

SEASONS
of the HEART

SEASONS *of the* HEART

*A Year of Devotions from One Generation
of Women to Another*

Compiled by
Donna Kelderman



Reformation Heritage Books
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Seasons of the Heart

© 2013 by Donna Kelderman

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. Direct your requests to the publisher at the following address:

Reformation Heritage Books

2965 Leonard St. NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-977-0889 / Fax 616-285-3246

orders@heritagebooks.org

www.heritagebooks.org

Printed in the United States of America

13 14 15 16 17 18/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN: 978-1-60178-272-4

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013950316

For additional Reformed literature, request a free book list from Reformation Heritage Books at the above regular or e-mail address.

Dedicated to my mother-in-law,

Gertrude Kelderman,

who has been to me

a godly example,

a loving mother,

a bosom friend

Her children arise up, and call her blessed.

—PROVERBS 31:28

Preface

During a time of prolonged health problems, I read in Mary Winslow's *Heaven Opened*: "You belong not to yourself, but to Jesus. Say to Him, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do.'" After praying about this, the Lord wonderfully opened a door for me to embark on this project. Since I have often been fed with the writings of these dear sisters in the Lord who have gone before us, my prayer in compiling these devotional pieces is that their writings, such a rich treasury, would not be forgotten but that the Lord would use these devotionals to correct, admonish, comfort, cheer the downcast, and lead many to the foot of the cross.

This devotional has been drawn from the writings of twelve godly women from both Great Britain and America who lived from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Several of these women never married and were faced with the challenges of singleness, while others were widowed at a young age and faced with raising a family alone. Like many today who suffer in various ways from bodily pain, several of these women suffered from chronic ailments. A few of them encountered severe persecution. Others among them suffered from various forms of depressions and trials. God used their trials to bring their strong wills into one with their Master's. In all these varied circumstances one truth remained constant: these women came to love the triune God and hate sin; they loved His Word and were daily immersed in it.

While several of the women whose writings are included here were published authors in their day, most of them recorded their thoughts in journals and letters, with a limited audience in mind. They often quoted Scripture, hymns, and other writers, probably from memory, but because they were not writing formally with publication in mind,

they didn't provide Scripture references or other types of documentation. While we have lightly updated the language some of them used to make their writing more accessible to modern readers, we have not changed their informal tone by inserting Scripture references or footnotes to document their quotations of others.

I spent several months with these women through their writings, and have developed an even deeper appreciation for those who have taken care to preserve them for us. One of my hopes in compiling this devotional is that you, too, would be inspired by these daily excerpts, come to value these women's writings, and desire to read more of their work. With that in mind, I have provided brief biographical sketches of each of the twelve women at the end of the book with information about publications of their writing for those who would like to know more about them. May you be blessed, as I was, through these "teachers of good things" (Titus 2:3).

Acknowledgments

First and foremost I acknowledge the Lord, who not only planted the idea for this book but gave the daily strength and ability to complete it. I especially want to thank our dear children—Jeremy and Adriana, Rachael and Gerard, Micah, Nathan, Caleb, and Hannah—who were such a great encouragement to me. Each day they asked about the book’s progress, always pressing me on, never complaining about my time being taken away from them. A special thanks to my sister, Linda den Hollander, who encouraged me to undertake this project and countless times gave me typesetting advice. Thanks to Jay Collier for overseeing this project through to completion. Thanks also to Amy Zevenbergen for the cover design and Annette Gysen, Gary den Hollander, and Dr. Joel Beeke, who spent hours editing and proofreading the manuscript. Lastly, my heartfelt thanks to my dear husband, Mark, who has constantly stood by my side and been a great support to me.

Christ the Physician of Souls

*Deep are the wounds which sin hath made;
Where shall the sinner find a cure?
In vain, alas, is nature's aid,
The work exceeds all nature's pow'r.*

*Sin like a raging fever reigns,
With fatal strength in ev'ry part;
The dire contagion fills the veins,
And spreads its poison to the heart.*

*And can no sov'reign balm be found,
And is no kind physician nigh,
To ease the pain, and heal the wound,
Ere life and hope forever fly?*

*There is a great Physician near,
Look up, O fainting soul, and live;
See, in His heav'nly smiles, appear
Such ease as nature cannot give!*

*See, in the Savior's dying blood,
Life, health, and bliss, abundant flow.
'Tis only this dear, sacred flood
Can ease thy pain, and heal thy woe.*

*Sin throws in vain its pointed dart,
For here a sov'reign cure is found;
A cordial for the fainting heart,
A balm for ev'ry painful wound.*

✿ ANNE STEELE



A New Year

LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days.

—PSALM 39:4

We are still journeying onward, but the question is *where*. Is it not a solemn thought? Should we not examine well our chart and the waymarks to see if we are going the right way? Would a wise person leave this an uncertainty? Again, I repeat the solemn truth: we are on an eventful journey, which must terminate in eternal life or eternal death. People who are blinded by the enemy will keep fully occupied with everything and anything but what would conduce to the soul's salvation. Beware of Satan's wiles! Turn in upon your own soul and ask yourself, "Am I ready to give my last account to the Judge of all the earth? Can I stand before His scrutinizing eye? Can He look upon me and see no spot, wrinkle, or any such thing? Can I appear in perfect holiness before the One who can only look upon sin with the greatest displeasure?"

Dear friend, let me entreat you to be honest with your own soul. Eternity—eternity with all its solemn realities—is before us. Flee at once to Jesus, the Savior of poor sinners, and do not leave Him until He speaks peace to your soul. Wrestle with Him for this mighty blessing; for I am sure that if you do, you will get it. Give no rest to your soul until you can say, "My soul is saved! Christ is my surety! Christ is mine, and I am Christ's!"

How busy is Satan when a poor sinner is securing a glorious inheritance! He will try every means to keep lost sinners from seeking Jesus, and they will never find Him until they do. Do not leave Jesus until He speaks peace to you and sends you away rejoicing in Him. Dear friend, give up your whole heart and soul to Jesus; He will accept you just as you are. He has said, "I will manifest myself unto you." Go and plead this promise.

The Value of Time

The time is short. —1 CORINTHIANS 7:29

To the Christian, how valuable is time! God has given it to us only minute by minute, to show us how precious a thing it is that He grants in these small drops. How soon is time over! How short is the longest life! And yet time is given to prepare for eternity. As we spend our time, so shall we spend eternity. The question “Where shall I spend eternity?” must be decided in time. When eternity begins, it will be too late.

Time is given us to serve the Lord in. Time is given us to repent in and to believe the gospel. Time is given us to do our duty in our station. Time is given us to do good to others. How much time is wasted! Idle gossip from house to house, too much attention to dress rather than to neatness, foolish reading—so many things to waste precious time!

But there is one idea I should like you to have, one thought that I trust the Spirit may write in all our hearts, and I pray He may keep in them, too, for Satan and the world would wish us to think far otherwise. This is it: time is given us to prepare for eternity. I am answerable to God for my use or abuse of time.

Let us pray to God to give us grace to spend our time in His service, in doing our duty in our day and generation, and in preparing for the life to come. Then, when time shall be over, we shall enter upon a glorious eternity through Christ our Lord. The ungodly and the careless will then wish, when wishing will be vain, that they had in like manner devoted their time to God. What would sinners give at the last for one short day! Oh, then, be wise now. Be wise in time. Consider your ways, and prepare for a life that shall never end!

Search the Scriptures

Search the scriptures. —JOHN 5:39

By the Word, we will grow in the knowledge of Christ. The mere surface of this is obvious. For how do we come to know more of anyone whom having not seen, we love? Is it not by reading and hearing what He has said and written and done? How are we to know more of Jesus Christ if we are not taking the trouble to know more of His Word? He has said, “Search the scriptures; for...they are they which testify of me.” Are we really searching, or only superficially reading those Old Testament Scriptures of which He spoke? He says they testify of Him, meaning that they tell us all about Him. Are we acting as if we really believed that? “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” Then there are things about Jesus in *all* the Scriptures—not only in the Psalms and Isaiah—but in every book! How very much there must be for us to find! Let us ask the Holy Spirit to take of *these* things of Jesus and show them unto us, that we may grow in “the knowledge of the Son of God.”

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”—quickenings and continually life-giving words. We want to be permeated with them; we want them to dwell in us richly, to be the inspiration of our whole lives, the very music of our spirits, whose melodious overflow may be glory to God and goodwill to man. Jesus Himself has given us this quick and powerful Word of God, and our responsibility is tremendous. He has told us distinctly what to do with it; He has said, “Search!” Now, are we substituting a word of our own and merely reading them? He did not say, “Read them,” but “Search!” and it is a most serious thought for many comfortable daily readers of the Bible, that if they are only reading and not searching, they are distinctly living in disobedience to one of His plainest commands. What wonder if they do not grow!

The Patience of the Husbandman

He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

—PHILIPPIANS 1:6

The great Husbandman is watching over all, giving sun and rain as well as storms and frosts in due season. We like the showers and sunshine, but would rather go on without the cold and stormy weather, which is likewise needful and often very conducive to our spiritual growth. I have often said before the Lord, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” But when a cutting north wind has come, I have complained, little thinking that it was just an answer to my prayer.

Perhaps you may pass through some such experience, and in these wintry seasons you may think that growth is stopped and life will soon be gone—but no, it is “incorruptible seed” of which you are born, which lives and abides forever. Amid our many changes, how encouraging is the thought—and also the knowledge—that the great Husbandman has more interest in the seed than the seed has in itself. “Ye are not your own,” but His who bought you with His blood. You are His portion, His inheritance, in whom He will be glorified.

Truly the gospel of the blessed God, while it is most strengthening, as showing all the work to be His, is most humbling, as showing all weakness and sin to be ours. Had it not been so, such mighty costs and pains would not have been needful for our redemption. I pray that the oil and wine of gospel grace may flow into your soul, for this makes us nothing and Jesus all. The Lord be with your spirit, strengthen your faith, and make all needed grace abound toward you.

A Prisoner's Brave Faith

*Ah Lord GOD! Behold, thou hast made the heaven
and the earth by thy great power and stretched out
arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.*

—JEREMIAH 32:17

Your difficulties and trials may not be comparable or similar to those of the Weeping Prophet, but they are very real and seemingly insurmountable to you. It is a fact that, of yourself, you can neither overcome nor endure them, so I want to remind you that the Lord's hand is not shortened, that what was true of His power in Jeremiah's time is as certainly true today, and that whatever present hardship may press upon you or whatever burden may be weighing you down, you—yes, *you*—may look up to Him with confident faith and say, "There is nothing too hard for Thee."

Oh, the blessed peace that such an assurance brings! I do not know what your particular sorrow or hardship may be, but I do know that, whatever its nature—cruel, bitter, or hopeless—it is as "nothing" to Him. He is able to deliver you as easily as you can call upon Him for succor. An old writer says, "Our God delights in what men deem extremities. He waits for extremes, He tarries for crises. And why? In order that He should be looked up to for wisdom, strength, and deliverance, and that, when deliverance comes, He should have all the glory."

Now, dear friend, think of all the hard things there are in your life—hard circumstances, difficult duties, grievous pains, sore struggles, bitter disappointments, hard words, hard thoughts, a hard heart of your own, a hard heart in others. Gather all these, and many more together, and pile them one on another till you have one great mountain of affliction. Your God still calmly asks the question, "Is there anything too hard for Me?"

Continual Praises

*Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD.
Praise ye the LORD.*

—PSALM 150:6

Often, when I am in a pensive mood and the sun is for a time hidden behind some intervening cloud that unbelief has raised and I am just going to hang my harp on the willows, I with shame take it back again and begin some song of praise, and that sets all right. The Scriptures, and especially the Psalms, not only abound with praises to our God but assure us also that He is pleased with our praises.

I think scarcely any Christian seems to cultivate this temper of mind, this holy habit sufficiently; for it should not be an accidental, but a habitual frame of heart, not merely flowing from the sense of His mercies to us but from the contemplation of the glorious perfections and attributes of the triune Jehovah, as He is in Himself and in relation to us as poor, fallen creatures. What a theme does this open! Eternity alone can make us know and estimate it. Oh, for faith to look not at the things that are seen, which are temporal, tempestuous, contradictory, confused, and often heartsickening, but at those that are not seen, which are eternal, unchanging, certain, peaceful, and heart-cheering; not such a faith as generalizes, but realizes, and that makes the things of sense retreat and actually gives place to the things of faith, with as much certainty as if they were present and in possession.

This, my honored friend, is our high privilege and, I trust, our constant desire and aim, however we may fail in the attainment. And, as to our failings, we will mourn over them and fight against them, but give no place to despondency, even for a moment, while Christ our Savior ever lives to intercede for us at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Words in Company

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

—EPHESIANS 4:29

Let us set the Lord always before us and behave in all company as in the presence of the holy God and His holy angels, who are always close by to hear our words and see our carriage. Let us watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, that we yield not to the suggestions of Satan or any of his instruments to draw us away from God. But let us stand as holy warriors, with our armor on, resisting the devil and opposing the powers of darkness to the utmost. For in all company they will oppose us and watch to get an advantage against us.

And if we are careless, we shall soon be worse off. “All company has in it,” as a dear servant of Christ once said, “either the nature of fire or air; it either heats or cools.” Let us watch both in spiritual company, to get and communicate more spiritually, and in carnal company, whenever for a time we are called to be in it, to restrain carnality and to kindle spiritual, heavenly fire in the carnal, earthly persons we converse with.

Let us always regard most strictly the rule that is given us, that “no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it many minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29). Oh, how much corruption does *one* corrupt word, many times, convey into and produce in the minds of the hearers! And so, on the contrary, how much grace is ministered to and produced in the hearts of hearers by *one* gracious word, when the Lord is pleased to work by it! And it is most certain that by our words—whether carnal or spiritual—carnality or spirituality will be increased in our own souls. And therefore we have need to watch our words. Oh, how much of the ungodliness of our time runs down through the channel of words!

The Hill Country of Perfect Trust

*Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for
the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.*

—MICAH 7:7

Hearthrending griefs are often the forerunners of great spiritual blessing. It must be a heavy wave of affliction that casts some of us high and dry on the safe and sheltered shore of complete confidence in God. It was a most distressed acquaintance with earth's shame and sorrow that drew from the Lord's prophet the exalted utterance of the text, and we often have to learn the blessedness of turning to God and trusting Him by the sharp pain of finding out that He alone is a dependable and constant friend.

Come, my heart: God has set you a lesson to repeat that has stood you in good stead in many a time of sorrow! To say it over again will help you get it by heart. For you cannot remember too often the lovingkindness of the Lord and the many deliverances He has wrought for you. Though bruised and wearied by the roughness of the way, I have at last reached a safe shelter and resting place where I may wait till my Lord reveals Himself to me as my deliverer.

How blessed am I to know that one so mighty both in love and power watches over and directs my steps—one who is not only God, but the God of *my salvation!* He has a more tender and personal interest in me than the angels of heaven, for I am that marvel of marvels: a sinner saved by grace, a soul redeemed unto God by His most precious blood! For Him I will wait, confident and expectant. As someone lately said, "I know I am cared for; but just what His care may deem best for me, this I do not know." I can leave all with Him and wait with the unfolding of His will and purpose concerning me.

True Heart Knowledge

The LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

—1 CHRONICLES 28:9

When I look into my own heart and behold those endless complaints against God that lurk there, and when I think what must be the fountain from which they spring, it would seem as if I should be filled with repentance, as if I should mourn, with deep and penitential sorrow, over my unspeakable, my amazing guilt. But still I am freezing with impenitence! The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good; man is bound to comply with it. God must not relax His requirements. If He should, His law would not be strict enough to check the progress and influence of sin, and sin, unrestrained, would soon disorganize His whole moral system and banish happiness from the universe. This I know and believe—and yet I rebel! Yes, the worm lifts her unrighteous head and asks, “What doest Thou? And why doest Thou thus?” This is what troubles me.

I am afraid I have never been brought truly to submit all things to the disposal of God, especially to submit to His righteousness in the condemnation of sinners. I fear I have never yet seen aright the dreadful evil of sin, as to its just desert of eternal punishment, and this is the source of the misgivings I sometimes experience. But Jehovah is—I know He is—righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works, and He has said that “the wicked shall be turned into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire shall never be quenched.” Hush, then, every murmuring, doubting thought, every rebellious, discontented feeling! Oh, for deeper views of the vileness—the exceeding vileness—of sin, for stronger and more abiding confidence in the rectitude and the goodness of God!

Who Can Tell?

Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me?

—2 SAMUEL 12:22

The day of grace has not passed you or any soul that has the least desire to find mercy. It is now, now, with you still. The voice of the gospel to you is, "Today, after so long a time;...today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 4:7). Oh, turn not away from the dear Savior, who most lovingly invites you to come unto Him, even you, as it were, by name, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). Oh come, dear soul, and tell the Lord Jesus all your griefs. For compassion, there is none like Him. Show before Him all your burdens; His own kind hand will take them off your shoulders. Oh, come and see how good, how gracious, how mighty to save the Lord the Savior is! And how faithful He is to His promise! I will give you rest. I will in no wise cast out. Oh, say not in unbelief, "There is no mercy for me," but come to Christ and see. Come, see what the Savior will say to you, if His mercy will not bid you live. Yea, come, though you have done as evil things as you could, though laden with innumerable sins, griefs, and fears.

For the Savior will abundantly pardon, abundantly comfort, abundantly deliver, and in all respects will do for you more exceeding abundantly than you can ask or think! Oh, return unto the Lord, with a "who can tell but He may be gracious?" Thousands of souls who came to the throne of grace have found mercy, only with a possibility that they might find it and even though they were attended with innumerable fears that they should not. Yea, let me say, *never* did any soul perish that cast itself down at the Savior's feet, in all its misery, to find mercy—nor ever shall, even to the world's end. Mercy reigns, mercy triumphs, mercy rejoices against judgment. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." This is God's new covenant of free grace in Christ. And He calls poor sinners to come unto Him and promises to make it with them.

The Abiding Joy

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

—JOHN 15:11

Anyone who has known anything of joy in the Lord has asked, “But will it last?” And why has the question been so often the very beginning of its not lasting? Because we have either asked it of ourselves or of others, and not of the Lord only. His own answers to this continually recurring question are so different from the cautious, chilling, saddening ones His children so often give. They are absolute, full, reiterated. To the law and to the testimony, O happy Christian! There you will find true and abundant answer to your only shadow on the brightness of the joy. So long as you believe your Lord’s word about it, so long only it *will* last. So soon as you ask of other counselors and believe their word instead, so soon shall it fail. Jesus meets your difficulty explicitly. He has provided against it by giving the very reason He spoke the gracious words of His last discourse: “That my joy might *remain* in you.” Is not this exactly what we were afraid to hope, what seemed too good to be true—that it might remain? And lest we should think that this abiding joy only meant some moderate measure of qualified joy, He adds, “and that your joy may be *full*.”

Never in His Word are we told anything contradicting or explaining away this precious and reiterated promise. When it is suggested that we cannot expect to be always joyful, remember that it is written, “Rejoice in the Lord [not sometimes, but] *always*.” “As sorrowful, yet *always* rejoicing.” The joy of the Lord is your strength. Perhaps in that word *of* lies the whole secret of lasting joy, for it is more than even “joy *in* the Lord.” His own joy flowing into the soul that is joined to Him alone can remain in us, not even our joy in Him. Let us, then, seek not the stream, but the fountain; not primarily the joy, but that real and living union with Jesus by which His joy becomes ours.

Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.

—EPHESIANS 1:15–16

Happy are those who have praying friends! The Christian, however great her attainments may be, will never be *beyond* the prayers of her friends on this side of the grave. The Ephesians were “saints,” and they were “faithful in Christ Jesus.” Like Paul himself, they were “accepted in the beloved,” having been chosen of God in Christ “before the foundation of the world.” Moreover, they “were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our inheritance.” Paul had heard of their “faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all saints.” We may say that the Ephesians were *advanced* Christians, and yet Paul does *not* therefore cease to pray for them.

What did Paul ask for the Ephesians when he prayed for them? First, he prayed that they might have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. They required this. We all need it now; we all need far more heavenly wisdom. The next expression is very striking: Paul desired that the eyes of their understanding be enlightened. Paul especially desired that the spiritual eyes of the Ephesians might be opened for one reason: he longed that they might “know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” This inheritance is promised equally to all believers in every age. May *our* eyes be enlightened to see its glory, and to desire it.

And last, Paul prayed that the Ephesians might know the greatness of God's power working in believers. Do *we* ever cease to need this, and can we dream of the extent of this power, unless, by God's mercy, we experience it ourselves? The little he knows makes the good man long for more, and hereafter he shall be satisfied in the presence of Eternal Wisdom and Perfect Light.

Advancing in Divine Life

This is the way, walk ye in it. —ISAIAH 30:21

How is it at present with your soul? Christ is dear to every member of His mystical body. Are you still in the same position, or have you got further on the road? They who are running a race should not stand still. There are stages in the Christian's life when, in one sense, she is to stand still; that is, when Providence hedges up the way and she is at a loss what to do. She is then to place herself in a waiting position, listening to hear the well-known voice behind her saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. 30:21).

But, in another sense, she is to be always making headway, growing in grace and in the knowledge of her Savior-God. Beware of all hindrances. If you really have placed yourself under the guidance and guardianship of Christ, shelter beneath His outstretched, all-powerful wing. Have you surrendered to Him your *whole* heart? Then blessed are you. Fear not; He will watch over you day and night, for He cares for you.

Do not attempt to transfer your interest from His hands into your own. He knows the end from the beginning, and infinite wisdom, power, and love are all engaged on your behalf. If you have committed your soul to Him, cannot you trust Him to regulate and conduct your earthly concerns? A fretting against God's providence is very dishonoring to Him and causes Him to leave His perverse child to have, for the time, her own way. Then how bitter it is in the end! The Spirit is grieved, the sensible presence of Christ is withdrawn, and the soul is left in trouble and sorrow and darkness. Live upon Him as a loving Father. Lean upon Him, and He will support you under all trials of life, for He is a present help in every time of trouble. Give yourself up wholly to Him—body, soul, and spirit. Go and tell Him all. You need not shrink from opening your whole heart to Him. He will keep all your secrets and will do all things well. What He does withhold He sees would not be for our good. Learn early in life to trust Him with your all, and He will be all to you.

Come into the Ark

Come thou and all thy house into the ark.

—GENESIS 7:1

We are either inside or outside the ark. There is no halfway in this. Outside is death; inside is life. Outside is certain, inevitable, utter destruction. Inside is certain and complete safety. Where are you at this moment? Perhaps you dare not say confidently and happily, "I am inside," and yet you do not like to look the alarming alternative in the face and say, "I am outside!" You prefer trying to persuade yourself that you do not exactly know and can't be expected to be able to answer such a question. You say, perhaps with a shade of annoyance, "How *am* I to know?" God's infallible Word tells you very plainly: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." "A very severe test!" you say. I cannot help that; I can only tell you exactly what God says. So then, if old things have not passed away in your life, and if you are not a new creature, born again, altogether different in heart and life and love and aim, you are not in Christ. And if you are not *in* Christ, you are *out* of Christ, outside the place of safety.

Come into the ark! It is one of the devices of the destroyer to delude you into fancying that no very decided step is necessary. He is very fond of the word *gradually*. You are to become more earnest—gradually. You are to find salvation—gradually. You are to turn your mind to God—gradually. Did you ever think that God never once uses this word or anything like it? Neither the word nor the sense of it occurs in any way in the whole Bible with reference to salvation. You might have been gradually approaching the ark and gradually making up your mind to enter, but unless you took the one step *into* the ark, the one step from outside to inside, what would have been our fate when the door was shut? Come thou into the ark! I want the call to haunt you, to ring in your ears all day and all night, till you come.

All Directly from Father's Hand

My times are in thy hand.

—PSALM 31:15

Why need I trouble or tremble? That great, loving, powerful hand keeps all the events of my life sealed and secure within its almighty clasp, and only He, my Maker and Master, can permit them to pass from His keeping and be revealed to me one by one as His will for me. What a compassionate, gracious arrangement! How eminently fitted to fulfill that sweet promise of His Word, "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee!" If we fully believed this, we should be absolutely devoid of the care that corrodes and chafes the daily life of so many professing Christians.

Not one or two important epochs of my history only, but everything that concerns me—joys that I had not expected; sorrows that must have crushed me if they could have been anticipated; sufferings that might have terrified me by their grimness had I looked upon them; surprises that infinite love had prepared for me; services of which I could not have imagined myself capable—all these lay in that mighty hand as the purposes of God's eternal will for me. But, as they have developed gradually and silently, how great has been the love that appeared, enwrapping and enfolding each one! Has not the grief been measured, while the gladness has far more abounded? Have not the comforts and consolations exceeded the crosses and complaints? Have not all things been so arranged, ordered, undertaken, and worked out on our behalf that we can but marvel at the goodness and wisdom of God in meting out from that dear hand of His all the times that have passed over us? You agree with me in all this, do you not, dear reader? Then, I pray you, apply it to your present circumstances, however dark or difficult they may be. They have come direct from your Father's hand to you, and they are His dear will.