

DAY BY DAY

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

2.9: THE LIFE

1. BEHOLD YOUR GOD

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Isaiah 40:3-11.

“Obstacles to the advancement of the work of God will appear; but fear not. To the omnipotence of the King of kings, our covenant-keeping God unites the gentleness and care of a tender shepherd. Nothing can stand in His way. His power is absolute, and it is the pledge of the sure fulfillment of His promises to His people. He can remove all obstructions to the advancement of His work. He has means for the removal of every difficulty, that those who serve Him and respect the means He employs may be delivered. His goodness and love are infinite, and His covenant is unalterable.

“The plans of the enemies of His work may seem to be firm and well established, but He can overthrow the strongest of these plans, and in His own time and way He will do this, when He sees that our faith has been sufficiently tested, and that we are drawing near to Him, and making Him our counselor.” Testimonies Volume 8, 10.

“In Christ is the tenderness of the shepherd, the affection of the parent, and the matchless grace of the compassionate Savior. His blessings He presents in the most alluring terms. He is not content merely to announce these blessings; He presents them in the most attractive way, to excite a desire to possess them. So His servants are to present the riches of the glory of the unspeakable gift. The wonderful love of Christ will melt and subdue hearts, when the mere reiteration of doctrines would accomplish nothing.

“Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.” O Zion, that brings good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.” Tell the people of Him who is “the chief among ten thousand” and the one “altogether lovely.” Cant. 5:10, 16. Words alone cannot tell it. Let it be reflected in the character and manifested in the life.” The Desire of Ages, 826, 827.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF ASSOCIATES

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” Psalms 1.

“The link is a mysterious one which binds human hearts together, so that the feelings, tastes, and principles of two individuals are closely blended. One catches the spirit, and copies the ways and acts, of the other. As wax retains the figure of the seal, so the mind retains the impression produced by intercourse and association. The influence may be unconscious, yet it is no less powerful.

“If the youth could be persuaded to associate with the pure, the thoughtful, and the amiable, the effect would be most salutary. If choice is made of companions who fear the Lord, the influence will lead to truth, to duty, and to holiness. A truly Christian life is a power for good. But on the other hand, those who associate with men and women of questionable morals, of bad principles and practices, will soon be walking in the same path. The tendencies of the natural heart are downward. He who associates with the skeptic will soon become skeptical; he who chooses the companionship of the vile will most assuredly become vile. To walk in the counsel of the ungodly is the first step toward standing in the way of sinners and sitting in the seat of the scornful.” Testimonies 4, 587.

“There are localities in Switzerland where the canary is caged with a nightingale, so that it may catch the sweetness of the latter's song and breathe into its notes that harmonious melody that delights all tourists in Europe. It is a demonstration of the power of association. The canary may be trained by a nightingale. So men may make their lives strong, pure, sweet, and holy in thought, word, and deed by unbroken association with those who live on a higher plane.”

“When Stanley went to Africa in search of Livingstone, he was not a Christian, but after he had met and lived with Livingstone, he bore this testimony: 'Here is a man who is manifestly sustained as well as guided from heaven. The Holy Spirit dwells in him. God speaks through him. The heroism, the nobility, the pure and stainless enthusiasm at the root of his life come, beyond question, from Christ. There must, therefore, be a Christ; and it is worth while to have such a Helper and Redeemer as this Christ undoubtedly is, and as He here reveals Himself in this wonderful disciple.’”

3. GRAVEN ON CHRIST'S HANDS

“Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me.” Isaiah 49:13-16.

“Every promise in the word of God furnishes us with subject matter for prayer, presenting the pledged word of Jehovah as our assurance. Whatever spiritual blessing we need, it is our privilege to claim through Jesus. We may tell the Lord, with the simplicity of a child, exactly what we need. We may state to Him our temporal matters, asking Him for bread and raiment as well as for the bread of life and the robe of Christ's righteousness. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things, and you are invited to ask Him concerning, them. It is through the name of Jesus that every favor is received. God will honor that name, and will supply your necessities from the riches of His liberality.

“But do not forget that in coming to God as a Father, you acknowledge your relation to Him as a child. You not only trust His goodness, but in all things yield to His will, knowing that His love is changeless. You give yourself to do His work. It was to those whom He had bidden to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness that Jesus gave the promise, “Ask and you shall receive.” Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, 190, 191.

“Those who share Christ's suffering and reproach now, will share His glory hereafter. He “will not be ashamed to call them brethren.” His angels minister to them. His second appearing will be as the Son of man, thus even in His glory identifying Him with humanity. To those who have united themselves to him, He declares, “Though a mother may forget her child, yet will not I forget thee. I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands. Thou art continually before Me.”

“Oh, what amazing privileges are proffered us! Will we put forth most earnest efforts to form this alliance with Christ, through which alone these blessings are attained? Will we break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by turning unto the Lord? Skepticism and infidelity are widespread. Christ asked the question, “When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” We must cherish a living, active faith. The permanence of our faith is the condition of our union.” Testimonies 5, 230, 231.

They who trust in God are said to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. God is often called their rock, their fortress, their shield and buckler, their defense and refuge; and are they not then impregnablely safe? Isaac Barrows.

4. THE LORD'S MERCIES

“It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassion fails not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sits alone and keeps silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” Lamentations 3:22-33.

“God's love for the fallen race is a peculiar manifestation of love,-a love born of mercy; for human beings are all undeserving. Mercy implies imperfection of the object toward which it is shown. It is because of sin that mercy was brought into active exercise.” Testimonies 7, 264.

“By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.” The Desire of Ages, 762.

“Far more than we do, we need to speak of the precious chapters in our experience, of the mercy and loving-kindness of God, of the matchless depths of the Savior's love. When mind and heart are filled with the love of God, it will not be difficult to impart that which enters into the spiritual life. Great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, unselfish purposes, yearnings for piety and holiness, will find expression in words that reveal the character of the heart treasure.” Prophets and Kings, 347, 348.

We often wish we had a chance
To begin our life anew,
And think we see, as back we glance,
What great things we would do.

We see so many crooks we've made,
And the time we have misspent,
We long to make a better grade;
Oh, how we do repent!

We see we've failed to speak a word
Of comfort and good cheer,
And failed to heed the cry we heard,
And help to dry a tear.

We thought we loved our Savior dear,
And longed to tell Him so,
But when His needy poor was near,
We told him he must go.

It will do no good to sigh or moan
O'er time forever past;
Let's make the present time our own,
So we may win at last. -J. B. Thayer.

5. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

"Thou shall have no other gods before Me." Exodus 20:1

"We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there he that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." I Corinthians 8:4-6.

"In the last days of this earth's history, the voice that spoke from Sinai is still declaring, "Thou shall have no other gods before Me." Man has set his will against the will of God, but he cannot silence the word of command. The human mind cannot evade its obligation to a higher power. Theories and speculations may abound; men may try to set science in opposition to revelation, and thus do away with God's law; but stronger and still stronger comes the command, "Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall thou serve." Matthew 4:10." Prophets and Kings, 624, 625.

"Men put God out of their knowledge, and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. The psalmist describes the effect produced upon the worshiper by the adoration of idols. He says, "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusts in them." It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness. If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. The worshipers of false gods clothed their deities with human attributes and passions, and thus their standard of character was degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity." Patriarchs and Prophets, 91.

“Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the source and sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship. Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 305.

“There's a law that I am learning That is helping me each day;
That our God sends something better For the things He takes away.
While some sorrow presses on us, And we feel that loss severe,
He will follow up this heartache With a blessing, never fear.”

6. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

“Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me. And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.” Exodus 20:4-6.

“Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;” Deuteronomy 7:9.

“Are we worshipers of Jehovah or of Baal? Of the living God, or of idols? No outward shrines may be visible there may be no image for the eye to rest upon, yet we may be practicing idolatry. It is as easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal. Are we worshipping the true God as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Savior. He is a God of patience and long suffering. If such is the being whom we adore, and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshipping the true God.” Testimonies 5, 173, 174.

“As the worshipers of the true and living God, we should bear fruit corresponding to the light and privileges we enjoy. Many are worshipping idols instead of the Lord of heaven and earth. Anything that men love and trust in instead of loving the Lord and trusting wholly in Him, becomes an idol, and is thus registered in the books of heaven. Even blessings are often turned into a curse. The sympathies of the human heart, strengthened by exercise, are sometimes perverted until they become a snare. If one is reproved, there are always some who will sympathize with him. They entirely overlook the harm that has been done to God's cause by the wrong influence of one whose life and character do not in any way resemble those of the Pattern. God sends His servants with a message to the people professing to be followers of Christ; but some are children of God only in name, and they reject the warning.” Testimonies 5, 250.

7. THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

“Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.” Exodus 20:7.

“I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall thou swear by thy head, because thou cannot not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these comes of evil.” Matthew 5:34-37.

“These words condemn all those meaningless phrases and expletives that border on profanity. They condemn the deceptive compliments, the evasion of truth, the flattering phrases, the exaggerations, the misrepresentations in trade, that are current in society and in the business world. They teach that no one who tries to appear what he is not, or whose words do not convey the real sentiment of his heart, can be called truthful.

“If these words of Christ were heeded, they would check the utterance of evil surmising and unkind criticism; for in commenting upon the actions and motives of another, who can be certain of speaking the exact truth? How often pride, passion, personal resentment, color the impression given! A glance, a word, even an intonation of the voice, may be vital with falsehood. Even facts may be so stated as to convey a false impression. And “whatsoever is more than” truth “is of the evil one.”

“Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. Yet it is not a light or an easy thing to speak the exact truth. We cannot speak the truth unless we know the truth; and how often preconceived opinions, mental bias, imperfect knowledge, errors of judgment, prevent a right understanding of matters with which we have to do! We cannot speak the truth unless our minds are continually guided by Him who is truth.” Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 104, 105.

“This commandment not only prohibits false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance. By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial matters, and by the frequent and thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him. “Holy and reverend is His name.” All should meditate upon His majesty, His purity and holiness, that the heart may be impressed with a sense of His exalted character; and His holy name should be uttered with reverence and solemnity.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 306, 307.