

# WOMEN IN WAR-TIME

TWENTY-TWO  
HEART TO HEART TALKS

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375



BY

DORIS FEENEY

*(Secretary, Federation of Congregational Women).*

WITH A FOREWORD BY

JANE SHELDON

*(of the "Christian World").*

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## FOREWORD.

WHEN the author told me of her plans for this little brochure I knew that she would achieve her object—that of bringing comfort and counsel to women in these dark days. These are difficult times for us all, and as I have read these brief messages I have felt my spirit quietened and my heart strengthened. The personality of the writer shines through every word, and those who have heard her speak will recognise the accent. She once said to me, “What is the use of being a Christian if you can’t be cheerful?” And that is the note of her “talks.” Women will find themselves able to accept the assurance which she offers them, with her own deep and happy experience underlying it, that Christian faith can make them strong to bear all pain, and can teach them how to point the “way” to those about them. This little book has been compiled in sad times, but it is worthy of the hour; and I am privileged to have the opportunity of commending it.

JANE SHELDON.



God the All-wise! by the fire of Thy chastening,  
 Earth shall to freedom and truth be restored;  
 Through the thick darkness Thy kingdom is hastening;  
 Thou wilt give peace in Thy time, O Lord!

So shall Thy children in thankful devotion  
 Laud Him who saved them from peril abhorred,  
 Singing in chorus from ocean to ocean,  
 "Peace to the nations and praise to the Lord."



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## 1. VISITING.

Reading: JOHN IV. 1-26.

"I hate visiting strangers," says many a woman. "I never know what to say."

Do you remember how Christ dealt with the Samaritan woman? He asked her for a drink of water. When we visit, we should not feel "superior." We should not feel that we go to do good, but to receive and to share.

Before you visit, try to find out something about the stranger, who, you hope, will become your friend. Christ's second point of contact was a reference to the woman's personal affairs. Use your powers of observation. Perhaps it will be a snapshot of a boy in uniform, or an A.R.P. card in the window which will create the link between you. Go prepared to listen, and to be keenly interested in what is uppermost in the mind of the other woman. Go at a time which will be convenient to her and not to yourself. This matter of "visiting the stranger" is never a rush-hour job.

A text in the Bible says it is "more blessed to give than to receive." Give the other woman a chance to earn this blessing. Go with that deep respect for the sanctity of another human being, which is the basis of our Christian faith.

It is not always wise, on a first occasion, to ask the woman who has crowded God out of her life to come to church. Give her the opportunity to get to know you, that she may discover that you have something which she has missed. Try to bring her within the circle of your friendship, before helping her to discover the meaning of fellowship.

"Ye are My friends," said Christ, "if ye do whatsoever I command you. Ye shall bear witness of Me, because ye have been with Me since the beginning." We have our orders, we must start without delay, for many are friendless.

### Prayer :

"Holy Father, Who on Thy Heart dost bear the burden of the world's suffering, help us to carry the loads of others. Take our human love and transfigure it until it shines with Thy redemptive power. This we ask, for the sake of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Thy Son. Amen."

## 2. GRATITUDE.

Reading: ZECH. xiv. 1-9.

A few days before the invasion of Holland, a service was broadcast by the Hilversum radio, and the preacher chose as his text the words, "At evening time it shall be light."

We have come to associate these words with the months which foreshadow death. To-day they bring us another message also. We had prayed for peace, and war was declared. We had dreamed great dreams for our loved ones and for ourselves. War has put a stop to their fulfilment, perhaps for ever. At eventime, when our prayers seem unanswered, when our dreams are in pieces, even at an eventime like this, "there shall be light."

Dare we believe this or is it yet another dream, the glow lamp of a will o' the wisp, luring us on? We can switch on the light if we will, for the "Light shineth in the darkness and the darkness overcometh it not."

Many a woman has found gratitude to be the key switch by which she transforms darkness into light, gratitude to the Risen Lord, who took away death's finality and who has set the seal of Love Eternal, not on our arms, but in our hearts.

We can dare to be grateful for all we have had and which can never be taken away from us. We may even dare to be grateful for shattered dreams, which in some mysterious way have become part of us. Above all, we may be grateful for the over-ruling Providence of God Who joins together the threads of broken lives, restoring the years which the locusts have eaten.

It is at eventime that we most need light. The half-light makes mysteries of plain objects, and turns them into terrifying shapes. "I am the Light of the World," says our Lord, "Walk in the Light." Our unknown way is not hidden from Him. He will preserve our going out and coming in, until finally we reach our Father's House.

### Prayer :

"Almighty and Most Merciful God, forgive us for our lack of faith. Help us to trust Thee to the uttermost. In our moments of doubt and despair, may the light of Thy Love shine through our darkness, bringing to us the Vision of Thy most Holy Purpose.

"This we ask for the sake of Thy dear Son. Amen."



### 3. THANKFULNESS.

Reading: REVELATION iii. 18-21.

When you first waken, turn over in bed and say, "Thank God, I am alive." Then quieten your mind in His presence and ask Him to make His way for the new day clear to you.

Mobility and adaptability have to be our watchwords in these times. Our eager spirits must ever be on the move outwards and upwards towards Him in Whom we live and move and have our being. He will prepare us to adapt ourselves quickly to the needs of the hour, whether it brings sudden alarm or just the usual stress of the daily round.

"While there is life there is hope." This is true, but for those of us who know Christ, there is eternal hope. Even if we have to dwell in the Valley of the Shadow of Death for months, we need fear no evil, for He is with us.

We women have a great part to play in keeping the Home Front steady. It is our job. We must not crowd out God, because we are so busy. Spend five minutes with God—before you get up—if that is the only time you have to yourself in the early morning. The woman who does this can meet her family with quiet, confident courage, which will be undisturbed by bad news which may come over the wireless or by the post. She can send her family on their way fit to do their job, and at night as, tired, they turn homewards, they will be looking forward to finding their rest in her.

"Wait, I say, on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart."

#### Prayer :

"Father, we bring to Thee our thanks for all the blessings we have received, and we pray Thee for courage to take from life all those unguessed blessings which the future holds for us. Our hope is in Thee, who dost save by many or by few. Help us to play our part. This we ask for the sake of Him who overcame, even Christ, our Lord. Amen."

### 4. BEARING YOUR CROSS.

Reading: MATTHEW xxvii. 29-55.

In 1914 we were told that war was the will of God, and our spirits rebelled. How could God be love if He planned war? To-day the same query throbs through the minds of the girls who stand where we stood in 1914, with our dreams shattered at our feet. Have we no message for them?

We had been taught that the Crucifixion was the Will of God, that God, as it were, arranged it all. Somehow we could not make the picture fit in with our thought of a God of Love.

Now we see more clearly. Christ gave Himself of His Own free will to show us the heart of God, who suffers with and in His children. We have taken stock of life and discovered that the wages of sin are always death. We, being part of our generation, again have to pay the price of sin in blood and tears. Could we expect that life would work out differently?

No man's hands are clean. We have all sinned, but this present suffering, due to man's sin, brings with it a new understanding of man's dependence on his brother man. We belong to each other for weal and for woe. Even as God in Christ was killed by the ill-will of that generation, so we, too, in our turn, are compelled to take up the Cross.

But Christ, "being dead, dieth no more." He has not left us without hope, without help. His Cross is bathed in the glory of the Resurrection Morning. He is our Risen Saviour.

Do you remember His words to His disciples as He left the Garden to face His enemies, "Arise, let us be going." What strength, what comfort, what hope that word "us" may bring to-day. He goes with us through death to life.

#### Prayer :

"O God, Thou knowest our foolishness, our sins are not hidden from Thee. Have mercy on us. Cleanse us from secret faults, comfort our souls. Into Thy hands we commit our spirits, for Thou hast redeemed us. Under the shadow of Thy wings do we trust. Amen."



## 5. PARTING.

Reading: DEUT. xxxiii. 26-29.

He has gone again, back to the horror and danger, and you feel broken-hearted and possibly physically sick. You sent him off with a smile! You helped him out, and but for your courage, he would have broken down, and he would have hated it. And now? For him action and danger; for you, the despair of uncertainty and the feeling of one lost in a fog.

Have you the courage to see the fog as the cloud which covered the Mount of Transfiguration, enclosing both our Lord and His disciples? This black fog of uncertainty which enshrouds you is less than a summer haze in His eyes, for the unknown is known to Him, and He waits by your side to bring both you and your loved one into the haven of His Desire. He has set your course, no enemy shall prevail if you are faithful to your knowledge of His Love.

*Dare* you leave your dear one in complete confidence in the Hands of your loving Father? *Dare* you believe that the comfort of the Everlasting Arms will bring him as great a peace as did your own arms when, as a little lad in trouble, or as a man in great distress, he used to throw himself down at your knees?

We want to do so much for our dear ones. We find it so difficult to leave their well-being to God. We would make no mistakes. We would save them through the sacrifice of ourselves. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." God cares so much that He gave His best willingly. His Will is best for our loved ones. He makes no mistakes, but He asks for our prayers for them, that through their power He may be able to accomplish His loving purpose.

In the Czarist days in old Russia it was no uncommon sight on a railway platform to see a man make the sign of the Cross over the face of a dear one before they separated, and to hear the quiet prayer:

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee; The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace" . . . and bring thee back to me.

### Prayer :

"Father, increase our faith. Help us to do and to endure Thy Will, for Thy Will is our peace. Amen."

## 6. FEAR.

Reading: PSALM cxxi.

How queer that air-raid siren makes you feel! Its sudden alarm and its creepy note strike terror. Perhaps you are one of those who has already experienced this, or perhaps one who wonders how she will face up to it. Then, too, there is the awful noise of the guns and bombs.

It is natural to be afraid, and God understands, but if we make preparation beforehand, the emergency will find us ready. You have seen a horse startled by a sudden noise. We are like that. Noise can't kill, but it does terrify, and the Germans have exploited this natural fear to the full. Again, the God Who speaks through the thunder will quieten us.

We may be injured, we may see our loved ones suffer, and this is the worst thought of all. We may see our home go up in flames. We shall be frightened, but fear which in the Christian woman turns to panic, is sin.

Have you any experience of panic? It is so infectious, so insidious. It is like a blot of ink spreading silently, quickly, in all directions on a sheet of white paper. How then may we resist the temptation to panic?

First of all in cold blood, face the possibilities, face your fear, the noise and the horror, but don't face them alone. Face them in company with Jesus Christ, talk to Him about them.

Then each day, make a point of "slipping the world off your shoulders" for a few moments. Get away by yourself. Lie down on your bed if you can, breathe in and out steadily and quietly, and with each breath you take, say to yourself, "I breathe in the courage and power of Christ." Coin for yourself some little sentence which has come to you in this silence with God. It will come back to you in the hour of your trial as a message from a Friend. You will find that you will not face danger unarmed, for your weakness will be perfected in His strength. You will find that your thoughts are for others, just as His always were. We must always remember that we have a Saviour.

### Prayer :

"Dear Lord, come to our help when we are afraid. Steady us and help us to steady others. May they, seeing our faith, catch a glimpse of Thyself. Make us strong for Thee. Amen."



## 7. SYMPATHY.

Reading: PSALM xxxvii. 1-11.

One thing women have to learn in war time is the mastery of their emotions. One of the greatest hindrances to the development of women's work has always been our tendency to "personalise" all we touch. Service for our country becomes "my war work." Criticism of effort is made a personal matter.

To-day this weakness tempts us in another way. We hear over the wireless of the machine-gunning of helpless Belgian children. The news sickens us. "What if it were my child?" asks a woman. Through her mind there flashes a picture of her child dying in a roadside ditch. All the day she is haunted by this picture, though her child is happily at play.

There is a translation of a verse in Psalm xlix, which says that no man can redeem another, for the cost paid is too great. Christ does not ask any woman to carry the whole weight of the world's suffering. That is His burden. He asks her, through prayer and service, to bear her own burden and to lighten the load of those with whom she comes into contact.

This does not mean that she must care less, but that she must care more wisely. Humanly speaking, she can do nothing for that dying Belgian child. Let the sickness of her heart pass into prayer to the Christ Who loved and Who still loves little children. Then strengthened, instead of weakened, let her devote herself to the task which is her duty, to the task close at hand. The mastery of her emotions and imagination will have deepened her personality. To her there will have come a new experience of her fellowship in Christ's sufferings. In His company she has seen that child in agony, even as the women gazed from afar off on the suffering of their Lord. Then, like Mary on that first Easter morning, she must be up at dawn to see what service she can render.

### Prayer :

"Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us ;

"Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace.

"Let Thy mercy lighten upon us, for our trust is in Thee. Amen."

## 8. CHEERFULNESS.

Reading: REVELATION iii. 7-12.

Here is an experiment for you. The next time you go along your street, go looking happy, no matter how you are feeling.

You will meet sad faces and grim faces, but if one face does not lighten at the sight of your happy face, it will be surprising. How much good it does you in these days to hear a laugh. Why not try to do good in this way to somebody else? Don't let the burden of the world's suffering stifle your spirit.

That boy of yours longs to think of you as happy in the home which is so dear to him. It would make life still harder for him if he thought you were miserable. Your fortitude helps him. "What would you do if I broke down?" a woman asked her husband just before he went overseas. "It would break my heart to leave you like that," was his reply, "and I've got to go, it's my job."

Yes, it is our job to keep a stiff upper lip and a smile, so that we can help others on their way. When we can't make light of our troubles, we can keep them dark.

"Ye are the light of the world," said Christ. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven." Do you see the implication? Our cheerfulness reveals God as Father. The downcast know that our smile is not one of bravado nor bitterness, but of courage, which is the gift of our Lord who set His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem.

### Prayer :

"Saviour Divine, we give thanks for Thy high courage and for Thy words, 'Be of good cheer.' May the fire of our courage lighten those who walk in darkness. May the triumph of our faith glorify Thy Holy Name. Bring us in Thine own good time to days of peace and quiet. Amen."



## 9. REUNION.

Reading: JOHN xiv. 1-10, 18, 19, 27.

Death, which seemed so far off, has come very close to us these days. Perhaps it is a dear one who faces it each day, perhaps its shadow has fallen on our own lives and we are wondering about things. Perhaps the call will come first to us.

Shall we meet again after death? Shall we know each other? Will we be very different? We long to know, and we have to face the fact that we can't have knowledge; all we can have is faith.

Think for a moment about Jesus Christ. Mary recognised Him as soon as He spoke. Some other friends saw Him on the lake side, and He had lighted a fire, so that they could have a meal, when they came ashore after a hard day's work. Thomas actually put His fingers in the marks of the nails. Christ still carried those marks after death. This same Jesus told us not to be afraid of the death of our bodies, but only to fear the things which could kill our souls. Then, too, there is another thought for us to treasure. Do you remember that He wept at the grave of His friend? He was flesh and blood, like ourselves, and perhaps for a moment He knew our heartache.

It is a fact of history that Jesus was killed, that the tomb was sealed and a guard set over it, that His body disappeared, and that His friends saw Him after death. These are facts which cannot be contradicted. Remember this, too, that before He died, He told His friends that He would be back with them, AND HE WAS.

We have a sound basis for our faith, haven't we? In fact, if you have experienced anything of the power of God in your own life, nothing will convince you that death ends everything. You just cannot believe this. Perhaps you are half afraid to pray for the dead. Do you remember that it was two dead men who talked with our Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration? We have to look on death, not as finality, but as transfiguration. We shall be the same, but at the same time, different.

Most comforting of all, do you remember the words of our Saviour, "I go to prepare a place for you"? We thought that we and our loved ones would be going out into the unknown. Not a bit of it, a welcome awaits us, a room is ready for us. We pass through death to life.

You will remember how Mary set out that first Easter morning after a night of despair, her mind tormented with the question, "Who will roll away the stone?"

When she reached the Tomb, the stone had been moved—God had been there. She had been worrying unnecessarily. Isn't it often like that with us? Let us take courage and "prove" Him in Whom we believe.

### Prayer :

"Lord Christ, who art our only Hope, breathe on us the gift of Thy good spirit, that we may see even now the home prepared for us in our Father's House.

"Because we believe on Thee, we know that we, too, shall rise again to live with Thee and with our loved ones who have gone ahead of us. Make us even now to be partakers of Thy triumphant victory over death. Come to us in our hours of doubt and despair. Comfort us, lead us through death into life eternal. Amen."



## 10. TO-DAY'S DIFFICULTIES.

Reading: PSALM CXXIV.

A story is told of General Gordon, how that each day, on opening his newspaper, he used to say, "I wonder what God wants me to pray about to-day."

It is with a thought like this in our mind that we may well tune in to the news bulletins. Just before eight o'clock, there is that very helpful "Lift up your hearts," but at other times, before we tune in, let us spend a few moments with God. Instead of a great dread, instead of those moments of bitterness, which we all know so well, our minds will be steadied, our reason at peace, so that we can form sound judgments and find courage to do and to endure.

If we are on the "look out" for God, keeping constant watch with Him, so that His Presence with us becomes one of the most sure facts of our daily living, we need not fear. News, good or bad, whether it comes over the wireless, or in one of those little yellow envelopes which make a woman's heart stand still, will find us ready.

Having made your preparations, don't face the emergency till it comes. God may never call on you to face it. Don't weaken yourself by trying to carry to-morrow's burden. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," said our Lord, and He understands life and us much better than we do ourselves. "In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Meantime, get on with the work He has given you to do. Probably if you could choose you would be doing something very different, something which seemed to you to be more important. He has put you where you are to work for Him and not to please yourself. Three very ordinary men met him on a road as they were coming home from their work. Expect to meet Him as you go about yours. You will not be disappointed.

### Prayer :

"O God, in whom we live and move and have our being, help us to realise our dependence upon Thee. Give us faith in the victory of goodness and patience to endure until the day dawn and the shadows flee away. This we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

## 11. FORTITUDE.

Reading: PSALM CXXIV.

War brings to us a sense of frustration. It negatives so many of our hopes and slows down our ambitions. Must we then give up our dreams? The prophet promised that they who waited on God "should mount up with wings as eagles." He promised that no hardship should cripple their spirit.

Most days you pray "Thy Kingdom come." Do you feel that the cause of God's Kingdom is lost or that this is still God's world? For centuries men have been praying that God's Will might be done, and to-day we are at war. Are our prayers just waste words? Our faith that one day God will claim this world as His own, is the dream which lifts us up with eagles' wings. We know that His Supreme Providence is the most certain factor in this life, in which at every turn, we face a cross.

The thought that God suffers with us is the only thought which makes the present almost unbearable things at all bearable. Once we have looked into the eyes of the Risen Christ, we know this to be true, and as we gaze, the reflection of His triumphant courage becomes ours. We see life with eyes of hope. Hate shall pass, but love is eternal. We need fear neither for ourselves, nor for our loved ones, for nothing can "pluck" us out of the hand of God.

After Good Friday, the disciples thought that the end had come, and they went back to their fishing; but He came to them across the waters and fed them. So to-day He comes to us—He was there all the time, but we did not notice Him. "Lord, we believe, help Thou our unbelief."

### Prayer :

"Who is like unto Thee, O Lord? Thou art great and Thy name is great in might. Who shall not fear Thee, O King of the nation: for to Thee doth it appertain. Forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto Thee."—JER. x. 7.



## 12. LONELINESS.

Reading : PSALM xxiii.

It is the loneliness which gets you down, isn't it? Your home seems so empty. First the children went, now your man has gone too, and you face life alone. Before this there was always somebody with whom to share your responsibility and troubles, and now when you face the greatest trouble of all and need your man most, he has gone. Sometimes you are afraid of the loneliness which turns you into a primitive woman, prey of your emotions. Sometimes even God Himself seems to have left you.

Unless we "manage" our loneliness, it beats us. Do you remember those words of Christ, "I am alone," and then you can almost hear the catch in His voice, "yet not alone, for the Father is with Me." Offer your loneliness to God for His use. Lay it at the feet of Christ crucified, who endured it for your sake. Don't try to damp it down, or it will turn to self-pity. Let it burn itself out in service to other people as lonely as yourself. Gradually you will come to treasure that loneliness, for it has brought God so close to you, God, who is ever with those who are forced by life "to make their bed in hell."

Do you remember, too, those words of our Lord's from the Cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me"? Our Lord, because He endured, must understand the awful isolation which loneliness brings.

Use your loneliness. How can I? you may ask. There is a wonderful translation of a verse in the Scriptures which runs, "Christ is our Peace, for He has broken down the barriers of separation, making us a unity." You feel alone, separated from that dear one who is dearer than life. Relax, seek Christ's presence, confident that He is as close to your loved one, as He is to you. Christ knows what your man is doing at that actual moment when you are praying for him. Christ is the link between you. Physically speaking, you are separated, in the Mind of God you are linked together, you are a unity.

It may help if you and your loved one can fix a time which you set apart for prayer for each other. Perhaps at eleven o'clock on a Sunday morning. He can picture you in the pew you shared. He will know that you are

thinking of him, and praying for him, and you will know his thoughts are all for you, that he is reaching out towards you; both being in touch with Christ.

### Prayer :

"Christ, who alone art our Peace, have mercy on us. Thou Thyself hast created the love which binds us to our dear ones. It is Thy gift, and we lay it at Thy feet. Strengthen us and be with us, that our human love may reveal Thy redemptive love to all whom we meet, that we may send them on their way with hope in their hearts and faith in their future. Come very close to us, dear Lord, speak to us and encourage us, help us to do and to endure for Thy dear sake. Amen."



### 13. VISION.

Reading: DAN. X. 14-19.

A few miles north of Dublin lies one of the loveliest spots God made. It is a little village set in the midst of hills, whose tree-covered slopes are reflected in the waters of the lake. Alongside a trout stream stands the village store, which serves also as a public house.

One afternoon two English visitors were in the shop buying fishing tackle. The door opened, and in came a tramp who had been cutting peat. Unshaven, tattered, soaked by the rain and dried by the sun, he was a fearsome sight. Of course, he ordered the inevitable glass of porter, and then, like most Irishmen, started to philosophise about life and about God.

"God, who was God? Life was so hard, there must be no God." The man behind the counter pricked up his ears, for he was a devout Catholic. "The priests tell you there is a God, but they are paid to do so; humbugs they are, just like God Himself." This last blasphemy was too much for the man behind the counter, and the tramp was forcibly ejected from the shop.

Putting his head again round the door, he fired his last shot: "Better a brave heart," he said, "than a flat conscience."

It was a sordid scene; but the tramp's last words were true. Aren't we at war because we believe them? Wasn't it partly to show us the truth of these words that Christ died? They come home to us at every turn. Perhaps it is an extra pound of sugar which tempts us, we can get it by some back street way. Why not? Perhaps we are tired of this business of wasting nothing, tired of trying to economise. "Better a brave heart than a flat conscience." We must carry on.

Then at nights, when the curtains are drawn we sit quietly over our knitting. How easily our thoughts slip into fears and we start to worry about our dear ones facing danger. They are on their job, and we on ours. Both of us are in the good hands of the Father who makes no mistakes. "Our heart is fixed, trusting on the Lord, we need fear no evil tidings." We will have a brave heart, we will endure and win through.

Who was that tramp? Years ago, he too must have had his dreams of the "brave heart" or he would not have spoken like that. Had someone dear to him

disillusioned him, for loss of faith in one's brother man opens the door to loss of faith in God.

Was it the hardness of life which had embittered him, robbing him of the power to think sanely? We shall never know, but how strange it is, that God could use a man like that to bring us a message of Himself.

We had been eager to keep "the brave heart" for the sake of our own self-respect, but let us think more deeply. We must keep it because we belong to our brother man and to God. We are the keepers of the world's conscience.

Over and over again, this truth is made clear as we face "the unfolding promise" of the present grim struggle for Christian civilisation. We dare not be slack, the price paid is too great.

#### Prayer:

"God, Who art our Father, make us worthy of our calling. May we, having seen the Right, persevere until the fight is won. As we journey through the wilderness, may our eyes be turned towards the sunrising, for Thou shalt reign in power. Glory to God in the Highest, on earth, peace and goodwill to men."



## 14. FAITH.

Reading: HEBREWS vii. 24-28.

One of the most wonderful thoughts about prayer is our belief that Christ prays for us. Do you remember what He said to Peter? Jesus told Peter He had prayed that his faith should not fail, and on the face of it, a few weeks later it looked as if the prayer of our Lord had gone unanswered. You will remember what happened later on and how Peter triumphed.

Do you not think that in these terrible days our Lord is praying for us? There is so much He wants us to do. He counts on our buoyant faith, which will keep others afloat when all hope of rescue seems lost. He expects our faith to leaven the group, when the lamp of faith seems to be flickering almost to the point of extinction.

There is something more He expects. "Ye are the salt of the earth," He said. He counts on us to help Him cleanse the thoughts of souls tainted with bitterness and tormented with despair. He asks all this from us, and hopes for still more. He knows our weakness, and so He prays that our faith may not fail. He asks us to join our prayers with His, that He may claim the soul of every man as His Kingdom. He longs to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Do you remember His prayer to His Father? He thought of us, for He prayed for all those who, through the efforts of His first friends, should come to know Him. He wanted us in His world and prayed that we might be kept from evil. For their sakes He had sanctified Himself, that we in our turn might by His grace sanctify ourselves, making ourselves fit for His use. He wanted us to "go out" for Him, that His Gospel might reach even unto the ends of the earth. . . .

You will remember His words at the last meal which He and His friends shared. "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer."

In these days of strife He still prays, calling on us to bear our part.

### Prayer :

"Remember us, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people. We have sinned with our fathers, we have done wickedly. Save us, O Lord our God, to give thanks unto Thy Holy Name."

## 15. PRAYER.

Reading: ROMANS viii. 15-28.

What is the use of prayer? you may ask. Both Germans and British are praying for the safe return of their loved ones. Not long after the last war a woman said, "I prayed for the return of my loved one, and he came back; but now I wonder . . . Never again will I pray for the gift of life or death, for God knows best."

Dare we pray for our dear ones? Why should they be spared and the prayers of another woman go unanswered? Is it all a question of luck, or does God really have a hand in it? Can we, through prayer, force God to keep our loved ones safe? Will our faith break if our prayers are unanswered?

Of course we may pray for the safe return of our loved ones, but there is something more precious than their life. It is their souls. We must pray for His grace upon their souls to keep them in life, and if the call comes, in death also. Of course, we may pray for their safe return. It is God Himself who has set in our hearts the love which links us together, but instead of beseeching God for their safe return at all costs, let us talk to Him about our love for each other, about our hopes and dreams and our longing to be together again in peace. He made us for Himself; He understands. Let us think of our human love as a star in a great firmament, not hanging in space, but in its allotted place in the firmament of His Eternal Love. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand. He knows our heart's desires, for He gave His dearest to be crucified. We, too, may be asked to give our dearest, and our spirits shrink, even as our Lord's spirit shrank in the Garden that evening. Christ offered all He had to His Father, and then went on His way to peace. . . .

This thought must, as it were, enclose our prayers for our dear ones. Christ agonises with us, suffers with us, prays in us. He longs for our happiness. He hates war and its agony, but He suffered unto death, that He might rise again.

Think of His words about the sparrow, words which often have puzzled us. "Your Father knoweth," He said.

### Prayer :

"Lord, teach us how to pray. Help Thou our unbelief."



## 16. CONFIDENCE.

Reading: PSALM iv.

"I am almost afraid of going to bed," said a woman. "I am afraid of being wakened by that awful siren, or perhaps I will sleep through it, and then what will happen if we are bombed."

What a comfort to the Children of Israel must that Pillar of Fire have been which went before them at night? It made them feel safe, for they knew God was with them. They went happily to their tents and slept soundly. We have got to do the same. Look at it from a commonsense point of view. You will be far more fit to meet an emergency if your body is rested.

Let your last thought as you get into bed be of God. Prepare your mind for the night, just as you have prepared your body. Undress mentally, so to speak. In all probability some part of the country will be raided. It may be your home, or some spot dear to the heart of another woman. Let your prayers for yourself pass into prayer for all who that night shall be in danger. Remember, before God, the men who that night, for your sake, will meet danger. Then, after you have switched out the light, relax in the knowledge that underneath us all are the Everlasting Arms.

We have come to think of eternity as something which "starts" when we die. As a matter of fact, here and now, if we will, we may rest in eternity, for death, should it come to us, is but one step farther along the same road. Why should we fear death? We know that some day we will have to face it. Why should we worry if the call should come to us earlier than we had hoped?

Before you turn in, read one of the Psalms; read the cry of men who, like ourselves, faced danger, and facing it with courage, found God at their side. "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety."

### Prayer :

"O Christ, who has bought us with so great a price, help us to glorify God in our bodies. Seal us with the holy spirit of promise. Fill us with all joy and peace, that we may abound in hope. This we ask, for Thy dear sake. Amen."

## 17. RUMOURS.

Reading: PSALM cxlix.

"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and keep the door of my lips," said the Psalmist. It is a prayer which to-day must be constantly on our lips. Somehow we gain comfort from passing on bad news to others. Sometimes the news is so bad that we just can't keep it to ourselves. At other times it is just a lack of self-control, or a desire to seem to know more than others, which makes us talk.

Look at it like this. Perhaps lying awake at night, you *think* you hear guns. Over the garden fence you tell your neighbour that you *think* you heard guns. A little later everybody *knows* that you heard guns. If people came direct to you, of course, you would tell them that you only *thought* you heard guns. So a rumour gets round. Does it matter? You may say to yourself that it would not have worried you; but think of that other woman who is so terribly afraid. Have you helped her? Don't you perhaps think that you have been one of those who has hanged a millstone round the neck of a "little one," for little ones are not always children. They are the people who brood and worry, and people who are desperately afraid and trying to hide their fear.

Any sentence or action of ours which makes life even a bit more difficult for another woman, is unworthy of us whose trust is in the Living God. Do you remember how our Lord kept silence before the High Priest. Next time you are tempted to pass on news, remember His silence . . .

Instead of talking, we must pray.

### Prayer :

"O Lord, who for our sakes didst sanctify Thyself, strengthen our self-control, that we may endure hardship without bitterness, resentment or dismay. Keep us in the hour of temptation and deliver us from evil. Make us worthy to bear Thy name. And unto Thee be the glory, for ever and ever, Amen."



## 18. VENGEANCE.

Reading: PSALM cxxxix.

Not far from Trafalgar Square, in the heart of the Empire, stands the statue of Nurse Cavell, shot at dawn by the Germans in Brussels on October 12th, 1915. On the plinth of the statue are the words which she wrote in her diary the night before she was shot, "Patriotism is not enough, I must have no bitterness . . ."

Can we fight and not hate? This is a problem which we, as Christian women, have to face. Unspeakably evil things, diabolic in their cruelty, are happening. Our loved ones are seeing these things, and our spirits shrink. Our anger rises, bitterness surges up in us. We long to avenge the evil.

"Vengeance is Mine," says our God. We cannot pass over these things as if they did not matter. We must put a stop to them. Cannot you see the white, stern face of our Saviour, His eyes ablaze with anger, as He drove the men from His Father's house. He has called on us to endure, to sacrifice to the uttermost, that these evil things may pass from His world. We must fight, trying all the time to preserve that self-control which will never make us bitter or callous, though it makes us determined.

Righteousness, and not vengeance, is to be our goal. Our personal bitterness must find outlet in service for a common cause. It must be transformed into loyalty to the truth as we know it. We must be ready to do and to endure. God knows how we hate war, and yet we have been called to take up the sword to preserve His holy things. We don't understand, we can see such a short way ahead. In some mysterious way perhaps we, too, are called to bear in our bodies the marks of the world's sin, to share the fellowship of the sufferings of our Lord. We must not let personal hatred defile us, or we stand on the side of those who make war.

We must each think it through for ourselves. Perhaps it is that word "personal" which holds the key to the problem.

### Prayer :

"Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. . . . Blessed be God, who hath not turned away our prayer, nor His mercy from us. Amen."

## 19. SERVICE.

Reading: ISAIAH xl. 27-31.

Two alternatives face us. One is to worry, the other to "wait on God." What does this waiting on God mean?

The majority of women spend their time waiting on somebody. From morning till night they are busy. The running of a home and the bringing up of children is a whole-time job demanding concentrated energy.

Our waiting on God demands this same active concentrated energy. We have to put our hearts into it. It demands the mastery of our feelings and of our will. We have to forget ourselves and to see only God.

How difficult it is to think, for more than a few minutes, about God. Our minds slip back to our fears and worries and to what is happening round us. We find it so difficult to pray. Again, we must put our hearts into it. When Christ passed triumphantly at peace after His long watch in Gethsemane, He said to His disciples, "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." War is teaching us something about that agonised waiting which Christ endured that night in the Garden. We can only find peace, when like Him, we can say to our Father, "Thy Will be done." Unless we both constantly watch and pray, we shall yield to the temptation to worry. Each time we fail we must try again, for this practice of "waiting upon God," this practice of prayer, is a matter which we only master through experience.

There is another thought, too, and we may think of it in homely terms. Your loved one is on leave. You have had a wire, you may expect him any minute now. How happily, eagerly you wait, expecting to hear his knock and his dear voice once again. This eager, happy expectancy is the blessing which those who, day in, day out, "wait upon God," carry in their hearts as they tread their unknown way, with their hand in the nail-scarred hand of their Master.

### Prayer :

"I am but a little child, I know not how to go out or come in; have mercy on me, Lord, be with me, help me to keep close to Thee; lighten my darkness and give me Thine own Peace. Amen."



## 20. HELPFULNESS.

Reading: MATTHEW XXV. 31-46.

The Prime Minister told us, in one of his speeches, that it was part of our war task to "uplift the downcast."

"Ye are the light of the world," said our Lord. In these black-out days we all know the feeling of security which a torch brings. Life would be easier for many a man and woman if contact with any and every Christian woman brought to them this sense of security. It ought to do this, for we know Him in whom we believe.

Why is it that some people are "good mixers," and that others who long to help can never make these intimate contacts? To be a successful mixer demands great humility of spirit. It demands the offering of one's deepest self to another. It demands the selflessness which enables a woman to see life through the eyes of the woman she is trying to help, and to feel what she is feeling.

Then, turning back to our own experience of God, we serve as a torch which may lighten the other into the Presence of God, though His Name may not have been mentioned between us. It is so often through human sympathy and human friendship that the vitality of our Father God passes into another human soul, sometimes in disguise unsuspected by either, for the ways of God are very mysterious.

To-day, as Christian women, we stand at our action stations, for God's world is full of lonely souls.

### Prayer :

"O God our Father, who has entrusted to us the task of helping others, open our eyes that we may see their need. Help us to take up Thy Cross and to follow Thee. Make us worthy of our Master. Give to us the joy of knowing that all service is honourable in Thy sight. May our love, like the precious ointment which Mary poured out, anointing Thee for Thy Passion, fill our homes. May its sweet savour pass into the hearts of others, making them more sure of Thee. This we ask, because we know Thou lovest us. Amen."

## 21. MEMORIES.

Reading: PHIL. iv. 1-13.

Think happily! Have you the pluck to do this in war time? During these days we are tempted to think that nothing is too bad to come true.

Do you remember the advice which Paul gave to the people of Philippi. He told them that if they made their requests known to God with supplication and thanksgiving, they would possess a peace which passes understanding. Then he went on to tell them to think about the things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report. We must do this always, but especially in war time.

There must surely be a lovely memory you treasure, perhaps of some glorious spot which once you shared with your dear one, a field gold with buttercups, or the sea dashing over some cliff. Perhaps it is the memory of a friend whose presence always brought to you a sense of peace. Perhaps it is a memory of a time when God seemed very real to you. Forget the war for a while and think on these things. War brings many changes, but it cannot change the Love of God.

One evening a little slum boy, in camp with his club, was found sitting at the door of his tent, gazing at the moonlight on a nearby cornfield. "Miss, ain't it wonderful," he said. "It makes me feel clean." "I want to hear some good music," said a man on leave, "I want to get clean."

So often it seems to us as if the only thing that mattered was a news bulletin, and when we have heard it, we turn it over and over in our minds, brooding over its message. Our spirits will die unless deliberately we fill our minds with thoughts that are lovely, knowing these things to be true facts of life. We must cleanse ourselves by taking in beauty and goodness. In spite of war, this is still a wonderful world. The black-out showed us the stars, the eternal routine of day and night stabilises us, God does not change.

Think happily, this world is God's, and in His own good time He will make all things lovely. Neither things present, nor things to come, can separate us from His love.

### Prayer :

"Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of His dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul."



## 22. GOING OVERSEAS.

Reading: PSALM CXXXIX. 9, 10.

You have seen a flock of sheep huddled together in some corner of a field at the approach of a strange dog. We are like sheep; in time of trouble we want to be together. It is much easier to face an air raid when you are with people in a shelter than in a lonely room on your own. It means everything to have your dear ones with you at such a time.

Now to many women has come the test. Shall she, or shall she not, let her children go overseas? It was bad enough to send them to strangers here at home, but to send them overseas, to be out of touch save for occasional letters! It seems almost unbearable. What is right? Is it right to keep them here? Is it right to send them across the sea at a time when every sea passage is fraught with danger. Would it not be wiser to "take a chance"?

It is, as a rule, only in moments of great unhappiness or distress that a child reveals his full mind. Think for a moment of a little English boy from an east coast town who, when "in safety" in another part of England, used to wake at nights crying, "I don't want to die." A few months ago he had been a happy, care-free child. Must our children lose their childhood and face the fear which, do as we will, we cannot keep from them? Is it not their peace of mind which is their greatest possession? To them the sea journey will seem a wonderful adventure. After a while they will hardly miss you, except for occasional outbursts. That thought hurts you, doesn't it? "Perhaps they will forget me," you say to yourself, "if the war goes on for years."

Of course it hurts, but what matters most? Is it your own heartache or the terror which most probably your child will have to face, if you keep him with you? "If only they hadn't to go across the sea," you think. Yes, you have to face up to that danger, though we can thank God for the waves which wash our shores, and for the men who keep guard. "Overseas" seems a terribly long way off. The Jews feared the sea, even as you now fear it, for to them it typified separation. Those who go down to the sea in ships, know that the seas do not separate continents, but link them together. Our God is the God of the Overseas. The Risen Christ is master of space. There is no corner of the world which is a foreign

land to Him. He is there speaking to little children in their mother tongue.

Should not we rather thank God for the love reaching across the seas from our kinswomen, telling us of their longing to save our children from the horror of war. Can't we trust our children to these our friends and to Christ who is the children's Friend? The Colonial Missionary Society, 22, Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, will make things easier for us by keeping in touch with our children, and passing on news.

Every mother must decide for herself, weighing up the alternative risk, and bearing in mind the temperament of her child. In some cases it is better for the child to go, while another child is so built, that he should stay at home. Either way there is danger, for we are at war.

Pray that you make the right decision, and then leave the outcome with God.

Now is the testing time of our faith. We can be sure of this. We need never, even in our moments of despair, say to ourselves, "perhaps we will never see each other again." God does not mock us, and the glad reunion, whether it be in this world or the next, will come in His own good time. Our hearts may break, but we have no problem to solve.

### Prayer :

"O Christ, who art the Friend of little children, help us to do what is best for those little ones, whom Thou, in Thy love, didst send to us. Give us the wisdom we need and courage to face the unknown future. Help us to make the right decision, and having done so, help us to put our children into Thy good keeping, knowing that distance cannot separate us from Thy Love. Lead us gently, Lord, for we are weak; deal very mercifully with us, for we are afraid. Abide with us, for in Thee alone is our hope. Amen."



