhaps the day may not have passed without some painful disappointment, some suffering or affliction. If this should be the case, our hearts nevertheless should not be diverted from the occasion for praise to God that is furnished in the experience of the day. Moreover, it is revealed to us as our duty in everything to give thanks; to bless the name of the Lord, as well when he takes away, as when he gives, for our afflictions

are all deserved, while, on the other hand, our mercies are all forfeited on account of our sins.

“ Give me a calm and thankful heart,
From every murmur free ;
The blessings of thy grace impart,
And make me live to thee.

“ Let the sweet hope that thou art mine
My life and death attend ;
Thy presence through my journey shine
And crown my journey's end.” MRS. STEELE.

We have reason to be as thankful for the shadows of the evening which invite us to our repose, as we had for the new light of the morning to favor us in the prosecution of our worldly pursuits. The same wisdom, power, and goodness which make the outgoings of the morning to rejoice, make those of the evening to do likewise. We have reason to be as thankful that the curtains of the night are drawn about us to favor our repose, as for the opening of the eyelids of the morning upon us in accommodation to our business. When God divided between the light and the darkness, and allotted to both their respective periods, he saw that it was good it should be so. Let us therefore give thanks to Him who forms the light and creates the

darkness ; and let us also believe that the darkness of affliction may be as needful for us, in its season, as the light of prosperity.

We have reason to be thankful if, when the season for repose comes, we may be permitted to lie down, and are not obliged to sit up, through the night. Some afflicted persons cannot lie down, in consequence of painful sickness. Many are prevented from lying down by sickness in their families. Many are kept from their repose by fear of enemies, in time of war and disorder. Let us be duly thankful, then, if neither personal illness, nor that of members of the household, nor danger from without, hinder us from the needful and most delightful advantages of undisturbed and healthful slumbers in the night season.

2. *When we lie down, it is wise to think of death, and of the great change to which that event shall introduce us.* The conclusion of each day suggests to us the concluding day of our life on earth. It is good to think of dying, as often as we go to our beds. It will help to subdue in us what is wrong ; it will fortify us against the temptations of the world ; it will diminish our regard for its possessions ; it will reconcile us

to our discomforts and fatigues ; it will prepare us to leave the world with less severe regret ; it will tend to make the idea of death so familiar, and our views of it so Christian, as to raise us above the fear of that event.

Let us think, then, of our putting off the body at death, with as much composure, and even pleasure, as we do of putting off our clothes at night ; and let us comfort ourselves with this thought, that if we be clothed with the grace and righteousness of Christ, we shall, at death, be clothed upon with immortality. In due time, also, we shall be invested with a glorious body like that of Christ himself, as a substitute for the vile body that falls a victim to death and becomes a tenant of the loathsome grave.

“No, no, it is not dying
 To go unto our God ;
 This gloomy earth forsaking,
 Our journey homeward taking
 Along the starry road.

“No, no, it is not dying
 To wear a heavenly crown ;
 Among God’s people dwelling,
 The glorious triumph swelling
 Of him whose sway we own.”

MALAN.

3. *When we are about to lie down, it becomes us to make penitent reflections upon the sins and omissions of the past day.* While we rejoice in the Divine goodness that has furnished the mercies of the day, we are not to overlook the inglorious return which we have made for them, and we should exercise therefore a becoming penitence and humiliation before our God and Saviour. Though we may have endeavored to conduct ourselves according to the rules of the gospel, yet a careful review of our feelings, words and deeds, will show us that we have much to lament, to confess, and to forsake. It will be of service, with this end in view, to ask, What have I done this day? What have I done amiss? What duty have I neglected? What false step have I taken? How have I conducted myself in my business, in my social intercourse, and in my family? Have I accommodated myself to the will of God in every event of providence? By such inquiries, pursued every night, we shall make important advances in self-knowledge and in Christian rectitude.

We must renew our repentance for whatever we find to have been wrong and unchristian in our thoughts, feelings, and actions; we must be

truly sorry for it, and humble ourselves on account of it, and honor God by confessing the wrong of which we have been guilty, whether in reference to God or to man. Even the sins of daily infirmity, and the defects of our piety and morality, should be lamented and confessed. And repentance should not be deferred, thus hardening the heart, and hindering our spiritual growth and comfort.

Repentance must be followed by a fresh application for pardon of the sins confessed and repented of, through the blood of Christ. Not only have we need of Christ for this purpose at our first conversion from sin, but ever afterwards, in this life, we need to apply to him as our Advocate, who appears for us in the presence of the Father, to procure us pardon and acceptance. Not quite sufficient is it to employ the general prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" but the specific sins that rise to our remembrance should be presented in our prayer for pardon.

" Deep regret for follies past,
 Talents wasted, time misspent
 Hearts debased by worldly cares,
 Thankless for the blessings lent.

“ Foolish fears and fond desires,
Vain regrets for things as vain ;
Lips too seldom taught to praise,
Oft to murmur and complain ;

“ These and every secret fault,
Filled with grief and shame we own ;
Humbled at thy feet we lie,
Seeking pardon from thy throne.” J. TAYLOR.

4. *Before we yield ourselves to repose, we should offer supplications for the needful mercies of the night before us.* We must pray that our bodies may enjoy the care of God's holy angels, who are the ministers of his providence, for he has promised that he will give his angels charge concerning those who make the Most High their refuge, and what he has promised we may and must pray for. We are not indeed to suppose that he needs the assistance of angels to secure our well-being through the night, nor that he devolves the care of us upon them exclusively ; but the Scriptures inform us that they are employed about the people of God, though they are invisible, performing this service as well for the honor of God, as for the honor of his people. Perhaps they preserve us from the mischief which otherwise we might suffer from the agency of malignant spirits.

We must also pray that our souls may enjoy the influences of the Holy Ghost, the author and fountain of all grace. We learn from Job 33:15, 16, that in the slumbers of the night God opens the ears of men and seals instruction. We learn, also, that David so found it in his own experience. Psa. 16:7; 17:3. He found the night to be a propitious season for remembering God and meditating upon him. But to converse profitably with God in solitude, we need the benign influences of the Holy Spirit, to which, therefore, we should submit and consign our souls when we lie down. How God's Spirit may work upon us when we are asleep, we know not. The soul can act in a state of separation from the body, and how far it does act independently of the body when the bodily senses are inactive, we cannot say; but we are sure that the Spirit of God is not limited to our wakeful hours. It is reasonable to pray, not only that we may be preserved from disturbing or polluting dreams, (in which, for aught we know, evil spirits may have an agency,) but that we may be favored with good dreams—those which are pleasing and instructive.

“Thus, with my thoughts composed to peace,
I give mine eyes to sleep ;
Thy hand in safety keeps my days,
And will my slumbers keep.”

WATTS.

II. *It must be our care and our endeavor, when we lie down, to do so “in peace.”*

1. *In peace with God.* If this has not been secured, we should hasten to make our peace with God in Jesus Christ, by repentance and faith. There should be no delay ; for it is hazardous to go to sleep in that condition in which we dare not die. Sin is continually making mischief between God and our own souls, provoking his displeasure against us, and alienating our hearts from him, so that there is need every night of reëstablishing a state of peace, by the agency of his Spirit upon us and by our own personal reconciliation to God, that there may be no conscious distance, no strangeness between us and God, no interposing cloud, no obstruction in our way to the mercy-seat. Being justified by faith, (Rom. 5:1,) we have this peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let it be our daily care, that God have no quarrel with us, nor we with him.

2. *Let us lie down in peace with all men.* It is

our high concern to go to sleep, as well as to die, in charity. Those who have much to do with the world can scarcely pass a day without receiving some affront or injury, and when they retire at night there is danger of magnifying the offence by dwelling upon it, and thus of stirring up one's self to undue resentment, which may lead to a purpose of revenge. Now is the time, therefore, for guarding against such an unhappy result. If others are inclined to quarrel with us, let us resolve that we will not engage in a quarrel with them ; but will subdue all resentful and malevolent feelings, and thus avoid doing wrong to our neighbor or to ourselves. The apostolic injunction is, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil." We cannot, therefore, lie down at peace with God, unless we are at peace with men, nor in faith pray to be forgiven, unless we forgive. Let us, then, study the things that make for peace ; for the peace of our own spirits, by living, as much as in us lies, peaceably with all men.

3. *Let us lie down in peace with ourselves—in a quiet serenity of spirit and self-enjoyment.* This will be achieved, if by the grace of God we have

in some good measure performed the work of the day, and filled it up with acts of duty and of usefulness ; if our hearts are not, in the retrospect, obliged to exclaim, "I have lost a day," or, what is worse, if they do not reproach us with the spending of that time in sin which should have been spent in the service of God. If, on the contrary, we have passed the day in the fear of God, and waited on him all the day long, we may then lie down in peace, and the sleep of the laboring man, the laboring Christian, is sweet. He can say, As I am a day's journey nearer my end, so I am a day's work fitter for it. Nothing will make our season of repose so pleasant, as the witness of the Spirit of God with our spirits that we are going forward towards heaven, and a conscience kept void of offence, which will be not only a continual feast, but a continual rest.

"Great God, let all my hours be thine,
While I enjoy the light ;
Then shall my sun in smiles decline,
And bring a pleasant night."

WATTS.

Again : if by faith and patience, and resignation to the Divine will, we have reconciled ourselves to all the events of the day, so as to be

uneasy at nothing which God has done, we may then lie down in peace at night. We may have met with disappointments or losses in our business, or may have been otherwise tried, but we should not forget that these events proceed from the Lord, and that which pleases him ought not to displease us.

Further : upon renewing our repentance for sin, and making a fresh application to the blood of Christ, we may lay us down in peace.

So also, if we have put ourselves under the Divine protection for the night before us. If by faith and prayer we have made the Lord our refuge and our habitation, we may then speak peace to ourselves, for God in his word speaks peace to us.

So also, if besides we have cast all our cares for the day following upon God. Indulging anxious thought for the morrow is a great hindrance to peace of mind and quiet slumbers during the night. Let us but learn to live without corroding care, and to refer the issue of all events to that God who may and can do what he wills to do, and who wills to do what is best for those who fear and trust in him, saying, "Father, thy will be done!" and then our minds

shall be tranquil and happy. Our Saviour, in his Sermon on the Mount, presses this subject upon his disciples, counselling them to take no anxious thought for to-morrow, assuring them of the care which their heavenly Father exercises over them and their daily necessities.

“Then comes the quiet and the cool of night,
To give me back the calm, of which the light
Of this gay world had sought me to bereave.
O gentle shadows of the tranquil eve !
Eve, with thy stillness and soul-soothing balm,
What do I owe thee for thy solemn calm !
Thou comest down like some peace-bringing dove,
To soothe and cheer me with thy silent love.” BONAR.

III. *Having laid ourselves down in peace, the next thing is to compose ourselves to sleep.* “I will lay me down and sleep.” The love of sleep for the sake of sleep is the characteristic of the sluggard ; but as the divinely-appointed means of recruiting our physical energies—quite as needful as food—we are to employ it with thankfulness to Him who “gives his beloved sleep.”

With such REFLECTIONS as the following we may yield ourselves to sleep :

1. *What frail bodies are these, which so often call for rest and relief from fatigue, and require so*

large a proportion of our time to recover their strength by sleep!

2. *What a sad thing it is to be obliged to employ so much precious time, so large a portion of our life in sleep, during which we can perform no act of piety towards God, nor render any service to man!* Those who consider how short our life is, and what amount of work we have to do, and how rapidly the day of account hastens on, cannot but grudge the hours that must be spent in sleep, and wish to employ as few as may suffice for purposes of health and vigor. They cannot avoid being urged by these considerations to redeem time when they are awake, and to long to be transferred to that world where there shall be no need of sleep, but where they shall be as the angels of God, and never cease praising and otherwise serving God.

3. *What a gracious Master we serve, who allows us time for sleep, and furnishes us with all the requisite conveniences for it, and makes it to us so refreshing and so grateful!* Thus kindly does he provide for our bodies; and this is one good reason for presenting them to him as living sacrifices. It is worthy of special remark that sleep is spoken of as given by promise to the saints: "Lo!

he giveth his beloved sleep." Psalm 127:2. What a vast difference there is between the sleep of an unregenerate man, who is not sensible of his being within a step of hell, and the sleep of a child of God, who has good hope, through grace, of his being within a step of heaven. That is the sleep which God gives to his beloved.

"When each day's scenes and labors close,
And wearied nature seeks repose,
With pardoning mercy richly blest,
Guard me, my Saviour, while I rest!
And as each morning sun shall rise,
Oh, lead me onward to the skies!

"And at my life's last setting sun,
My conflicts o'er, my labors done,
Jesus! thy heavenly radiance shed,
To cheer and bless my dying bed,
And from death's gloom my spirit raise,
To see thy face and sing thy praise."

SIR R. GRANT.

4. *How sad is the case of those from whose eyes sleep departs, as the result of bodily or mental suffering, and to whom wearisome nights are appointed!* When we consider how earnestly nature longs for sleep, and how much refreshment is derived from it, we should regard with deep compassion, and remember in our prayers, those

to whom that and other comforts possessed by ourselves are denied.

5. *How ungrateful are we to the God of the night and of the morning, when we so far indulge in sleep, beyond our need or advantage, as to make it a hindrance to that which is good ; as when it keeps us from our hour of prayer and devout reading in the morning or in the evening.*

6. *We have now one day less to live than we had in the morning.* As time goes, eternity comes ; we are hastening on. What preparation have we made for our last account, to be given so soon ? How should the thought of it stimulate us to the appropriate use of our time, making our sleep not the less desirable, and our death much the less formidable.

“One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o’er and o’er :
I am nearer home to-day
Than I ever have been before ;

“Nearer my Father’s house,
Where the many mansions be ;
Nearer the great white throne,
Nearer the crystal sea ;

“Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down ;
Nearer leaving the cross,
Nearer gaining the crown.”

CAREY.

7. *To thy glory, O God, I now go to sleep.* Whether we eat, or drink, yea, or sleep, (for that is included in "whatever we do,") it should be done to the glory of God. Why should I go to sleep now, but to fit my body to be the instrument of the soul in the service of God to-morrow? Thus common actions, when directed to such an end, assume a high moral character, and gain Divine approval and reward.

8. *To thy grace, O God, I now commend myself.* It is good to fall asleep with a fresh surrender of our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, to God, saying with joy and with gratitude, 'Return to God as thy rest, O my soul; for he has dealt bountifully with thee.' Sleep not only resembles death, but is sometimes the introduction to it: many yield themselves to sleep and never wake, but pass into the sleep of death. This furnishes a good reason for turning our thoughts towards death, and for committing our souls to the living God, so that sudden death during the ensuing night should be no surprise or detriment to us.

9. *Oh that when I awake I may be still with God; that the parenthesis of sleep, though long, may not break off the thread of my communion with God,*

but that I may resume it as soon as I awake! Oh that, should I awake in the night, I may have my mind turned to good thoughts; may remember God, who then is at my right hand, and to whom the darkness and the light are both alike. Oh that thus I may sweetly meditate upon him in the night watches, so that the time may be employed to the highest advantage which otherwise is liable to be lost in frivolous thoughts, or misspent in those which are sinful. Oh that, when I awake in the morning, my first thoughts may be of God, and thus my heart be prepared to enter properly upon the business and trials of the day!

10. *Oh that, in due time, I may be introduced into a better rest than that which I am now about to enjoy!* The apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, (Heb. 4:3, 9,) speaks of a rest which we that have believed do enter into, even in this world, as well as of a rest which, in the other world, remains for the people of God; a rest from sin and from the world; a rest in Christ and in God through Christ—a satisfaction in the blessings of the gospel and in the hopes of the hereafter. Oh that I may enjoy this rest while I live, and at death enter into something more

than rest—into the joy of my Lord, and dwell at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore!

“Earth’s joys are but a dream ; its destiny
Is but decay and death. Its fairest form,
Sunshine and shadow mixed. Its brightest day,
A rainbow braided on the wreaths of storm.

“Yet there is blessedness that changeth not ;
A rest with God, a life that cannot die ;
A better portion and a brighter lot :
A home with Christ, a heritage on high.

“The tempest makes returning calm more dear ;
The darkest midnight makes the brightest star ;
Even so to us, when all is ended here,
Shall be the past remembered from afar.

“Then welcome change and death, since these alone
Can break life’s fetters and dissolve its spell ;
Welcome all present change, which speeds us on
So swift to that which is unchangeable.” BONAR.

IV. *We must do all that has now been suggested and recommended in a believing dependence upon God, his power, providence, and grace. Therefore “I lay me down in peace,” and compose myself to sleep, because “thou, Lord, keepest me.” “Thou makest me to dwell in safety.” David takes notice (Psa. 139) of God’s compassing his path and his lying down, as his protector and observer.*

1. *It is by the power of God's providence that we are kept safe in the night, and on that providence we must rely continually.* He preserveth man and beast, (Psa. 36 : 6,) and upholds all things by the word of his power. Death would soon lay all waste, if God did not shelter his creatures from the arrows of death. Our bodies carry about with them the seeds of disease, and a slight derangement of their functions may lead to sudden death. We are exposed also at night to the designs of the robber or the incendiary, and to the malice of evil spirits. Unseen dangers may be near us in those unconscious hours when we cannot help ourselves, and when our friends, alike unconscious, are unable to assist or defend us. When Saul was asleep he lost his spear and his cruse of water, and might have lost also his head, as easily as Sisera did, when he was asleep, by the hand of a woman. There is a special protection assured to God's people, (Psa. 27 : 5 ;) he is round about them, as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, (Psa. 125 : 2.) He protects their habitations, as he did the tents of Israel in the wilderness.

The care of Divine providence concerning us and our families we are to depend upon, so as to

look upon no provision which we make for our safety as adequate, without the blessing of the Divine providence upon it. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Be the house ever so well built, the doors and windows ever so well barred, the servants ever so careful, it is all to no purpose, unless he that keeps Israel, and never slumbers or sleeps, undertake for our safety.

2. *It is by God's grace that we are enabled to feel ourselves safe, and on that grace we must continually depend.* The fear of danger, even when groundless, is equally vexatious as when well-founded. And therefore it is important that by the grace of God we be delivered from our fears, as well as from the things themselves that we were afraid of.

Let us lie down in peace, and sleep, not in the strength of a natural resolution against fear, nor merely of rational arguments against it, though they may be useful, but in a dependence on the grace of God to work faith in us, and to fulfil in us the work of faith. This is going to sleep like a Christian, under the shadow of God's wings, going to sleep in faith; and it will be to us a good pledge of dying in faith, for the

same faith that will carry us cheerfully through the short death of sleep, will carry us through the long sleep of death.

“ I close my heavy eye—
 Saviour ever near !
 I lift my soul on high
 Through the darkness drear.
 Be thou my light, I cry,
 Saviour ever dear !

“ I feel thine arms around,
 Saviour ever near ;
 With thee let me be found,
 So shall I never fear,
 Whatever ill abounds—
 Saviour ever dear !

“ Thine is the day and night,
 Saviour ever near ;
 Thine is the dark and light—
 Be thou my covert here ;
 Oh shield me with thy might,
 Saviour ever dear !

“ And when I come to die,
 Saviour ever near,
 Receive my parting sigh ;
 And, in the hour of fear,
 Be to my spirit nigh,
 Saviour ever dear !”

BONAR.

PPPLICATION.





APPLICATION.

1. *We discover how much it is our concern to carry our religion with us wherever we go, and to have it always at our right hand.* At every turn we have occasion for it—on lying down, when rising up, going out, coming in; and those are Christians indeed who confine not their religion to the Sabbath, or to the season of family worship, but bring the influences of it into all the common actions and occurrences of human life. We must sit down at our tables and rise from them, lie down in our beds and arise from them, with an eye to God's providence and promises. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, even while we are engaged in worldly pursuits.

In order to this, we must have in our hearts a principle of grace, which, like a well of living

water, may be continually springing up to life eternal. John 4:14. It is necessary, also, to keep our hearts with all diligence, and to control our thoughts, more than Christians commonly do.

2. *The life of good Christians is a hidden life; much of it does not come under the observation of the world.* The most important part of their business lies between God and their own souls, in the frame of their spirits and the workings of their hearts even in solitude, which no eye sees but his, that beholds all. Justly are the saints called God's hidden ones, and his secret is said to be with them, for they have meat to eat and work to do which the world knows not of, and joys and cares and griefs which a stranger does not intermeddle with.

It is to be feared that there are many whose religion is external only, being strangers to this secret communion with God, in which consists so much of the power of godliness. On the other hand, it is to be hoped there are many who pass through the world without being taken notice of, and yet converse much with God in solitude.

3. *Observe what enemies to themselves those are*

who continue under the power of a carnal mind, and live without God in the world. They lie down and rise up, go out and come in, constantly pursuing the profits or the pleasures of the world; and God is not in all their thoughts, nor voluntarily in any of them. They live upon the gifts of his bounty from day to day, but they feel no regard to him, never own their dependence upon him, nor make any effort or self-denial to secure his favor.

Those who live such a mere animal life as this, not only put great contempt on God, but do great damage to themselves; they deprive themselves of the greatest comforts that can be enjoyed on this side of heaven. What peace can they have who are not at peace with God? What rational satisfaction can be taken in their hopes, which rest on so precarious a foundation as earthly good?

4. *What a pleasant life the people of God might live, were it not for their own fault and folly!* Some of them are gloomy, full of cares and fears and complainings, because they do not pursue that life of delight in God and of dependence on him which they ought to live. God has provided for their happiness, even here

but they neglect to use the provisions he has made for them.

Oh, that all who appear to be conscientious, and are afraid of sin, would appear cheerful, and be afraid of nothing else but sin; that all who call God their Father, and have a care to please him, and to keep themselves in his love, would learn to cast all their other care upon him, and to commit their way to him, as to a Father. He chooses our inheritance, and knows what is best for us—better than we do for ourselves. It is (writes Matthew Henry) what I have often said, and will abide by, “*That a holy, heavenly life, spent in the service of God and in communion with him, is the most pleasant, comfortable life anybody can live in this world.*”*

* A more beautiful illustration of this thought, or of this fact, can scarcely be furnished, than that which we find in one of the letters of the Rev. Dr. Philip Doddridge, to his much loved wife, in his absence from home in search of health. Thus he writes: “My days begin, pass, and end in pleasure, and seem short because they are so delightful. It may seem strange to say it, but really so it is, I hardly feel that I want anything. I often think of you, and pray for you, and bless God on your account, and please myself with the hope of many comfortable days and weeks and years with you; yet I am not at all anxious about your return, or indeed anything else; and the

5. From all that has been said, *we learn what is the best preparation we can make, for encountering the changes that are appointed to us in the present state.* It is, to keep up a constant intercourse and communion with God, to converse with him daily, and maintain stated devotions. Then we may come to God in all times of trouble with a cheerful boldness and comfort, and find in him

reason, the great and sufficient reason is, that I have more of the presence of God with me than I remember ever to have enjoyed in any one month of my life. He enables me to live for him, and to live with him. When I awake in the morning, which is always before it is light, I address myself to him, and converse with him; speak to him while I am lighting my candle and putting on my clothes; and have often more delight before I come out of my chamber, though it be hardly a quarter of an hour after my awakening, than I have enjoyed for whole days, or, perhaps, weeks, of my life. He meets me in my study, in secret, in family devotions. It is pleasant to read, pleasant to compose, pleasant to converse with my friends at home; pleasant to visit those abroad—the poor, the sick; pleasant to write letters of necessary business, by which any good can be done; pleasant to go out and preach the gospel to poor souls, of which some are thirsting for, and others dying without it; pleasant in the week day to think how near another Sabbath is; but oh! much, much more pleasant to think how near eternity is—how short the journey through this wilderness, and that it is but a step from earth to heaven.”

a Refuge ; for we are not to expect in this world entire exemption from annoyances and afflictions. But if every day be to us, as it should be, a Sabbath of rest in God and of communion with him, earthly troubles will lose much of their power to disturb our peace, and to render us unhappy.

“ My soul, a hymn of evening praise
To God thy kind preserver raise,
Whose hand, this day, hath guarded, fed,
And thousand blessings round thee shed.

“ Forgive my sins this day, O Lord,
In thought or feeling, deed or word ;
And if in aught thy law I’ve kept,
My feeble efforts, Lord, accept.

“ While nature round is hushed to rest,
Let no vain thought disturb my breast ;
Shed o’er my soul religion’s power,
Serenely solemn as the hour.

“ Oh, bid the angels o’er me keep
Their watch, to shield me while I sleep,
Till the fresh morn shall round me break ;
Then with new vigor may I wake ;

“ Yet think, my soul, another day
Of thy short course has rolled away ;
Ah, think how soon in deepening shade
The day of life itself shall fade !”

FRISBIE.

6. *The course of life recommended in the pages of this work, indicates the best preparation we can make for the unchangeable world before us. We*

know that God will bring us to death, and our great concern should be to get ready for it. The business of every day should be, to prepare for our last day; and what better can we do for ourselves in anticipation of the dying hour, than by frequent retirement, for holding communion with God, to detach our affections from that world which at death we must abandon, and to become better acquainted with that other world to which at death we are to be transferred? Thus may it be made, by divine grace, as easy to us to close our eyes in peace and die, as it is wont to be to close our eyes in peace and sleep.

Certain it is, that all who shall go to heaven hereafter begin their heaven now, and have their hearts there now. If thus we enter into spiritual rest every night, it will be a pledge of our future repose in the embraces of divine love in that more desirable world, where day and night come to an end, and where we shall never cease to pour out our praises to Him, who is, and will be our Everlasting Rest.

“As, when the weary traveller gains
The height of some o’erlooking hill,
His heart revives, if o’er the plains
He sees his home, though distant still;

“ Thus, when the Christian pilgrim views
By faith his mansion in the skies,
The sight his fainting strength renews,
And wings his speed to reach the prize.

“ ‘Tis there,’ he says, ‘I am to dwell
With Jesus in the realms of day ;
Then shall I bid my cares farewell,
And he shall wipe my tears away.’

“ Jesus, on thee our hope depends,
To lead us on to thine abode,
Assured our home will make amends
For all our toil while on the road.”

NEWTON.

