

DAY BY DAY

Bible Texts and Topics, With Comments,
For Personal Study and Use at Family Worship.

13: GODLINESS

1. LIKE UNTO THE HEAVENLY FATHER

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Matthew 5:38-48.

“God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. “Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning.

“The tempter's agency is not to be accounted an excuse for one wrong act. Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of Christ making excuses for their deformity of character. It is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christ like life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God....

“Christ is the ladder that Jacob saw, the base resting on the earth, and the topmost round reaching to the gate of heaven, to the very threshold of glory. If that ladder had failed by a single step of reaching the earth, we should have been lost. But Christ reaches us where we are. He took our nature and overcame, that we through taking His nature might overcome. Made “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3), He lived a sinless life. Now by His divinity He lays hold upon the throne of heaven, while by His humanity He reaches us. He bids us by faith in Him attain to the glory of the character of God. Therefore are we to be perfect, even as our “Father which is in heaven is perfect.” The Desire of Ages, pages 311, 312.

2. “BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD”

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is

with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolation He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah." Psalm 46.

"In all who are under the training of God is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs or its practices; and every one needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, "Be still, and know that I am God." Here alone can true rest be found. And this is the effectual preparation for all labor for God. Amid the hurrying throng, and the strain of life's intense activities, the soul that is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. The life will breathe out fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men's hearts." The Desire of Ages, page 363.

"In the darkest days, when appearances seem so forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day. His understanding will be placed at their service, that they may not err in the carrying out of His purposes.

"There is to be no despondency in God's service. Our faith is to endure the pressure brought to bear upon it. God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need. He will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. He will give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand." Testimonies, Vol. 8, pages 10, 11.

3. THE SPEECH OF THE CHRISTIAN

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14.

"By thy words thou shall be justified, and by thy words thou shall be condemned." Matthew 12:37.

"The Lord Jesus demands our acknowledgement of the rights of every man. Men's social rights, and their rights as Christians, are to be taken into consideration. All are to be treated with refinement and delicacy, as the sons and daughters of God.

"Christianity will make a man a gentleman. Christ was courteous, even to His persecutors; and His true followers will manifest the same spirit. Look at Paul when brought before rulers. His speech before Agrippa is an illustration of true courtesy as well as persuasive eloquence. The gospel does not encourage the formal politeness current with the world, but the courtesy that springs from real kindness of heart.

"The most careful attention to the outward properties of life is not sufficient to shut out all fretfulness, harsh judgment, and unbecoming speech. True refinement will never be revealed so long as self is considered as the supreme object. Love must dwell in the heart. A thoroughgoing Christian draws his motives of action from his deep heart-love for his Master. Up through the roots of his affection for Christ springs an unselfish interest in his brethren. Love imparts to its possessor grace, propriety, and comeliness of deportment. It illuminates the countenance and subdues the voice; it refines and elevates the entire being." Gospel Workers, page 123.

"Closely connected with Christ's warning in regard to the sin against the Holy Spirit is a warning against idle and evil words. The words are an indication of that which is in the heart. "Out of the abundance of

the heart the mouth speaks.”

“But the words are more than an indication of character; they have power to react on the character. Men are influenced by their own words. Often under a momentary impulse, prompted by Satan, they give utterance to jealousy or evil surmising, expressing that which they do not really believe; but the expression reacts on the thoughts. They are deceived by their words, and come to believe that true which was spoken at Satan's instigation. Having once expressed an opinion or decision, they are often too proud to retract it, and try to prove themselves in the right, until they come to believe that they are.

“It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief. Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shall be justified, and by thy words thou shall be condemned.” The Desire of Ages, page 323.

4. SPIRITUAL GIFTS

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:” Ephesians 4:8, 11-15.

While these gifts were given to the church for every period of its existence, they were to be especially manifested in the outpouring of the former rain on the day of Pentecost and in the outpouring of the latter rain immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ.

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.” Joel 2:28-32.

“The apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthian church, exhorts those waiting for the Lord's return that they “come behind in no gift.”

“I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything you are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge. Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I Corinthians 1:4-8.

The testimony of Jesus, or the Spirit of prophecy, was to be manifested, particularly in the remnant church. “The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 12:17.

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not; I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.” Revelation 19:10.

That this gift has been manifested in connection with the Second Advent movement has been abundantly demonstrated, and we have as a result of that gift the writings of the Spirit of prophecy, from which liberal quotations are made in these devotions. F. M. W.

5. THE GRACE OF GOD

“The grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus 2:11-14.

“The children of God, the world over, are one great brotherhood. Our Savior has clearly defined the spirit and principles which should govern the actions of those who, by their consistent, holy lives, distinguish themselves from the world. Love for one another, and supreme love to their heavenly Father, should be exemplified in their conversation and works. The present condition of many of the children of God is like that of a family of ungrateful and quarrelsome children....

“We are living in a most solemn, important time of this earth's history. We are amid the perils of the last days. Important and fearful events are before us. How necessary that all who do fear God and love His law, should humble themselves before Him, and be afflicted and mourn, and confess the sins that have separated God from His people. That which should excite the greatest alarm is that we do not feel or understand our condition, our low estate, and that we are satisfied to remain as we are. We should flee to the word of God and to prayer, individually seeking the Lord earnestly, that we may find Him. We should make this our first business.

“The members of the church are responsible for the talents committed to their trust, and it is impossible for Christians to meet their responsibilities unless they occupy that elevated position that is in accordance with the sacred truths which they profess. The light that shines upon our pathway makes us responsible to let that light shine forth to others in such a manner that they will glorify God” Testimonies, Vol. 3, pages 52, 53.

Lord, I would work for Thee, but know not how;
This feeble, useless life seems lived for naught.
I've tried and tried; dear Savior, tell me now,
What can I do for souls whom Thou has bought?

Here is my spindle and my distaff,
Lord, Give me some flax, and teach me how to spin,
That I may clothe with beauties of Thy word,
Some trembling soul, into Thy presence bring.

Lord, I would play for Thee to bring delight,
But this my harp is sadly out of tune;
It makes but discord now; Lord, make it right,
That from some hearts, I may dispel the gloom.

And, Lord, while Thou does tune this harp of mine,
Tune Thou my heart, to higher longings raise.
Then sweep the strings with Your own hand divine.
That life may be one anthem filled with praise. Margaret W. Locke.

6. THE KEEPER OF ISRAEL

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

"David could not be present at the burial of Samuel; but he mourned for him as deeply and tenderly as a faithful son could mourn for a devoted father. He knew that Samuel's death had broken another bond of restraint from the actions of Saul, and he felt less secure than when the prophet lived. While the attention of Saul was engaged in mourning for the death of Samuel, David took the opportunity to seek a place of greater security; so he fled to the wilderness of Paran. It was here that he composed the one hundred and twentieth and twenty-first psalms. In these desolate wilds, realizing that the prophet was dead, and the king was his enemy, he sang: "My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Patriarchs and Prophets, page 664.

"It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Job. 14:4; Romans 8:7. Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness. The Savior said, "Except a man be born front above," unless he shall receive a new heart, new desires, purposes, and motives, leading to a new life, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3 (margin)" Steps to Christ, page 20.

He holds my hand, I feel the lifting of His power
As my poor feet are stumbling in the way;
He guides me through life's very darkest hour,
And brings me out into a perfect day.

He holds my hand. Temptations sweeping o'er me
Would well-nigh blast my soul, my courage fail,
And cast about on life's dark, troubled waters.
I turn to Him for peace; He calms the gale.

He holds my hand. In life or death He guides,
Where all the way looks very dark and drear; I cry to Him,
"My Lord, who never chides
My human frailty, or my doubt or fear.

“Hold Thou my hand, And never let me falter.
Guide Thou my feet, and never let them stray;
Make me to feel the presence of my Helper,
Whom I shall see in beauty some sweet day. J. W. Mace.

7. THE GOOD SHEPHERD

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” John 10:1-5, 14-18.

“As the shepherd leads his flock over the rocky hills, through forest and wild ravines, to grassy nooks by the riverside; as he watches them on the mountains through the lonely night, shielding from robbers, caring tenderly for the sickly and feeble, his life comes to be one with theirs. A strong and tender attachment unites him to the objects of his care. However large the flock, the shepherd knows every sheep. Every one has its name, and responds to the name at the shepherd's call.

“As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. “You My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, says the Lord God.” Jesus says, 'I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.' 'I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.

“Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.

“Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Savior died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, “Follow Me,” and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth.” The Desire of Ages, pages 479, 480.