

Mountain Tops with Jesus

Calls to a Higher Life

BY THE REV.

Theodore L. Cuyler
D.D.



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I

MOUNTAIN-TOP EXPERIENCES

MANY of the greatest events mentioned in the Bible are linked with certain mountains; they are both nature's monuments, and the memorials of divine grace. Ararat, the patriarch of mountains, smoked with the first sacrifice in the restored world; Moriah reminds us of the victory of faith, and Nebo of the Christian's vision of the celestial Canaan. Sinai still towers as the sublime symbol of divine Law, and Olivet is redolent with Christ's loving interviews with His disciples. Carmel quickens our faith in the power of prayer; and Zion is the

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type of Christ's everlasting reign, and the saint's everlasting rest.

On a certain occasion Jesus took His three favorite disciples up into a high mountain apart; it was probably one of the southern spurs of Hermon, and it commanded a wide outlook. The Master is still doing the same thing with His followers. Worldliness has a tendency to dwarf us, and selfishness to cramp us into narrow quarters. We need to be called up where we cannot only live higher but look more widely—where we will not think of our little selves, but of the wants and claims of other people. The horizon of Peter and John was wonderfully widened when they ceased to catch fish for a livelihood, and became fishers for immortal souls. By the same view-enlarging process Christ's

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spirit still makes ministers and missionaries and evangelists and philanthropists. Saul of Tarsus was not merely converted, he was enlarged into an apostle to the Gentiles and Kings and Roman Emperors. When John Bright lost his wife, a Quaker friend came and told him that his best comfort would be in laboring for the starving poor of England; Bright threw himself into the movement for cheap bread for the masses, and soon became enlarged into the great leader of many social reforms. That is the way the Master deals with the men and women whom He wishes to make useful; He calls them up out of the lower atmosphere of selfishness, and teaches them that true religion does not consist in feeling happy but in making others happy.

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That is the true "*higher* life" which lifts us into a closer fellowship with Jesus, and at the same time into a wider outlook. Then heavenly things come into our vision; for the things which selfishness sees are temporal, but the things which faith sees are eternal.

When Jesus took these three disciples up into that high mountain apart, He brought them into a close communion with Himself. They saw no man but Jesus only; and it was good to be there. The Master had times and places for quiet converse with His disciples, once on the peak of Hermon, but oftener on the sacred slopes of Olivet, and there He held His last interview before His ascension. Every Christian now should have his Olivet also. Most of us, es-

Mountain-top Experiences

pecially in the cities and towns, live at high pressure. From early morning until bedtime we are exposed to the whirl. The world meets us at the breakfast table in the columns of the morning newspaper; then we launch out into the crowded day. Care collars the tradesman, the lawyer, the mechanic, in fact, every man, as soon as he leaves his home. The day's furnace of exciting occupation is kindled in the morning, and glows at a white heat until the sunset. After such bustling days come the evening meal, the evening paper, the evening visitors, the social entertainments, and in some happy cases the evening prayer-meeting in the house of God. Amid all this maelstrom how little chance for quiet thought, for family worship, for God's Word, for prayer

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and heart fellowship with the blessed Master!

Can no Olivet be found? Can Christian dwellers in the cities and the towns discover no time or places for meditation, for prayer, for spiritual reading, for their Bibles, or for heart-converse with their Saviour? Yes, they may if they will resolutely determine so. The leading Christian merchant of New York was in the habit of rising early, and having a good half hour over his Bible and on his knees before he met his family for household worship; and then he went to his place of business with his face shining. Another one walked home for his noonday lunch with his family, and said that he thus caught time for good thought and secret prayer; Arthur Tappan had a private room for

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noonday devotions up in his warehouse; and some catch a little refreshment in the noon prayer-meeting. Others keep conscientiously a quiet evening hour for bathing their souls. No Christian can keep his religion alive in the constant whirl of worldly excitements. Daniel needed to have an Olivet in his chamber amid Babylon's roar and idolatries. Peter found his on a housetop in Joppa; and Martin Luther found his in that "upper room" at Wittenberg, which is still held sacred. Let every child of Jesus resolve that he or she *will* have some place and seasons for meeting their beloved Master alone; and they will go forth from such interviews with their hearts lightened and their strength renewed. Our Olivets will prepare us for that mount of heavenly

Mountain-top Experiences

glory where we shall see Jesus as He is.

There is another kind of mountain-top experience to which every faithful Christian may aspire. John Bunyan, in his immortal allegory, brings his pilgrims to certain "delectable mountains," which are clad with orchards and vineyards, with gardens and fountains of water. From these sunny heights they caught some glimpses of the Celestial City, and were regaled with pleasant fruits. Now, there is no reason why any of us should be content to live down among the damps and the "dumps" of the low grounds, or in those marshy regions where the malaria of despondency prevails. Much of our unhappiness in this world is of our own making. We might have a great many more

Mountain-top Experiences

joyous days during our earthly pilgrimage. When we have had a conflict with some strong temptation, and by Christ's imparted help have conquered it, then we reach a delectable mount, and can sing our psalm of gratitude. Every good deed wrought for the Master or our fellow men, every answer to prayer, every new discovery of Christ's love, every new attainment in the spiritual life, carries us up into a higher, purer, atmosphere. We can read the eighth chapter to the Romans up there, and sing the one hundred and third psalm. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles. In these best, and holiest, and happiest hours we rise above the petty vexations, the carking cares, and the wretched wor-

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ries of life, and realize what it is to be the children of the King and the heirs to a magnificent inheritance.

Yet we must not expect to reach Heaven before our time. Jesus Christ did not spend all His time on Hermon, wearing a raiment as glittering as the sunlight. The impulsive Peter suggested that they should build their tabernacles up there, and stay on that mountain summit. But the Master was needed down at the foot of Hermon, where a poor youth possessed of evil spirits was waiting to be healed. Duty forbids you and me to spend all our time in meditations, however profitable, or in devotions, however holy, or in psalm singing, however sweet. There is too much work to be done—too many battles to be fought, too many crosses to be borne, too

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many trials to be endured. Spiritual frames should not unfit us for practical duties, but the hours on the mountain tops should fit us all the more for the humbler valleys of everyday life. We can have the Master with us all the time—in our common rounds and daily tasks. And the lowly valleys in which we do our work and meet our friends and business associates ought to be just as verdant and well watered as those mountain tops, where we “see no man save Jesus only.”

II

HIGHER!

WEBSTER'S famous remark to a young lawyer, who complained that the legal profession was overcrowded, "there is plenty of room at the top," will apply to the Christian Church. While there are quite enough minimum Christians (who will probably have only a minimum heaven), there are some who are becoming sick of themselves and of their low attainments. To be barely alive does not satisfy them. "Friend, go up higher!" He who imparted to you such spiritual life as you have, offers to you "life more abundantly." Jesus Christ is the inexhaustible source of

Higher !

strength and joy, and it depends upon yourself how much of these you shall possess. Growth is not a momentary, magical gift ; it is a process, and you must do the growing. Paul was no perfectionist when he exclaimed, "but one thing I do ; I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." There was something higher yet before him.

Just what are the essentials of that more abundant life that you should strive after ? The first one that I may name is—more *faith*. "Lord, increase our faith," was the prayer of men who felt that they were but children, and not full grown ; they saw only through a glass dimly and often stumbled on the road. A feeble faith may move mole-hills ; it takes a stalwart faith to move mountains. It is

Higher!

the feebleness of the grip on the Almighty Saviour and Lord that makes it so difficult to stand a heavy strain, or carry a heavy load, or exert a powerful influence over other hearts and lives. This is the secret of a vast deal of the unfruitful preaching in the pulpit and unfruitful teaching in Sunday-schools, and of failures generally to accomplish much good in the world. Look over the official reports of a great number of churches and you will see that they barely hold their own; many—in the mercantile phrase—have ceased to “pay any dividend.” “According to your faith be it unto you”; that is Christ’s measurement of spiritual power. If a minister does not know whom he believes, and does not know that the book he holds in his hand is God’s own “fire and ham-

Higher!

mer" he will not be likely to melt, or to break many hard, stubborn hearts. Doubt means debility; unbelief means death. What is true of ministers is equally true of all Christians.

You will realize the vital necessity of an increase of faith, if you will but understand that faith is vastly more than an intellectual process or a mental assent to divine truth. It is vastly more than a devout emotion, and a mightily different thing is it from the pious fetish that some religious quacks are now employing for purposes of delusion. A genuine Christian faith is just the grappling union of the soul with the omnipotent Son of God. "I am the vine; ye are the branches; abide in Me." That is the way in which Christ puts it, and *faith makes that very union.* The closer your con-

Higher!

nection with Jesus is, the greater will be the amount of grace that flows into your soul and out into your daily life. I have seen a current of electricity sent through a huge horseshoe magnet that enabled it to lift four thousand pounds; the moment that the current was drawn off the weights dropped to the floor. The more abundant your faith, the fuller and more potent will be the inflow of Jesus Christ. "Not I," exclaimed the old giant of apostolic days—"not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God." That sentence of Paul is about the best description of the sort of higher life that Meyer and Murray and Moody are now advocating. Stripped of all the language of mysticism that is about the core of the matter.

Higher!

With increase of faith will come great increase of spiritual vigor. When a person's system is in a low, impoverished condition, he is liable to catch any fevers which are prevailing. It is a feeble spiritual life that breeds self-seeking and covetousness and worldliness, and also exposes one to the ague-fits of unbelief. As weak blood breeds ulcers, so a weak spiritual state breeds sinful lusts. With a sick soul, as with a sick body, the problem is whether there is internal vitality enough to slough off the disease. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," said Jesus, when Simon Peter was in a wretchedly bad way; and but for imparted grace that ugly assault of Satan in Pilate's courtyard might have been the end of poor Peter. After he was endued with the

Higher!

more abundant vigor of Christ's promised Spirit, he withstood fiftyfold stronger pressure without flinching. It is very encouraging to weak Christians that the poltroon who was frightened by the sneers of a servant-girl, lived to face Herod's jailers and the threats of death without turning purple in the lips. Why should any Christian be so feeble and so easily upset when he might be strengthened with all power in the inner man, according to the might of Christ Jesus? The more vigor you pray for, the more you will receive. Rouse up to useful activities. Quit your Sunday afternoon lounge for some thorough mission-work. Active exercise does for the soul just what it does for the body.

You say that you are not happy; and I do not wonder. None of us is

Higher!

as happy as we might be. Many professed Christians carry such repulsive countenances and irritable tongues, and shed around them such a chill, that if they should ever try to win an unconverted person, that person might well retort: "No, I thank you; if your religion carries such a face as yours, I don't want it." Such Christians cheat themselves out of their birthright; Jesus promised them that if they continued to abide in His love, His joy would remain in them and their joy would be full. Mounts of rapture are only occasionally reached in the best lives; but a healthy person enjoys a ripe pear or a California orange. A loyal husband enjoys the welcoming kiss of a loving wife at his threshold; and there must be something wrong in you if you profess to love

Higher!

Christ and pretend to be working for Him, and find no delight in it. How can you possess Christ and a clean conscience, and not be happy over it?

Joy is love looking at its treasures. The richer you become in having Christ with you here, and in the expectation of being with Him forever, the more investments you make in helping other people, and drying tears, and saving souls, the fuller will be your jewel-casket. If you say to me: "I have not enjoyed my religion much lately," then I may suggest to you that you had not much religion to enjoy. Turn a new leaf; make a new start, with the honest question: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and then do it. His smile will give you sunshine, and put a new song into your mouth. Put more conscience

Higher!

into your religion. Weakness means wickedness. Don't worry over "hard times," or outside troubles; if you have peace of conscience you can stand rough weather cheerfully. There are always some chilly days in March and April, but summer will come along in its time, with the joys of harvest. Jesus offers you "life more abundantly"; grasp the offer and, quitting the boggy and dark low grounds, let Him lead you up *higher!*

III

CHRIST'S HAND AT THE HELM

THERE is an unseen hand that holds the helm of every godly life. While the errorist is blown about by every wind, and the selfish sinner is left to steer his own course—often toward rocks or quicksands—the voyage of every true believer is ordered by the Lord. We are often obliged to pull the oars of duty with our backs to the future; we cannot tell what the morrow shall bring forth; it is our business to pull at the oars of prayer and labor, and to leave the rudder in the divine Helmsman's hand. We commit our way to Him; He knows where

Christ's Hand at the Helm

the shoals and the sunken rocks are, and where the deep water is also ; let the Omniscient Pilot do the steering. The poor disciples had a rough night of it while the Master was asleep in the stern of the boat ; He was teaching them a lesson ; and when in their extremity they called up the Helmsman, the storm lulled, and their fishing-smack swam safe into harbor.

It is a good thing for us that we cannot foresee tempests or trials, for then we might be frightened out of undertaking many a voyage at the call of duty. It is well that we cannot foresee difficulties. When Paul set off for Rome he could not discern a prison or a bloody axe of martyrdom waiting for him in the imperial city. When Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson set in motion their great en-

Christ's Hand at the Helm

terprise of overthrowing the African slave-trade, they could not anticipate the twenty years of ferocious opposition which they and their associates, Wilberforce and Macaulay, were doomed to encounter. They tugged at the oars, and God brought them into the harbor where the negro's fetters fell off. The five praying collegians beside the haystack at Williamstown were launching a little boat in simple *faith*; what head-winds it might have to face they did not know or care. The Master took the helm, and lo! their tiny craft was the pioneer of all the mighty fleet of American missions to heathendom. No penitent soul who comes to Jesus can fore-know all the obstacles and oppositions, all the temptations or trials that lie before him. It is well that he can-

Christ's Hand at the Helm

not. He might be frightened back, or be ham-strung with discouragements. There are too many "Pliables" who get bemired in the first "Slough of Despond," and are glad to sneak back to that worldly life which they had never truly abandoned. "Christian" gets out of the Slough on the side toward heaven.

Difficulties are a part of our discipline. Canaan lies on the other side of both the Red Sea and the Jordan. We need not cross either of them till we come to them. God can divide the big sea as easy as He can dry up the little river. When we come up to the sea, the voice of Providence is "go forward," and the waters part asunder. When we reach the flowing Jordan and our feet touch the stream, behold it has vanished, and

Christ's Hand at the Helm

we go through dry-shod! The story of Christian faith and its divine deliverances reads like a romance. When we voyagers get safely into the "desired haven" up yonder, we may take great comfort in looking over our log-books and in discovering how wonderfully our Helmsman brought us through dark nights and dangerous channels. The writer of this article is aware that a very dense fog lies ahead, both over his own future and that of his beloved church. There is One, however, to whom the darkness shineth as the day.

Faith's real office and faith's real victory is in trusting the helm to Christ in the fogs and through the dark hours. Everybody can trust God in the sunshine and over smooth water. It is easy to commit our way to the Lord

Christ's Hand at the Helm

when that way seems as clear as the noonday. Faith says "Commit the helm to Him when you cannot see your hand before your face, when the clouds have extinguished every star, and no lighthouse of human guidance is in sight!" Jesus can see in the dark, if we cannot. The beginning of every genuine Christian life is by the *supernatural* operation of the Holy Spirit; and the *supernatural* agency and oversight of the Son of God is concerned in every step of that life to the final entrance into glory. Take that fact out of our religion and it becomes a beautiful myth, a devout delusion. But when I accept a Book that came down out of heaven as the rule of my faith, and a divine Saviour that came down out of heaven as my Redeemer and my Guide and my Pro-

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tector, then I can entrust the bark that bears my immortal soul into His safe pilotage. John Newton remembered his experiences as a sailor when he wrote,

**"By prayer let me wrestle,
And he will perform ;
With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm."**

IV

THE PRAYER THAT HAS POWER

ALL of God's mighty men and women have been mighty in prayer. When Martin Luther was in the mid-volley of his conflict with the man of sin he used to say that he could not get on without three hours a day in prayer. Charles G. Finney's grip on God gave him a tremendous grip on sinners' hearts. The greatest preacher of our times—Spurgeon—had preëminently the "gift of the knees"; the last prayer I ever heard him utter (at his own family worship) was one of the most wonderful that I ever listened to; it revealed the hiding of his

The Prayer that has Power

power. Abraham Lincoln once said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go; my own wisdom and that of all around me seemed insufficient for the day."

But what is prayer? Has every prayer power with God? Let us endeavor to get some clear ideas on that point. Some people seem to regard prayer as the rehearsal of a set form of solemn words, learned largely from the Bible, or a liturgy; and when uttered they are only from the throat outward. Genuine prayer is a believing soul's *direct converse with God*. Phillips Brooks has condensed it into four words—a "true wish sent Godward." By it, adoration, thanksgiving, confession of sin, and petition for

The Prayer that has Power

mercies and gifts ascend to the throne, and by means of it infinite blessings are brought down from heaven. The pull of our prayer may not move the everlasting throne, but—like the pull on a line from the bow of a boat—it may draw us into closer fellowship with God, and fuller harmony with His wise and holy will.

1. This is the first characteristic of the prayer that has power: “Delight thyself in the Lord and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart.” A great many prayers are born of selfishness and are too much like dictation or command. None of God’s promises are unconditional; and we have no such assets to our credit that we have a right to draw our checks and demand that God shall pay them. The indispensable quality of all right

The Prayer that has Power

asking is a *right spirit toward our heavenly Father*. When a soul feels such an entire submissiveness toward God that it delights in seeing Him reign, and His glory advanced, it may fearlessly pour out its desires; for then the desires of God and the desires of that sincere, submissive soul will *agree*. God loves to give to them who love to let Him have His way; they find their happiness in the chime of their own desires with the will of God.

James and John once came to Jesus and made to Him the amazing request that He would place one of them on His right hand and the other on His left hand when He set up His imperial government at Jerusalem! As long as these self-seeking disciples sought only their own glory, Christ could not

The Prayer that has Power

give them the askings of their ambitious hearts. By and by, when their hearts had been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and they had become so consecrated to Christ that they were in complete chime with Him, they were not afraid to pour out their deepest desires. James declares that, if we do not “ask *amiss*,” God will “give liberally.” John declares that “whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” Just as soon as those two Christians found their supreme happiness in Christ and His cause they received the desires of their hearts.

2. The second trait of prevailing prayer is that it aims at a mark, and knows what it is after. When we enter a store or shop we ask the sales-

The Prayer that has Power

man to hand us the particular article we want. There is an enormous amount of pointless, prayerless praying done in our devotional meetings; it begins with nothing and ends nowhere. The model prayers mentioned in the Bible were short and right to the mark. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "Lord, save me!" cries sinking Peter. "Come down, ere my child die!" exclaims the heart-stricken nobleman. Old Rowland Hill used to say, "I like short, ejaculatory prayer; it reaches heaven before the devil can get a shot at it."

3. In the next place, the prayer that has power with God must be a *pre-paid* prayer. If we expect a letter to reach its destination we put a stamp on it; otherwise it goes to the Dead-letter Office. There is what may be

The Prayer that has Power

called a Dead-prayer Office, and thousands of well-worded petitions get buried up there. All of God's promises have their conditions; we must comply with those conditions, or we cannot expect the blessings coupled with the promises. No farmer is such an idiot as to look for a crop of wheat unless he has ploughed and sowed his fields. In prayer, we must first be sure that we are doing our part if we expect God to do His part. There is a legitimate sense in which every Christian should do his utmost for the answering of his own prayers. When a certain venerable minister was called on to pray in a missionary convention he first fumbled in his pocket, and when he had tossed the coin into the plate he said, "I cannot pray until I have given something." He prepaid

The Prayer that has Power

his prayer. For the churches in these days to pray, "Thy kingdom come," and then spend more money on jewelry and cigars than in the enterprise of Foreign Missions, looks almost like a solemn farce. God has no blessings for stingy pockets. When I hear requests for prayer for the conversion of a son or daughter, I say to myself, How much is that parent doing to win that child for Christ? The godly wife who makes her daily life attractive to her husband has a right to ask God for the conversion of that husband; she is coöperating with the Holy Spirit, and prepaying her heart's request. God never defaults; but He requires that we prove our faith by our works and that we never ask for a blessing that we are not ready to labor for, and to make any sacrifice

The Prayer that has Power

to secure the blessing which our souls desire.

4. Another essential of the prayer that has power with God is that it be the prayer of faith, and be offered in the name of Jesus Christ. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." The chief "wrestling" that we are to do is not with any reluctance on God's part; it is with the obstacles which sin and unbelief put in our pathway. What God orders we must submit to uncomplainingly; but we must never submit to what God can better. Never submit to be blocked in any pious purpose or holy undertaking if, with God's help, you can roll the blocks out of your pathway. The faith that works while it prays commonly con-

The Prayer that has Power

quers ; for such faith creates such a condition of things that our heavenly Father can wisely hear us and help us. O, what a magnificent epic the triumphs of striving, toiling, victorious faith make! The firmament of Bible story blazes with answers to prayer, from the days when Elijah unlocked the heavens on to the days when the petitions in the house of John Mark unlocked the dungeon, and brought liberated Peter into their presence. The whole field of providential history is covered with answered prayers as thickly as bright-eyed daisies cover our Western prairies. Find thy happiness in pleasing God, and sooner or later He will surely grant thee the desires of thy heart.

V

THE GARMENT OF GRACE AND THE GARMENT OF GLORY

“THOU hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” Suppose that we alter the date and the geography, and instead of “Sardis” write New York, Brooklyn, Boston, or some other locality in these days. We shall not find it an easy thing for any Christian to keep his garments undefiled in the midst of surrounding impurity.

The words “garment,” “robe” and “raiment,” are used in the Scriptures

The Garment of Grace

to typify *character*. When a man repents of sin and joins himself by faith to Jesus Christ, he is clothed with a new nature. Old things pass away; the filthy rags are thrown aside, and conversion by the Holy Spirit is a pledge of new tastes, new principles and new habits. He "puts on Christ," so that there is not only an inward faith in Christ, but some good degree of outward resemblance in daily conduct. This may be called the *garment of Grace*. It means Christian character. Now character is not determined by a single act, but by habitual conduct. It is a fabric made up of thousands of threads and put together by uncounted stitches. Some characters are stoutly sewed; others are only *basted*. A Christian ought not only to have his spiritual garments well

The Garment of Glory

sewed, but kept clean; in fact, as a representative of Jesus Christ he ought to present such an attractive apparel before the world that others should say to him: "Where did you get this? I want one just like it."

However thorough may be the cleansing process wrought upon the heart at the time of conversion, yet no one becomes absolutely spotless. We live also in a defiling world. Who would pretend to say that the prevailing moral atmosphere of any one of our towns is favorable to strict self-denying godliness? If we sit for an hour in an unventilated railway car, we find that our lungs are insensibly affected by the foul air. So in the atmosphere prevalent in commercial, political and social life, Christian character is exposed to a subtle taint and

The Garment of Grace

poison. If we walk through certain streets in this city we must be on the lookout, or our clothes will become besmirched. So in the spiritual walk it requires constant circumspection to keep our garments unspotted from the world.

A good man goes to his place of business and finds himself in the atmosphere of Mammon. The greed for gain is as "catching" as varioloid; the standard of integrity is lowered by a thousand tricks of trade, and unless he is very careful a smutch of unfair dealing is on his garment. It is every citizen's duty to take a citizen's part in politics; but when he becomes a zealous partisan there is plenty of "pitch" around in the caucus and the convention, and unless he is a conscientious man he is apt to be defiled. In social

The Garment of Glory

life he encounters the prevailing trend for show and self-indulgence and expensive living. Almost insensibly he gets tainted with the atmosphere of extravagance, and finds himself tempted to use the Lord's money for selfishness and vain show, or at least a larger share of it than for the service of Jesus Christ and the salvation of his fellow men.

On a white surface the slightest spot shows painfully; and it is no easy thing to keep the spiritual raiment clean when society is as full of sin as Pittsburg air is of coal smoke. It is difficult to preserve the garment undefiled when "iniquity abounds" in the street, in the market, in social life, in the secret places, and so is apt to lurk in the holes and corners of the Christian's heart. Yet by the indwelling

The Garment of Grace

power of Christ's grace there are those "even in Sardis" who keep their spiritual garments comparatively clean. In times of coldness and formalism and abounding worldliness they walk close enough with Christ to maintain a distinct godly life "separate from sinners." If a spot of defilement is contracted on their conscience or character they do not suffer it *to dry on*. With deep penitence they make sincere confession to God, and betake themselves anew to that fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness. This is the invariable trait of the genuine Christian which differentiates him from the false one. If a true follower of Christ becomes soiled with impurity, he grieves over it, repents of it, and hastens to that Saviour who pardons and restores. By such processes only can the gar-

The Garment of Glory

ment of grace be kept from utter disfigurement and defilement.

Brethren and sisters in Christ, we must long for purity with a deep, fervent longing of heart. Grant that the atmosphere of the world is polluting; grant that the temptations of sin are strong, we must strive toward purity as the climber strives for the mountain top, and the swimmer, though often beaten back by the surf, still struggles for the "shining shore." Constantly should the prayer ascend "wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sins!" Constantly should we be watching as well as washing. Sanctification is not a sudden magical process once for all; it is a continual work—and stiff work too—by which we are enabled more and more to die unto

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sin, more and more to live unto righteousness. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after *rightness*; they shall be filled! There is a mighty difference between a whitewashed sinner and a cleansed believer clad in the garment of grace.

By and by this garment of grace shall be laid aside for the *garment of glory*. The one is for time; the other is for eternity. The one is worn on earth, the other shall be worn in Heaven. The first garment is a Christian character formed by the regenerating Spirit of God in this world. The other is a Christian character completed, perfected, consummated and glorified in that world wherein entereth nothing whatsoever that defileth. They who have kept their garments clean in this bad atmosphere of earth

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shall “walk with Jesus *in white*, for they are worthy.” That shining vesture is the “pure linen” of the saints upon that sea of glass that is like unto flashing gold. Glorious promise—even though we cannot pry into all the mysteries hidden behind the gorgeous metaphors of the Apocaiypse! Glorious company! Glorious garment that shall never lose its luster!

My brother in Jesus Christ, who may read these words, determine that whatever others may do you will be a thorough and consecrated servant of your Master, “even in Sardis.” Determine that you will keep the garment of character undefiled. If all Sardis is infected with the lust of gold, let not the canker eat into your soul. However many in Sardis rush off into frivolities and into those scenes of

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folly that make deathbeds terrible, do you choose rather the joys of holy converse with the Master in the "upper chamber." Amid the surrounding rush of worldliness strive to keep pure and unspotted from the world. For this evil world, no less than thy Master, *needs thee*. A clean Christian is a sermon in shoes eloquent and convincing; a reproduction of Christ visibly before men. Let the supineness of the slothful and the treasons of the unfaithful only spur you on to a bolder fight, to a more steadfast loyalty, to a more unselfish consecration, and life in Christ and for Christ and with Christ evermore. Make thy garment of grace a garment of glory!

VI

THE CHRISTIAN'S ROCK-FORTRESS

To learn what it is to be a genuine Christian and why such a Christian does not go to wreck amid all the temptations of this present evil world, we need only go to our Bibles. In the thirty-third chapter of Isaiah we light, for example, on this grand description of the righteous man: "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Every word of this is worth studying; it tells the secret of spiritual strength and security; and simply because there is a divine support and a divine supply.

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“He shall dwell on high.” True conversion is a change of place; it puts a man in a new position toward himself, toward his fellow men, and toward God. While the ungodly build down on the shifting sands, and the flimsy structure at last “falls in,” the wise man makes his abode up on the everlasting cliffs. I once climbed up to the magnificent fortress of Salzburg, which overlooks wide leagues of emerald plains with the snowy Tyrolese Alps in the background. It is one of the most enchanting outlooks in all Europe. But while I could enjoy the splendid prospect only for an hour, I found that a hundred or more people were living up there. So it is with a soul that has been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and has repented of sin, and been regenerated

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by the Holy Spirit; he has got into a new position, breathes a new atmosphere and has a new outlook. *He lives up with God.* This is the true higher life. The morning sun of God's favor shines on him, and at evening-time it is still light. There is such a thing as keeping our heads and our hands busy in all the useful activities of life and yet having our hearts dwelling "in fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

This strong position affords a sure *protection* from the worst dangers that assail the soul, and the worries that most disturb our peace. The righteous man's "place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." This vivid passage recalls the rocky heights in Palestine and Syria on which men reared their fortresses in olden times.

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It describes spiritual solidity, strength and security. This is a picture of all those good men and women whose characters are rock-based and rock-built. Their sure foundation is on God's immovable and infallible word as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Their faith is no blind guess-work, no devout delusion; it is a rational, intelligent, whole-hearted grasp on heaven-revealed truth. It is the believing soul's response to Him who says, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." He says, "Trust me," and the believer trusts Him. He says, "Follow me, and I will uphold you," and the believer follows Him. Whenever I cross over yonder stupendous East River Bridge, I do not stop to ask the ticket seller, "Is the bridge safe to-day?" for I know what adamantine piers

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support the structure. God saith to me: "Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is the rock of ages." My divine Saviour saith to me, "I give unto my sheep eternal life; they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands." He will take care of His promises. You and I have nothing to do but believe and obey. I once spent a night in the ancient castellated convent of Mar Saba in the gorge of the Kedron. All night I lay secure in the strong fortress while the jackals howled down beneath us, and the Bedouin prowled without the walls. So may every follower of Christ who has lodged himself in the stronghold of the divine promises rest securely and let Satan's jackals howl as fiercely as they choose, or the adversary lie in

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wait outside the gateway. When I put my soul and my eternal interests into Christ's keeping, why should I worry? Duty is mine; service of the Master and my fellow men is mine; my salvation belongs to Him who hath promised it. Who can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

If we dwell thus on the munitions of rocks, our characters become solidified also. We get a measure of our Lord's unchangeableness; we become men and women of rock. The apostle Peter, when writing to his fellow Christians about Christ, says to them: "Unto whom coming as unto a living stone ye also became living stones, built up into a spiritual house." "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be re-

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moved, but abideth forever." There is a quaint old Scottish version of this passage that puts iron into our blood:

"Who sticketh to God in stable trust
As Zion's mount he stands full just,
Which moveth no whit, nor yet doth reel,
But standeth forever as stiff as steel!"

There is a great demand for this style of Christians in the business world, in civil life and in social life, as well as in pulpits and in press. Shaky preaching tends to make shaky Christians. A minister whose own knees are quaking with doubt about the Book which God has given him to preach will put no backbone into his hearers; he must be firmly planted on the rock if he would draw others up to that rock.

There is one more promise to those who dwell up in God's strong fortress.

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Sometimes a garrison is obliged to surrender because their provisions are exhausted, or the supply of water has failed. But no danger of this kind need to alarm the children of faith who live in God's Gibraltar. Bread shall be given them, and their waters shall be sure. There is an inexhaustible well in that citadel. Godliness is profitable in all things; even in worldly affairs, those who obey God's commandments are commonly the most thrifty. Christianity does not breed idlers, or swindlers, or gamblers, or knaves, or defaulters. It is not a bad thing to "live from hand to mouth" when the mouth is the mouth of faith and the hand is the hand of our loving Father. For our hungry souls He makes infinite provision; His manna descends every morning, and Jesus Christ is both the

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bread of life and the unfailing well-spring. My friend, if your soul is really dwelling in God's strong fortress, you ought to have a serene countenance and a sweet temper and a singing tongue, and be converting other people to a faith in the brightness and beauty and power of Bible religion.

VII

THE DEMON OF DISCOURAGEMENT

A HINGE is a very small part of a door, yet it is a very important part; for on it turns the question whether the door be opened or shut. So the little word "but" is a very important hinge in that Bible text which tells us that "David was greatly distressed, but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." On the hinge of that word turns a door of hope to God's people in the darkest hour of trouble. David was not the only good man who has been distressed; his experience has been a universal one. Our Heavenly Father has never promised to the best man or woman that their

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voyage of life shall be over smooth seas without a "capful" of head winds. He so orders it that the precious things shall be costly things, and that the noblest life shall be one of conflicts, oppositions, trials, and often of severe discipline.

Observe that there is a mighty difference between being distressed and being discouraged. The King of Israel had good reason to be distressed; for a band of marauding Amalekites had attacked and burned down his town of Ziklag, and had carried off his wife Abigail as a captive. He goes right to God and asks what he shall do; and the prompt answer is to "pursue them." Whereupon he musters his gallant six hundred, pushes after the enemy and routs them, and recovers his wife and all his plundered

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goods. Disaster did not discourage him; it drove him to God. Such experiences in the Psalmist's life taught him to ring out the words of good cheer, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God! Trust in the Lord, and be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart."

Just in proportion as any life is a thoroughly conscientious Christian life must it encounter enemies without and within. There is no lack of "Amalekites" in any track we may take, and some of them start up in our own hearts. Conversion does not end the battle with besetting sins; it rather intensifies the conflict. Paul might have had a more quiet time if he had let the old Adam have his way; instead of that he exclaims, "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I

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keep my body under and bring it into subjection." One of the best men I ever knew has a constant fight with a naturally unruly temper, and there is more than one good woman who has hard work to restrain an unruly tongue. There is enough animal lust in the constitution of some Christians to keep them watching as travellers in Africa watch for tigers in the jungles. Pride is the besetting sin of Brother A——, and love of popularity is the snare of Brother B——, and a pinching covetousness makes it no easy thing for Brother C—— to open his purse wide when the collection basket comes along. The Master's constant command is, "I say unto you all, watch!" The Christian who gives up fighting his Amalekites, and tries to find peace by surrendering to them, is

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disgraced in the sight of God; such discouragement means death to all healthy and happy religion.

Another command of our Lord is, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." Heart-keeping is very much like housekeeping. There must be a continual sweeping out of dirt and clearing out of rubbish—a daily washing of dishes and a perpetual battle with all sorts of vermin. If heart cleaning could be done up once for all, then the Christian might discharge all his graces, and have an easy time of it. And just because the assaults of subtle temptations are so constant, and the uprisings of sinful passions are so frequent, and the task of keeping the inward man what it ought to be is so difficult, many a one who begins a religious life gets discouraged,

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and makes a wretched failure. The question with every Christian is, Shall these accursed Amalekites of temptation burn up all my spiritual possessions, and overrun my soul? Shall outward assaults or inward weakness drive me to discouragement, and disgrace me before my Master and before the world? Or shall they drive me to Jesus Christ, who will give me the victory?

Another frequent temptation to discouragement arises from the apparent failure of our best efforts and undertakings. How often we ministers prepare a Gospel message, and season the sermon with prayer, and we persuade ourselves that such truths must convert some sinners, and must conquer some hard hearts! No echo seems to follow our strokes; no re-

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sponse is made to our appeals; sermons seem to rebound like shot flung against a wall of adamant. Satan whispers in our ears the taunt, "Where is thy God?" The demon of discouragement lays his icy paw on us, and sneers in our faces, "Didn't I tell you so?" These are some of the hardest trials that a faithful minister or devoted Sunday-school teacher has to face. Under such circumstances discouragement is just what a bottle of brandy is to an inebriate, or what a roulette table is to a gambler—it is an assailing sin. When thus assaulted, we must encourage ourselves in God as David did; we must remember that it was His message we were uttering, and His children we were preaching to, and for His honor and glory. We were using His weapons, and He is

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responsible for results. All that you and I are responsible for is doing our whole duty. Ours is the seeding, and God alone beholds the end of what is sown. How do we know how much good we accomplish, when we do any good thing, or utter any timely truth in love? Our measuring lines do not reach into distant years—much less into the other world. Eternity may have many surprises for us. Wait and see.

One of the worst evils wrought by the sin of discouragement is that we are tempted to stop when we are just on the eve of realized success, and almost in sight of the richest blessings. Up near the summit of Mount Washington, I once saw a cairn of stones to mark the spot where a poor girl perished from exposure and heart failure

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on a cold night. She and her father had rashly attempted to ascend the mountain without a guide (it was many years ago,) and they had become lost, and had sat down bewildered when the chilling darkness of the autumnal night came on. The next morning the distracted father discovered that a very short distance more would have brought him in sight of the lights from the windows of the "Tiptop" cabin! Here is a bit of a parable to illustrate how those who are doing not rash things but wise things, may be tempted to lose heart, and to relax their efforts when they were almost in sight of success. During my early ministry in a certain difficult field I became not only distressed but discouraged, and began to think of fleeing away to Tarshish like willful

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Jonah. The Lord most mercifully headed me off by a wonderful outpouring of His Spirit on that little church. That precious revival taught me many lessons; one was that God puts dark hours before day-dawn to test faith; another was that hard fields are the very ones that ought not to be abandoned.

When George Muller made his first appeal to a public meeting in Bristol for money to start an Orphan House, he waited three or four days, and only one shilling was given him, and that by a poor missionary. He laid hold on God with prayer, and within a fortnight money and goods poured in. Grand old Adoniram Judson—prince of American missionaries—preached in Burmah for six years without any converts; then came a great harvest.

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The forty-second Psalm was written as a weapon to kill the demon of discouragement. In these days, when the Amalekites of skepticism are abroad, and worldliness abounds more than conversions, all preachers and godly people may well imitate David, and "encourage themselves in the Lord God." David's distress sent him straight to God, and God sent him straight after the enemy. A majority of all the failures in this world come from the want of courage. In the next world it will be found that the same sin has robbed many souls of their salvation and many Christians of their crowns. If these plain words shall help to cast out the demon of discouragement from any heart, they will have served their purpose.