

## HEAVENLY LIGHT ON DAILY LIFE



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**The Lesson of the Looking Glass**

Wherever there are women there are looking-glasses, from the Sherifa with her great mirror framed in carving and gilding, to the tent of the Bedouin woman, who wears a little leather-covered disc among her many ornaments.

For all women want to see what they look like - what they look like to other people. And they know that the mirror gives to their view what they themselves would never see - the form and the tint of their features and the drapery of their headgear.

So far the mirror goes, no further, it can only picture the outer person. But there is another mirror that can shew thee thy inner person. That mirror is the Holy Book. In a mirror of glass thou canst see thy face as thy neighbour see it, but in the Word of God thou canst see thy heart as God sees it.

Our earthly mirrors sometimes shew things that make us sad. A woman may think her face still young and fair; but her mirror shews the wrinkles and grey hairs that have begun to come. It tells her the truth.

So also God's Word tells us the truth about our hearts, that is to say that they are not good as we like to think them, but bad before Him.

For instance, thou thinkest perhaps that thou canst gossip all day long, without harm. See how that gossip appears to God. He says, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

It may be, in thy mind are thoughts of pride, despising thy neighbour. Look in the mirror of God: He says, "He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth."

It may be that thy heart harbours hatred against another, thou sayest, "I do well to be angry." Look once more in God's mirror and see how this hatred looks to Him: "He that hateth his brother is a murderer."

Look, O my sister, in this mirror that tells thee the truth, and quickly thou wilt see that thou dost need a Saviour.

(2)

### The Lesson of Sweeping

There are two ways of sweeping - a good way and a bad way. You can tell a clever woman from a foolish idle woman by the way she sweeps her room.

The foolish woman only wants to put the crumbs and the dust out of sight. She begins in the middle of the floor where the rubbish is easiest to see, and sweeps it all under the bed, or into the corners, and leaves it there.

The sensible woman begins in the corners and sweeps all into sight instead of sweeping it out of sight. She sweeps into the middle of the room, and gathers it into her shovel, and carries it away. Have I the truth?

This thing is a picture of the unseen. Our souls are like the room, and our sins are like the rubbish. If we try to forget our sins we are like the foolish woman who sweeps the rubbish into the corners and leaves it there, and next day covers it up with some more dust, till the day comes when the owner of the house is angry with her, and the whole must be turned out to her shame.

It may be, my sister, that thou hast told lies, and hidden those lies by other lies, and then thou hast tried to forget all about it. Verily thou art like the foolish woman who only sweeps the dust out of sight.

If thou wouldst be as the wise woman, look at thy sins till thou art ashamed of them, and dost long to be rid of them. Sweep them out of their hiding places in thy heart, tell God about them. Bring them out to the light before the great day of judgment comes when, if thou hast still hidden them, all will be brought to view to thy confusion.

God says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Take with you words and turn to the Lord, say unto Him "Take away all unrighteousness." Take with you words and turn to the Lord, say unto Him "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously." And this He will do for the sake of Christ the Lord.

**(3)**

**The Lesson of the Loom**

Wherever we go in the lands of the East there are looms. Some bear on their framework gay curtains and carpets, some black goatshair tents, some snow white haiks with stripes of shining silk. And most women know how to thread in the strands and beat them firmly into their places.

And, when a piece of work has been woven, it is, as you know, rolled up. No one can see after that the pattern of the carpet, or the stripes of the haik, only the last little bit remains visible.

And when it comes to the end, you measure the whole, and if it is too short on one side, you make it right as best you can, but the whole weaving is out of your power to change, and when it is cut you can add no single thread, good or bad.

Our lives are like the fabric on the loom, and each day adds a few threads. They are grey or gay, so to speak, with trouble or joy; they are black or white with sin or purity. Then night comes down like the beam, and shuts all back into the days of thy past; and soon it is rolled up and almost forgotten.

But the end of the weaving comes when life is done. In their last hours people try to set right what they can, saying to one and another, "Forgive me." But this is only like the added threads that are meant to straighten the work that can change nothing of the past. Then death comes and cuts the whole. And it was said of old in the Book of the Prophets by a great king who saw death coming, "He will cut me off from the loom." And as your life leaves the world, so must it be shewn in the day of Judgment.

In that day, my Sister, thou canst change nothing and add nothing. But now, thanks be to God, we can tell thee of a Saviour Who can take out the wrong thread as if they had never been, and give thee henceforth new and beautiful threads to weave into thy life. So wilt thou not be ashamed when it is unrolled before the Judgment Seat of God.

(4)

### The Lesson of the Patch

Patching is poor work. We all know that, and you have often said when you have finished a bit of it, "It is the best I could do." Your little son comes back from play with a great hole in his gandoura, past your power to mend. So you took out a bit of stuff and see that it covers the hole. But if does not match, and if it is a bit of new stuff and the gandouras is old, it soon tears into a worse hole than before.

And then perhaps the boy's father comes back from a journey and says, "I am ashamed to see him like that," and he buys him a new gandoura altogether. How gladly you put it on him and are done with the old patched one.

There is another kind of patching - People try to patch a bit of the new faith and life on to the old faith and life.

Do you do this my Sister? I know many women who like to come to the meetings and listen to the story of the Gospel and sing hymns they avow they believe it and receive it, but they go back to their houses and return to the old feasts and fasts and superstitions, and, worse than that, the old sins. That meeting once a week is like the little new patch on the old garment, and Jesus, who must have watched the women patching long ago, tells us that the rent is made worse. That means, it would be better for you in the end if you had never heard than that you should be content with the patching together of the new faith and the old life, saying, "It is the best I could do."

The patching may be the best you can do for your boy's gandoura, but it will not do for your soul. Tell God it will not do and He will give you a new heart, a new spirit, and a new life through and through, because this is what Christ the Lord bought for you. If you delay, take care lest in the last day of account our Lord should look at the patch of the new faith on the old life, and only say, "The rent is made worse."

(5)

### The Lesson of Washing Day

It is a hard day, this washing day, to the dwellers in towns, who have to buy their water by the pot or skin, or who must draw it from the well in the court.

But is not a hard day to the women who live by a stream or a river, and it is to those that I write, for they will the most readily understand the meaning of the heavenly light on that work of theirs.

First of all the woman seeks out her soiled garments; if she is in any doubt, she brings all to the light of the doorway where the sun can stream upon them, and then, whether she finds them soiled much or little, they will go into the bundle that will be taken down to the river. For to leave anything behind would only be to fix the stain; time will not get rid of it, nothing but the water will avail.

Then she plunges each garment into the stream, and in some way that she does not understand, the water takes hold of the raiment and of the defilement that is in it, and the stains pass into itself, so that for the moment the clear water is stained, but the flood sweeps along, and it bears the defilement out of sight, where it can never be found again, and the garment is left as fresh and clean as if it were new, and the water runs as pure as ever.

So, long ago, our Lord the Christ took our guilt, and for those two hours on the Cross it passed on Him and was counted as His, not ours. God "made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin" and He took away the sin of the world - away where God would look on it no more.

My sister, here lies the one and only hope for getting rid of thy stains of thy sins. Thou dost not wait to take thy clothes to the river till thou dost understand how it carries away all the impurities, thou only knowest that it will be done. Come with same certainty to Christ our Lord bringing Him thy soiled heart and life, and the stains will go, thou knowest not how. Amen.

**(6)**

**The Lesson of the Broken Bread**

"Give me a 'kesira'" (i.e. a little broken bit) - How well mothers know the word! How gladly your hand reaches to the shelf, and breaks and gives, if bread is there. What sorrow and pain they bring when there is none.

That loaf on the shelf cannot meet your boy's need while it remains there. You have to bring it down to him, and you have to break it before his hunger can be stayed.

Christ our Lord said of Himself, "I am the Bread of God, which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world." He was in truth the Bread of God up in Heaven - able to supply the need of every created thing, but He could not meet the needs of this earth of ours while He stayed up there. God brought Him down to us when He was born of the Virgin Mary and was made man.

And then at the end of His life down here His body was broken by His wounds on the Cross, and His Heart was broken for our sins - He was broken for you because God your Father so loves you, and He had no other way by which He could give you the Bread of Life.

And now, in that the message of his love has reached you, it is as if the hand of God our Father were stretched out to you, and He offers you the greatest thing that He has to offer, the gift of Jesus.

And on your side you have only to know that you need Him and his salvation - you need Him more urgently in your soul than your body needs its daily bread - that you cannot do without Him. If you have come that far you have but to stretch up your empty hand as it were to God, for the gift of His Christ. Say to Him, "I want Christ to be my Saviour."

That is like your little boy when he holds out his hand to you for a "kesira." As surely as you give it to him, so surely will God give Christ to you.

(7)

### **The Lesson of the Coal**

If you were asked to name the blackest thing you know, the first thing that would come to your mind would be a coal; you could wash a coal till you washed it away, and the last crumb would be as black as ever.

Yet if you look in your kanoun next time you are cooking, you will see that black coal changed, through and through. It is glowing with light and heat, not a black speck is left, the fire has taken hold of it and transformed it. It is a new creature, it can shine, and warm and work.

Our hearts that we have from our father Adam are black and cold with sin, and useless before God. No effort of our own will make them worth anything. It is the fire of the love of Jesus Christ our Lord that can transform them.

Bring your heart to Him: tell Him that it is black with sin, and cold with lack of love, and useless for His service. Let Him take hold of your heart as the fire takes hold of the coal. Let the love of Jesus, who loved you and gave Himself for you, go deeper and deeper into your heart like the fire that goes deeper into the coal, till it possesses it altogether.

Then your heart will begin, as it were, to grow warm and shine, and those around you will share the blessing that has come to you. For those is whom the love of Jesus shines and glows, bring light and love to all who come near them. They cannot keep it to themselves, but "they that enter in may see the light," for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given unto us.

One heart really aglow can set on fire many hearts around. So bring your heart to Christ the Lord just as it is, and see what He can do with it!



(8)

### The Lesson of the Lamp

Some people sleep in the dark all night. In other houses where there are sick people or little children, you see a light all the night through.

But what happens when the sky goes yellow with the dawn? The light of the little lamp was well enough for the night while it lasted, but already the flame was getting low, and now you have put it out, you have something better.

The world has pleasures that are like the tiny flame of the lamp - feasts and fine clothes, and jewels and such - like for those whose souls are still dark and who have nothing better, these things make a little light for a little while.

But Christ our Lord says, "I am the light of the world." He is like the sun that shines, not for one room like the lamp, but for all lands and always. If your heart turns round to the sun, a new brightness will come to you like the brightness of the sunrise, and you will not care for these old pleasures anymore. They will seem as dull and meaningless as a candle in the sunshine.

This paper is meant for the younger women, to whom the fear comes about the things they may have to give up, if they surrendered themselves altogether to Christ.

Do not be afraid. You know the time for putting out the lamp. It is the time when the light of the new dawn has grown brighter than the light that you have had in your dark room all night.

So there will come a moment in the new life if your heart keeps turning round to Christ, when the new joys get brighter than the old joys, and to please Him becomes sweeter than to please anyone else. That is the moment to let all go for Him. It will not be really hard. Sacrifice is no sacrifice to those who in their hearts have seen Jesus!

(9)

### **The Lesson of Spinning**

This lesson is about the fleece that you buy in the market, and how you get it ready to be woven into a burnous for your husband or your brother.

To begin with you wash it. But we have spoken already of that lesson; the mud is gone but there is still much work to do. You take the Kerdash, pass it through patiently till every knot and tangle is cleared, and it is soft as a little cloud, and then you take the spindle and twist the threads firmly together and each little strand helps the other to hold fast till they take their place in the garment you are weaving.

This is a lesson about living together in love. God has put us in families and often He wants us to be like the Kerdash that smooths out the knots of difficulties and the tangles of quarrels. For instance, if a neighbour gets a day's work and fears to leave her children alone, cannot you say, "I will take care of them" and the knot of difficulty will be gone. Or if there has been a vexed feeling with another, you can say, "I am sorry about those words between us, let us forget all and be sisters again." And when the children quarrel, do not slap them both, but try patiently to find out the cause and set it right. Then you will be like the Kerdash, and the tangles will be gone.

And thus, with loving thoughts and words and looks, we can, as it were, twist the thread of our lives with the lives of others, and especially with our sisters in Christ, that we may help each other to be strong, like the little strands of wool help each other, and so we shall grow fit for God to use us.

He has said, "Let all bitterness and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all male, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

(10)

### The Lesson of the Mother's Lap

Can you not remember my sister, as if it were yesterday, the hour when your first born child lay in your arms, and how your heart glowed with such love and joy that all you had suffered in bearing it to life was forgotten.

And as it lay there, weak and helpless, its very need called to you all the time, so that you could not forget it for a moment because of the great fountain of loving care that had sprung up in your heart.

Even in the night you would wake at its faintest cry, and put your arms round and care for its needs. God created in you, my Sister, that wonderful Mother heart, and He loves you with the same strong tender love that He has given you for your little ones, only far more tender and strong and deep. He says in His Book, "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb, yea they may forget, yet will not I forget thee" and again He says "As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you." So in all that love that dwells in your heart you can feel as if God stretched out His hands to you and said "That is a little like the way I love thee."

And when your child gets a little older, your arms are still his refuge, he runs and hides his head in your lap if he is frightened and he sobs there if he is hurt.

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," very little children and very weak, perhaps you have hardly yet learnt to speak to Him or to walk in His ways. But before your little ones knew how to speak or walk they knew how to get comforted in your arms.

So if the new life has come to you by faith in Jesus Christ you have a place of refuge in God as safe and warm and beautiful as you have ready for your child. Come and hide your head there when you are afraid of what may happen and if you are troubled bring the trouble there as your children come to you, and when Satan tempts you or the world draws you run to your refuge like your children run to you if they see danger near. And if the night of death comes before Jesus returns He will take you in His Arms and hush your soul to sleep and you will know nothing more till you wake in the new day of heaven. Amen.

