

EVENING BY EVENING

OR

READINGS AT EVENTIDE

for the family or the closet

C. H. SPURGEON

Author of "Morning by Morning," "Sermons," &c.

“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the night watches.”

Psalm lxiii. 5–6.



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PREFACE



When the noise and turmoil of the day are over, it is sweet to commune with God: the cool and calm of eventide agree most delightfully with prayer and praise. The hours of the declining sun are so many quiet alleys in the garden of time wherein man may find his Maker waiting to commune with him, even as of old the Lord God walked with Adam in Paradise in the cool of the day. It is meet that we should set apart a peaceful season ere the day has quite departed, a season of thanksgiving for grace abounding, of repentance for follies multiplied, of self-examination for evils insinuating. To leap from day to day like a mad hunter scouring the fields, is an omen of being delivered over to destruction; but the solemn pause, the deliberate consideration—these are means of grace and ensigns of an indwelling life. The tide of ocean stays a while at ebb before it resolves to flood again; the moon sometimes lingers at the full; there are distinct hedges in nature set between the acres of time—even the strike of the bell is a little mound of warning: men should not remove landmarks, but beat the bounds frequently and keep up with due interval and solemnity the remembrance of the passing away of days, and months, and years: each evening it were well to traverse the boundaries of the day, and take note of all it has brought and all it has seen.

The drops of the night come from the same fount as the dew of the morning: he who met Abraham at break of day communed with Isaac in the field at eventide. He who opens the doors of the day with the hand of mercy draws around His people the curtains of the night, and by His shining presence makes the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice. A promise at dawn, and a sure word at sunset, crown the brow of day with light, and sandal its feet with love. To breakfast with Jesus and to sup with him also, is to enjoy the days of heaven upon the earth. It is dangerous to fall asleep till the head is leaned on Jesus' bosom. When divine love puts its finger on the weary eyelids, it is brave sleeping; but that the Lord's beloved may have such sleep given to him, it is needful that he should make a near approach to the throne, and unburden his soul before the great Preserver of men. To enter into the blaze of Jehovah's presence by the way of the atoning blood is the sure method to refine ourselves of earthly dross, and to renew the soul after exhausting service. The reading of the word, and prayer, are as gates of carbuncle to admit us into the presence chamber of The August Majesty, and he is most blessed who most frequently swings those gates upon their sapphire hinges. When the stars are revealed, and all the hosts of heaven walk in golden glory, then surely is the time when the solemn temple is lit up, and the worshipper is bidden to enter. If one hour can be endowed with a sacredness above its fellows, it must be the hour when the Lord looseth the bands of Orion, and leadeth forth Areturus and his sons: then voices from worlds afar call us to contemplation and adoration, and the stillness of the lower world prepares an oratory for the devout soul. He surely never prays at all who does not end the day as all men wish to end their lives—in prayer.

In many households the gathering of the family for evening prayer is more easy than the morning opportunity, and in all the tents of our Israel the evening sacrifice should be solemnly remembered. Ere we cower down beneath the wings of the Eternal, let us entreat Him to deliver us from the terror by night, and give us safe dwelling in His

secret place. It is blessed work to set the night warders in their posts by supplication, and then commit ourselves without fear to the embraces of divine love.

Having had the seal of our Master's blessing set upon our former volume, entitled "Morning by Morning," we have felt encouraged to give our best attention to the present series of brief meditations, and we send them forth with importunate prayer for a blessing to rest upon every reader. Already more than twenty thousand readers are among our morning fellow-worshippers. Oh that all may receive grace from the Lord by means of the portion read; and when a similar number shall be gathered to read the evening selection, may the Father's smile be their benison. We have striven to keep out of the common track, and hence we have used unusual texts, and have brought forward neglected subjects. The vice of many religious works is their dulness—from this we have striven to be free: our friends must judge how far successfully. Out of our own experience we have drawn much of our matter, and we have always felt assured that a truth which has been sanctified to our own good will not be without an unction for others. If we may lead one heart upward which otherwise had drooped, or sow in a single mind a holy purpose which else had never been conceived, we shall be grateful. The Lord send us such results in thousands of instances, and His shall be all the praise. The longer we live, the more deeply are we conscious that the Holy Spirit alone can make truth profitable to the heart; and therefore in earnest prayer we commit this volume and its companion to His care.

C. H. SPURGEON.
MAY, 1868.

JANUARY 1

“We will be glad and rejoice in thee.” — Song of Solomon i. 4.

We will be glad and rejoice in Thee. We will not open the gates of the year to the dolorous notes of the sackbut, but to the sweet strains of the harp of joy, and the high sounding cymbals of gladness. “O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation.” **WE**, the called, and faithful, and chosen, *we* will drive away our griefs, and set up our banners of confidence in the name of God. Let others lament over their troubles, we who have the sweetening tree to cast into Marah’s bitter pool, with joy will magnify the Lord. Eternal Spirit, our effectual Comforter, we who are the temples in which Thou dwellest, will never cease from adoring and blessing the name of Jesus. *We WILL*; we are resolved about it; Jesus must have the crown of our heart’s delight; we will not dishonor our Bridegroom by mourning in His presence. We are ordained to be the minstrels of the skies; let us rehearse our everlasting anthem before we sing it in the halls of the New Jerusalem. *We will BE GLAD AND REJOICE*: two words with one sense, double joy, blessedness upon blessedness. Need there be any limit to our rejoicing **IN THE** Lord even now? Do not men of grace find their Lord to be camphire and spikenard, calamus and cinnamon, even now, and what better fragrance have they in heaven itself? *We will be glad and rejoice IN THEE*. That last word is the meat in the dish, the kernel of the nut, the soul of the text. What heavens are laid up in Jesus! What rivers of infinite bliss have their source, ay, and every drop of their fulness in Him! Since, O sweet Lord Jesus, Thou art the present portion of Thy people, favor us this year with such a sense of Thy preciousness, that from its first to its last day, we may be glad and rejoice in Thee. Let January open with joy in the Lord, and December close with gladness in Jesus.

~ C. H. SPURGEON ~

JANUARY 2

“Let the people renew their strength.”—Isaiah xli. 1.

All things on earth need to be renewed. No created thing continueth by itself. “Thou renewest the face of the year,” was the Psalmist’s utterance. Even the trees, which wear not themselves with care, nor shorten their lives with labor, must drink of the rain of heaven, and suck from the hidden treasures of the soil. The cedars of Lebanon, which God has planted, only live because day by day they are full of sap fresh drawn from the earth. Neither can man’s life be sustained without renewal from God. As it is necessary to repair the waste of the body by the frequent meal, so we must repair the waste of the soul by feeding upon the Book of God, or by listening to the preached Word, or by the soul-fattening table of the ordinances. How depressed are our graces when means are neglected! What poor starvelings some saints are who live without the diligent use of the Word of God, and secret prayer! If our piety can live without God, it is not of divine creating; it is but a dream; for if God had begotten it, it would wait upon Him as the flowers wait upon the dew. Without constant restoration we are not ready for the perpetual assaults of hell, or the stern afflictions of heaven, or even for the strifes within. When the whirlwind shall be loosed, woe to the tree that hath not sucked up fresh sap, and grasped the rock with many intertwined roots. When tempests arise, woe to the mariners that have not strengthened their mast, nor cast their anchor, nor sought the haven. If we suffer the good to grow weaker, the evil will surely gather strength and struggle desperately for the mastery over us; and so, mayhap, a painful desolation, and a lamentable disgrace may follow. Let us draw near to the footstool of divine mercy in humble entreaty, and we shall realize the fulfilment of the promise, “They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.”

JANUARY 3

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” — Luke iii. 4.

The voice crying in the wilderness demanded *a way for the Lord, a way prepared, and a way prepared in the wilderness*. I would be attentive to the Master’s proclamation, and give Him a road into my heart, cast up by gracious operations, through the desert of my nature. The four directions in the text must have my serious attention.

Every valley must be exalted. Low and grovelling thoughts of God must be given up; doubting and despairing must be removed; and self-seeking and carnal delights must be forsaken. Across these deep valleys a glorious causeway of grace must be raised.

Every mountain and hill shall be laid low. Proud creature-sufficiency, and boastful self-righteousness, must be levelled, to make a highway for the King of kings. Divine fellowship is never vouchsafed to haughty, high-minded sinners. The Lord hath respect unto the lowly, and visits the contrite in heart, but the lofty are an abomination unto Him. My soul, beseech the Holy Spirit to set thee right in this respect.

The crooked shall be made straight. The wavering heart must have a straight path of decision for God and holiness marked out for it. Double-minded men are strangers to the God of truth. My soul, take heed that thou be in all things honest and true, as in the sight of the heart-searching God.

The rough places shall be made smooth. Stumbling-blocks of sin must be removed, and thorns and briars of rebellion must be uprooted. So great a visitor must not find miry ways and stony places when He comes to honor His favored ones with His company. Oh that this evening the Lord may find in my heart a highway made ready by His grace, that He may make a triumphal progress through the utmost bounds of my soul, from the beginning of this year even to the end of it.

~ C. H. SPURGEON ~

JANUARY 4

“Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.”

— Genesis xlii. 8.

This morning our desires went forth for growth in our acquaintance with the Lord Jesus; it may be well to night to consider a kindred topic, namely, *our heavenly Joseph’s knowledge of us*. This was most blessedly perfect long before we had the slightest knowledge of Him. “His eyes beheld our substance, yet being imperfect, and in His book all our members were written, when as yet there was none of them.” Before we had a being in the world we had a being in His heart. When we were enemies to Him, He knew us, our misery, our madness, and our wickedness. When we wept bitterly in despairing repentance, and viewed him only as a judge and a ruler, He viewed us as His brethren well beloved, and His bowels yearned towards us. He never mistook His chosen, but always beheld them as objects of His infinite affection. “The Lord knoweth them that are His,” is as true of the prodigals who are feeding swine as of the children who sit at the table.

But, alas! *we knew not our royal Brother*, and out of this ignorance grew a host of sins. We withheld our hearts from Him, and allowed Him no entrance to our love. We mistrusted Him, and gave no credit to His words. We rebelled against Him, and paid Him no loving homage. The Sun of Righteousness shone forth, and we could not see Him. Heaven came down to earth, and earth perceived it not. Let God be praised, those days are over with us; yet even now it is but little that we know of Jesus compared with what He knows of us. We have but begun to study Him, but He knoweth us altogether. It is a blessed circumstance that the ignorance is not on His side, for then it would be a hopeless case for us. He will not say to us, “I never knew you,” but He will confess our names in the day of His appearing, and meanwhile will manifest Himself to us as He doth not unto the world.

JANUARY 5

“And God saw the light.” — Genesis i. 4.

This morning we noticed the goodness of the light, and the Lord’s dividing it from the darkness; we now note the special eye which the Lord had for the light. “God saw the light”—He looked at it with complacency, gazed upon it with pleasure, saw that it “was good.” If the Lord has given you light, dear reader, He looks on that light with peculiar interest; for not only is it dear to Him as His own handiwork, but because it is *like* Himself, for “He is light.” Pleasant it is to the believer to know that God’s eye is thus tenderly observant of that work of grace which He has begun. He never loses sight of the treasure which He has placed in our earthen vessels. Sometimes *we* cannot see the light, but *God* always sees the light, and that is much better than our seeing it. Better for the judge to see my innocence than for me to think I see it. It is very comfortable for me to know that I am one of God’s people—but whether *I* know it or not, if the Lord knows it, I am still safe. This is the foundation, “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” You may be sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, and mourning over your darkness, yet the Lord sees “light” in your heart, for He has put it there, and all the cloudiness and gloom of your soul cannot conceal your light from His gracious eye. You may have sunk low in despondency, and even despair; but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are seeking to rest in His finished work, God sees the “light.” He not only *sees* it, but He also *preserves* it in you. “I, the Lord, do keep it.” This is a precious thought to those who, after anxious watching and guarding of themselves, feel their own powerlessness to do so. The light thus preserved by His grace, He will one day develop into the splendor of noonday, and the fulness of glory. The light within is the dawn of the eternal day.

~ C. H. SPURGEON ~

JANUARY 6

“Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening.”

— Ezekiel xxxiii. 22.

In the way of *judgment* this may be the case, and, if so, be it mine to consider the reason of such a visitation, and hear the rod and Him that hath appointed it. I am not the only one who is chastened in the night season; let me cheerfully submit to the affliction, and carefully endeavor to be profited thereby. But the hand of the Lord may also be felt in another manner, *strengthening* the soul and lifting the spirit upward towards eternal things. Oh that I may in this sense feel the Lord dealing with me! A sense of the divine presence and indwelling bears the soul towards heaven as upon the wings of eagles. At such times we are full to the brim with spiritual joy, and forget the cares and sorrows of earth; the invisible is near, and the visible loses its power over us; the servant-body waits at the foot of the hill, and the master-spirit worships upon the summit in the presence of the Lord. Oh, that a hallowed season of divine communion may be vouchsafed to me this evening! The Lord knows that I need it very greatly. My graces languish, my corruptions rage, my faith is weak, my devotion is cold: all these are reasons why His healing hand should be laid upon me. His hand can cool the heat of my burning brow, and stay the tumult of my palpitating heart. That glorious right hand which moulded the world can new-create my mind; the unwearied hand which bears the earth's huge pillars up can sustain my spirit; the loving hand which encloses all the saints can cherish me; and the mighty hand which breaketh in pieces the enemy can subdue my sins. Why should I not feel that hand touching me this evening? Come, my soul, address thy God with the potent plea, that Jesu's hands were pierced for thy redemption, and thou shalt surely feel that same hand upon thee which once touched Daniel and set him upon his knees that he might see visions of God.

JANUARY 7

“*My sister, my spouse.*” — Song of Solomon iv. 12.

Observe the sweet titles with which the heavenly Solomon, with intense affection, addresses his bride, the church. *My sister*, one near to me by ties of nature, partaker of the same sympathies. *My spouse*, nearest and dearest, united to me by the tenderest bands of love; my sweet companion, part of my own self. *My sister*, by my Incarnation, which makes me bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh; *my spouse*, by heavenly betrothal, in which I have espoused thee unto myself in righteousness. *My sister*, whom I knew of old, and over whom I watched from her earliest infancy; *my spouse*, taken from among the daughters, embraced by arms of love, and affianced unto me forever. See how true it is that our royal Kinsman is not ashamed of us, for He dwells with manifest delight upon this two-fold relationship. We have the word “my” twice in our version; as if Christ dwelt with rapture on His possession of His church. “His delights were with the sons of men,” because those sons of men were His own chosen ones. He, the Shepherd, sought the sheep, because they were *His* sheep; He has gone about “to seek and to save that which was lost,” because that which was lost was *His* long before it was lost to itself or lost to Him. The church is the exclusive portion of her Lord; none else may claim a partnership, or pretend to share her love. Jesus, thy church delights to have it so! Let every believing soul drink solace out of these wells. Soul! Christ is near to thee in ties of relationship; Christ is dear to thee in bonds of marriage union, and thou art dear to Him; behold, He grasps both of thy hands with both His own, saying, “*My sister, my spouse.*” Mark the two sacred holdfasts by which thy Lord gets such a double hold of thee that He neither can nor will ever let thee go. Be not, O beloved, slow to return the hallowed flame of His love.

~ C. H. SPURGEON ~

JANUARY 8

“Thy love is better than wine.” — Song of Solomon i. 2.

Nothing gives the believer so much joy as fellowship with Christ. He has enjoyment as others have in the common mercies of life, he can be glad both in God’s gifts and God’s works; but in all these separately, yea, and in all of them added together, he doth not find such substantial delight as in the matchless person of his Lord Jesus. He has wine which no vineyard on earth ever yielded; he has bread which all the cornfields of Egypt could never bring forth. Where can such sweetness be found as we have tasted in communion with our Beloved? In our esteem, the joys of earth are little better than husks for swine compared with Jesus, the heavenly manna. We would rather have one mouthful of Christ’s love, and a sip of His fellowship, than a whole world full of carnal delights. What is the chaff to the wheat? What is the sparkling paste to the true diamond? What is a dream to the glorious reality? What is time’s mirth, in its best trim, compared to our Lord Jesus in His most despised estate? If you know anything of the inner life, you will confess that our highest, purest, and most enduring joys must be the fruit of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. No spring yields such sweet water as that well of God which was digged with the soldier’s spear. All earthly bliss is of the earth earthy, but the comforts of Christ’s presence are like Himself, heavenly. We can review our communion with Jesus, and find no regrets of emptiness therein; there are no dregs in this wine, no dead flies in this ointment. The joy of the Lord is solid and enduring. Vanity hath not looked upon it, but discretion and prudence testify that it abideth the test of years, and is in time and in eternity worthy to be called *“the only true delight.”* For nourishment, consolation, exhilaration, and refreshment, no wine can rival the love of Jesus. Let us drink to the full this evening.

JANUARY 9

“*Serve the Lord with gladness.*” — Psalm c. 2.

Delight in divine service is a token of acceptance. Those who serve God with a sad countenance, because they do what is unpleasant to them, are not serving Him at all; they bring the form of homage, but the life is absent. Our God requires no slaves to grace His throne; He is the Lord of the empire of love, and would have His servants dressed in the livery of joy. The angels of God serve Him with songs, not with groans; a murmur or a sigh would be a mutiny in their ranks. That obedience which is not voluntary is disobedience, for the Lord looketh at the heart, and if He seeth that we serve Him from force, and not because we love Him, He will reject our offering. Service coupled with cheerfulness is heart-service, and therefore true. Take away joyful willingness from the Christian, and you have removed *the test of his sincerity*. If a man be driven to battle, he is no patriot; but he who marches into the fray with flashing eye and beaming face, singing, “It is sweet for one’s country to die,” proves himself to be sincere in his patriotism. Cheerfulness is *the support of our strength*; in the joy of the Lord are we strong. It acts as *the remover of difficulties*. It is to our service what oil is to the wheels of a railway carriage. Without oil the axle soon grows hot, and accidents occur; and if there be not a holy cheerfulness to oil our wheels, our spirits will be clogged with weariness. The man who is cheerful in his service of God, proves that obedience is his element; he can sing,—

“Make me to walk in Thy commands,
’Tis a delightful road.”

Reader, let us put this question—Do *you* serve the Lord *with gladness*? Let us show to the people of the world, who think our religion to be slavery, that it is to us a delight and a joy. Let our gladness proclaim that we serve a good Master.

~ C. H. SPURGEON ~

JANUARY 10

"In my flesh shall I see God." — Job xix. 26.

Mark the subject of Job's devout anticipation—"I shall see God." He does not say, "I shall see the saints,"—though doubtless that will be untold felicity,—but "I shall see *God*." It is not, "I shall see the pearly gates, I shall behold the walls of jasper, I shall gaze upon the crowns of gold," but "I shall see God." This is the sum and substance of heaven, this is the joyful hope of all believers. It is their delight to see Him now in the ordinances by faith. They love to behold Him in communion and in prayer; but there in heaven they shall have an open and unclouded vision, and thus seeing "Him as He is," shall be made completely like Him. *Likeness to God*—what can we wish for more? And *a sight of God*—what can we desire better? Some read the passage, "Yet, I shall see God in my flesh," and find here an allusion to Christ, as the "Word made flesh," and that glorious beholding of Him which shall be the splendor of the latter days. Whether so or not, it is certain that Christ shall be the object of our eternal vision; nor shall we ever want any joy beyond that of seeing Him. Think not that this will be a narrow sphere for the mind to dwell in. It is but one source of delight, but that source is infinite. All His attributes shall be subjects for contemplation, and as He is infinite under each aspect, there is no fear of exhaustion. His works, His gifts, His love to us, and His glory in all His purposes, and in all His actions, these shall make a theme which will be ever new. The patriarch looked forward to this sight of God as a *personal* enjoyment. "Whom mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Take realizing views of heaven's bliss; think what it will be *to you*. "*Thine* eyes shall see the King in His beauty." All earthly brightness fades and darkens as we gaze upon it, but here is a brightness which can never dim, a glory which can never fade—"I shall see God."

JANUARY 11

“I have prayed for thee.” — Luke xxii. 32.

How encouraging is the thought of the Redeemer’s never-ceasing intercession for us. When we pray, He pleads for us; and when we are *not* praying, He is advocating our cause, and by His supplications shielding us from unseen dangers. Notice the word of comfort addressed to Peter—“Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but”—what? “But go and pray for yourself.” That would be good advice, but it is not so written. Neither does he say, “But I will keep you watchful, and so you shall be preserved.” That were a great blessing. No, it is, “*But I have prayed for thee*, that thy faith fail not.” We little know what we owe to our Saviour’s prayers. When we reach the hill-tops of heaven, and look back upon all the way whereby the Lord our God hath led us, how we shall praise Him who, before the eternal throne, undid the mischief which Satan was doing upon earth. How shall we thank Him because He never held His peace, but day and night pointed to the wounds upon His hands, and carried our names upon His breastplate! Even before Satan had begun to tempt, Jesus had forestalled him and entered a plea in heaven. Mercy outruns malice. Mark, He does not say, “Satan hath sifted you, and therefore I will pray,” but “Satan hath *desired* to have you.” He checks Satan even in his very desire, and nips it in the bud. He does not say, “But I have desired to pray for you.” No, but “I *have* prayed for you; I have done it already; I have gone to court and entered a counterplea even before an accusation is made.” O Jesus, what a comfort it is that Thou hast pleaded our cause against our unseen enemies; countermined their mines, and unmasked their ambushes. Here is matter for joy, gratitude, hope, and confidence.

~ C. H. SPURGEON ~

JANUARY 12

"I have yet to speak on God's behalf." — Job xxxvi. 2.

We ought not to court publicity for our virtue, or notoriety for our zeal; but, at the same time, it is a sin to be always seeking to hide that which God has bestowed upon us for the good of others. A Christian is not to be a village in a valley, but "a city set upon a hill;" he is not to be a candle under a bushel, but a candle in a candlestick, giving light to all. Retirement may be lovely in its season, and to hide one's self is doubtless modest, but the hiding of *Christ* in us can never be justified, and the keeping back of truth which is precious to ourselves, is a sin against others and an offence against God. If you are of a nervous temperament and of retiring disposition, take care that you do not too much indulge this trembling propensity, lest you should be useless to the church. Seek in the name of Him who was not ashamed of you to do some little violence to your feelings, and tell to others what Christ has told to you. If thou canst not speak with trumpet tongue, use the still, small voice. If the pulpit must not be thy tribune, if the press may not carry on its wings thy words, yet say with Peter and John, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee." By Sychar's well talk to the Samaritan woman, if thou canst not on the mountain preach a sermon; utter the praises of Jesus in the house, if not in the temple; in the field, if not upon the exchange; in the midst of thine own household, if thou canst not in the midst of the great family of man. From the hidden springs within let sweetly flowing rivulets of testimony flow forth, giving drink to every passer by. Hide not thy talent; trade with it; and thou shalt bring in good interest to thy Lord and Master. To speak for God will be refreshing to ourselves, cheering to saints, useful to sinners, and honoring to the Saviour. Dumb children are an affliction to their parents. Lord, unloose all Thy children's tongues.

JANUARY 13

“The iron did swim.” — 2 Kings vi 9.

The axe-head seemed hopelessly lost, and as it was borrowed, the honor of the prophetic band was likely to be imperilled, and so the name of their God to be compromised. Contrary to all expectation, the iron was made to mount from the depth of the stream and to swim; for things impossible with man are possible with God. I knew a man in Christ but a few years ago who was called to undertake a work far exceeding his strength. It appeared so difficult as to involve absurdity in the bare idea of attempting it. Yet he was called thereto, and his faith rose with the occasion; God honored his faith, unlooked-for aid was sent, and the iron did swim. Another of the Lord's family was in grievous financial straits; he was able to meet all claims, and much more, if he could have realized a certain portion of his estate, but he was overtaken with a sudden pressure; he sought for friends in vain, but faith led him to the unfailing Helper, and lo! the trouble was averted, his footsteps were enlarged, and the iron did swim. A third had a sorrowful case of depravity to deal with. He had taught, reproved, warned, invited, and interceded, but all in vain. Old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon, the stubborn spirit would not relent. Then came an agony of prayer, and before long a blessed answer was sent from heaven. The hard heart was broken, the iron did swim.

Beloved reader, what is thy desperate case? What heavy matter hast thou in hand this evening? Bring it hither. The God of the prophets lives, and lives to help His saints. He will not suffer thee to lack any good thing. Believe thou in the Lord of Hosts! Approach Him pleading the name of Jesus, and the iron shall swim; thou too shalt see the finger of God working marvels for His people. According to thy faith be it unto thee, and yet again the iron shall swim.

~ C. H. SPURGEON ~

JANUARY 14

“Beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”

— Matthew xiv. 30,

Sinking times are praying times with the Lord’s servants. Peter neglected prayer at starting upon his venturous journey, but when he began to sink his danger made him a suppliant, and his cry, though late, was not too late. In our hours of bodily pain and mental anguish, we find ourselves as naturally driven to prayer as the wreck is driven upon the shore by the waves. The fox hies to its hole for protection; the bird flies to the wood for shelter; and even so the tried believer hastens to the mercy-seat for safety. Heaven’s great harbor of refuge is All-prayer; thousands of weather-beaten vessels have found a haven there, and the moment a storm comes on, it is wise for us to make for it with all sail.

Short prayers are long enough. There were but three words in the petition which Peter gasped out, but they were sufficient for his purpose. Not length but strength is desirable. A sense of need is a mighty teacher of brevity. If our prayers had less of the tail feathers of pride and more wing, they would be all the better. Verbiage is to devotion as chaff to the wheat. Precious things lie in small compass, and all that is real prayer in many a long address might have been uttered in a petition as short as that of Peter.

Our extremities are the Lord’s opportunities. Immediately a keen sense of danger forces an anxious cry from us the ear of Jesus hears, and with Him ear and heart go together, and the hand does not long linger. At the last moment we appeal to our Master, but His swift hand makes up for our delays by instant and effectual action. Are we nearly engulfed by the boisterous waters of affliction? let us then lift up our souls unto our Saviour, and we may rest assured that He will not suffer us to perish. When we can do nothing Jesus can do all things; let us enlist His powerful aid upon our side, and all will be well.

JANUARY 15

“But I give myself unto prayer.” — Psalm cix. 4.

Lying tongues were busy against the reputation of David, but he did not defend himself; he moved the case into a higher court, and pleaded before the great King Himself. Prayer is the safest method of replying to words of hatred. The Psalmist prayed in no cold-hearted manner; he *gave himself* to the exercise,—threw his whole soul and heart into it,—straining every sinew and muscle, as Jacob did when wrestling with the angel. Thus, and thus only, shall any of us speed at the throne of grace. As a shadow has no power because there is no substance in it, even so that supplication, in which a man’s proper self is not thoroughly present in agonizing earnestness and vehement desire, is utterly ineffectual, for it lacks that which would give it force. “Fervent prayer,” says an old divine, “like a cannon planted at the gates of heaven, makes them fly open.” The common fault with the most of us is our readiness to yield to distractions. Our thoughts go roving hither and thither, and we make little progress towards our desired end. Like quicksilver, our mind will not hold together, but rolls off this way and that. How great an evil this is! It injures us, and, what is worse, it insults our God. What should we think of a petitioner, if, while having an audience with a prince, he should be playing with a feather or catching a fly?

Continuance and perseverance are intended in the expression of our text. David did not cry once, and then relapse into silence; his holy clamor was continued till it brought down the blessing. Prayer must not be our chance work, but our daily business, our habit, and vocation. As artists give themselves to their models, and poets to their classical pursuits, so must we addict ourselves to prayer. We must be immersed in prayer as in our element, and so pray without ceasing. Lord, teach us so to pray that we may be more and more prevalent in supplication.