Happiness

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Chapter 1

The path of love leads me to the land of happiness. The land of happiness is a place here on earth where loving hearts, saddened by reality, find their way, and where the human nature that longs to give finds rest. This land lies at the feet of Jesus. There my soul bows down to become one with the One Who is the Source of happiness and love.

It is a very exclusive community, and not everyone can endure its atmosphere of peace, joy, and rest in Christ Jesus. The mind is focused on the happiness of others, while great ideas are considered about how to make those you love happy and how to fill their lives with joy, friendship, and love. At times it is physically impossible to reach everyone, so you have to choose particular people and test how open their hearts are, gently placing within them truths about love and joy in Jesus. Not everyone wants to be happy, even though people wish happiness for one another. And when happiness comes and knocks at the door, those who hear that voice sometimes have no desire to open the door and let Him in. People are afraid to be themselves and, at the same time, to look happy.

The most common activity in the Kingdom of Heaven will be the deliberate planning of ways to make happy those who surround you, those you meet, and those who know and love you. Every thought and intention will be directed toward making those around you completely happy. I believe it is worth beginning to plan for this now, so that in Eternity we will have some experience for reaching new, boundless territories.

Love cannot think any other way! It leads everything toward the goal of making everyone nearby happy. And if not everyone wants this, love searches for a way forward and develops new approaches, new points of connection, and new ways to exert a positive influence.

Life passes very quickly, and in the pursuit of possessions, knowledge, and comfort, I may lose what matters most—love for my neighbor. Happiness is a science for the soul, with its

own laws and spheres of influence. It is life in abundance, overflowing with good thoughts, ideas, and feelings.

Unfortunately, we have no institutes devoted to happiness, and our schools offer no classes on how to attain it. Yet everyone pursues it, often without understanding what it is.

I, too, often think about developing this endeavor and plan all kinds of strategies that I try to put into practice in my life. I have noticed that as soon as I begin planning some extraordinary way to make someone happy—even when I have no idea how it could be carried out—I myself become very happy simply because I am thinking about the happiness of others. The deeper the plan and the more complex the strategy, the more joy and delight it brings me amid my busy life. Sometimes I feel so full of joy that I have to let out all kinds of joyful exclamations just to calm my emotions a little.

And I think: if it is possible to be happy now, while surrounded by evil, what will happen to us when sin is gone and we are surrounded by people who need our love and who give us theirs? Wonders! We will need strength from above to keep our emotions within the bounds of propriety and to keep from rushing at everyone we meet with our humble desire to bring them happiness.

The Lord Jesus is the Author of happiness, and without Him it is impossible to possess the perfect and pure mind of a blessed person. He is a Man, and He knows how our minds are made and understands how to teach me this science.

Even after I have been taught, I do not rest on what I have achieved. Instead, I devise new ways and strategies for gaining citizens for the land of Happiness and Love.

The only serious obstacle in this campaign is a person's free will, because a person may simply be unprepared for such advances and may not want such changes. To attain complete happiness in this life, one must believe that happiness exists and that it has come into one's life. Everything that brings death and misery must be left behind completely, and not many people agree to such changes.

As a working professional, I seek knowledge that will help me better understand business strategy and the management of cash flow. I have noticed a definite pattern: the better you understand these things, the easier it is to find your way in them and make plans. But the world of money is an entirely different country, with laws of its own that differ from those in the Land of Happiness in Jesus. The two appear very similar, and people sometimes confuse them, attributing to each qualities that do not belong to it. They personify money and begin serving it as if it were a living being.

I often face the choice of what knowledge should fill my mind and how to reconcile what cannot be reconciled. I choose happiness, peace, joy, love, and friendship. We are not of this world. Sometimes I feel a little awkward around influential people in our society because these worldly values do not interest me enough to devote my entire life to them. At the same time, I feel sorry for such people, because they have chosen the world and rejected immortality and true happiness.

Yet we still need food, so we have to work with our hands and minds simply to live amid all this busyness and provide for our needs.

We are living just before the end of earth's sinful history. The final events will soon unfold, and from prophecy we know that everything will revolve around money, which will be one of the vital resources for sustaining human life. But God will give His protection and provision to those who have chosen the narrow path to the land of Happiness—those who believe in Jesus, have a close relationship with Him, and learn love, friendliness, and happiness from Him.

The Lord set Himself in opposition to mammon and placed service to Himself and service to wealth in two opposing camps.

The camp of Jesus offers righteousness, truth, love, peace, joy, hope, salvation, friendship, and an abundance of happiness for the soul.

And what does mammon offer? Everything that will be given over to fire and left behind after you as a reminder to future

generations that death is inevitable and that nothing you acquire can be taken into the grave.

As you consider the advantages of a happy life, you find yourself facing the choice of whom you will serve.

I am not saying that only poor people can be happy. I maintain that, in the hands of happy wealthy people, money becomes a means by which they can do good, ease the suffering of others, respond to their needs, and support projects, thereby helping to save deceived souls.

Jesus taught that what is impossible with man is possible with God, and through the example of Zacchaeus the tax collector, He showed how this happens.

The Lord is coming! And who can stand?

I believe happy people will be filled with joy as they meet their Savior and accept His invitation to inherit the Eternal Kingdom of peace, love, and happiness.

Happinessology. You will not find this term anywhere else. But in our school, we will introduce the science of happiness as a field of study. It is a science worth learning and understanding. Happiness has its own laws. They apply equally to everyone. Even if I cannot become happy on my own, I can learn to be happy—and I will be. If you believe this is impossible and have no intention of changing anything, I feel very sorry for you. Being happy is God's plan for the children of God who are living in the last days.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Psalm 1:1; Matthew 5:3–12; Job 5:17; Psalm 16:11; 32:2; 33:12; 34:8; 40:4; James 1:12

Chapter 2

To understand correctly what happiness is, let us first understand what happiness is not. It is difficult to change old stereotypes and difficult to begin believing in something we are not accustomed to. Yet there are laws of happiness that overturn all these ideas, sweep away unstable values, and build something solid, compelling, and multifaceted. Christ's Sermon on the Mount completely upended the thinking of those who heard it at that time. All their values collapsed in an instant. Before the eyes of people accustomed to living within the prisons of their own ideas, new and boundless expanses of Eternity opened up, together with its principles. They were astonished by the simplicity and depth of this new light.

There are commonly accepted forms of temporary comfort in everyday life that people call happiness.

1. everyday happiness.

We know that family, children, raising children, home life, acquaintances, friends, and a good job—all of this is everyday happiness because it creates a measure of comfort in this world. People who start families and approach this decision wisely want a home of their own, a home that is cozy, where they can invite others or simply enjoy spending time themselves. A family truly is an oasis in the desert of sin. But everyday happiness is conditional. If something intrudes into this little paradise—if some misfortune or problem comes—then all that happiness collapses in an instant. If one spouse suddenly leaves, becomes unfaithful, or dies, emptiness comes. The couple may have seemed happy, yet in a single moment they become profoundly unhappy. This means that something is wrong with this kind of happiness: it is not entirely sound or lasting.

2. sudden happiness.

Do you know people who have suddenly won something? Perhaps you have never met them personally, but at some point you have seen stories about them in the news or in movies. The

plot is always the same. Someone receives a prize and is happy; that person's eyes are shining. We are led to believe that this is true happiness.

Are you happy when you receive gifts? We also love giving them. But people remain happy only until the next gift, until the gift breaks, or perhaps for five minutes before returning to ordinary life. Much depends on how a person was raised, but this happiness, too, is temporary and conditional.

Someone wins a million in the lottery and is happy. But then problems begin: how to collect the money, how to spend it, and how to keep it. The person loses peace of mind.

I asked my coworkers what they needed in order to be happy. What would they like to have? How did they understand this state? One of them said he needed two million. I asked him, “Suppose we gave you thirty-two million euros. What would you do with it? You would probably give me something, since you became rich so quickly, wouldn't you?” He said he would give me two million. (It is easy to give away what you do not have.) But when I asked what he would do with the rest of the money, he could not answer. He did not even know. He could not imagine having that much money in his bank account. He was accustomed to earning just a little, and that was all; his thinking could not reach beyond that. Easy money does not bring happiness. If you examine the statistics concerning major lottery winners, you see a pattern: families are broken, most winners lose everything they won within a very short time, some go into debt, and some take their own lives. The statistics are deeply troubling. Emptiness. Yet for some reason, many people want to become rich quickly in this way so that they can be “happy” and independent.

3. emotional happiness.

This can mean, for example, creating a situation that produces a rush of adrenaline: extreme sports, skiing, skydiving, and so on.

I have gone skydiving. After our first jump, my friends and I were so excited and happy as we drove away from the field

where we had jumped. We shared our experiences with one another and talked about how wonderful it had felt. In our own way, we were happy. But I think that if one of us had broken a leg, he would not have been happy that he had gone skydiving. That happiness would have ended very quickly. It is the same with a skier: after skiing down the mountain, he is happy. But if he crashes into a rock, breaks a bone, and then spends six months in the hospital, I do not think he will look back with joy on how wonderful it felt. His only regret would be, “Why did I ever feel the need to go up that mountain? What was I doing there?” Unfortunately, for many people, understanding comes too late.

Other sports can also be included in this category. Every victory creates an illusion of happiness, and we long always to remain at the top. But our victories are of another kind—the victories that overcome the world: our faith. People do not understand this.

Drug use, alcoholism, and other addictions also belong to the realm of emotional experience. They bring temporary enjoyment and pleasure. While people are in that state, they may experience something they perceive as happiness, but it is very short-lived. Sexual pleasure can be included here as well. People crave it and think that it is the meaning of life. Not only that, but afterward they go and tell others how wonderful it all is, and they seek a new victim and new adventures. Then everything collapses, becomes tiresome, or leaves them wanting more. Life loses its meaning; people become ill, lose their sanity, and die. How attractively all of this is portrayed in movies! It appears to have special significance and to bring happiness. It has become a normal social phenomenon. Consider sexual minorities, same-sex relationships, and sexual perversions. All of this is now being imposed on us as something that brings happiness and meaning, while the Bible calls it an abomination. Of all addictions, sexual addiction is the most dangerous and extreme. From the history of fallen empires, we see that sexual immorality was the final drop that filled the cup of God's wrath, after which those corrupt nations disappeared from history.

4. spiritual happiness.

For example, a person listens to spiritual music, watches old movies, television shows, and programs, reads books and novels, plays games, or studies something interesting. In a certain sense, that person is happy because of the emotional response these things awaken. Why are such things so popular today? Because they fill life with something that is missing—something a person needs, such as nostalgia for earlier times, when everything seemed different from the way it is today.

The world wants to listen to songs from years gone by and return in memory to youth. People want something spiritual and familiar, something that feels like home. That need remains unmet in the modern world. We are made in such a way that music has a special influence on us, and we do not tire of listening to it. But this is not true happiness.

This list could be expanded. Some people seek happiness by acquiring new things—cars, houses, clothing, and pleasures—while others travel around the world in order to be happy. I call all of these things “bottomless vessels.” King Solomon tried them and wrote that everything is vanity, the very height of vanity. In other words, emptiness. Our world is arranged this way and lives according to its prevailing laws. Everyone strives for these things: people travel to the ends of the earth and spend millions and billions of their euros, dollars, and rubles in order to obtain the peace that is offered freely, and to find the meaning of life and existence that is offered to us at no cost.

Yet happiness is so near and so accessible! And it is real for everyone who tastes it. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Call to Him, and He will show us great and inaccessible things that we do not know.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Job 30:15; Proverbs 12:7; 15:15; Ecclesiastes 7:14; Malachi 3:15; Proverbs 8:30–32; 1 Corinthians 15:19

Chapter 3

There is a very interesting prophecy of Jesus about the church in the last days. I had read it very often, knew it by heart, and studied it many times, yet I never even noticed that this prophecy was there. I had never stopped to think about what it was saying.

It is also interesting that the Lord addresses His message specifically to those who will be living at the very end of the last days—that is, to us. For me, this revelation was like a flash of brilliant light that enabled me to see what I had neither seen nor known before.

I was also greatly surprised that this message contains a rebuke for me, because there are things in my life that should not be there. And the Lord's words apply not only to me personally, but to all of us—to God's children.

Let us stop speaking in riddles and discover what we still do not know. We read in Revelation 3:17: "For you say, 'I am rich, I have become wealthy, and I need nothing,' yet you do not know that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."

How powerfully this is stated—directly about our generation. And what did you learn? What did you hear? It is a familiar verse that everyone has read many times.

Now pay attention! Let us read it again, but for the moment focus only on what we need to see:

"Yet you do not know that you are miserable!"

To understand what misery is and why we are so pitiful, we must know what happiness is—and what it is not.

Let me get a little ahead of myself.

Friends, as I studied the science of happiness, I realized that we simply do not know what it is. Like the science of love, it is a mystery to us. We hear people speak about happiness all the time, but we can only guess what it looks like in real life—or see it portrayed in a movie. At the same time, we go through life

believing that we are happy and never even questioning it. Yet the Faithful Witness states very clearly that I am miserable and do not even know it, because I have invented my own version of happiness, hidden myself within it, and convinced myself that, in some sense, I possess such a state.

If I do not understand what it means to be happy or how happiness works, I will sometimes experience it as something spontaneous, temporary, and unpredictable. Each time, I will wait for some outside influence to give me a little enjoyment in life.

But if I know how Jesus understands happiness, how to receive it, and how to live with it, then it will become something steady and constant—something that does not go out during life's difficult moments but comes alive whenever it is needed. And, of course, a happy person can very quickly teach other people to be happy, provided that he himself understands what happiness is.

With what words does the Sermon on the Mount begin? With teaching about the happiness that people have lost. And it ends with the parable of two builders who decided to build that very happiness, but on different foundations. The first thing Jesus expressed was His desire to see all of us happy. He is deeply grieved when He sees us surrounded by so many blessings, yet suffering in the chains of our stereotypes, wishing emptiness upon one another, and chasing the wind as we try to catch dust and make it our possession. Yet happiness is very near. It is within reach. It is only a decision and an understanding away.

But a decision alone is not enough.

For example, if I decide to become wealthy—or extremely wealthy—that would be an interesting, even a very interesting, decision. But what comes next? I need knowledge, experience, and money to make my dream a reality. The road toward such a goal passes through many trials, disappointments, and losses. And if I finally accomplish this task, I realize that I am still only on the way. Looking back at the roads I have traveled, I understand that it is not all simple, yet neither is it difficult

when you keep moving in that direction. But it is impossible to become wealthy while retaining the mind-set of a poor person. All the millions that may come to me will not remain in my hands. Like water, they will run through my fingers and disappear into the sand of needless spending.

The same is true of happiness. Only someone who has the mind-set of a happy person can be happy. And that requires knowledge, experience, and courage. To be happy is to challenge the entire world—a world that offers substitutes and counterfeits, that has trampled every principle of happiness into the dirt and replaced it with pleasure and enjoyment that are temporary, unstable, driven by the senses, yet highly impressive and attractive.

Everywhere we look, advertisements for happiness show us smiling faces, beautiful possessions, and wonderful vacation scenery. The soul dreams of having all these things, but we must work long and hard to obtain them. So we labor like oxen merely to taste a small piece of that long-awaited happiness. Meanwhile, life passes by, and there is nothing worth remembering. My entire journey through life resembles a hamster wheel: there is plenty of motion, but little meaning.

But as the Lord looks at me, He lovingly and hopefully tells me that I am miserable—and therefore pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. In response, I show Him my Bible, with every powerful thought highlighted in red; my deeds, which supposedly speak for themselves; my faith; and my nose held high with pride. Yet He invites me to visit His store and obtain what will make me truly happy and rich.

I deeply hope that after reading this lesson, you will understand who you truly are in God’s eyes and recognize that you need to become the person He desires us to be.

Being happy is like the life of an athlete who has trained for the Olympic Games, achieved victory, and now stands on the podium, rejoicing over the path he has traveled. Yet he must constantly contend with new rivals who dream of becoming better and taking his place.

In the Heavenly contest, however, happy people do not deprive others of happiness. Instead, they do everything possible to help those around them reach the same height they have attained. But the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms hate truly happy people and constantly fight against them, seeking to knock them from the victors' podium and drag all their joy of victory into the dirt.

It is impossible to become an Olympic champion without rigorous training. The same principle of sustained effort in pursuit of victory applies to a happy life. There is no way to avoid struggle and perseverance. But we have a wonderful Coach. He prepares Heavenly champions of happiness, love, and friendship, and those who choose His school will never regret it.

To begin building our house of happiness, it is important to understand what happiness is not. Then we will not use inferior materials in its construction. The old, rotten structure that is cracking and periodically collapsing should be torn down. We need to draw up a plan and have it approved by Heaven's executive council, understand what we want, and—most important of all—get up and go. We must begin the journey of a happy life regardless of the obstacles, wars, diseases, disasters, crises, hunger, and suffering taking place around us.

Happiness is not always a broad smile and a cloudless sky. It is, rather, God's peace and the complete contentment that comes from the inner harmony of my spirit joined with eternal values.

The advantage of agape happiness is that I will be able to take it with me to Heaven. There it will remain mine forever, bringing joy to me, to Jesus, and to those around me. Because of it, I will always be able to devise new plans for reaching new territories where happiness already exists, but where my own happiness has not yet been shared.

It is difficult for me to agree with Jesus' statement. But as I learn the science of a happy life, I understand that He is right and knows what He is saying. I am so grateful that, having begun a good work in me, He is bringing it to complete

perfection, adding His grace to my efforts. And so we always walk together.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 7:24–27; 1 Corinthians 9:24–27; Revelation 3:14–18, 21; 16:15; 22:7; Zephaniah 2:3; 3:17; Isaiah 61:3–6; Luke 5:36–38; Romans 12:1–3; 1 Corinthians 2:10–16

Chapter 4

Once, at a camp meeting, a woman told me about her teenage daughter. The daughter blamed her mother for teaching her many good things but failing to teach her about happiness and how to be happy. I was so glad to know that there was someone in this world who longed for happiness and wanted to learn how to be happy.

I met the girl and asked her to take a pen and a notebook. I began telling her about happiness, its laws, and its principles. We talked about it for a very long time, and she wrote down everything that brings happiness and everything of which it consists.

If our sons and daughters were taught the principles of a happy life from childhood, I think they would be very happy throughout their lives. Still, happiness is my choice.

To understand whether I am happy, I must define what happiness is. Many people confuse it with joy, and when difficulties arise and joy no longer fills the heart, or there is no smile on the face, happiness evaporates. Many of you are happy without even realizing it, and this leads to certain difficulties. When I understand what this state is, I consciously choose this path and remove every obstacle so that I may attain happiness and remain in it.

Wikipedia defines it this way:

Happiness is a human condition that corresponds to the greatest inner satisfaction with the circumstances of one’s existence, to the fullness and meaningfulness of life, and to the fulfillment of one’s human purpose.

It is a good definition, but it has no spiritual foundation and, in many cases, may even apply to those who are unhappy.

The Bible gives a definition that describes happiness more fully: ‘righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost’ (Romans 14:17).

My happiness is determined by how I understand my condition and by the choice I make.

You can stand under an umbrella in the rain and rejoice, or you can cry.

I have raised this subject so that together we may discover the meaning and nature of happiness. It has its own laws and its own way of working within a person.

There are two concepts:

1. Temporary happiness, or what we sometimes call happiness.
2. Constant and eternal happiness—the happiness to which the Lord desires to lead us.

There is another kind of happiness as well—a sort of castle in the air. It is the theory that if I obtain or achieve something, I will feel wonderful once I have it.

Now let us consider the most important matter: what happiness rests upon and what forms its foundation.

Let us picture it as a little house of happiness. It is governed by the same principles we encounter in construction.

The apostle Paul uses builders as an example and writes in 1 Corinthians 3:9, 11: ‘Ye are God’s building,’ and ‘other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’

This is the Foundation of every kind of happiness.

How are we to understand this? We are speaking about spiritual things, and they must also be understood spiritually. If I have not believed in Jesus as my personal Savior from the power of sin and do not have a close relationship with Him, then I do not know Him, and He does not know me. He draws me to Himself, calls me to know Him, desires to reveal the beauty of His character and cleanse me from sin, and He waits for me to respond.

By accepting Christ as my Lord and Savior, I lay a firm foundation in my life, in my mind, and in my feelings. Upon it, I can build the little house called ‘My Happiness.’

This Foundation will bear any load and support any structure, and it is eternal and unchanging.

It is possible to build happiness without Christ. This is called building on sand. The house will still take shape and may even be beautiful, but only until the first trial, when it will collapse.

What is built upon Christ will also be tested—and tested from every direction. If anyone has built with inferior materials, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved.

For example, consider two wealthy brothers.

One of them acquired many fine possessions, established a business, surrounded himself with influential people and friends, and continued increasing his wealth until the day he died, feeling no need to be saved from sin. He left this life full of years, without knowing God or His will.

The other always asked for wisdom from above and sought God’s counsel so that he would know how best to manage the wealth he possessed by God’s grace. He established a business, surrounded himself with friends and influential people, and continually thought about whom he could help and how he could best use his wealth. He died full of years, with faith in a better life with God.

Their deeds were brought before God’s judgment, examined, and a verdict was rendered. Which of them do you think will be happy at the resurrection?

A life with God and faith in Jesus lays a firm foundation for eternal and genuine happiness here on this earth, in this present life.

The foundation of every kind of structure in my spiritual life is Christ—that is, my personal relationship with Him, my fellowship with Him, and my trust in Him. And this is no small foundation, but a Rock upon Which anything can be built, no matter its height, width, or depth. He will bear any load.

Have you ever wondered why such tall buildings are constructed in Manhattan in the United States? A layer of

granite lies beneath them and can bear enormous loads, making it possible to build skyscrapers there with confidence.

And so I begin building happiness. Do I have a plan? God has a plan for my life. Do I know it, and does it agree with my ideas about happiness? If my plan for happiness is merely my own, then even with a good foundation, my little house may turn out very flimsy, because I have no understanding of what it should be like or what loads it must withstand.

I am a builder myself, and in many respects I see a connection between physical and spiritual laws. The houses I build are engineered to withstand earthquakes measuring up to magnitude 5, hurricanes, snowfall, cold and heat, floods, groundwater pressure, dampness, and vandals. Everything is calculated before construction begins; the plans are then approved by the local authorities, and a building permit is issued.

Even if none of these disasters occur, the structure is designed to withstand them all. These requirements exist because they were written in blood.

When I built a small house in my garden, I took all these things into account as well. My neighbors were surprised and made fun of me, but time will show which of us was more farsighted. If a hurricane comes, I know that my roof will remain in place.

God is deeply concerned about the safety, beauty, and strength of our spiritual house, and He has excellent building materials so that it will neither collapse nor burn when it is tested. Unlike ordinary construction, spiritual construction is remarkable in that it passes through every storm, upheaval, hurricane, fire, and flood and is tested from every direction for strength. After the test, I see that the house is still standing, that it is fit to live in, and that I can invite anyone who wishes to enter, giving them the warmth of my happiness and answering all their questions about how this house was built. Yet there are always people who have their own ideas and refuse to learn from the mistakes of others, people who want to create a masterpiece very quickly and cheaply. Trials come to them as well, however,

and collapse follows. God has given many instructions, and He is too wise to be mistaken. He loves us and helps us in everything. The storm is approaching, and He knows it, but He is limited by our choice.

Shall we begin planning?

Shall we build?

Shall we learn how to build?

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Corinthians 3:9–15; Proverbs 30:26; Isaiah 28:16; 54:11–14; Ezekiel 13:13–14; Luke 1:3–4; 6:48; Hebrews 11:10

Chapter 5

There are expressions in the Bible that have become so familiar to my ears that at times I do not even stop to think about the meaning contained in them.

In the previous chapter, we touched on the foundation of happiness. It is logical, understandable, and vivid. But what does it mean? What does it look like in my life? What changed in my thinking when I read about it? If I answer honestly, nothing did, because I already knew about it. The chapter merely reminded me of a familiar truth.

I believe it is worth stopping to consider how clearly we understand what is being discussed. After all, knowing verses from the Bible does not necessarily mean understanding them or living by them.

What is the meaning of the expression ‘to build on the Rock’? How should we understand that ‘Christ is the Foundation’? Try to explain it in such a way that I can understand and see whether I have such a foundation. Reveal to me the essence and meaning of what is written, and demonstrate it in your own life so that everything becomes clear to me.

To have Christ as the Foundation means to possess His character, to know His Word and His teaching, to live according to the light received, to understand God’s will for me, to have a pure heart clothed in love, and to maintain a personal relationship with Christ. It means to be guided by the same mind and feelings that were in Jesus. And none of this comes in a single moment. It is a process.

If you think that you can simply read about love and happiness now and that all of it will appear within you, you are mistaken. In that case, you are like a person sitting on the couch in front of the television with a sandwich, watching sports and considering himself a champion in every competition because he thinks he knows better than anyone else what should be done and how.

Practice, however, differs from theory, and in our school it accompanies every student. Yet it begins with a sincere prayer to God, asking Him to teach me, reveal the depths of the subject, establish me in the truth, write His laws in my heart, instruct me in what we are studying, and show me its meaning and prospects. Ask, and it shall be given you.

Some students complain to me that it takes a great deal of time to grasp the meaning and depth of one chapter, and then they must study the next one, and another, and another. It is impossible to keep up. But why are you in such a hurry? Who told you that you must rush? What matters is to take heed, delve deeply into the teaching, ask God for help from above, and move as quickly as the heart allows. There is a great difference between those who read hurriedly and those who try to penetrate to the heart of things by reading and rereading difficult passages and comparing what they have studied with what is happening in their own lives. Although the effect and perception differ from person to person, everyone benefits from the knowledge received.

To build on Jesus means to know Him personally and to speak with Him about every little matter in life that troubles the soul or remains unclear. The more often I seek Christ's counsel, the more clearly I see His involvement and His answers for me. He knows how to speak with His friends. This is the most vital knowledge of all—the knowledge of Christ. For if I do not possess it, I am simply spiritually dead, while all other fields of knowledge will help me only in this life. The Lord Himself said in His prayer for us in John 17:2–3: 'As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.'

To know Thee and Jesus—this is what it means to build on the Rock.

Christ also told parables showing that many believers would bear His name and do certain things in that Name, yet Jesus would not know them. Even the five foolish virgins, whose only

failure was that they had not provided themselves with oil, will be declared strangers—people He does not know.

The study of love and happiness is a very serious discipline. It is not something we can merely study; it is vitally necessary for everyone to understand it and accept it with all the heart. For if the Lord reproves me for being unhappy, He does so not to humiliate me in any way, but to show me the way out. God needs a happy people among whom love reigns. Among this people, everyone finds a special joy in agape and draws this strength from Christ.

In Deuteronomy 28, through verse 14, we find God's blessings for His faithful children. Then follows a description of the curses and diseases that will overtake those who 'servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things' (Deuteronomy 28:47). Is this what you want? Do you plan to continue living unhappily amid an abundance of light, gifts, and blessings? Perhaps it is time to come to your senses.

I am not speaking about everyone, friends, but there are some among you who understand what I mean.

The apostle Paul once made this statement in 1 Corinthians 15:34: 'Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.'

Please come to the little Laodicean shop and buy for yourself what is offered there. We studied this a little earlier. Christ is coming, and what is happening in the world now makes this very clear to us. Things will not be as they were before. That time has passed, and the opportunities have changed. From this point on, everything will become more difficult and more interesting. But now is precisely the time to know Christ. It is vitally important to have Him in the heart. And if He is not there, I feel sorry for you, even if you are in the church. Emotional experiences while attending a worship service are not evidence of God's presence in my heart. But my prayers about my own decisions, my requests for a new heart, my personal fellowship with the Lord in those prayers, my desire to

know God’s will, and my faithfulness to His commandments—all of this says a great deal. And as a pledge of salvation, the Holy Spirit is given to me. He conveys the meaning of everything to my mind and teaches me how to live rightly.

Simply bearing the name of Jesus or remembering the date of one’s baptism is not enough. I know people who listen to present truth, read appeals, become acquainted with revelations, agree with them, and change nothing. The habit of doing nothing and merely attending gatherings and meetings has become the normal way of life for believers. No initiative is welcomed. The attitude is, ‘If you want to do it, do it yourself, and we will watch.’ I am not writing about the whole world, but about the community in which I live and move.

I read the message to Laodicea and see that it is about us. Yes, about us. And it is with such poor, unhappy little people that the Lord intends to bring the history of this world to its close! Could He have gotten something wrong?

But God has a plan. It is the coming crisis. What we failed to learn in favorable times, we will have to learn under life-threatening conditions. When all our idols are destroyed, all our structures of straw are swept away, and all our possessions are plundered, then we will understand that the Foundation is still intact and that it is still possible to build something strong upon it very quickly. Perhaps that is when the knowledge we are receiving today will prove useful. It is also possible that it will be too late.

A narrow path called ‘Love, Happiness, Friendship’ is offered to us, and the Lord Himself teaches us and leads us along it as a close Friend. Will I follow this path? The decision belongs to you and me, my friend.

But we must build now. The Rock will withstand every disaster. Yet hurricanes and rushing waters will sweep away everything that is not fastened to the Rock, that does not hold on to It, and that has been built carelessly, even though it stands on the Rock.

I think it is worthwhile to stop once more, look within, and search my heart so that I may understand upon Whom and with what materials I am building. It is important to realize how strong those materials are. God expects happiness from His people, and it will come.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 11:25; 14:6; 17:2–3; 1 John 5:12–13, 20; 1 Corinthians 3:13–15; Deuteronomy 28:1–2, 15, 45–47; Psalms 1:1–3; 40:4; 84:4, 12

Chapter 6

Let us imagine the following situation:

A land bank grants me nonrepayable funding to build a home large enough for me, my family, and my friends. In addition, I have the right to build as many houses nearby as I wish, and I may rent them out or give them away at my discretion. The municipality will provide me with land for construction wherever I choose. An architectural firm has agreed to draw up the plans and prepare the calculations for all my buildings. Construction and transportation companies are waiting for my command to begin the project. Everything now depends solely on my decision about when to set the process in motion. Everything has come to a standstill, awaiting my command.

Yet the following questions arise in my mind. If I take this step of faith and begin construction, will I have the strength to complete everything this undertaking promises? Will my house be reliable enough to withstand any disaster? Will the building be beautiful and comfortable enough for me to live in? Will I suffer there from heat or cold? What if the house has no bathroom, or no provision has been made for a water supply? What if the electricity or gas is shut off? What will I do then, and where will I go? What if the bank stops financing the project? Where will I find the money to finish it? What if the authorities change their minds about giving me anything? All these questions trouble me and keep me from beginning construction.

And so I content myself with renting a modest place and quietly live out my days, dreaming that someday a miracle will happen and everything will become different for me. Then I will enter that different and beautiful future, and life there will be good. My entire life is spent on these dreams. I write books about them, attend seminars on these subjects, and think about them from morning until evening. Yet I do nothing to change anything.

A foolish situation? Or perhaps the situation itself is normal, but the person who has fallen into it is foolish?

Do you think I will be able to build anything for myself under these circumstances, even if I eventually decide that I want to? What is the heart of the problem? I believe the problem lies within me.

Let us speak about another, very real situation and consider it in the same way.

God has prepared limitless Heavenly resources to provide me with everything necessary to build my little house of happiness, where I, my family, my friends, and anyone else who wishes may live. The Highest Authorities are willing to grant me a sphere of influence wherever I desire to have one. God's faithful servants have drawn up detailed plans and calculations for my salvation and have described every prospect for my further growth. God's angels are waiting for my command to begin building my happiness, and they are ready to teach me love and friendship, whose development will never end. Everything stands still, awaiting my decision and my command to begin this process.

But I have many questions and fears that hold me back. What if God changes His mind? What if an error is discovered in the calculations? What if there is not enough grace to cover all my sins? What if this structure collapses under the pressure of trials? What if my love and friendship are cut off? Where will I go then? What if the Holy Spirit is not poured into my life? Whom will I turn to then? And why should I believe that all this is available to me? Everyone around me lives an ordinary life, and our daily routine is arranged well enough. Why change anything? After all, if I set out on the path of love, I will have to walk it for the rest of my life, and I will have no time left for anything else—for my busyness, my ambitions, or my sins. Without these things, how will I ever make something of myself? People will laugh at me.

No, the opinions of those around me are still dearer to me than God's plans for me. Building happiness requires constant effort

and strength from above. But will God even be interested in these desires of mine?

I would rather continue living calmly and quietly passing my time. I am comfortable inside my shell, where I can shut myself away from everyone and dream that someday a ‘kind benefactor’ will move me into a new house, where life will be good—even very good. Beautiful people will surround me there. Everyone will be glad to see me. I will become quite famous. I could even write a book or make a movie about it. What wonderful prospects! All my neighbors will learn about my talent, and I will give autographs to anyone who wants one. Why should I take a risk? I will wait until happiness simply falls from Heaven into my lap.

But the Lord is waiting to give. The Ruler of Heaven and Earth stands waiting for my decision to be happy. And He is ready to do whatever is necessary for my happiness. Jesus makes it clear that He alone can teach me the very best things in life and give me the best that my soul longs for. He is waiting to enter. He is waiting to begin building my little house of happiness. He knows all my questions, and none of my doubts surprise Him. He has the best answer to every one of them.

And Jesus decided to become my Friend. He gives me His love and loves me at all times. He can do all things, but without me He will do nothing.

He knows all my dreams and vain plans. The Lord desires to tear them down and give me His future and His hope, fulfilling His plans in my life—plans for a beautiful future, plans for happiness, love, and friendship. And Christ sends me peace that surpasses my understanding, yet it is so real that I can feel it with my whole soul.

What will I decide? How will I live from now on? What will I pursue?

Should I begin building my little house of happiness, or should I wait until my friends have built theirs first, then compare the results, take all their mistakes into account, and only then begin?

Where can I find enough faith for all this?

And how much time do I have left? It seems as though I will never die, as though old age and illness were not made for me. Life must be enjoyed here and now, and after I am gone, let the flood come. Is this the right way to think?

Do you recognize the person I have described?

At the end of this reflection, I can add the following. Friends, if any of you decide to build your little house of happiness together with God, you will create a masterpiece beyond anything you have ever imagined. You will build a strong and beautiful structure that will withstand every trial and will not fall under any pressure. Love, happiness, and friendship are available to everyone, and God has them in great abundance. There is enough for all who take a step of faith, begin to ask—and receive.

I am one of those who decided to try and put God to the test. And it worked. I am happy—very happy indeed. I love, and it is wonderful. I believe that the gifts of Heaven are available to me, and I receive them. And I know that everyone who sets out on this path will gain far more than expected. Dare to ask for much, and God will answer. He loves us; He loves to give; and He has a very great deal to give.

Always remember that my happiness is Heaven’s plan for the last days. I need only enter into that plan and do what the Lord reveals to me.

What do you think: if you plunge headfirst into the ocean, will you get wet? I think everyone answered, ‘Yes.’ But if you plunge headfirst into God’s happiness, will you remain unhappy? Now that is something people may wish to debate...

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Corinthians 1:25–26; 3:10; Matthew 6:27; Luke 14:28–30; Hebrews 4:1; James 1:25; 1 Peter 4:15; John 10:16, 27–30

Chapter 7

Do you know someone who is always joyful—someone you could confidently call the happiest person in the world? Let us suppose that you do know such a person. Unless that person is a member of your family whom you see all the time, it can be very difficult to judge how another person truly lives. We know that we can behave well in public and lead a double life, creating a certain image for ourselves. In that case, can I say of myself that I am happy? Not everyone will dare to make such a bold statement while remaining honest with themselves.

At least I can say that happiness is present in my life—not because I was born this way, but because I chose it and am engaged in a constant struggle with myself for my happiness.

Happiness is a great battle that takes place between my right ear and my left. I must constantly keep my mood, emotions, thoughts, and feelings under control and bring them into submission to my reason and will. At times, this is beyond my own strength, so I ask God for the strength and blessing to remain in this state no matter what happens. And He helps me and gives me His grace.

I am learning this, and I can see my progress. With God’s help, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And when my mind is in this state, I clearly understand what blessedness is, what laws govern happiness, and how they work. God does not leave me in ignorance about this. He does not teach me to be happy by guesswork, depending on chance or favorable circumstances. He sends revelations of His love and care and teaches me to build my happiness on a firm foundation, using eternal materials and values.

I have noticed that sometimes my happy heart forgets to tell my face what is happening inside me, and from the outside I do not always look like someone who is happy. People occasionally point this out to me. I agree with them, and this is something I also need to learn. A smile is the best testimony to the world

that all is well within you—although smiles can be very different.

Happiness, however, can be divided into conditional happiness and true happiness. A person is usually happy when everything goes according to plan, when success and good fortune accompany him, when he achieves what he intended and worked toward, or when the temporary circumstances around him do not irritate or depress him but remain favorable and stable.

True happiness rests on a firm foundation, which is Christ. In other words, I believe in Him as my Savior and have a personal relationship with Him. When I come to know Jesus deeply and allow Him to know me and take part in every area of my life, joy fills me. This enables me to discover the laws of happiness and live by them. Such happiness is more enduring than conditional happiness. It is true because it rests on eternal principles that do not change; as long as I follow them and live by them, I have every opportunity and every right to be happy always. And in all of this, my choice plays the leading role.

Happiness is not something that suddenly fell upon me, leaving me unsure what to do with it. It is an entire science that must be studied, comprehended, understood, tested, and proven throughout one’s life by making a continual choice. This is exactly how we should live.

Difficulties and difficult people are a continual test of my happiness, and trying situations are the best training ground for my will. Yet the most troublesome opponent is within me. It is called the old self, or the flesh, which constantly pulls me toward sin if I stop holding it down.

Time passes, and I become so accustomed to living in happiness that at times I even forget to ask for it. I simply enter into it early in the morning after my morning prayer and remain in that state throughout the day. And God blesses me in this for His own sake.

When my daughter was little, I would take her to the sandbox, and we would make little sand cakes. She was happy that I was

nearby, that I was with her, and that I was helping her. At that moment, I was not thinking about the terrible trials she would have to endure in her life or wondering whether she would be as happy then as she was now. I simply played with her and cared about her small joy and her safety.

Perhaps, in God's eyes, my present struggle for happiness resembles a game in a sandbox. But He does not rebuke me for it. Instead, He sits down beside me and helps me make my little 'sand cakes' while telling me about His love. He teaches me to trust.

Yet no matter how small my happiness may be, I see that when I begin sharing it with others and telling them about its laws, their lives become better, more joyful, and more interesting. Their worldview changes, and what once seemed like darkness becomes a blessing that opens the door to the land of happiness. What joy it is to realize that someone's life became better because I entered it and simply helped a little. Sometimes my support consists of leading people to Jesus and explaining that God is better than they imagine Him to be, and that sin is an evil that must be fought.

God did not intend for a sinful person to be happy and live in blessedness. Sin is destructive. It ruins everything, robs us of peace, and kills love. It has a tendency to grow: though it may be small now and seem harmless, over time it gains strength, sends down deep roots, and scatters evil seeds all around it. God does not plan to perpetuate sin or place the seal of His happiness upon it.

But happiness comes when the soul is cleansed from the dominion of sin and finds freedom in Jesus Christ. A person who has received forgiveness and deliverance from the bonds of evil becomes truly happy and, if he chooses, can always remain in this frame of mind.

Our world was not created as a place for happy people to live. It is only a school of happiness in which we are all learning and hoping for a better world and a better time, which will soon

come with the return of our Lord Jesus. But while we are here and alive, the struggle for happiness will not end.

It is striking that we live in an age of unhappy people. Unhappiness has become the normal way of life, and we do not even realize that we are unhappy. Instead, we think that we are rich, well clothed, and in need of nothing. But the Lord says, ‘And knowest not that thou art wretched…’ He continues to expose our miserable condition while also giving us counsel on how to escape it.

But people are stubborn. They devise all kinds of theories about the human soul and make various discoveries simply to convince themselves that they can be happy without God—or that they can believe in Him, live in sin, and pretend that God neither notices nor pays attention to it. After all, they say, the main thing is simply to believe!

Sin and true happiness are two different things. Conditional happiness may adapt to a life of sin, but such a person has no future. All he has is this short earthly life, which can be unpredictable. Every day, so many people reach the end of life grieving that they did many things wrong and can no longer undo them. They leave us valuable advice that changes very little in our lives. Only God can bring about radical improvement. And in Him are happiness, love, and friendship.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Jeremiah 33:3; Philippians 4:13; Proverbs 15:13; 17:22; 2 Timothy 3:1–5; Isaiah 14:3–4; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Galatians 4:6–7, 9

Chapter 8

King Solomon once wrote these words: Ecclesiastes 5:18: ‘Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.’

Love, happiness, and friendship are a special enjoyment of life. Blessed is the person who understands this and makes full use of it. Let me offer a comparison.

When I walk around my neighborhood, I often pass buildings that I helped construct several years ago. I remember the empty lot well, when there was nothing there and only grass was growing. Then we builders came and began to create something good. As a result of our labor, two small houses appeared. Later, other people came and added their efforts, and the houses became warm and inviting. I remember the owners’ joy when they received the keys and prepared to move in. Now they live in these beautiful homes and arrange their lives as they see fit.

Every time I pass these buildings, I look at them and rejoice that my labor, too, became part of someone’s life and helped make it more comfortable and interesting. I take in the sight of those houses and continue on my way. The people living inside do not even realize that each time I pass by, I rejoice in the work of my hands. I do not think they even remember me, but that does not take away my joy.

Why am I telling you this? I have used this illustration as an example of a special joy that I have experienced for many years and plan to enjoy throughout Eternity.

The Lord has entrusted His Word, His love, and influence to us so that we may sow them wherever possible. And He watches very carefully to see how I use these gifts of Heaven. It is so wonderful to pass them on to others, sowing love in the lives of those around me.

And afterward, what joy it is to watch the crop spring up—to see God's seed take root, blossom, and bear fruit.

When God's love, sown by you, falls on good soil, it makes a person's life beautiful and inviting, filling the mind with warmth and happiness. And when the seed of love sprouts, it bears fruit that contains seed of its own, ready to be sown.

I experience tremendous enjoyment and delight when I pass by those people into whose hearts I once planted something good. I quietly stand off to the side and remember how things were at first, and then how Jesus and I came and began making an effort, building something and making improvements. Later, others came and lent a hand. Then the Lord presented the keys to the 'house of happiness' to its joyful owners and became a welcome Friend in that home.

And I stand off to the side and quietly rejoice as I see my friends' lives filling with happiness, love, and friendship. What a pleasure it is to see strong families that have remained intact and set out on the path of love and friendship; to see the radiant faces of friends who live in the light of love and prepare for Eternity, no longer dwelling on the darkness from which they once saw no way out; to see people who have found the meaning of life in Jesus and live with the assurance of salvation as they prepare to meet Him; and to see those whose lives became better and more beautiful because you entered them with your love and friendship.

I often reread in the book of Isaiah that the Lord 'shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.' It brings me such joy to see the happy face of my Savior and to share His joy with Him throughout Eternity.

For now, I am only learning this heavenly joy. I am learning to live as though I were already in Eternity and only its laws were written in my heart. Eternal life began at the moment of the new birth; through faith in Jesus, it continues. Knowing the only true God and Jesus, Whom He sent, sustains my spiritual growth and gives me the right to live among holy beings. I have

this hope, and through the death and resurrection of Jesus, it has become possible for every person.

And the love that brings friendship into relationships and happiness into the mind is the key to the house of my heart, entrusted to Jesus so that He will not stand outside and knock, but will enter my life as its rightful Owner, set my life in order, and have access to every room. I can only tell others about this and share my experience of how I came to it and what I went through. To some, these may be only words, but they are good words with the power to create something new and meaningful —the power to change someone's life.

Words of love transform the mind, change lives, point people in the right direction, scatter darkness, give hope, bear good fruit, and point to Jesus. Yet they remain only words, and there can never be too many of them. They adorn life with heavenly light.

Do not be afraid to be happy and kind. Do not be afraid to speak freely and act decisively in love. Words of love reveal the true motive behind everything you do. Your words of love will vindicate you on the day of judgment, testifying to the closeness with God that filled your heart to overflowing; for when the heart overflows with love, the mouth begins to speak, revealing God's character to the world.

It is so wonderful to stand off to the side and behold the work of your own lips, which has adorned someone's life with love, happiness, and friendship. What joy it is to know that someone's life became better because you are part of it. How important it is to realize that someone is happy because you sowed a seed of love in that person's heart, and it sprang up and bore good fruit; that someone became happy after hearing about your experience with agape, decided to try it, and succeeded; that someone found in me a friend forever. Glory to God!

It brings such joy to hear that those who are studying in this school fellowship with one another, form their own groups, make new friends, gain new experiences, and then even come to love one another.

It brings such joy to see families that were planning to divorce but learned that love exists and decided to taste it—and now live happily in love and cannot imagine life without one another.

How wonderful it is to hear that someone who was in the church yet lived in the prison of sin and had become disappointed in everything chose to turn on love in his mind, came to know Jesus, and became a light to this world. What joy it is to see someone else's happiness in which you, too, have had a part.

What blessedness it is to receive seeds of life from the Lord and sow them in this world, watching the soil into which they fall and seeing how they spring up.

Most remarkable of all is learning that words of gratitude are being offered to Jesus for your humble labor and that God's Name is being glorified. No matter how you participated in this process or how late you became part of the movement of God's work, the Lord will give you what He desires to give and what He has prepared for those who love Him.

And the greatest joy is knowing that our names are written in the Book of Life—and that, because of us and our influence, our words of love and friendship, new names are being written there as well.

My lips never cease to thank the One Who is Love, the One Who is Love in my life.

And all of you, my friends, are my joy. It gives me great pleasure to stand off to the side and watch your lives become better because Jesus entered them and kindled a light called love, happiness, and friendship. What joy it is to see that you are happy. And Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Isaiah 32:20; 53:11; Matthew 5:16; 12:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 3:9; Proverbs 11:18; 2 Corinthians 9:8–12; Luke 10:20; Colossians 1:27–29; Psalm 126:5–6; Titus 2:11–15; Hebrews

13:21–22; 2 Timothy 4:6–8; Proverbs 25:11; Song of Solomon 2:4; 6:1–3

Chapter 9

If I consider something impossible, extremely difficult, or beyond my abilities, I most likely will not even attempt to do it. Logical thinking tells me not to waste time on something that exceeds my capabilities or lies beyond my understanding.

Yet to grasp the essence of any field of knowledge, one must spend a very long time investigating, experimenting, making mistakes, searching, trying, and studying its underlying laws. That is how the process of learning works.

Consider, for example, an electrical outlet in your home. What is in it? Electricity at 220 volts and 10–16 amperes. You plug in an appliance, and it works, without your even thinking about where the electricity comes from or why that power remains constant. Yet behind those two or three wires in the outlet lies an entire industry, with its complex laws, mechanisms, inventions, underground and overhead lines, service personnel, and uninterrupted production. All of it is constantly in motion so that your home will have electricity. You simply press a switch, and the light comes on.

Or consider how our bodies work—how all our organs affect one another without asking our advice, simply laboring day and night as they carry out the design of their Creator. When I immerse myself in this world, I begin to understand and discover the great mysteries and laws of health and the interrelationship of the spiritual, physical, and emotional dimensions of life. Even then, many mysteries remain under God’s authority, beyond the limits of my understanding.

The study of love, happiness, and friendship belongs to those wonders of human relationships whose discoveries will delight us throughout Eternity and whose possibilities and supernatural influence will never cease to amaze us. At present, we are learning only the foundations of these disciplines, yet we are already astonished by how multifaceted and varied they are and how wonderfully they work together with my will and desires. Some people consider all of this far too difficult and

inaccessible. They do not even attempt to learn more or dig deeper, contenting themselves with only a superficial experience of these laws.

If I decide to build my little house on the Rock, I must take many factors and laws into account so that my structure will stand and will not be swept away by the wind or by powerful torrents that may come after the rain, flowing down the slopes.

Once I flew to Magnitogorsk, and we were driven from the airport to a meeting in Bashkiria. We traveled across the steppe, and suddenly the Ural Mountains began to emerge in the distance. They rose directly from the plain as small hills and stretched away, growing into a mountain range that crosses the entire continent toward the far north and south, eventually ending somewhere beyond our sight. We stayed at the very beginning of that mountain range, unable to comprehend its full grandeur and height. Yet I understood that I was in the mountains because I remembered the map of that region from my geography lessons, even though I could not grasp their entire scale and magnitude.

As I approach happiness, I immerse myself in its outermost edge and come into contact with the eternal laws of this field of knowledge, without even imagining all the grandeur and power that begin working together, weaving themselves into my consciousness and existence and setting remarkable processes in motion within my mind. I am simply happy and cannot even explain why. I feel good because I have immersed myself in this ‘good,’ and its laws have begun to work in me as well.

Many philosophers and thinkers have tried to comprehend the study and mysteries of happiness, but they reached the limits of their imagination and concluded that everyone is happy in his or her own way, according to individual perception. When Eternity and infinity open before you and you are standing at their very edge, it is extremely difficult to imagine what they will become or where they end. You content yourself with what you can see and study only what lies within your field of vision and reach. Faith is needed to understand that there are vast realms which ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,’ but which a

loving God has prepared for all who desire to inherit and explore them. When the Heavenly Father promises to show me great and inaccessible things that I do not know, He understands what He is speaking about and sees the whole picture. He reveals His beautiful landscapes to me as I advance deeper into the land of Love and Happiness. This land is immense. Our spiritual sight cannot even imagine it, yet it exists.

How great is the Rock upon Which we have begun to build? It is infinite, yet it has a beginning at a certain point in my life. What can I build on this Rock, where can I build, when can I begin, and how much can I build? Everything is limitless: I can build much, high, and deep, and I can begin right now. How long am I permitted to build? As long as Eternity lasts.

Yet a journey of thousands of miles begins with one small step. Great happiness begins with a small joy in discovering the great laws by which the entire infinite Universe lives. Wherever there is no law, no order, and no power ensuring that these rules are carried out precisely, chaos and destruction begin. But our God is a God of order and peace. With Him, everything is ‘in its proper place,’ everything has its definition, and even what we consider a miracle He calls the restoration of order according to His will and your request or expectation.

At the very beginning of learning about happiness, we must understand that it exists, that it has its own laws, and that it is infinite—yet it must begin at some point in our lives so that it may never end.

This sounds fantastic, but it is a living reality for a believer—a reality he will encounter sooner or later and cannot avoid. If I choose any direction and begin moving straight ahead, I will eventually reach an ocean and face the inevitable need to continue onward, for which I will have to enter it.

In the same way, life with God means that my growth takes place not only within my own shell, where it is warm and comfortable, but also in something that exists all around me—something I will inevitably reach if I keep moving. And that

something is Love, Happiness, and Friendship in Christ Jesus. It is an infinite reality that cannot be avoided. Yet I can stop and refuse to enter it, contenting myself with what I already understand, what has already been revealed to me, and what is accessible within the limits of my narrow outlook.

Is God to blame for the narrowness of my thinking? No. He does everything possible so that I may go farther and higher. Our Earth is the world in which we are accustomed to living, but it is only a tiny part of the vast, infinite Universe surrounding us on every side—a Universe that tells us the Earth is only the beginning. For us, it is the center from which our upward growth begins, but beyond the Earth another world begins: mysterious and yet real. It has its own laws, which can be discovered and studied and by which we can live.

To go farther, it is worth understanding that happiness exists: it is real, infinite, eternal, and governed by its own laws. It is important to realize that happiness is available to me and has been prepared for me. It flows from Jesus and returns to Him. God is happiness, and those who abide in happiness abide in Him, and He in them. I came up with that myself, but that is truly how it is.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Romans 4:5–6; Hebrews 11:6, 16, 40; Hosea 4:6; 6:3; Hebrews 9:28; Ephesians 3:16–21; Genesis 12:1; John 10:10, 27–29; Luke 18:17; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Luke 1:17; 2:8–10, 14

Chapter 10

Building a foundation requires a great deal of effort and money, and it takes considerable time. Yet even here, faith is tested. One person keeps building and begins to look more deeply into the matter; thirst awakens, faith comes, and the soul undergoes a test of loyalty to the chosen path. Another grows weary, abandons everything, dismisses every discovery as empty talk, and returns to familiar pursuits. Do not rush into life-changing decisions or abandon the plow you have taken hold of. Dare to be happy.

Let us consider the life of the happiest person. Do not be troubled by the word ‘happiest.’

How does a happy person live? How can we discover what he breathes, what he feels, and what he dreams about?

I think we must find the happiest person in the world and ask him these questions. If he has enough courage, perhaps he will answer you, trying to put his experiences into words. That is not always easy, but I will try. The hardest part is being brief and concise.

I have decided that I am the happiest person in the world. That is a very good decision, especially when it has a solid foundation. Of course, such words may sound presumptuous to some people, but I have abundant evidence within myself. I simply gather it all together and see that it is true. If I were to say that I am unhappy, I would be a liar, and that would be a sin.

All the powers of Heaven took part in building my happiness, and the Creator Himself laid His hand upon my mind to write His laws upon it and place them within my thoughts and feelings.

I always have a vivid comparison before me: before and after. I have the results of a thorough analysis and examination of the events and changes that have taken place in my life.

When I compare all of this with God's will for me as revealed in the Bible, I see many of the Most High's plans being fulfilled in my mind.

It is written that God grants the rebellious the disposition of the righteous, and I see that this has been fulfilled in me. My thoughts now dwell on what is holy, pure, true, and joyful.

God promised that Jesus would save His people from their sins. This has been fulfilled in my life as well.

As I read the message to Laodicea, I heard the declaration that I was wretched, along with counsel on how to leave that condition behind. I accepted the Lord's counsel, and now I live in a completely different dimension.

I am happy! I have a Friend named Jesus, and He is the best Friend of all.

Christ's presence on my journey fills all my plans, my work, and my life with special meaning. It is not I, but He in me, Who performs good works while also respecting my choice. I am in Him, and He is in me. This is a deeply joyful union.

I have become calmer. I have learned to cast both my own cares and the cares and problems of others upon Him immediately, for He cares for us. When Jesus carries everything in His hands, it does not burden my soul; instead, it gives me joy as I deal with everyday matters and strength as I fulfill my responsibilities.

I look at my life with gladness. It brings me joy when all my plans rest within God's will.

I have learned to be happy regardless of circumstances, outward factors, worldwide problems, and the disasters around me. Human malice from those close to me sometimes discourages me and knocks me off balance, but then a protective response immediately engages: my decision to love goes into action, and peace enters my heart as I recognize yet another victory of love. Joy comes with it.

Living each day within the streams of God's love and blessings, I decide to be happy, and this becomes a reality in my thoughts and feelings.

As I studied how happiness works, I discovered God's laws and commandments of blessedness and learned to submit to them and put them into practice. It turns out that being happy is so simple when Jesus lives in the heart and teaches me from within.

The school of love and happiness leads through sorrow, through the fire of trials, through the deep waters of human passions, and through storms of enticement and temptation. Yet nothing harms or destroys me, because my Teacher permits only what I have the strength to overcome and endure. He teaches me how to respond properly to each trial and how to gain the victory.

The love of Christ, given to me in response to my earnest request and according to His will, is the key to solving every problem and the assurance of victory in every battle.

As I journey through life, I choose love and happiness, and I live in them. How wonderful it is to be happy, to love in every situation, and to be meek and obedient to God.

Sometimes I realize that committing a sin is far more difficult than gaining victory over it. To protect me from sin, God has raised such powerful barriers of His grace that at times I simply cannot cross them, because I have neither desire nor interest—only disgust. At the same time, I understand perfectly well that although I am standing, I could fall very quickly. So I guard myself against falling, believing that if I must fall, let me fall into the hand of Jesus. It is frightening to commit sin. Better to die in purity than to live in sin and vice.

Yet amid all of this, throughout my small happiness that lasts a lifetime, I sometimes suffer deeply because I cannot share it in such a way that I can simply give it away and kindle a light in someone else's life. It is personal to me, deeply rooted and very closely connected with God. I want to give it away, and I do, yet I remain misunderstood and sometimes spend my happy days in complete solitude.

I can tell others about it, teach it, and explain it, but I cannot make another person's decision or live that person's happy life. This is something deeply personal between each individual and God. Everyone must choose this path personally.

I know what I have experienced, and my experience of small victories has taught me very important lessons. I see that I have a positive influence on some people, and I rejoice when I can help them, but they must choose their own happiness for themselves.

My happiness is highly self-sustaining. It does not depend on the opinions of others or on their attitude toward me. It rests upon my relationship with God, and when I am in harmony with my Creator, happiness becomes the natural result of that relationship.

I am preparing for life among holy beings. That life has its own laws, and I am already living by many of them here. I understand that they will not change in Eternity, but in Heaven there will be no sin and no enemy of souls with his temptations.

I am writing to you, my friends, about love and happiness with only one desire: that these may also become your personal experience, discovery, and treasure.

God longs for all of us, His children, to be happy amid the hardships and dangers of this world. He gave everything for this—all that was most precious to Him—so that it might become a reality. When I step onto the path of love and happiness, I come into harmony with God and His will, and I am destined to succeed.

'O taste and see that the Lord is good.'

I strongly urge you to listen to the rebuke and counsel of the True and Faithful Witness to Laodicea. If He tells us to buy something from Him, we need to do it. If He advises us to open something, it is important to answer Him and do so.

In this message, Jesus does not state what will happen to those who remain deaf and unwise, but it is not difficult to understand. If God Himself offers us Himself and friendship

with Him, I believe it would be extremely foolish to refuse—or to be so busy that we fail to hear Him.

Do you believe that the happiest person in the world wrote this to you? I do not think, however, that ‘the happiest’ means ‘the only one.’ I am waiting for you, my friends. Enter the land of remarkable discoveries and victories called ‘Happiness in Jesus.’

Bible verses for this chapter:

Luke 19:40; Psalm 139:23–24; 1 Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 5:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Ecclesiastes 12:9–10; Proverbs 20:27; Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 10:12–13; Philippians 4:15; Malachi 4:6; Habakkuk 3:17–19

Chapter 11

In the days of Moses, the Lord chose to give visible form to His plan for the salvation of humanity. He commanded Israel to build the tabernacle. Before it was built and afterward, the Lord visibly remained with His people as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:22).

God brought His chosen people out of Egyptian slavery. When the tabernacle was built, the ground served as its foundation. Although the sanctuary was portable, the visible presence of God filled all the surrounding tribes with fear and dread. God Himself was the King of His people. Yet the history of the Israelites shows us that, despite all the miracles and signs, murmuring and rebellion periodically arose among them.

After God's people entered the Promised Land and settled there, the Israelites rejected God as their supreme Ruler and chose a king. In time, King Solomon built the first temple, which God honored with His visible presence at its dedication.

When the foundation of this temple was being laid, a stone of unusual shape was brought to the site, but the builders rejected it. They used other material for the foundation.

Then disaster struck. God's people fell into idolatry and brought His righteous judgments upon themselves. As a result, the first temple was destroyed and plundered, and the people were taken into captivity for seventy years.

Yet according to God's plan, this captivity ended in deliverance, and Israel came out of Babylon. Upon returning to their homeland, the people built the second temple for the Lord. Services were held there, and sacrifices were offered.

During the construction of this building, however, a problem arose. The foundation required a stone that could bear the weight of the entire structure and become its chief cornerstone. To everyone's surprise, the builders turned their attention to the stone that had previously been rejected. In every dimension

and respect, it fit that place perfectly, and it was laid in the foundation of the second temple.

Later, Jesus compared Himself to this stone, making it clear that He Himself would become the Foundation of the third temple. During Christ's earthly life, however, no one understood this declaration, but it was recorded for our instruction.

After Christ's death and resurrection, the second temple was burned and destroyed, and all of Christ's followers were scattered throughout the world.

But God has a plan to build His House in my heart and in the heart of every one of His sons and daughters. The Lord is steadily moving toward this goal.

This construction begins when God's people come out of the slavery of sin and out of spiritual Babylon. Because this building has been under construction for nearly two thousand years, there is confusion about what exactly is being built.

The biblical accounts tell us very clearly that God intends to dwell in our bodies and write His law in our hearts and minds. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are therefore expected to treat this sanctuary with care and to understand what is taking place within it.

The little house of happiness that we have decided to build in our school is not something new or revolutionary. It is an attempt to put into words and organize all those biblical truths that must come alive in our minds and give us a clear understanding of what God is building and how it relates to me. When the example of construction helps me see Who the Foundation is, what serves as the binding material, what materials are used for the walls, and what the roof looks like, all these images come alive in my mind. I can then work with them because I understand what is taking place.

I know many happy Christians whose faith has a solid foundation and strong walls. Yet at times they do not understand or distinguish eternal happiness from earthly

happiness and try to blend the two. As a result, they experience disappointment and hardship. But when a person of God clearly understands what is eternal and secure, he becomes a wise builder who builds with stone upon the Rock without mixing dirt and debris into his structure.

Happiness is directly connected with our thoughts and feelings and very quickly permeates the heart, becoming part of my life. To say that it is only a principle would be dry and lifeless, but to limit it to feelings would make it excessively sentimental. Each person may understand happiness in whatever way he considers right, and it is difficult to argue with that. Yet there is a common understanding: happiness is when you feel well. There is, however, a great difference between the Christian meaning of ‘well’ and the worldly one. Although the two may become intertwined both in the world and in the church, they should be distinguished from each other.

Worldly happiness is temporary and can cease to exist or change at any moment, even though its presence greatly delights my heart and gives my soul temporary pleasure.

Christian happiness is an eternal and unshakable condition of the soul that no circumstances can destroy unless I choose to let them. The only person who can deprive me of this happiness is I myself, when I choose my own path and the sin that I prefer to eternal values.

The laws of happiness work in the same way for all people, regardless of their religious beliefs or age, and they are capable of working wonders in the human mind. Yet they are powerless to give salvation to the soul. These laws cannot become the foundation of my house. That would be like building on sand. ‘I am happy without Christ’ is the most hopeless kind of structure, one that will lead the soul to inevitable disaster. Sadly, many people build their lives in precisely this way.

What is our life in comparison with Eternity? It is a tiny point in a boundless ocean. Yet people choose that point and build a comfortable life upon such a foundation of nothing, failing to notice the Eternal.

If I decided to build my house on an elephant, would that be a wise decision? One day I would go out on an errand and return to an empty place. My little house would have run away, and I would not be able to find it. At best, I might discover the remains of the ruined building. Perhaps these comparisons make you laugh, but I see people who believe in Jesus and yet build in exactly this way. When their little house runs away, you have to comfort them and offer them an eternal Foundation and durable materials. Not everyone agrees, however, and then they make you a participant in their troubles.

Let me give you an example. Please do not judge me too harshly.

Lately, people have very often asked for money for medical treatment or rehabilitation, even though there is no guarantee that it will help. You can invest everything you have in such requests and rejoice that you have helped. Yet we should look deeper and offer these people not only continued life in a healthy body, but eternal hope as well. The Lord is able to restore and heal very quickly and to teach people how to avoid illness, but this is often rejected. When people need money, money is what they expect, and everything else seems foreign to them. Your love is measured by the amount you are willing to give. You want so much to prove your love, but it is like a bottomless barrel for which you can work from morning until night with only the slightest chance that anything worthwhile will come of it. Jesus has a better remedy—He Himself.

Yet the very Stone rejected by these misguided builders becomes the chief cornerstone of the entire structure. When I lay my foundation upon Christ, my soul finds rest. It does not fear death; it is healed. If sickness comes, it does not tremble with fear, but entrusts itself to the Best Hands and calmly waits for an answer.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Isaiah 28:16; Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10; James 4:14; Acts 17:24–26; Revelation 18:2–5; 1 Corinthians 3:11, 16–17; 1 Peter

2:4–8; 2 Corinthians 2:14–15; 3:3–4; Romans 8:11, 14, 16; Isaiah 26:4

Chapter 12

Do you recognize yourself in these examples?

‘The sun is shining today, and my heart feels so joyful!’

‘It is raining today, and my heart feels so gloomy; everything around me is gray.’

‘I feel so good today—I will smile at everyone!’

‘I am so tired of everything. I do not want to see anyone.’

And so on.

A mood is a prolonged state of mind shaped by our response to a particular event. Whether our mood remains steady or changes depends on external or internal factors that subconsciously influence our decision about how to behave.

We are surrounded everywhere by people ruled by their moods, whose behavior is impossible to predict. We never know what they will be like today. Yet certain conditions can be created that will cause them to behave in one way or another.

Have you ever had a coworker or family member come in with a bad attitude and either snap at every attempt to cheer them up or remain angrily silent? We usually try not to bother such people. Yet the same person may come in another time full of joy, joking about everything and nothing. It can be very difficult to interact with people like this or make plans with them. They depend on their feelings and emotions, building their attitude toward life and toward others upon them and spontaneously choosing how they will behave.

I, too, have often noticed how unkind thoughts oppress me and rob me of the joy of life. At other times, good thoughts stir my emotions, and I delight in reality. Being led by my emotions is not a very promising way to live.

But life with God teaches stability and consistency in what is good and positive. God helps me manage my mood and respond to different circumstances with joy and gratitude.

Speaking to our generation, Jesus says that we are miserable even when we possess certain riches and valuables. Life itself, amid temptations and the constant struggle for survival, sometimes discourages us. Forgetting God, we rush about in search of happiness but do not find it. Yet Jesus offers us a choice and a way out. He counsels us to obtain from Him certain good things that will change everything in our lives.

Love for my neighbor or for someone close to me guarantees that person the freedom to choose, even when that choice is not expressed as I would wish.

But if I dictate how someone must behave, there can be no question of freedom. For example, suppose I demand that my employees smile at our customers, answer politely and properly, and remain attentive and cheerful. Otherwise, they face permanent dismissal and the loss of their bonuses. I would have a wonderful team of ‘kind people,’ but they would have no freedom to choose.

Have you ever had everything going well, only for someone in a bad mood to arrive and spoil your mood and everyone else’s? Or perhaps the opposite has happened: everything is going badly for you, but then a friend appears, turns joy back on in your life, and you are happy.

We are made in such a way that our moods are influenced by external and internal factors, which may be physiological, psychological, or spiritual.

But there is a very good remedy called love, which teaches me how to manage both my own mood and the moods of those around me.

As I learn to love, I may make mistakes and behave differently under the same conditions. Yet the habit of loving and responding with love to the needs of others helps me manage my mood and leads me to see a cheerful spirit as the best possible choice.

It is written that ‘the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace…’ These very qualities create fertile ground for lifting our spirits, while the works of the flesh know how to spoil them.

People ruled by their moods are highly unpredictable, and it is very difficult to make plans with them. Woe to me if I am such a person, understand it, and yet do not fight against myself. To be a dark ‘storm cloud’ amid an abundance of light and grace is both a sin and a disgrace to the name of God, by which I am called. I may then come under the curse described from Deuteronomy 28:15 onward.

A bad or spoiled mood has another distinctive feature. I begin to see very clearly the sins, mistakes, and shortcomings of those around me—especially of those who have offended me. I can identify every failure so precisely that others find it very difficult to contradict me. I strike a person at his weakest point and hurt him most deeply in the very places where he previously revealed his weaknesses to me. I become merciless in my criticism and can kill with a look anyone who stands in my way or tries to argue with me. Whom am I representing at such a time? Certainly not Christ. But saddest of all, those who suffer most from my bad mood are the ones who love me, who are weaker or poorer than I am, who work under my authority or depend on me, who desire my happiness, or who serve me with love. I strike them because I feel bad.

Yet when I am in the presence of the powerful, the wealthy, and the influential people of this world, I become someone else.

In German, a Christian is called a Christ, a word closely connected with the name of Christ Himself. In effect, I am being called by Christ’s name. This usage has become part of the culture, and people do not even consider what a sacred and awe-inspiring name it is. It is an honor to be called by that name. Yet many who call themselves by it disgrace our Lord by living and acting like the world.

How can I become someone who brings a cheerful spirit to others? Psychology textbooks offer many explanations and principles. Knowing these principles, a person may even correct

certain things in life while still living according to the flesh. But God offers His love and His grace to transform my thoughts and feelings and to give me the mind of a righteous person, so that I may live according to the Spirit.

When love comes, it cleanses the mind from evil and gladdens the heart with small victories over the works of the flesh. I gain strength for happiness, friendship, and love. This becomes so natural that in every difficult situation I seek solutions from God. I do not lose heart, but look to the future with joy, anticipating opportunities for growth and blessing. I myself become a blessing to others. Sometimes I simply rejoice quietly in the presence of my friends, and later they tell me how good they felt in my presence. Not everyone experiences this, but it does happen at times. And when there is also fellowship in the spirit of love, or some form of help or support, it becomes pure delight and a celebration for the soul. Unfortunately, not everyone desires or appreciates this until it is lost.

Why did I decide to write about this? Because at times we look like a country of ‘dark storm clouds’ that spend their entire lives creating and solving endless problems, when we should be ‘little lights,’ kindling light, love, friendship, and happiness all around us. Love is capable of doing this. As for the person who does not seek to change amid such an abundance of God’s power, perhaps he will not have the strength to do so in Eternity either. My choice and my movement toward Heaven determine a great deal and give God the authority to correct me and shape my character into the likeness of Jesus.

My good mood depends only on me. When I understand this and know how to manage it, I become its master and decide what kind of person I will be today and what kind I should not be. Everything is in my hands if I live in trust in God. My bad mood will control me if I am unwilling to fight and make an effort to change it.

Everything is in my hands when I am in God’s hands.

Bible verses for this chapter:

2 Corinthians 7:10; Matthew 11:28–30; 26:37; Proverbs 12:25; 14:13; 15:15; 17:22; 21:9; 25:20, 24; 26:21; Isaiah 35:10; John 16:20; Nehemiah 2:2; Esther 9:22; James 3:14–16; 4:7–10

Chapter 13

No matter how we live or what we do, and no matter what happens around us, Heaven has its own plans for us—plans that do not change, slow down, or suffer delay. Now is the time to be happy. And the closer we come to the end, the harder it becomes to learn this art.

Perhaps I know a little more than you do about the laws of happiness. I understand how to apply them in my life, yet even so, I see and experience constant attacks upon my soul—attacks intended to deprive me of harmony with God and destroy the balance of peace and joy in my life, both in my emotions and in my principles. These temptations are so subtle and treacherous that they are sometimes difficult to recognize at first. Sources of unhappiness may even be found in my dearest and closest friends, or in the familiar activities and things around me. Yet it is precisely my knowledge of the laws of happiness, together with God's constant grace, that helps me quickly recognize an alien influence forcing its way into my heart and robbing me of peace with God. Then my whole being begins to tremble, to recall all the laws that have protected me until now, and to search for a breach in the fence so that I can take steps to repair what has gone wrong.

I have grown so accustomed to happiness that I have begun to assume everyone around me is just as happy. I am continually amazed at how quickly people find and create problems for themselves where none exist and none should exist.

More than anything, I am afraid of becoming unhappy, because that condition will lead me to incurable diseases and spiritual death. To be unhappy amid such abundance, while possessing the fullness of light—in other words, to choose darkness—is a crime against God.

Our time is remarkable because digital technology emerged in the last days, and now each of you holds in your hands a technological wonder beyond the dreams of even the boldest science-fiction writers. Yet we have grown accustomed even to

this and can no longer imagine life without smartphones and the Internet.

This achievement is also remarkable because it has become a powerful rival to God in gaining worshipers and unhappy souls for itself. People communicate less face-to-face, visit one another less often, think less, and move less. The words spoken about our age are fitting indeed: '...and they knew not...'

Even across the vast reaches of the Internet, communication often takes place through other people's quotations, pictures, videos, and links. Creative people invent, film, design, or write something and then share it with friends, who share it with other friends. Many people live only to surprise others, gain more followers, likes, or views, or simply kill time in front of that little screen.

Entertainment, games, and shopping—these are the god of our age. And they create an illusion of happiness. The brain receives hormones of pleasure and satisfaction, not from good deeds, physical activity, or pleasant fellowship, but from a stream of information that it does not even have time to absorb.

But our Good Shepherd addresses us with this declaration: 'And knowest not that thou art...miserable...'

Unhappiness is the disease of our time, our world, and our friends. We see it all around us, yet sometimes we do not even recognize it for what it is.

And when the Lord declares us miserable, He also provides a way out of that condition. He offers us, in all its fullness, precisely what He has never offered to anyone before. He presents Himself—humbly and without pressure—and says that He is the very best He has to give.

Christ is coming soon. And when He comes, will He find faith on the earth? Will He find faith that all His offers are true and real, that they work in a person's life and transform it? He longs for our happiness and teaches that we can become happy, but only by obtaining what He counsels us to receive. He loves me and all those for whom He died. He loves His entire creation. And

He suffers with each one of us. Can you imagine how painful it is for Jesus to watch people who are close to the Source of happiness—only one short prayer away—choose suffering, disappointment, sickness, and death? What sorrow!

When you love, you share that love with those around you. You look for ways to improve your friends' lives, but very often all you see are their backs, their ridicule, and their disbelief that a better life is possible even in this world.

What a paradox. Everyone seeks happiness apart from the Source of happiness. People wish happiness for one another, yet make no effort to understand what it is. Everyone always wants to be in a good mood, yet they do not want to be friends with the One Whose presence continually gladdens the heart. What can be done?

Let us, at least within the scope of this message, look inside ourselves. What do I understand from what I am reading? Do I have questions for Jesus? Do I desire change? This is a very serious subject. It demands intense thought and a far-reaching decision of the will. So what do I choose? What will I do with Jesus, Who is once again standing and knocking, and perhaps even crying out at the door of my heart? Before He leaves forever, He will not ask in a whisper to be let in. He will cry out so loudly that the whole world will tremble. Will those who have rejected Him all their lives hear Him? Yes, they will hear—and become even more hardened, shut themselves away forever, and perhaps even call the police to remove the One Who has already become a nuisance to them.

Whether I want it or not, the message about accepting love and happiness changes me. As I become acquainted with it, I choose either to accept the offer and live with these blessings, or to reject it and continue along the path I have chosen for myself—without love, without happiness, without light—using in my life only what I have already accumulated but have not yet had time to spend.

If I decide to wait and refuse to let Christ in, I run the risk of never doing so.

I know many people who, shortly after coming to church and before they even understood the truth, decided to enter into covenant with God through baptism by full immersion in water. I was one of them. After taking that step, we began to grow quickly. But I also know people who have attended church for years, know all the doctrines and observe them, yet have no desire to be baptized and become full members of God’s family. This is one of the conditions for entering the Heavenly dwelling places, and there is no other way.

It is the same with happiness. Many know the theory, but only a few decide to enter into the joy of their Lord. Yet Heaven waits. Heaven cries out. Heaven is not idle.

Billions of holy beings wait intently for the moment when someone chooses the path of unconditional love, complete happiness, and close fellowship with Jesus, so that they may carry each such person in their arms and protect them, teaching them the laws of happiness, love, and friendship.

Let us bring joy to our kind angels and our loving Lord through our interest in and thirst for this subject. And we will receive what we choose.

Revelation 3:18 is the little key to the door of the Land of Happiness. If I pass it by, fail to pay attention to this verse, or do not understand what is being offered to me, all my knowledge may begin to work against me and against my happiness.

If God Himself has decided to give Himself in all His fullness and then comes to teach me how to make use of this Gift, He takes a keen interest in how I respond to It and what I do with It. If I have no interest, I will have no desire to explore such an offer. Yes, I may happen to receive what Heaven has prepared while knowing other truths as well. But we should not play the lottery with God. A very high price was paid for this Gift, and very great expectations are placed upon us.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Revelation 3:18; Luke 9:45, 62; Romans 14:17; John 17:13; Isaiah 54:13; 2 Timothy 3:14; Philippians 2:12–13; Hosea 11:4; Matthew 23:37–38; Jeremiah 7:13–16; Matthew 11:28–30; Hosea 11:7–8; Hebrews 12:3–4; Romans 10:1–3; 4:3–8

Chapter 14

The foundation of the little house of happiness has been laid—or, more precisely, it has been chosen. It is very strong, eternal, and infinite. It is not merely a simple stone, but a beautiful combination of precious stones, each distinguished by its color, beauty, purity, and unique qualities. I understand that I now need to determine the location and dimensions of the building. The fact that the Rock is immense in Its limitless dimensions and can bear anything does not mean that I should build something beyond comprehension or plan something boundless. Let it be a small house, but one that is mine—built with my own hands, made from pieces of my soul, and adorned with the sincere intentions of my heart.

I am planning a simple structure with four outer corners, and I have decided to bind each corner permanently to the Foundation. To do this, I began cutting into the Rock, passing through every stage of growth and seeking to reach a depth of relationship where I can firmly take hold and bind my heart to the Rock forever. This first corner of mine is called, 'I believe,' and the key word is 'I.' However personal and bold that may sound, it is precisely 'I' who must be the connecting material in my building; it is my hands of faith that must erect it; and it is this state of mind that gives me the right motive and direction. Simply saying 'faith' is good, but if the word 'my' is absent from it, faith may remain a theory forever—merely a beautiful sound with profound meaning.

'I believe'—these words bind me to Christ so firmly that no power in the world can break that bond. Even if the whole structure is built incorrectly and destroyed by various trials, my faith will help me endure everything that comes crashing down upon me. I am expected to believe in what I cannot see.

The distinctive feature of the foundation of my little house of happiness is that it cannot be seen with ordinary sight or imagined by the carnal mind. It is eternal and infinite, yet invisible and incomprehensible to those who are spiritually blind. It is the eyes of my faith that reveal to my imagination

the beautiful landscapes of an unknown land of happiness, peace, and love. My faith paints pictures of a wonderful future life and opens before me the possibilities that lie in this direction. My faith carries me on its wings and reveals to me the mystery of infinity. With its help, I immerse myself in visions of what is unknown, great, and beyond reach.

Much of what we learn in the School of Love will never be visible to ordinary sight. Yet the eyes of faith show us what is hidden and assure us that inexhaustible prospects of eternal growth and the discovery of endless truths are open to the immortal imagination of God's born-again children.

I believe. This declaration penetrates so deeply into the very heart of the Lord that the only outcome is complete union with the Divine nature, just as a grape branch joins with the vine when it is grafted into the trunk. My sinful being is joined to the Holy God, Jesus, and the pure blood of Christ begins to nourish me with its cleansing power, imparting to me eternal life of Heavenly origin. And I believe this.

My faith holds me to the solid Foundation with the strong bond of my heart. When dreadful trials come, my faith is transformed into trust and, when necessary, into absolute trust. Then I rest in the assurance that everything is in God's hands and under His control, and that all will be fulfilled exactly as the Lord promised—or as He sees fit to fulfill His promises in my life. At such a time I may see nothing, but the eyes of faith carry me to where the invisible becomes real, and my patience draws my heart closer to the union of what is expected with what was promised. Faith binds these together and brings them to fulfillment through the visible action of God in my human nature.

Without faith it is impossible to please the Almighty, and it is even more unthinkable to build a strong relationship with Someone in Whom you do not believe and Whom you do not trust.

Sometimes I conduct the following experiment. While in a small gathering, I tell the people that I have a banknote in my pocket

and will give it to the first person who comes to me and asks for it. Then I ask those listening whether they believe my promise, and I watch. Everyone nods in agreement, but no one jumps up to ask for what was promised. I try to assure them that I truly have what I said I had. They believe me, yet remain seated. But I am waiting for the person whose faith will lead him to stand, come forward, and ask me to give him what I promised. It will not be difficult for me to part with that bill. It is no longer mine. It is waiting for the one whose actions and trust will show me that he has come for what was promised to him. And he will receive it. Everyone believed me, but only one person came. Sometimes no one comes at all. And who is at fault then? Am I? I did not deceive anyone. Everything I promised is still with me.

Simply saying, ‘I believe,’ is good—better than declaring unbelief. But the next step must be: ‘I am going to receive what was promised. Please give me what has become mine by faith.’ Only then do I receive it.

What would it look like if I went around forcing upon the seated people something they did not need and for which they had not trusted me? That would show disrespect for their freedom of choice. Therefore, all I can do is wait.

Once I promised a businessman that I would help him resolve his financial difficulties if the need arose. Some time later, he came to me and asked, ‘Could you fulfill your promise? Does it still stand?’ Although I myself was going through difficult times, I found a way to meet his expectation and kept my word.

I believe God, not because I see or feel something that confirms my confidence, but because He has promised it to me. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

I believe in my happiness and that it can be built in my life—not because I decided that it could, but because the Lord promised it to me, showing how blessed are those who rise and begin to live this way. But to receive what was promised, I first need to learn about it.

When my wife was pregnant, we joyfully awaited the birth of our child and dreamed of nothing else. Then we were told that

we could receive various forms of financial assistance for the birth of a child at no cost to us. We accepted this information and went to claim what was ours. After completing the necessary paperwork, we were surprised to receive the promised money and gifts. I was ashamed of my unbelief, yet what was rightfully ours was readily given to us. No one, however, had forced this assistance upon us or even told us about it. We learned of it only by chance from people who knew more than we did.

Friends, happiness exists. It can be received, and we can live in it. This is God's plan for us. Happiness is so accessible and simple that all we need to do is rise and go receive it—and it will be ours. Do you believe this? I believed, and I am happy.

'I believe' is something personal that I cannot give to others. It is my oil for my lamp. But more oil can still be bought.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 20:29; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Habakkuk 2:4; Isaiah 54:11–12; Psalm 89:15–16; Psalm 97:2; Hebrews 10:38–39; 11:6; John 15:4–8; Romans 10:17; 14:23; Galatians 2:20; 3:11

Chapter 15

As I lay the Foundation and unite with Him by faith, I also need to understand that not all faith is the same. When I hear someone declare that he is a believer, I try to learn what that person believes, what his faith is based on, what he feeds his spiritual nature, and how he lives out his faith. By observing people, one can very quickly discern the level and stage of their faith—or the ignorance underlying their unbelief. It is remarkable when atheists call themselves followers of God, adorn themselves or their homes with religious symbols, tattoo signs or scenes from their religion on their bodies, strictly observe traditions, yet give no thought to what they actually believe. When the water of life is offered to such people, they often respond that their ancestors believed this way, their entire family believes this way, and they cannot betray them by changing their religion.

I think you have met people like this. It is very difficult to call them unbelievers. They may be deeply religious, strictly observing the traditions and rules they know, meticulously ensuring that their rituals are performed correctly and that the identifying signs of their faith are properly displayed. Love does not judge people for their sincerity; it respects their choice, their family ties, and their faith. But love always has something better. It simply begins to love these people regardless of their understanding and worldview. Through its attitude, love reveals the true character of the living God, Who does not change, yet has His own laws, holy days, plans, and expectations. In His longsuffering, God allows people to walk in their own ways, in the darkness of their own understanding, while still desiring to illuminate the life of everyone who begins to question whether he is living rightly.

‘And knew not’ is the description Jesus gave of our time and of those who would be living in the last days. It would be wrong to say that we do not think at all or that we have no intelligence. We are all sufficiently educated and have been taught in school to reason, analyze, undertake projects, and invent things. But

God wants to see how we think about our salvation and how we seek Eternal Truth and the True Foundation.

We have learned how to build on sand. The tallest building in the world, located in Dubai, was erected as a symbol of human wisdom and courage, and it stands on a foundation in the sand. Beside it lies an entire city whose foundation is former seabed and sand brought up from the bottom of the sea. The designers and builders of this complex deserve recognition, for they approached their task with great wisdom and created a wonder in the desert. But it does not save the soul or bring happiness. Christ's teaching concerns spiritual truths, the plan of Salvation, and the eternal laws of building. Happiness is not constructed from glass and concrete, and the human soul is not governed by the laws of physics or statistical calculations. God desires to bless us with Heavenly values and does everything possible to bring our hearts onto His Foundation, thereby becoming in each person's life that strong Foundation of faith which can withstand anything.

Does Satan believe in God? Yes, he does, and the demons also believe and tremble. If their faith were compared with human faith, they would surpass us thousands of times over. They know Who God is. They know how His word accomplishes everything for which it was spoken. They understand the power of grace and of God's Agape Love. Yet despite all their faith, the demons remain lost for Eternity and drag the whole world into their darkness, while people believe the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms more readily than they believe God.

Believing a lie—this is the true condition of our world, and it has become the foundation of many teachings and movements. What will such faith bring? Death—eternal death.

Faith in lies and error, even when sincere, is the unstable sand beneath the foundation of my happiness and worldview. It will not withstand the trials and will be mercilessly washed away by the powerful waters of God's judgments.

When the Lord sends me light, the only right response is to accept His truths and walk in them. The faith that truly has

value in God’s sight is the complete surrender of my life to Him and allowing the Holy Spirit to work out my salvation within me. In that case, I accept everything God begins to reveal and show me.

Faith without works is dead. Dead faith is a life without God in the heart and without love in the mind, accompanied by loud claims of belonging to some movement or denomination. A name will not save me on the day of trial. Faith without works is not merely idleness or inaction; it is the absence of right motives in everything I do. Works of faith are moved by love, and they fill every undertaking of mine with spiritual meaning that accords with God’s will.

Consider an example. A person is ill and needs financial assistance from people willing to pay for an expensive operation. Two donors come forward. One brings everything he has available for this need and invests all his love and faith in the hope that his gift and prayers will ease the suffering and bring relief to the afflicted soul, even though the amount of his contribution is very small. The other pays all the treatment expenses out of his reserves, thinking that his good deed will surely be recorded in the Heavenly books and recognized in the world as well, bringing him respect and honor. The operation takes place and is successful. Which donor did a good deed? Both of them. But in what spirit? And which of these deeds was truly a God-directed work of faith?

There is a work that the Lord Himself has defined. We read in John 6:28–29: ‘Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent.’ This answer was given for all time.

Does this create a vicious circle? Faith without works is dead, while works without faith are empty. But we should not think of it that way.

My faith produces works. God’s love within me performs true and right actions founded upon Christ, His teaching, His law, and His motives. It is not I, but God within me and through me,

Who begins to do the works. However small they may appear, they are works of faith. When I allow God's love to reveal itself in my actions, those actions become right in the Lord's sight and bear the seal of His approval. My life is filled with happiness because I have allowed God to act through my human resources and to accomplish within me the wonderful changes that form my character for Eternity.

'I believe' is that strong bond between the human and the Divine which holds my structure very firmly upon the mightiest Foundation. This is the faith that moves mountains of cares and casts them into the sea. It is the faith that, like a tiny mustard seed, sprouts in my life and becomes the largest garden plant, in whose shade the weary, deceived, disappointed, and burned-out can find shelter. God uses my faith to perform works of love for these souls, giving them hope for a better life, for happiness, and for love. My trust will not save anyone, but it can inspire another person to believe in the One Who truly saves. Without God I can do nothing, and without me God will not perform my works of faith. And without faith, it is impossible to please God by works.

I believe. This is the law of my happiness, which rests upon a solid Foundation and holds very firmly to Him.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Corinthians 13:2; Acts 17:30–31; 2 Peter 3:9, 15; Matthew 7:21–23; 8:11–12; 24:39; John 6:28–29; 15:7–8; 16:2–3; James 2:14–26; 2 Timothy 3:5–7; 2 Thessalonians 2:10–13; Romans 4:5; Revelation 22:12

Chapter 16

When I build a house, it is important for me to understand what I am doing and how the structure I am raising will hold up when various tests come.

A person can stand on one leg for a long time, but any pressure from the outside will throw him off balance, and he risks falling. If I stand on two legs, however, I can maintain my balance and resist all kinds of outside forces. Three or four points of support are even better.

Remembering that even if I have faith that can move mountains, but have no love, I am nothing, I decide to make another connection to the Foundation at the next corner of my little house of happiness—a connection called ‘I love.’ However bold and revolutionary this may sound, a structure that combines faith and love will be both strong and beautiful if it is built carefully. So I begin cutting into the Rock at the opposite corner of my structure, seeking to reach its very heart and fasten this new corner to the Solid Foundation with strong bonds of love.

This kind of embedded connection contains a crucial feature called ‘I.’ This is not the ‘self’ against which I must continually struggle—the self that expresses my inborn selfishness. It is the ‘I’ that speaks of my personal participation in building happiness and shows that I take ownership of everything happening in my heart. Without this little ‘I,’ the entire study of love will remain a beautiful theory—interesting to learn, to observe in other people’s lives, and to celebrate in their victories. I may then applaud the achievements of courageous individuals without ever joining them.

In our day, a whole army of believers has arisen that might be called the Worldwide Couch Troops. Its motto is: ‘The greatest building project of the age is calling me; the great and unattainable draws me; the marvelous and beautiful beckons me—but the couch shouts louder than all of them!’ Remaining faithful to these troops requires enormous effort: one must do

everything possible to stay on the couch and keep the will from responding to any other call.

If my structure lacks the simple ‘I,’ then ‘love’ sounds vague. It becomes common property and a beautiful phrase that can be printed on a T-shirt or cut out in the shape of a pink heart.

I love. This is the strong corner that connects the rest of the structure to the Chief Cornerstone and holds the entire building securely. In this precious material, the word ‘love’ is like a powerful adhesive. Like water, it flows throughout the form called ‘I,’ fills every open space, seals every crack, and takes the shape intended by the Builder. Then it hardens and remains established forever. Every part of the complex structure that this adhesive reaches is bound together. This Heavenly adhesive will continue to be used to unite everything from which my little house is built.

But the following must be kept in mind. Even if the corner is strong, when a wall is made of straw or dried mud, the adhesive will firmly attach those materials to the main structure, but it will not make them strong enough to withstand various tests. Straw will not become fireproof, and mud will not become waterproof. What is temporary may appear strong and godly, but it will never become eternal or able to withstand testing, no matter how much I may want it to.

Nevertheless, the presence of strong corners in my structure gives me confidence and hope that if I do something incorrectly, the building will not collapse, although it may suffer partial damage and require great expense to repair and restore what has fallen into ruin.

How greatly I need wisdom from above! And how many shattered destinies and broken lives I see among believers who build on the Rock, yet build incorrectly and unreliably with temporary materials—and then the building collapses. People become ill and fall into despair, unable to understand why it all happened or why their house collapsed even though the Rock remained. Then they gather mud and straw again and try to rebuild the ruins somehow while they wait for the Chief

Engineer, Who has promised all who believe in Him the gift of Eternal dwellings.

I love. These are two vital components which, when joined together through the Holy Spirit, become one exceptionally strong material. Take me, add love, pour in the early rain of the Holy Spirit, and the result is something amazingly strong. It is like mixing sand, cement, and water. Without love, I am merely sand: I absorb drops of the early rain but retain nothing, and when the fire comes, all the moisture within me evaporates and I become dry and unstable again. Love without me becomes soaked in the rain and hardens, but remains very brittle and unsuitable for building because it cannot withstand structural pressure. Or it may remain a watery paste that any stream can easily wash away and no walls can contain. Without the rain of the Holy Spirit, love and I may be thoroughly mixed and blend into one substance of a single color, yet remain dry. Then every wind of new doctrine will scatter this material across the countryside, and no one will understand what it was, even though it looked beautiful.

What we are studying together can become any one of the components described above and can take any form. But a strong structure requires them to be harmoniously combined in the right proportions. A person can read these lessons while lying on the couch, but this information must become part of his life, and he must ask God to establish it all in his heart through His Holy Spirit. Otherwise, his little house will quickly collapse when the tests come—and they certainly will come, because they are part of God’s plans.

When I know the theory of love, then in a time of testing I can allow my ‘I’ to put that theory into practice by choosing love and asking God to establish me in that choice. The right components then come together properly, and it works. The heart becomes accustomed to loving and can no longer live any other way. And as long as my ‘fish of faith’ is alive, it will always swim against the current.

I love. What happiness this is! Nothing is more beautiful than speaking of love to those you love and seeing how it brings joy

to the hearts of those who listen, though at first they may test the sincerity of your motives. But Agape Love is never counterfeit. It has an Eternal Source, from Whom it flows into my life, and it is not afraid to identify itself as love. It is not ashamed to be itself and to give itself to my friends and neighbors, bringing light, joy, hope, and happiness into their lives. Although it binds us with strong bonds of love, it does not deprive us of freedom or make us dependent on one another. Love directs our eyes to Christ, in Whom we become so close and dear to one another that only love can help us remain clear-minded and learn to respect each other's freedom.

We have already studied some of the qualities of Eternal Love, but it is worth noting that Love reveals Herself in countless ways, and the number of Her definitions never stops growing. We may discover Her thousands and millions of times, and something new will always remain to be discovered at the next stage.

'I love.' This is the corner of the little house of happiness that not only holds the entire building together but also illuminates everything within it.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Corinthians 3:11–15; 13:2; Revelation 2:4; 1 John 3:1; 4:17; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:13; Colossians 3:14; Galatians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 16:14

Chapter 17

As I build my little house of happiness, I must not forget that love is the binding and foundational element of the entire structure. It is like a circulatory system that begins in the heart of God and carries particles of life to every part of the temple of the Holy Spirit, nourishing and permeating every brick of my little house. Although my participation in this process is indispensable, the Master Builder is Jesus Himself, Who ‘is a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man’ (Hebrews 8:2).

The mystery of this structure is far too great for the limited human mind to grasp all at once. Yet it is love that opens the boundless reaches of thought and imagination and brings into life unlimited prospects for eternal growth and the knowledge of holiness.

Love is a plant of Heavenly origin. It is nourished by the water of life and possesses the renewing power of Eternity. Although love adapts itself to the earthly characteristics of my mind, its nature is incorruptible and its energy inexhaustible.

Love is a treasure of Heavenly origin. It is issued by the Heavenly Bank of Love, which enriches everyone who continually turns to the Manager for another loan so that he may empty all the Heavenly storehouses and distribute this wealth to his neighbors and those in need. This Bank is like a small room in a boundless ocean, into which the life-giving gold of Heavenly currency flows through the windows of my soul, so that I lack nothing. I may close these windows for a time and spend my reserves. I may sit upon bars of gold and accuse the Owner of the Bank of failing to give me what I need. Yet He desires to teach me how to use this wealth.

Happiness is found in love, and its beauty lies in the fact that the Lord provides everything necessary for it. But whether I will be happy or waste away from sorrow is a choice I make for myself. It is like having a smartphone in my hands. It has many functions and will do whatever it is instructed to do at the touch

of a finger. The device will produce whatever I request. But without my command it will simply lie there quietly like a piece of plastic, offering me no value. And if I do not know how to use it, all its capabilities will be of little benefit to me.

Consider this comparison. We have entered the smartphone age, and if we refuse to accept this innovation, we will fall hopelessly behind. We will continue to live, but without the benefits of modern civilization. That is not so terrible, and at times it may even be more interesting. But to the students in this school I can say that we have entered the age of love and happiness, and a new Land of great possibilities has opened before us. You have tasted the Bread of Life in Its pure form, and you can never again be what you once were. You have entered the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Temple to partake of something great and inaccessible that you did not know before. This Land of love and happiness has always existed, but not everyone wishes to live there. If you do not accept this new reality in your life, you will continue to exist in whatever you choose for yourself, but you risk falling hopelessly behind all that God has prepared—all that never stands still, but is revealed to those who seek, remain faithful, and thirst for it.

I myself did not know where we would arrive, but now we are confronted with the fact that God is opening a new way—the way of love and happiness in love—about which we have heard much but known little. It is present in our lives, and its laws are scattered everywhere. They will not be new to anyone, but as long as they are mixed with filth and submerged in the wine of Babylon, they cannot work in all their beauty and power. Happiness is always close to us. We have been tasting this water of life for a long time and know its flavor. But if this water becomes mixed with what is earthly and dangerous, whom should we blame? Who is at fault when we are unhappy in the midst of abundance? That very ‘I’ who can build something better.

If I have spent my whole life in a shed among other sheds and someone asks me to build a beautiful palace, what do you think I will build? That is right: I will build a large shed.

As long as I have the body of a caterpillar, my way of thinking may be called caterpillar thinking. Even though it develops, I find it difficult to imagine myself with wings. It is easier for me to picture my future as an enormous caterpillar with powerful jaws and gripping legs, able to crawl very quickly through the trees and devour everything in its path. To me, that represents the full extent of my potential. But God has prepared for me the body of a butterfly, which lives by different laws even though it inhabits the same world. I look at this and cannot imagine how, with my weight, I will be able to soar through the air and feed not upon flowers but only upon their nectar. I fear that I will be smashed flat and starve to death. But the Creator has a special plan for me. He confidently leads me into the land of butterflies, showing me that a day will come in my life when I first enter the dark cocoon of my soul and then emerge from it, never again to return to the body of a caterpillar—although He loves and values both caterpillars and butterflies.

The Land of Happiness is filled with fragrant flowers that yield wonderful nectar and are accessible only to butterflies that fly in love. We may merely observe this, or we may take part in it.

But while a caterpillar is destined to become a butterfly regardless of its wishes, we earthly people are given a choice. I may stop at any stage of construction. I may never even begin. I may build incorrectly and unattractively. I may place bricks made of manure and garbage into the walls and plaster it all with mud. Everything is in my hands. I have been given a plan, a compass, and instructions. There are people who know how to build and are ready to offer advice. But in the end, I am the one who decides what to do with my happiness and my love.

I decide to continue building according to God’s plan, guided by the instruction of the Holy Spirit. In prayer I declare my decision and take a step of faith. I believe that I will produce the masterpiece of God’s design prepared personally for me, and the joy of the Lord moves me, giving me enthusiasm and a desire to create something beautiful—something that will gladden my heart and bring rejoicing and peace to my neighbors and friends.

My friends actively help me with this construction by allowing me to try out all my newfound love, joy, and friendliness on them. At times it is very difficult for them to endure such assaults, but they allow me to love them and sometimes respond in kind, which gives me great encouragement. Occasionally they come to my construction site uninvited and examine everything I have accomplished. Some advise me to correct things according to their own ideas; some are amazed; and some try to convince me that happiness does not exist and that I am wasting my time. But I believe God and remember His rebuke that I am miserable, and I do not want to return to that land. So I must tactfully explain God's standards to everyone and quietly continue building, at times completely alone.

It is so strange that everyone seeks happiness, yet not everyone wants to be happy according to God's design and plan. It is impossible to enter God's happiness while holding on to our own ideas about it. The fire of testing will destroy everything that does not belong there. Only what is eternal can inherit Eternity and live forever.

I look at the open doors of the Land of Love and Happiness and understand that they will soon close to everyone. But which side of those doors I will be on now depends entirely upon me. I take a step of faith and accept God's plan. What happiness it is to be faithful!

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Corinthians 2:9–13; Psalm 27:5; Ezekiel 37:11–14; Colossians 1:26–29; Ephesians 3:16–19; Zechariah 4:6; Revelation 3:7–8; 22:1–5; Isaiah 55:1–3; Matthew 11:28–30; John 6:37

Chapter 18

Have you ever heard someone described this way: ‘He is so kind, a jack-of-all-trades, intelligent, gifted, a wonderful family man, quiet, calm, friendly, and talented—but he drinks’? It is very interesting to hear people’s opinions about someone or something that could be very good in every respect, except for one quality that cancels out everything admirable and brands that person with universal disapproval. What is most interesting and important usually begins after the word ‘but.’

Let us take the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 as an example. I think any man would dream of having such a treasure in his home. The word ‘but’ does not appear in this account, so let us add it at the very end and see what happens. Proverbs 31:27: ‘She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness, but she is unfaithful.’ I think that after such a conclusion, this woman’s virtues would no longer matter very much. Perhaps they would please her lovers, but not her husband.

I come to the third corner of my little house of happiness and, following the method now familiar to me, begin laying the next connecting bond in my building, called ‘I am faithful.’

It would sound strange to describe my faith and love with the added words ‘but he is unfaithful.’ This little ‘but’ reveals who I truly am, not the role I am trying to play. What is faith without faithfulness? Hypocrisy. And what is love without faithfulness? Adultery.

In the words ‘I am faithful,’ the word ‘I’ plays a very important role. It must be present throughout every stage of construction. Without it, my building will become a monument to human wisdom about beautiful things that remained nothing more than an attractive theory and unattainable dreams of something wonderful. I must be directly involved in this process and personally participate in every detail and distinctive feature of my construction.

This ‘I’ is not an expression of a proud spirit, but the open windows of my soul receiving God’s grace and the open door of my heart welcoming the personal presence of the Lord. Otherwise, I become a forgetful hearer.

Sadly, our age is characterized by the following condition. We have become so accustomed to receiving vast amounts of information and doing nothing with it that we carry this habit into our spiritual lives. Faith in God is reduced to attending a worship service once a week, listening to what is sung and said there, taking part in some activity, and then leaving to attend to our ordinary affairs. If someone asks me what the sermon was about this morning or a week ago, I may not even remember. But I will be able to describe how valiantly I fought sleep during it and how delicious the meal was after the service.

It would be sad to discover that all the Heavenly treasures and revelations have become merely part of the stream of information in my life—carefully placed on the shelves of my storeroom of useful things, where they are now gathering dust as they wait for their time to come.

I am faithful. This demonstrates that all of God’s truths have reached my heart, become part of my mind, changed my worldview, and taken practical form in my relationship with God and with the world.

Jesus prayed that I would not be taken out of the world, but kept from evil. This protection is given to me in response to my faithfulness in faith and love.

Consider an ordinary family in which two hardened egoists have decided to become one. Within their union, they first received what satisfied their curiosity and attraction to one another, and then began to discover the true face and individual characteristics of their spouse. Although family ties are the strongest bonds, marriage is still a covenant with conditions—one that presupposes both physical and emotional faithfulness. Faithfulness lays the foundation for a relationship of trust that penetrates so deeply into both hearts that no room

remains there for marital selfishness, although selfishness toward society may remain.

Tender care for the members of my family rests upon faithfulness, both on my part and on the part of my spouse. If this bond fails, disaster is inevitable. The family may remain intact, but the relationship will change and will never return to its former purity and holiness.

God expects absolute faithfulness from me—to Him and to the light I have received. He claims my physical and emotional devotion, and He is not ashamed to call Himself my Husband. Our relationship is so close and strong that God's plan is to make this union binding for all Eternity. There is no divorce in Heaven. And why would I betray the One in Whom I believe and Whom I love? Yet the reality of our time shows that this strong corner must be set into the foundation of the little house of happiness and the entire structure firmly bound together.

When the trials of faith and love come, when the forces of this world and the torrents of information warfare strike me from the sides of faith and love, my faithfulness will support these corners of my life and hold firmly to the Rock, keeping the building from shaking and collapsing. Three legs are better than two and give a structure particular stability. But I intend to complete this construction so that it will be fully finished, beautiful, and strong on every side as it withstands various pressures and attacks. The fourth corner is being prepared for installation, and it needs time to become what God's plan has determined it should be.

'I am faithful' implies that I must possess knowledge worth applying in my life and making the foundation of my worldview. I must also enter into a covenant and, through water baptism, formalize my relationship with the One to Whom I must be faithful.

Imagine an illustration of a strange kind of faithfulness. I am single and live next door to a very kind single woman. I greatly enjoy watching her and occasionally greeting her. I begin to notice that somewhere deep in my heart I have developed

special feelings for her, and I even suspect that she cares about me as well. So I decide to be faithful to this woman. I delete all my female friends from my contacts, stop communicating with any women, and begin demonstrating my faithfulness to this neighbor in every way, giving no one any opportunity to befriend me. I decide never to marry anyone, because I am faithful. One day I gather my courage and tell this woman about my faithfulness and love. I assure her that she need never doubt me and can always count on me. For some reason, she looks at me sadly and begins to cry—probably from happiness. After all, you will not find another person so faithful anywhere in the world! I cannot imagine a more foolish situation.

Yet this is precisely how I may relate to the Lord—showing faithfulness to Him without having a relationship with Him. And this may continue for years.

Cohabitation is now very widespread. It has almost become socially acceptable. A person is expected to have ‘a man’ or ‘a woman’—those crude terms somehow suit the arrangement—because everyone lives that way. Is there a relationship? Yes. Is there emotional and physical intimacy? Yes. Then why is it wrong? It is wrong because there is no commitment, no covenant before society and God, and no responsibility. Faithfulness cannot make such a relationship right, because God’s law has been broken and His blessing is absent.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 11:13; 14:5; 28:20; Matthew 24:45; 25:21; Luke 16:10; 3 John 1:3–6; Revelation 2:3–4, 10; 3:1

Chapter 19

Imagine someone who makes you a promise, then changes his mind and promises something else—or promises nothing at all. How many plans can you make when someone approaches commitments this way? Unfortunately, we have learned to live in just such a world.

Of course, there are situations in which I am pressured into promising to do something that would harm me or others. It is also possible that I did not fully understand what was being proposed and later realized that it was not for me. In such a case, I have the right to reconsider my promise and decline.

For example, if I am single and plan to join my life with a young woman who has won my heart, and I promise to marry her if she agrees, I should first get to know her better and determine whether this is the right choice, whether she will be faithful to me and to God in her love, and whether I will be able to make her happy. If, before the wedding, I discover something that would destroy our family and withdraw from this undertaking, it is not a breach of faithfulness but a change in my decision. But if we have entered into marriage and then realize that we are different, that is not a reason to end the relationship.

Conditional promises should not be confused with vital, lifelong commitments.

I have often encountered situations in which people bound themselves by promises, even though the circumstances of life showed that they needed to abandon what they had decided. Yet they could not bring themselves to do so and plunged themselves into various sorrows that could have been avoided.

I was once taught a wonderful and powerful phrase that resolves many issues quickly and painlessly: ‘I am very sorry, but…’

So how is my faithfulness expressed? Some everyday matters are decided on a personal level and may be changed or

canceled. But there are principles that should not be violated, because doing so can have catastrophic consequences.

It is important to understand the source of faithfulness.

From a human standpoint, I can plan my life within the limits of my freedom of choice. My faithfulness to my promises and decisions may provide support and stability for someone else. But I can change. Therefore, no one should build his happiness on another human being.

But is God faithful? Here we enter an entirely different understanding of faithfulness. Imagine the Creator of the Universe constantly changing laws and requirements—deciding one thing today and changing His mind tomorrow. It is frightening even to imagine. Everything would descend into chaos. But the Bible teaches that God does not change and that He is faithful to what He has promised. It is God's faithfulness that gives me a solid foundation for my own faithfulness. I have Someone Whose example I can follow.

God's example also shows me that He has unconditional promises and others that depend on certain actions on my part. God openly declares that He may change His blessings or judgments when people change. But in matters of universal importance, God is unshakable.

As I study God's character, I discover the very solid Foundation of His principles, His love, and His wisdom.

God's unconditional promises do not depend on anything. They will be fulfilled even if I do not believe them and live contrary to God's expectations and commands. These include the close of probation, the outpouring of the seven plagues upon the Earth, the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennium, God's judgment, the destruction of sin and sinners, the creation of a New Earth and a New Heaven, and Eternal life throughout the endless ages.

Even if I do not believe any of this, it will happen exactly as God has set forth in His plans. Christ will come. This will certainly take place, regardless of my belief or unbelief. But if I rely on

God’s unconditional promises, I understand what is happening around me and can plan my life on the basis of my knowledge and God’s requirements. The Lord will fulfill all His promises, including what He has personally promised me in the Word of God.

My ignorance of God’s promises deprives me of many blessings. I cannot ask for something I do not know about.

Another situation may arise. I decide that God can make me a foot and a half taller and begin asking Him to do it, since He can do anything. In that case, I will be deeply disappointed in the Creator’s omnipotence, because I will receive nothing. But if, for example, I pray for something He has promised and fulfill the conditions of that promise, the Lord will certainly accomplish it if it is His will, although His answer may be delayed.

We must remember that God is not a magic wand, but a Person Who is too wise to make a mistake. If I ask Him to feed me candy because I consider it tasty and healthy, I believe that in His love He will not give me what I ask for, but will offer exactly what is for my good. Or if I ask Him to heal someone from a fatal illness, the answer to that request rests in God’s hands, because I do not know whether that miracle would be to His glory or whether something bad might happen in the life of the person who recovered.

I am faithful. This is my determination to reflect God’s faithfulness to the principles of His law and to carry out what He has revealed to me. It is my desire to honor the commitments and promises by which I have bound myself to God and to other people.

Agape love protects me from inner burnout and fanaticism in my faithfulness to my principles. Like a wise teacher, it calmly explains how I should relate to life, how best to behave toward people, what I should promise and fulfill, and what I should avoid. Love leads me through various trials and remains with me in my difficulties and mistakes. It teaches me how to be disappointed in people in the right way while continuing to love

them. Love is faithful in its desire to love always, because it follows the example of its Source and His faithfulness in unconditional love. If love is made conditional—if its boundaries are limited by the lawlessness I desire and by my inborn selfishness—it will simply grow cold and die.

Diligently studying God's will and His promises gives me faith that, in any need, I may ask for what He has promised and receive it, because He Who promised is faithful and with Him there is not even a shadow of change.

Of course, it would be foolish to demand that God immediately fulfill what He has promised without regard for His will, or to approach Him with a presumptuous spirit. It is equally unacceptable to give God an ultimatum or try to intimidate Him with my disobedience.

In personal fellowship, I may speak with the Lord as well as I know how and understand. He does not object if I argue with Him, quarrel with Him, accuse Him, shake my fists, or demand something. He has undertaken to raise me, accepting me as I am, with all the 'bugs in my head,' but He will not leave me that way forever. He knows how to humble what is proud and create what is new. He has enough power and resources to make me into what He desires to see. I am very precious to Him, and He will shape me into what He wants me to become. In this process I am transformed. While the clay is soft, its form can be changed; but after it has passed through the fire, it becomes faithful and unchanging in the purpose for which it was shaped.

Faith and love teach me what is good, and my faithfulness in this training strengthens us in a lasting union. We are happy with one another, and God is with us—the One Who is always faithful to us in His love.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Deuteronomy 7:9; 32:4; Revelation 3:14; James 1:17; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; Hebrews 10:23–24; Romans 8:35–39; Isaiah 54:10; Proverbs 2:10–11; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:11, 17; 5:3

Chapter 20

And now I begin laying the most difficult corner of the building. I cannot do this work through my own human efforts. Yet this corner is essential, because it is directly connected to Heaven and very quickly receives everything that has been promised and is needed. I can speak about this, but I must also experience it.

We read: ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled’ (Matthew 5:6).

Thirst is the body’s signal to the brain that there is a shortage of water in the body. The greater the shortage, the stronger the signal.

There are several kinds of thirst.

Physical thirst is a strong desire to drink. Hunger, when a person intensely desires food, may also be included in this category.

Emotional thirst is a strong desire to receive from God what you need and also to be needed by someone—to be close and useful to that person. This kind of thirst also includes the desire to have a friend nearby who likewise needs you and is helpful to you, or the desire to share what you receive from Jesus.

A thirst for information is characterized by the realization that the knowledge and information you already possess do not satisfy your mind. You therefore begin searching for a source of information that will supply and satisfy this need.

Dependence is a strong need to perform certain actions or an emotional or physical attachment to something or someone.

Spiritual thirst is an understanding of your spiritual poverty—a realization that your spirit lacks knowledge, revelation, nourishment, a sense of belonging, and the opportunity to use your abilities properly for the good of others. As a result, anxiety and uneasiness arise.

Knowing that you belong to God, living in harmony with His will, and obeying His requirements bring peace and joy. Yet the soul thirsts for greater blessings; it desires to grow and seeks an opportunity to do so.

Christ taught that everyone who thirsts for righteousness will be filled and will be happy. With these words, He promised that, at the proper time, such thirst would be satisfied and that everyone who asks would receive what he asks for.

I thirst. By saying this, I acknowledge before God my miserable condition, which I am powerless to change on my own. I cannot give myself what I do not possess and cannot produce. The greater my thirst, the more persistent my requests become and the stronger my desire to receive what I ask for.

Jesus offers us Himself, saying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.’ He calls Himself the Source of living water, making it clear that only He can satisfy those who thirst spiritually.

The problem of our time is that we are not merely full but overfilled—and idle as well. Never before have people had such an abundance of information, opportunities, revelations, inventions, technology, and freedom. All of this serves our good, but when there is too much of it, the soul ceases to value what it has been given.

We have such tremendous opportunities to learn spiritual truth that, with a light touch of a finger on a smartphone screen, we can obtain all kinds of answers to every question that concerns us.

The saddest part is that I become lost in this inexhaustible stream and begin thinking that I am full, that I have everything, and that, for the most part, I need nothing more. Then frightening statements are heard: ‘How much longer can this go on? How much longer must we listen to this? It is always the same thing. I already know all of this.’

But Jesus states very clearly that I do not even know that I am wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. He is not mistaken

in His assessment. He also offers the solution, which is found only in Him, in Revelation 3:18.

Have you ever experienced genuine thirst or hunger—when you would have surrendered everything most valuable and precious for one sip of water, and when you had no goal other than that sip? Unfortunately, many people have no experience even of this, because abundance surrounds us everywhere. You turn on the faucet and water flows, even if it is not always clean.

There is a great difference among people who beg for alms. Some are truly hungry, while others are full or overfed. A very hungry person will quickly convince me that he is in need, and he will be grateful for any amount of help. If I have something to give, I will not be able to resist the hungry person's plea, and I will help him.

God promises to pour out His Spirit upon us, but on the condition that He pours it upon those who are thirsty and upon the dry ground.

'For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring' (Isaiah 44:3).

The Lord has promised, and He will fulfill His promise. But the fulfillment of this promise for me depends directly upon my thirst. God knows how to distinguish thirst from overindulgence.

Let us take an example from our own lives.

It takes me about two hours to write these lines of a single message about love or happiness. The Lord sends me a thought and expects me to clothe it in words. I try to present the very essence of the lesson as briefly as possible, and I ask for help from above—and that help is given. When the message is ready, I make it available for everyone to read. I rejoice that I can serve you at least in this way, hoping that the lesson, like a seed, will fall on good soil and bear much fruit.

I know that some people see a long text, simply scroll past it, and sometimes even become irritated by it. Then it disappears

forever among other messages. Yet I have spent part of my life to give the best and most valuable things I possess—my time and my heart. Some honestly admit to me: ‘You know, I do not read what you write because I am always in a hurry, or because it does not interest me. But I am glad that you are consistent. Keep going, brother!’

This was only one specific example from our lives, and it does not trouble me. I simply do what I must do on my part. I rejoice that I can serve God and you in at least this way, my friends. I am greatly encouraged by brief messages telling me that my words have helped someone and proved useful. But my greatest joy is that I give God the opportunity to use me to reveal to others what He has given me and taught me. Whether you need it is for you to decide. If you have no thirst, then even if an angel from Heaven were to speak, his words would be only one more stream of information among those that have already overfilled your soul.

I thirst. This is a cry to Heaven that will not remain unanswered. God is looking for thirsty souls so that He may pour out His blessings upon them and fill them. He has something to give us. He loves us, and out of His great love He gives to us.

He also warns that He Himself will send upon the Earth—not a hunger for bread or a thirst for water, but a hunger for hearing the words of the Lord. People will wander from sea to sea and will not find them. It will be a terrible time.

If there is no thirst, then we must ask for it, and we will receive it. God will create circumstances in which I recognize my condition and become thirsty.

Blessed are those who continually thirst and seek after righteousness, for they will continually be filled.

After reading this lesson, try to produce some kind of thirst within yourself, and you will see that it is impossible. But when the heart experiences a deficiency, it very quickly reports it to the mind. As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for the Lord.

If you have noticed that you feel drawn to study the next lesson, that is a good sign, and there is Hope that you will receive more than you thirst for.

This corner provides a powerful charge of energy and driving force to the entire structure, because it is directly connected to the Source of life and happiness. Without it, I lose a great deal forever by refusing to receive what is offered for my own happiness.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 5:6; Isaiah 44:3; 55:1; Psalm 42:2; 63:1; 107:9; 119:74; Amos 8:11–13; John 4:14; Revelation 21:6; 22:17

Chapter 21

My happiness is not merely an emotional experience or a good mood. It consists of continual victories over my habitual worldview and unceasing resistance to the current of evil that seeks to take possession of my mind.

To be happy in our time is an achievement of the soul and a rather courageous decision that turns all accepted stereotypes upside down. At the same time, all Heaven is set in motion, and the entire plan of Salvation takes effect in the life of this spiritually happy person. Another soul has decided to live by the laws of God's Kingdom, and that soul needs every heavenly resource in order to remain firm in this choice.

In essence, my thirst determines what I will ask for and receive, what I will strive for with all my soul, and what I will seek at all times.

Faith, love, faithfulness, and thirst—all these things are valued by the world and are very familiar to people, but only as temporary tools for achieving their plans or, at best, as features of a culture. They are found more often in the Christian world and have deeper roots there. But the Lord wants us to understand these principles clearly so that we can govern them and keep them pure and effective.

God offers a great many blessings to those who thirst. Jesus calls them blessed, because they will be filled. The mind of a hungry soul is intent on pleading for what it needs most. Yet ignorance of God's promises or unbelief that you will receive what you ask for may hinder such persistent petitions.

The poor in spirit are those who have nothing within themselves with which to satisfy their souls, but they know that Jesus possesses these spiritual riches. Therefore, they go to Him to plead with tears for what their souls so deeply thirst for. Christ knew the longing of such people and devoted an entire Sermon on the Mount to them. The poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those persecuted for

righteousness all share one characteristic: they thirst for righteousness in Christ Jesus and desire to have the Kingdom of Heaven within them. This longing is expressed in their sincere prayers for themselves and for their neighbors, and these petitions shake the throne of God day and night.

If I simply want something, I begin to dream about it and consider how I might obtain it. But when I thirst, I lay everything else aside and exert all my will and all my mind simply to receive what I need at that moment. The stronger the thirst, the more compelling my pleas become.

Imagine newlyweds who have just legally registered their marriage and then stood together at the altar. They have been blessed and pronounced husband and wife. If you asked them what they wanted most at that moment, I do not think they would say, ‘Well, now we are married, and we do not know what else interesting we might do.’ They thirst for a relationship, for intimacy, and for knowing one another as a family. The person whose hand they are holding is deeply interesting to them. If this mutual longing is absent, it looks very strange.

Imagine the Lord running after us, longing to give us His blessings and earnestly begging me to accept at least something from His storehouse: ‘Andrey, let Me give you love so that you may be happy in it!’ What would that look like? Yet in His mercy, Jesus sometimes leads us to appeal in precisely this way to people who are overfilled. But if I become such a believer myself, what can the Lord give me? He will not run after me and beg me. One day He will speak the most terrible words about me: ‘Andrey is joined to idols; let him alone!’ Then I will no longer be able to change this verdict. It is a very sad condition. But I hope this is not about me. I thirst for God’s blessings and cannot imagine my life without them.

When two young people, a man and a woman who are both virgins, begin a family, they have not yet experienced one another physically and do not know what feelings they will have, but they desire this intimacy and move toward it. Once they have experienced it, they possess personal knowledge and

understand what it is like in practice. Later, they again desire to be together and receive what is now familiar to them. They passionately long for it because they understand that they are about to experience the family celebration of two bodies and souls becoming one. In all of this, there must be mutual consent and attraction; otherwise, instead of a celebration of the soul, there will be violence and perversion.

God does not force His goodness upon our hearts, although He always desires the closest possible relationship with us. He loves us unconditionally, but He respects our choice.

Try to force yourself to thirst for something and see what happens. Nothing will happen. You cannot simply produce such a feeling at will. You need a reason, certain conditions, or the understanding that you cannot live without it. When that which has satisfied my soul runs out, I know where to obtain more, and I begin to thirst for it if there is a delay.

A crisis can reveal my true thirst very quickly, but is it worth deliberately placing myself in such a condition?

The best way to receive thirst is prayer. Even when my heart desires nothing from God, my mind may understand that I need it, and I begin to ask for it. At first, this sounds unnatural: ‘Lord, give me what I will not appreciate!’ But as I continue to pray, God’s Spirit produces in me both the desire and the willingness to act according to His good pleasure. Thirst cannot be manufactured, but it can be earnestly asked for. Then the Lord creates the necessary conditions and intervenes in my life.

Overindulgence and idleness rob the soul of the desire to seek, knock, ask, and plead. Yet even an overfilled soul thirsts for more—not for the simple Bread of Life, but for perversions and something special and exotic.

I once asked someone why speakers from other countries were invited to our camp meetings, since translation takes so much time. He answered that people would not come to hear local speakers; they needed something exotic. I found that strange. Does the Holy Spirit work only through a select group of people or through those who are well known?

There is a thirst to receive, and there is a thirst to give. When the heart overflows with happiness and love, you long so much to share it. Yet you cannot break into someone else's life and pour your happiness upon that person. At times, you encounter open contempt simply because you are happy and your behavior seems provocative against the background of everyone else's unhappiness.

But my thirst to give is stronger than my reserve, so I take the risk and begin to share. Sometimes it works.

I thirst. What a blessing from Heaven! It is an open door to Heaven's treasures. How the God Who longs for my happiness rejoices when He sees me thirsting for His blessings and coming to Him for what rightfully belongs to me as a member of Christ's bride. And the Lord comes to meet me.

Thirst is the condition for receiving God's great unconditional blessings. Agape love is unconditional toward me, but for it to become mine in my relationship with my neighbors, I must thirst for it and desire to live by it and in it.

Every advertisement is designed to convince me that I need to acquire what is being offered. Various means are used to influence my mind. I learn about the offer, begin to desire it, then seek it, and finally purchase it. But it is not always something I truly need.

God, however, offers me what I need most. And He knows how to convince me that possessing it is vitally important.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Hosea 4:16–18; Ephesians 1:3–4, 17–19; Psalm 42:2–3; John 7:37–39; Psalm 119:174; Isaiah 48:20–22; Psalm 143:6–7; Isaiah 44:3; Psalm 107:9, 35–38; Isaiah 57:15–16; 53:2

Chapter 22

Not long ago, we went through a situation called a pandemic.

Wikipedia states:

A pandemic (from the Greek word meaning ‘all the people’) is an extraordinarily severe epidemic that has spread across countries and continents; it is the highest degree of development of the epidemic process. A pandemic is the most dangerous form of an epidemic—one that encompasses the overwhelming majority of the world.

Soon this will affect every family. Our school was opened on March 23, 2020, precisely in response to this event.

We have now come to the most difficult question: How can we be happy when such things are happening all around us?

Wars, diseases, and disasters are what will soon come upon us in full measure. Each of us will have to resist the influence of these currents personally, making wise decisions concerning ourselves.

When each of us personally receives an ultimatum to respond to events the way everyone else does—or else face misunderstanding at first and hatred afterward—difficult times will begin for every student in the School of Love.

But we are building happiness, and this process is too important to abandon by climbing down and immersing ourselves in worldly cares.

We can pray about what is happening, pray with those who suffer and for them, and at the same time share the hope of the better things we possess.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The power of His love does not disappear during a crisis. He cares very tenderly for His disciples and desires to use every situation for good—to teach us something and warn us against something.

He seeks to take all our cares—and all my cares—upon Himself, in order to ease our lives and fill them with heavenly values and eternal blessings.

If I enter a house or walk past a construction site with one of you, we will see the reality around us differently.

Having worked in construction for more than twenty-six years, I have been trained to see what is hidden from the eye. As I examine a project, I instinctively try to understand how the structure is supported, which parts are load-bearing, what materials are being used, how the logistics are organized, how safe it is, and much more. I always find this interesting. Where you may see dirt and a ‘crocodile’ made of steel and concrete, I look beyond it and imagine what it will become and how strong it will be. This perception did not come immediately. It gradually became my way of seeing as my knowledge and experience grew. When people join my team who do not understand the laws of construction but have acquired some experience in the trade, many problems arise as I retrain and instruct them. A person must understand what he is building and why it is done one way rather than another.

Building happiness also has its own characteristics and laws. For many years I have studied these questions, compared things, experimented, observed, and identified the pattern I am now sharing with you. My task is to explain, through my own examples and mistakes, how I understand this in the light of the Bible. Yet I am still learning it myself, so I remain open to new discoveries and revelations. I can say that happiness exists and is available. God has it in great abundance, and we can live in it. I can even call it agape happiness. This term does not appear in the Bible, but that is precisely what this happiness is like: eternal and stable. It has very deep roots and reflects God’s character. Feelings and emotions are the final result and the most visible top of the building—or its ‘finishing material’—but the strength of such a structure does not depend on the plaster. Its strength lies underground, firmly binding every part of the structure together.

When we enter the land of happiness, each of us sees its characteristics differently. With experience, the quality and strength of any structure can be determined very easily. But many people pay attention only to the beauty of buildings rather than to their stability.

It is easy to teach those who are willing to learn and eager to test everything in their own lives. Any critical approach slows down the learning process, but at the same time it tests the strength of what is being offered. This, too, has been accounted for in the design.

Do not think that building happiness is very easy. There will always be people who try to weaken your hands.

Read the book of Nehemiah. He was not a prophet, but through his experience and enthusiasm he showed us how to approach God’s work and what we should not do.

Every one of you, dear students, will face severe attacks while building your happiness. These trials will seem natural—simply part of life. They cannot be avoided. But the purpose of the attacks is to prevent you from building, to stop the project, or to cause you to use weak materials in the house.

When loved ones all around us are falling ill and dying, how can anyone speak of happiness? But we must understand that happiness is not merriment, squeals, or exclamations produced by intense emotions. It is a stable state of peace with God and a calm disposition even in the most critical circumstances. It is sound thinking that rests upon God’s promises of help and protection in difficult times. It is trusting reliance upon the Lord’s power, leaving no room for fear, panic, or mental breakdown. This is something we must learn.

If I do not know the laws of happiness, I will behave as I am accustomed to behaving or as I am persuaded to behave by those whom I allow to influence me. The media are very skillful at imposing their opinions on people. Those opinions are not always wrong, but very often they contain things that contradict God’s laws and a believer’s sound judgment.

When I see that my friends are facing extremely difficult problems or trials, I very cautiously invite them, especially at such a time, to learn the laws of happiness and love. I explain that if they learn and understand these things now, they will be able to remain this way always. Very often, such suggestions are met with anger and insults. Yet it is precisely in wartime that training proceeds quickly and accurately. You either lose or win, and you see the result immediately. In peacetime, however, you do not know how strong your little house is or whether it will withstand trials.

The coronavirus pandemic opened new opportunities for God's influence and closed the doors to the past. The time that existed before these events will not return, and all the opportunities that were missed will not come back. The forces of evil have strengthened their positions in order to defeat God's children, and everything is now being prepared for this. Our school is one of God's many instruments for teaching us how to live under these new conditions. Love, happiness, and friendship are leaving this world forever, carrying many believers away with them upon the turbulent waters of fear and anxiety. And who will be able to stand?

Do not think that everything will pass and the world will return to what it was. That will not happen. A new trial will come—one more difficult and more challenging—then another, and afterward Jesus will come to stop everything and everyone who has decided to destroy us. The culmination of the final events brought about by the forces of evil is aimed not at destroying all humanity, but at destroying us, God's children. Therefore, we should begin resisting the world's influence now. Love is the best protection and the means of gaining absolute victory in such battles. Happiness is the most militant spirit, guarding me from falling. Friendship is discipline in Christ's army. And every way of thinking contrary to these things will be destroyed in my mind by God's hand.

Bible verses for this chapter:

2 Chronicles 7:14; Romans 5:1–5; Daniel 12:1; 1 Peter 1:7–9; Proverbs 20:27; 10:5; 13:16; 22:3–4; 14:5–6; 1 Thessalonians

5:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–12; Revelation 14:12; Isaiah 43:11; 30:15, 26

Chapter 23

And now we begin laying the walls that will protect us from bad weather, dampness, wind, cold and heat, and from every temptation that seeks to destroy my happiness and make me unfit for Eternity.

Have you ever wondered why being unhappy is dangerous for the soul? It is because an unhappy person deprives everyone around him of joy without even realizing it. He simply tells everyone about his sorrows and, through his influence, loads entire mountain ranges of his cares onto the shoulders of those close to him. They, in turn, share these cares, along with their own, with others, burdening their minds with an unbearable load as well. And if we add news reports and various books and movies about other people's problems, all this negative information settles in my mind and freely destroys my happiness. In order to survive somehow amid such informational garbage, I look for a stimulant or a rush of adrenaline. But even this does not solve the problem as a whole.

The world, however, has studied psychology and psychiatry in order to use them to resist all the cares of this life.

At last, utterly exhausted, I come to Jesus and ask Him to help me. And He shows me a very strong little brick called 'I surrender,' in which the word 'I' shines with a bright light, making it clear that there is something very important here.

The word 'I' is the practical guide and the 'guinea pig' of my soul. Through its actions, it brings every biblical teaching to life and makes that teaching a visible example of the power of God's grace. Without my participation and cooperation, all truths will remain stone-cold and lifeless, testifying against me: I knew, but I did not apply them to myself. And the best I can do in such a condition is to make other people right and good by pointing out their sins, giving them valuable instructions, and noticing all their failures and mistakes. I then become so busy with this kind of 'saving' of others that I forget about myself

and, in the end, become hopelessly burned out emotionally and collapse beneath the incredible burden of all my cares and sins. A mere theory of surrender does not work. It must be joined with my personal ‘I.’

Our world is filled with lawlessness and violence, and we live amid this evil. Whether we want it or not, something harmful finds its way into our homes in one way or another, making our lives very difficult. It is even worse when evil touches my heart and destroys my peace, my love, and my happiness.

In His wisdom, God has made provision to protect me from such things and to fill my life with true happiness and meaning. He does not remove the fiery furnace from my path; instead, He leads me into it, holds me by my right hand, and remains with me through the trial. If I understand what is happening to me, where I am, and what I should do, it becomes much easier to endure this process of purification.

The Lord of our happiness does not want the burden of my cares to break me and crush me beneath its weight. Therefore, through the apostle Peter, He counsels us to cast all our cares upon Him, for He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). The key words in this promise are ‘all’ and ‘cast’—to surrender them. When I do this, the Lord takes my problems and gives me peace.

I did not always know this truth. I believed that I needed to surrender only my sins to God, while carrying my cares alone and resolving them on my own. Eventually, they came crashing down on me from every side and nearly crushed me. I began seeking help from friends in the church, but unfortunately, they burdened me even more.

Then the Lord reminded me of His promise mentioned above, and I appealed to Him with these words—with a cry: ‘I surrender all my problems to You, because I have no strength to solve them or carry them. And I BELIEVE that You have taken them.’ At that time, I was simply wandering around the outskirts of the city. I could not even kneel, but I cried out to Heaven. After that prayer, I felt very light, and I suddenly realized how simple it is to live with Jesus and how simply every

problem can be resolved. I suddenly understood how easily we can be freed from our cares. They remained in my life, but they left my heart, and the path no longer seemed so difficult. Later, those problems were resolved as well, but now there was peace in my heart. As I experienced the joy of this newfound freedom, I decided to ask for genuine heavenly love, and God answered that prayer too. He did not merely sweep my heart clean; He also filled it with Himself so that the evil spirit would not return with its companions and leave me in an even worse condition.

There is a special power in the words ‘I surrender,’ and faith that God exists, has heard, and has answered is very important. My words are a document for the heavenly host, on the basis of which they may begin to act or wait for an order. If I say, ‘I want to surrender,’ I am expressing a desire that contains neither an action nor a request, and such a desire may receive no answer. But when I surrender something, I part with it forever.

Then God’s peace enters the heart, and happiness comes with it. Blessed are the poor in spirit. I do not possess this strength; I am poor and blind in spirit, but I have the rich Jesus. I cannot rid myself of all my cares, but I can surrender them to the One in Whose hand I rest. It will not become any harder for Him if I take off my backpack and set it beside me. He loves me and will free me from every burden.

I often hear people mock me. They tell me that only the mentally ill can be happy today, and they call me one of them. But I see the opposite: only those who are mentally sound and have fellowship with Jesus are truly happy.

Since I began entrusting everything to Jesus, I have become such a close friend of His that I simply can no longer do or decide anything without Him. I share all my little cares and concerns with Him. When I am alone, I am not forsaken; and when I am among a multitude of people, I remain with Him. And He teaches me.

What problems may arise in our lives?

Very often, those close to us tell us about their cares and concerns. This involuntarily burdens me and begins to weigh me down, especially when illness or suffering is involved. As soon as I realize that someone else's burden is weighing on me, I immediately pray silently or whisper, 'I surrender this to You, Jesus. You resolve this problem,' and peace comes. Then I can continue listening. I know people who cannot sleep normally after learning that something bad has happened, but Jesus is able to help them too.

This works in your life as well. I have practiced it many times in the lives of people who were completely crushed. I see them, and when they accept help and surrender EVERYTHING to Jesus, they receive freedom immediately. What a joy it is to see tears of repentance and deliverance, followed by smiles and joy as they become aware of God's power and freedom.

'I surrender' is not an incantation. It is a decision of my will to be freed from cares and an act of trust in God's promise that He will take them. He Himself taught all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him for rest, and He promised that we would find rest for our souls.

A soul that has received this rest is happy. It has found a quiet harbor for a brief rest—and then it returns to the battle for new victories.

I love, I believe, I am faithful, I thirst, I surrender—these form the solid foundation of happiness. They work together with one another and with my personal 'I,' without which they would remain nothing more than correct theory.

And so I purchase this material and prepare to lay the wall. But I see that I should not build with this material alone, and I begin selecting other building materials as well.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 8:36; 1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6–7; Romans 12:1–2; Psalm 37:4–6, 37; 1 Peter 2:4–5; Hebrews 4:16; 5:7; Psalm 22:25; 91:14–16; 94:12–14; Proverbs 3:5–8; Psalm 55:23; Matthew 6:34

Chapter 24

If you take a Bible concordance and try to find the word ‘problem’ in it, the search will yield nothing. Problems do not exist in the Bible. Yet they exist in my life, and there can be very many of them—even more than I would like. They have always existed, but in the past they were called ‘cares.’

Problems also existed in the time of Christ. People always faced the question of how to resolve these difficulties and what to do with them. Those who found the right way out were called wise men, thinkers, or teachers. People went to them for advice.

The Lord Jesus also gave counsel and used vivid examples to show how problems should be resolved. Everywhere He points to Himself as the One Who can deal with them very quickly in my life. If I try to avoid this way of resolving my cares and seek other methods, I am given freedom of choice—and the consequences of that choice become mine as well.

Carrying cares is not considered dangerous to the soul, as long as they are not my sins. Yet it is a rather heavy burden, and at times an unbearable one. It is very difficult—and sometimes impossible—to be happy while under the crushing weight of cares. When something hurts or troubles my soul, it is very difficult to think about happiness or plan anything joyful.

A problem in itself is neutral, but my response to it determines how I will live with it.

Jesus once gave an interesting illustration in Matthew 17:20: ‘...for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.’ Let us picture it this way. Faith the size of a tiny seed can move mountains. But if I place that little seed on a table and try, by faith, to move it even one centimeter, what will happen? Nothing. The seed will remain where it is. Therefore, if I do not have enough faith to move a seed, there is no point in dreaming about mountains. But when I seek to

understand what the mountain symbolizes in this illustration, I see a deeper meaning in Jesus' words.

A problem may be a small pile, a mound, or a mountain of cares. It may even grow into mountain ranges that surround my life in an endless chain and rest upon my shoulders. Is it easy to remove a pile of trash? Yes. A mound? That is harder. A mountain? Impossible. Yet Jesus teaches that this is entirely possible. All that is needed is a little faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. I also need to understand what this word means and why it was spoken.

Happiness must be built with an understanding of what you are building and Who stands behind it. God is deeply interested in my happiness and takes an active part in its construction, opening my mind to understand what to do and how to do it.

I can simply tell the problem, 'Go on, get out of here.' But what will change? Nothing. Everything will remain firmly where it is. The problem is not merely nearby—it is lying on top of me. That is the trouble with a problem. It presses down on me and squeezes every ounce of vitality from my soul. All my energy is directed toward resolving it, but the mountain is greater than everything I use in trying to move it. Many people cannot withstand such pressure and begin building other, lighter mountains so that they can rest beneath them. Then life turns into one unbroken nightmare. Some cannot bear it; some seek a solution in alcohol; some turn to pills.

When a problem has a spiritual dimension, I may allow an evil spirit into my life along with it. That spirit never stops tormenting me, and through me it also makes the lives of those close to me unbearably difficult. This continues for years, and only my death resolves everything quickly. Have you ever met people who are possessed? Yes, they exist, and there are many of them. It is no joy when such a person is a member of your family, and it is even worse if you yourself are possessed. To defeat such an enemy, you need Someone stronger than he is. Jesus humbly offers Himself. We read in John 8:36: 'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' Does this statement also apply to freedom from problems? It seems

to be speaking of freedom from sin. Yes—but problems are included as well.

Cares are not always sinful. They do not kill the soul, but they can be very heavy. For example, my home has not been cleaned, or someone close to me has died. Both are problems. The first can be resolved quickly, and I can rejoice in the cleanliness; the second is beyond my control. It simply presses down on me and kills my happiness. But I remember the promise in 1 Peter 5:7 and cast this problem upon Christ, for He cares for me. What happens then? The Lord resolves the difficulty by freeing my heart from the weight of this care, but He does not deprive me of my feelings or remove the concern from my memory. I feel better, but this does not bring my loved one back to life. The problem leaves my heart while remaining in my life. It is like getting into a car, taking a heavy backpack off my shoulders, and setting it beside me. Does that make things easier for the car? No. But I feel relief in my body, even though the backpack's weight has not changed.

In the spiritual realm, the following takes place. In response to my request and faith, Jesus drives the demon of problems out of my house. He Himself desires to enter and live within me, so He stands there and asks permission to come in. I feel better and rejoice. But if I let Jesus in, I will have to give up many pleasant indulgences that I do not want to remove from my life, so I do nothing. The demon wanders through the wilderness and then returns. It finds my heart unoccupied and calls companions more wicked than itself. Such guests may leave a person worse off than before.

Jesus, however, offers to cleanse my heart and fill my little house with love, friendship, happiness, and light. When such residents settle in the heart, there will be no room there for demons.

And I pray: 'Jesus, according to Your word, I surrender this problem to You. Please take it and carry it Yourself.' All Heaven begins to listen to my prayer. It is very important to add to this request the 'mustard seed' of my faith: 'I BELIEVE that You, Lord, have taken this care and that it is Yours now!' The words

‘I believe’ are the most important element of this prayer. They are the key to Heaven. They are a kind of command to act. I cannot give orders to God, but in a case like this, my faith releases God’s hands, which my own choice has bound, and God’s grace carries the heavy cares out of my heart in swift-flowing streams, making it clean and free for love and happiness. Whether I will fill my life with these things, however, depends on me and on the words with which I make this decision.

I have experienced this myself, and I know how it works in me. Many times I have offered this way of resolving problems to people weighed down with cares, and they have been set free. But not everyone believes it, and not everyone wants Christ. Some have gone so far that they no longer want to change anything. Everything is in their hands.

When I talk with people and enter into their problems, I feel as though I am being placed under a press. I immediately surrender it all to Jesus in a silent prayer, and so I can calmly continue listening without suffering at all beneath that burden. But we should not deliberately go to the information dump of the world’s cares and load this garbage onto ourselves. It destroys the walls of my house, and I risk being left without the Deliverer. Everything is within my power.

I choose love, happiness, and friendship.

I open God’s plan, study God’s will, and continue building according to the biblical blueprint.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 17:20; 12:43–45; Luke 17:6; 11:21–27; 12:22–32; Hebrews 11:6; 12:1–4; Isaiah 49:24–25; Psalm 22:5–6; 32:10–11; 91:1–2; 62:9; Isaiah 49:15–16; 1 Corinthians 13:2; Hebrews 4:16; John 8:36

Chapter 25

One distinctive feature of building the little house of happiness is that no single building material can be joined only to more of itself to form a solid structure. For example, it is impossible to build the house using love alone, or faith alone, or faithfulness alone, or thirst alone. Their shapes do not allow them to be joined to others of the same kind, but they fit very well and bond securely with a different kind of stone. A special place has been prepared for every brick at the base of the walls—a place that it alone can occupy and nothing else. In some ways, this house resembles the body: no two organs are alike, yet they are all connected and depend on one another.

The next brick in the little house of happiness is called ‘I forgive.’ Please pay special attention to the beginning of this name—to the first word, ‘I.’ Without my participation, this brick is merely a meaningless sound; but with my ‘I,’ it is transformed into a beautiful melody for the soul. We have heard much about forgiveness, yet it remains an unresolved issue for many broken hearts. Forgiving is probably the most difficult decision in the life of a proud person.

This is when ‘waiter’s memory syndrome’ takes over: a person cannot remember those who were honest but remembers in every detail all those who failed to pay their bill. I know someone who remembers every person who has wronged him in detail and is ready to take revenge whenever the opportunity arises. He remembers every evil done to him and gladly serves as the sword of justice in his own cause. What an unhappy person.

Jesus teaches that God’s forgiveness of us is conditional and directly connected with the way I forgive. Forgiving releases me from the burden of offenses and debts and gives God the right to remove from me the burden of sin that He desires to forgive and for which He Himself desires to pay. There is a special wisdom in forgiveness. It is a miracle of God’s mercy.

Imagine the following situation. A man beat, raped, and murdered his victim. He was caught, but he bought his way out of punishment. He lives by deceit and theft and spreads evil around him. Then light came; he accepted it and repented, believed that Jesus saves him, and began to live by that faith. But what about the debts he accumulated throughout his life? How can he restore his victim to life? How can he return what he does not possess? And does he have the right to go on living and to live happily? To many religions, God's plan of salvation is foolishness and an absence of justice. But God chose the best solution. He took all our debts upon Himself and paid for them with His own life in order to remove that burden from us and simply forgive us. He forgives in such a way that He never remembers our sins again, and He accepts us as though we had never sinned. What power and what wisdom! I tried to find another solution, but I could not. My heart melts before such love, and I understand that I was unclean but now stand clean before the righteous God. Yet He also wants me to experience the same joy of forgiveness by cleansing my memory of the guilt of those who owe me and those who have wronged me. When I forgive and let go, peace enters my heart, and I understand how easy it is to live.

I experienced this in my own life. Even as a believer, I would boil with anger whenever I remembered the person who had done evil to me. Then I simply said concerning him, 'I forgive,' and it felt as though a mountain had fallen from my shoulders. I could physically feel how much lighter I became. Soon afterward, the Lord brought to my mind everyone who had wronged me, and I forgave them all for everything. And I believe that the Lord forgave me as well.

Happy people do not harbor offenses. They do not hold grudges; and if they ever do, they quickly lay down that burden and continue living in freedom.

The spirit of unforgiveness contaminates the pure spring of living water within us. It is like a dead dog in a well from which people are invited to drink. Who among you would want to live that way? Yet many people have exactly such a spring and even

give all those around them water from it, blaming everyone for everything.

Once I was working outdoors, and not far from us a car ran over a skunk, which began to decay. Whenever the wind blew toward us, the stench was so strong that it was difficult to breathe. I thought about how we sometimes ‘smell’ this way to God when we carry the infection of unforgiveness within us. The saddest part is that we infect others too, seeking sympathy and telling them how we were hurt or treated unfairly.

Families sometimes fall apart simply because people cannot forgive one another and forget. We become historians, ready at every opportunity to recall every bad thing from our spouse’s past that has been recorded in our ‘waiter’s memory.’ And while living under this burden, we wish each other happiness and many years of life.

Happiness has its own laws. I forgive and am released from the debts I owe God when I myself forgive, acknowledge my guilt, and come to the Lord in repentance.

Forgiveness resolves every difficult issue at once and forever. It is profoundly wise, because justice demands retribution, while forgiveness contains love.

But how should we forgive financial debts, especially the debts of those who have no intention of repaying them? There are wonderful words: ‘I forgive.’ Your debtor may hate you, wish you dead, and lose you as a friend and companion, while having neither the ability nor the desire to return what belongs to you. By forgiving him, I free myself from his hatred and gain a chance for a normal relationship in the future. I lose nothing, because I would receive nothing anyway, but I lay down the burden of his debt and hostility. If I tell him that I forgive him, I give him another chance for a better future, and sometimes this can bring a change for the better in his life as well. It is better not to lend; but if you do lend, treat it as a gift, let go of that sum in your mind and heart, and rejoice if it is ever returned. ‘Give, and it shall be given unto you.’

Love knows how to forgive, and it loves to do so. It releases anyone who has caused pain or loss so completely that no trace remains. Unforgiveness, however, is like a rusty lock on the door of my heart whose key has also been lost.

My forgiveness is so important that after Jesus gave us the model prayer, He explained this point further. He declared that if I do not forgive, then my debt before God will not be forgiven either.

The distinctive feature of God's forgiveness, however, is that the Lord did not simply forgive and forget; He pays my debt with His own life and satisfies the demands of the law through His death. It is important to understand this correctly.

My heart has now grown so accustomed to the purity of forgiveness that any unclean thought of resentment is immediately recognized and rejected with the words, 'I forgive this too.'

What do I gain by refusing to forgive? I become right about everything, and the whole world becomes indebted to me. What benefit does that bring me? None. Only anger and irritation—and then thoughts of revenge torment me without end. Even the offender's death does not free me from hatred toward him. And do I intend to live forever with such a spirit? Heaven will never open its doors to people like that.

I forgive. This is a very strong brick in my happiness, and no external factor can damage this material formed by my decision. It will protect me from many troubles. Forgiveness must be present in my structure wherever the Chief Designer has appointed it to be in my little house of happiness.

To forgive brings such freedom of thought and opens such a vast field for love's work that nothing better can be imagined. Nothing can replace it. It is true happiness and the likeness of God in my character: I forgive just as I have been forgiven.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 6:12, 14–15; Deuteronomy 15:2; Psalm 103:3; 130:4; Matthew 9:6; 18:21–35; Mark 3:28–29; 4:12; 11:25–26; Luke 7:47; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12–13; Hebrews 9:22

Chapter 26

Forgiveness has several beautiful facets in my life, and it includes the following aspects:

1. My releasing or pardoning a guilty person from the punishment he deserves.

2. Renouncing personal resentment, revenge, the desire for justice against the offender, and the pursuit of the guilty party.

3. Taking upon myself all the consequences and covering all the expenses caused by the harm done by the guilty party.

4. My forgiving and canceling all debts and unfulfilled promises.

5. My personal acknowledgment of my guilt and wrongdoing toward others, and my asking them to forgive me.

6. My personal acknowledgment of my guilt before God and a prayer of repentance, accompanied by the desire not to do such a thing again.

And my personal participation in all these processes is very important.

A sinner's life is extremely tangled. It is like a snowball that grows larger and larger as it rolls, until it becomes an avalanche that sweeps away everything in its path, or until it falls apart under its own weight and the burden of cares, soiling everything around it. How can all this be resolved? If strict justice is applied, there are times when taking the guilty person's life would be a very humane punishment compared with the evil he committed. Yet even this sentence is not carried out, and the evildoer is given the opportunity to continue living and doing evil. Satan and his army of demons are a vivid example: they continually seek accomplices among human beings to achieve their evil purposes.

How, then, should God deal with this evil? He poured out His judgments in the form of a flood, fire, captivity, and disease, yet people still did not learn to be righteous. But God gave His Son

to the world in order to show humanity not His power and wrath, but His mercy and love, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The Lord chose the path of forgiving deceived humanity and decided to take all the consequences of that forgiveness upon Himself. He simply chose to forgive. No matter how tangled the case of each sinner may be, forgiveness resolves the problem instantly and forever if the lawbreaker recognizes his guilt and comes to the Creator in repentance, believing in Jesus Christ. It is God's love revealed in this process that draws deceived souls most powerfully to their Savior. His mercy and friendliness disarm every thinking person. They open human hearts to greater grace and blessings. Together with God's forgiveness, there comes into a person's life the happiness of being freed from the feeling and burden of guilt for sins committed.

The Lord takes my sin and removes it from my life and from His memory, making it clear that I must remain in the purity and holiness of a new life, with a new heart that He changes with my permission. On His own initiative, God Himself takes this first step while I am still living in sin, and He cleanses me. What will I say in response? Will I accept my salvation? The decision is mine.

But by taking this first step, the Lord leads me to learn to forgive people and show them mercy and forbearance even before they recognize their guilt or repent.

When my daughter was three years old, she decided to rebel and refuse to obey her parents under any circumstances. I did not know what to do with this little monster. All my arguments were useless, and no punishment brought her to her senses. I had no experience and did not know what action to take. But evening came, it was time for bed, and my exhausted daughter fell asleep. I looked at this sleeping little person and made plans for revenge the next morning—how I would punish and discipline her and refuse to let her rule my home. But the Holy Spirit gently spoke to my mind, asking how my Heavenly Father had treated me when I behaved the same way toward Him. I remembered my own behavior and began to think. After a

struggle, I knelt to pray and began asking for God's grace for myself and my daughter. Then I decided to forgive her and begin the morning with love and friendship, without knowing what the result would be. I was very surprised when this little person woke up and behaved with her usual obedience and love. She ran around the house as if nothing had happened and was an ordinary child, with no memory of the previous day's conflict. And I did not remind her of it.

It can be very difficult to ask God for forgiveness, but you take that step. Then the Lord calls me to forgive my debtors as well. This is where it becomes very painful. 'How can I? He treated me so terribly!' Yet the Lord calls me to forgive that scoundrel. And I forgive.

Then the Lord teaches me to acknowledge my sins and mistakes toward others and to ask for forgiveness myself, admitting my guilt and accepting full responsibility for the consequences of the sin or conflict. How difficult this is, especially when my pride tries to direct the process. But God humbles the proud and brings down the arrogant. I may resist and refuse to take such a step, believing that justice requires the other person to repent. Yet the Lord calls me to take the first step. And I do.

How difficult it can be to forgive the debts of those who sweetly pleaded for the money and then, while living in abundance, have no intention of repaying anything but keep looking for opportunities to ask for more. Yet I must forgive. The condition of my salvation is contained in this action.

When I forgive, I free both myself and my debtor from the burden. I place everything in God's hands, and He takes up my cause. I stop thinking about the debtor and tormenting myself with thoughts of his shamelessness. Peace enters my heart instead, and life becomes very easy.

I have noticed that the most difficult family conflicts were very often resolved quite quickly when I was the first to acknowledge that I was wrong, even when I did not consider myself guilty. A truce followed, and the relationship was restored. So I decided always to be the one who was wrong. But

this led to my becoming the embodiment of evil. Then I reconsidered my behavior and decided to resolve every conflict with love. And love works miracles. I saw that the spirit of love triumphs in every conflict, even if reconciliation does not take place, because I remain clean before God and before my opponent. Living by the motto ‘I am right’ is the greatest mistake, so I replaced it with a better one: ‘I love!’

Love is the very power of forgiveness, and it is love that draws me to repentance whenever repentance is needed.

‘I surrender’ and ‘I forgive’ are two sisters. They sound different, but they have the same spirit. Their action immediately brings me spiritual freedom. No meaningless pilgrimages or rituals are needed to remove this burden. My sincere words activate the process of liberation, and my heart rejoices in the lightness of a life unburdened by problems and sins.

Of course, there are duties and cares that must be carried out and borne, but I should not burden my heart with them. No matter how large my bank debts may be, they must be repaid; but the kind of heart and attitude with which I do so depends on me. And God teaches me diligence and sound judgment.

But construction has only just begun, and I need new materials that will take their appointed places in my little house of happiness and bring joy to my heart.

I see that blessings are overflowing in my life, and I wonder what to do next.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Psalm 32:1–2; John 3:16; Romans 5:6–8; 6:17–18, 22–23; Zechariah 12:10; Matthew 18:23–35; James 5:16; Mark 2:10–11; Luke 6:37; 15:20–24; 23:34; Numbers 14:19–20; Colossians 3:12–14; 1 John 4:10–12

Chapter 27

What I receive from God overflows into my life, fills me with joy and delight, influences my thoughts and feelings, and moves me to share all of it with others, urging them to accept the blessings available to me and become happy, at least for as long as those blessings continue to work in their lives. For the little house of happiness, this becomes the next brick, called ‘I share.’ It is worth paying attention to the word ‘I.’ It must be present in this material as well; otherwise, the result will be defective and will not withstand testing.

We came into this world naked, and we will leave it the same way. We will take nothing from here except our character. Therefore, God intended all our material and spiritual blessings to teach us to give, to begin sharing with those in need by giving what will support and bring joy to the people around us. Every gift from God is intended for serving others. Of course, we must approach this wisely and consider whom to give to and what to give, how much to give, how to give, and whether to give at all. We are God’s stewards. All the money, possessions, talents, and time we have are ours, but they do not belong to us; we only manage them. God knows that we need food and clothing and that we need rest, but He is very interested in seeing how we share His gifts. After all, giving is an eternal law of Heaven. We will be doing it throughout Eternity.

Have any of you experienced delight and happiness because you once gave something to someone? Have you noticed what a joy it is to share? Not when you regret that you now have nothing left, but when you see that, because of you, someone now has something—that your gift or donation enables a person to meet a need and glorify God for it. We can give both material and spiritual things.

Material things are what will remain in this world when we leave it, but while we are alive, we can use them and enjoy possessing these blessings.

Spiritual things include possessing love, talents, time, emotions, and everything I will take with me into Eternity. Some people can sing, some can play musical instruments, some can comfort, some can cook, and some can listen. All these abilities can be used to serve others. We were all created for one another, and we live joyfully when we use our gifts to serve our neighbors.

Look! Everything in the world was created to serve something or someone else. Sometimes only a human being becomes selfish, giving nothing but merely accumulating and gathering, building storehouses for himself and expanding them. In the end, he dies, and all his possessions go to someone who has no idea what they are for and may therefore squander everything very quickly.

Giving is God's principle. If He stopped giving to us, we would simply perish. All Heaven considers what else it can give us. God has already prepared so many gifts for us and is waiting for the opportunity to give them to us freely when we ask or when we are in need. These blessings are described in the Bible. The Lord is simply waiting for the moment when we begin learning about them and asking Him for them. But why do we need these material and spiritual gifts? Is it merely to use them, enjoy them, and nothing more? I believe God is also interested in our taking what we need and passing the surplus on to others.

I once heard the following truth, and I liked it very much: 'When we reach Heaven, God will never rebuke us for giving too much.' He will never say, 'You behaved so badly; you gave so much to others.' He will never rebuke anyone for that. And second: 'He will never scold us for keeping so little for ourselves.' I can see that the person who said this understood what he was talking about. I live this way and see how fascinating it is to be a simple channel through which God distributes resources: here, there, to these people, and to those people.

God also understands that everyone must be paid what is due: taxes and insurance to the government, rent to the landlord, and money for food and personal hygiene supplies. Those to

whom I pay what is due also take care of us. The police protect us, and they need something to live on. The government creates laws that protect our property, our daily lives, and our lives themselves. The authorities need resources. They are not robbing us when they require what rightfully and legally belongs to them. We live in a country that cares for its citizens. Perhaps there are people in your family who need food and clothing. You must give to them as well. There may be relatives who are not as well provided for. There may be missionary projects. There are so many needs. And we manage these flows of money. Who is a steward? A steward is someone who wisely distributes the resources he has received and that are under his control. Take a church treasurer, for example. Every Sabbath, he receives money through offerings. As treasurer, does he have a right to even one penny of those funds? No. What, then, is his role? He takes everything we have given him and then distributes it: tithe goes there, offerings go here, and donations go elsewhere. He distributes it and sends it out; nothing remains with him. If he is entitled to a fixed salary, he receives only that salary, regardless of the amount of donations received. In God's eyes, we are the same kind of people. Heaven is interested in all my affairs and projects, and it watches me.

There is such a concept as wise saving. God does not call you to give everything away and then wonder and worry about how to survive until your next paycheck. He calls you to act wisely. For example, if circumstances allow, savings should include an amount set aside for unexpected expenses. That is wise. But saving merely so that I can have a great deal of money and let it comfort my soul is a sin. The amount may be very small, but the very spirit of accumulating merely for the sake of accumulating is wrong. The apostle Paul wrote that it is more blessed to give than to receive. But when I experience this myself, I see from Paul's words that he understood what he was writing about. This truly is happiness. There is such satisfaction in being able to help someone or support something. It is especially joyful when your contribution bears good fruit. Yet the essence of

happiness is not in that result, but in receiving and then passing what you have received on to others.

In Israel, the Jordan River flows into the Sea of Galilee and then flows out of it. The Sea of Galilee is still home to many living creatures. But when the river flows into the Dead Sea, it does not flow out again; its water only evaporates. The very name of that sea speaks for itself without any further explanation.

But giving is not enough for complete happiness. We must also know how to receive. We must know how to ask so that we may receive. Those who wish to give us something also want to be happy, and we should support them in this. God takes great pleasure in giving when there are people who ask. I must learn to receive what He has prepared for me. The same principle applies to people who want to share with you. Do not deprive them of happiness, especially when they want to give you their love, friendship, and time.

I share. This is a very strong material for building the little house of happiness, and we cannot do without it.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Kings 17:12–16; John 12:24; Acts 20:35; Matthew 7:7–8, 11; 10:8; Luke 6:38; 12:33–34; 2 Corinthians 9:7–11; 8:2–5, 9, 13–14; 1 John 3:16–18; Galatians 6:2; Philippians 2:3–4; James 2:15–17

Chapter 28

The finest and unsurpassed example of selflessness is found in the character of God. His desire to share His blessings with us never ceases to amaze and captivate thirsty souls.

Our entire Earth was created according to the principle of receiving and giving. Rain and snow come down from heaven to make the soil fruitful, and after passing through the depths of the earth, they flow into underground rivers, which give their waters to the ocean; the ocean, in turn, returns them to the sky.

Every living creature and every plant is designed to benefit someone or something. Everything was created to give and to serve.

Sin altered God's creation and distorted this harmony, yet nature still bears the signature of its Creator.

Yet Heaven's most generous Gift to humanity is that, for the sake of our salvation, God did not withhold the most precious Gift He had—Himself in the Person of His Son Jesus. The Creator gave Him, and gave Him forever, never again to receive His Son as He had been before He was born in a human body. This Gift cannot be measured in words or by any value our minds can comprehend. The Eternal, Immortal, Almighty God became a dependent human Being. The hidden depth of this mystery amazes me by both its simplicity and its profound meaning, which my limited human mind can never fully comprehend. Yet in His mercy, the Lord desires to reveal this mystery to those who seek and thirst. He shows great and inaccessible things to those who call upon Him with a desire to learn more and go deeper.

Knowing God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gives the believer Eternal life, transforming his outlook and character into the image and likeness of God.

The human body itself is uniquely designed. Our entire organism was created to receive and then give. No cell lives only for itself; each one serves the good of others. One of our

responsibilities, therefore, is to study our unique bodies and care for them in the light of the knowledge and instruction we have received.

But the main purpose God has set before humanity is the formation of a character like that of the Most High. To make it possible for us to fulfill this desire of God, He gave His Beloved Son to our world. He became a living Example for us and revealed the beauty of His love to everyone who shows an interest.

To give what is most precious is the character of Love. Love is always ready to sacrifice itself, forgetting everything else as long as others may be well. Love finds its greatest satisfaction when it can invest itself in a gift or a deed, whether great or small. Love gives meaning to everything and makes every action right. Every cell of our bodies bears the seal of God's love. If this were not so, we would fly apart into tiny atoms and disappear in an instant. Yet love holds us together in the fullness of our physical being and sustains the proper functioning of the body.

Sin has also affected our health. Every illness is a symbol of sin, which destroys God's creation in order to kill it. But the Lord placed within us mechanisms of defense and immunity so that we could continue to live. Yet what can God do for those who knowingly kill themselves by destroying body and soul with something harmful? God offers His Son as the only One able to save from sin and give wisdom and hope for a better life. Who will value this Heavenly Gift? Who will receive Him?

The world was created to meet the needs of everyone living on this Earth, including those yet to be born. Its resources are sufficient for this task. But sin has shown that all the wealth and resources of this world are not enough to satisfy the greed and envy of even one person. The world is far too small to fulfill every desire of a sinful heart. Selfishness is the complete opposite of love. It serves itself, insatiably seeking to fulfill its ambitions and gain the whole world for its own soul. Love is the absolute opposite of selfishness. It is designed to give and to share what it possesses within itself and what it receives from

God the Father, from Whose Heart it originates, so that it may return to Him with even greater thanksgiving and blessings.

‘I share’ is the character of God, written by the Creator’s hand on the tablets of my heart as the eternal law of life in the universe and in God’s Kingdom, of which I become a citizen by being born again of the Holy Spirit.

Is it difficult for people who love to share? Of course not. Most likely, it is impossible for them not to share, because love always seeks an outlet in giving and selflessness. It has no need of all the treasures of this world for self-admiration and pleasure. Love finds its greatest satisfaction when it can make someone happy, ease someone’s suffering, or give someone comfort and hope for a better life. Love always finds something to do for the good of another. It is love precisely because it shares itself. Its task is also to teach me to be a wise steward, giving others what is sent to me so that I may serve my neighbors with the gifts and talents I have been given. Love continually sows itself. It ceaselessly shares all its strength and resources so that next time it may give even more and more.

The seed of love possesses an inherent power to sprout and bear fruit wherever it is sown. Love has many enemies, but it is not afraid to give itself even to them, for it has been endowed with power from above to change the hearts of those who are hostile but have not yet closed themselves completely to the Heavenly Gift.

As a result, when love wins a person’s heart, it draws the mind toward the original Source of its nature and leads the soul to Christ, in Whom there is true Eternal love and wisdom for every thirsty and seeking heart. Blessed are those who hunger, for they shall be filled, so that, once filled, they may share what they have received.

The circulation of love within a person’s nature fills his life with meaning and his heart with the happiness and beauty of selflessness. It is not good to boast, but when you are known as someone who loves to share and always does so wisely, that has a very good influence and rightly reflects God’s character in

your life. Such material produces a very strong structure for the little house of happiness, one ready to welcome anyone within its walls, give that person a part of itself, and gladden my heart because it is where my treasure is. It is so pleasant to realize that all my treasures are evenly distributed among the hearts of my friends, so that they may receive me when they enter everlasting habitations.

Once, when we were moving to another apartment, I spent two weeks transporting our belongings to the new home, filling my small car to capacity each time. When those two weeks had passed, my wife and I sat in the old home and thought about what we lacked. It seemed that we still had everything necessary for life and could live without what had already been moved. Then I realized that I do not need very much in this world and that I will be unable to take anything from it except my heart. Therefore, I rejoice whenever I can fill my soul with love that delights in sharing. I will inherit Eternity with that love and continue this activity forever.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 3:16; 10:17–18; Genesis 1:1, 27–29; 2:8, 15, 18, 22; Leviticus 20:24; Jeremiah 27:6; Ecclesiastes 1:7; 2:3–11; Mark 8:36; Proverbs 28:27; 31:20; Luke 6:34; 10:19; 1 Timothy 6:17; James 1:5; Revelation 21:6–7

Chapter 29

Perhaps the strangest and most foolish question one can ask a person is, ‘Are you alive?’ Strange as it may sound, this is precisely what I think and reflect on least of all. It does not even occur to me to ask what life is, although many people want to know what its meaning is.

But if I ask, ‘Are you eternally alive?’ many will stop and think, realizing that I am speaking of another kind of life. Very often, even believers answer that they do not know, and that sounds very strange coming from them.

The next brick in my little house of happiness is called ‘I live.’ This stone is strong, but it can contain different things.

We were born and live where wickedness reigns. When God established this world, He knew that the Fall was possible, and He understood where sin would lead. But the originator of evil —Satan—did not. When he sinned, he could not understand what would result from that first, seemingly harmless state of mind: pride, envy, and indignation. Lucifer began spreading these attitudes widely among his fellow angels, and he succeeded. Some angels turned against the Creator and supported Satan in his rebellion without understanding the consequences. From the Bible we know where all this led. Then the enemy of souls seduced sinless humanity as well; as a result, the Earth was filled with suffering, and death entered the world.

When God created human beings, He did not create sinners, for the wages of sin is death. But through disobedience, people chose this fate for themselves. The very existence and approach of death brings joy to few people; and when one also realizes that sin will exact a severe price, life itself loses its appeal.

Happiness and sin are two incompatible concepts.

Look at any advertisement: happy people, happy children—everyone is smiling. All they supposedly lack for complete happiness is laundry detergent or toothpaste, while some even

manage to offer happiness in alcohol and tobacco. Sadly, this is how the world deceives itself, showing such trash to others. Amazingly, it works. People see an advertisement and go buy the familiar product—not the one that may be better, but the very one they saw, because cheerful people were promoting it. Yet happiness does not come with the purchase, while the need for it is built into the human heart. We want to smile, rejoice, and be delighted continually. We human beings were created for love, and we want to be happy. We search for it.

Yet not everyone who is physically alive is alive to God. There are two kinds of life: physical life and Eternal life. There are also two kinds of birth: birth into this world as a human being and birth of the Holy Spirit as a son or daughter of God. To be born the second time, one must first experience the first birth.

The Lord Jesus gives life, and life more abundantly; by believing in Him, I begin to live eternally. I receive this Gift. I am born into it. Even if I die, I will live again. This Eternal life within me is a source of joy and inspiration. I live. God has saved me from the power of sin so that I may live forever, and God gives me everything needed to make me fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. He teaches me the eternal laws of life. Through faith in Jesus, I receive the right to be born again. This faith changes my earthly existence and invites Christ into my heart. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. He works within me to accomplish what pleases Him, and through my invitation and choice, I give Him full authority to do so.

‘I live for the world’ and ‘I live for God’ are very similar bricks of happiness. Yet one is suitable only for earthly life, while the other, soaked in the blood of Christ, will withstand every trial and adorn my little house forever. Both bring happiness, because the dead cannot appreciate life, much less rejoice in it. As long as a person is alive, there is hope of receiving the Gift of Eternal life. Only the living can appreciate what took place at Calvary for their salvation. The dead know nothing, and in the grave there is neither wisdom, nor knowledge, nor happiness.

I live. How good it is for me always to remember this! I am alive!!! Glory to God!

The brick called ‘I live for God’ is eternal. It always gladdens the heart. It must pass from the state of ‘I live’ through the process of being washed in the blood of Christ and endure the refining fire in order to become golden.

I live! What happiness this is!

A living person has more possibilities. He can grow, think, dream, create, and enjoy life. Long years lie ahead of him, and he is able to accomplish much.

Life is a Gift from the Author of life, a Gift from the Creator to humanity. The breath of life unites soul and body, and a person begins to live.

At times I do not think about life. I simply live, and that is all.

Yet life was given to us for a special purpose: that we might be happy and reflect in our lives the character of the One in Whom we move and have our being.

I live for God. This is life within life. It is a second birth during this life for Eternal life. The Lord says to some people, ‘thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead,’ making it clear that spiritual birth must distinguish us from merely earthly existence.

In the spiritual life of a person born again, spiritual transformation and training begin. God Himself is the Teacher in the school of life. He instructs us, continually making the lessons more challenging and sending greater light.

The purpose of this education is to reveal God’s image and character to a person and to restore that image and character within the person.

How joyful it is to live according to the truth, to see the difference between light and darkness, to understand God’s will, and to submit to it.

Life is given on the condition of obedience to the laws of life, and it is well with me if I know and keep them.

Eternal life has already begun in those who have believed in Jesus and have been born of the Holy Spirit. Even if these

people die, to God they are alive, like sleeping children who will awaken on that glorious morning when their Lord comes to wake them.

What is Eternal life, or Eternity?

It is something like this:

Once every million years, a seagull from another planet flies to the ocean, takes a beakful of water for its needs, and flies away. When it has drunk the entire ocean, one second of Eternity will have passed. And we are invited to live that long!

I live for God! This is an enormous advantage over those who do not possess life. My spirit is nourished from a Source that will never run dry. My life is under special protection, and I give thanks for everything.

A living person can do anything!

What happiness it is to live—and to live forever!

To live in order to love; to live in order to do good; to live in order to gladden everyone through my presence, individuality, and uniqueness.

There is no one else anywhere exactly like me. Every one of us is special.

The living are drawn to the living, so that by their own lives they may inspire others to live life to the fullest.

Life receives the seed of life from the Creator and goes into the world to sow it, so that its shoots may find good soil and give life to those who do not yet possess it.

The finest adornment of any life is love. It fills life with light. I know living people who have no love and do not know its taste, and I feel deeply sorry for them. Like salt, love gives life a special flavor and fills it with meaning. Life without love is merely a temporary stay in a sinful world, and without love I am nothing. Through faith in Jesus, we give God authority to teach us to love and to live in order to love—to live forever and to love forever with everlasting love.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Luke 20:38; Revelation 3:1; Ecclesiastes 9:4–6, 10; John 5:21, 25; 3:3–8; 10:10; 11:25–26; Romans 6:7–8; 8:10–11; Ephesians 2:5–6; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 2:14–15

Chapter 30

To understand the full wonder and beauty of life with God, I need to understand Who God is and what my Eternal life cost Him.

God wants me to reflect on what is taking place in my relationship with Him, where blessings come from, how they work, and what lies behind them. Thoughts like these give God the opportunity to reveal to me what will provide the right answers to my questions.

For example, when I married, I assumed the responsibility of caring for my family and providing for the material well-being of all its members. In time, I notice that I am perceived as someone who disappears from home early in the morning and reappears in the evening. Few people are interested in where I have been, what difficulties I have faced, or whether I managed to earn anything. All I hear is what else we need to buy to make our home comfortable and where we should go on vacation. I have nothing against comfort or travel, but it may happen that no one ever appreciates my emotional and spiritual contribution to my family's well-being. Instead, it is treated as an obligation that I must fulfill without question. Yet I spend my life on it—my own life—and everything is reduced to a single question: 'Where is the money?'

Although money cannot buy happiness, many husbands discover the true character of their wives only when they lose their jobs or are no longer able to work. Wives, too, very often begin to appreciate their husbands and their care only after they lose them. But while I am still alive, I would like simply to be noticed as a human being who, besides working and earning money, is a unique person with unique qualities.

Now let us apply this example to our relationship with God. He is the Maker of my life and the Author of everything that sustains it. He knows better than I do what I need for happiness and health, and He gladly cares for all my needs. Even before I was born, the Lord put into effect in this world His plan to save

me from the power of sin and grant me the privilege of Eternal life, on the condition that I accept this Gift. That plan is now at work, and setting it in motion cost the Creator dearly. He had to pay for it with the life of His only Son. He gave Him over to the anguish of eternal death in order to give me Eternal life.

To draw my attention to Himself, He sends me many evidences of His love, care, and wisdom. He directs my eyes to Jesus so that in Him I may see and find every blessing my soul needs, believe in Him as my personal Savior, and on the basis of this hope receive the Gift of Eternal life. There is no other Name and no other way by which people may be saved. No religion of good works can give humanity what God offers through faith in His Son. He gives life without limits—Eternal life. And this life consists in knowing the Father and the Son.

Who will appreciate this? Who will believe it? And having believed, who will stop to consider what God experienced in making such a sacrifice? What does He sacrifice even now as He cares for my well-being and happiness? God, too, gives His life and His strength so that it may be well with me. It pains Him to hear the demand, 'Where are Your blessings?!' He is a living Person, and He is pleased when I think about where all this abundance comes from, what it costs, and what price was paid for it. When I see God's love in all of this and thank my Creator, seeking to know Him personally and to have the closest possible relationship with Jesus, it gladdens God's heart and moves Him to protect me in a special way in this world and to care for me.

God's love and His ways are not always what I imagine them to be. Sometimes His actions surpass my knowledge of Him, and I simply do not understand such love and mercy or the depth of His tenderness and care for me. Yet He accepts me and always loves me unconditionally.

Jesus promises me many good things and privileges, both here on Earth and in His Kingdom, if I remain faithful and obedient and become an overcomer. Abundant life is the most precious Gift God could possibly have conceived in exchange for my heart and my faith in Him.

He does not give me a life of sin. Instead, He removes lawlessness from my heart and will then destroy it completely throughout the entire Universe. Eternity and Eternal life will then appear before us in all their beauty and purity.

My little house of happiness will blend in perfect harmony with the inexhaustible treasures of the eternal world. It will no longer need strong walls to protect us from disaster, for the Lord Himself will personally become its Wall, Foundation, Happiness, and the One Who fills everything. The glory of God will be my constant adornment in the form of an eternal, spotless character shaped under the conditions of warfare and severe trials.

I live! This is not merely a joyful exclamation, but also an understanding that I belong to the One Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. My personal relationship with Jesus gives Him the right to open for me the Heavenly treasuries of God's love and to impart to me this attribute of the Divine nature. By studying the life of Christ and carefully considering His ministry for my salvation, I unite my heart with Heaven and drink the water of life from the pure, original Source.

As I come to know Jesus, I marvel at His love and realize that I do not possess it. But He offers me agape love as gold which, once it becomes mine, will carry me through the refining fire and teach me to see life and this world with different eyes—eyes anointed with the special salve of God's enlightenment. Then I will see what I had failed to notice. My new white garment will testify to the world and to Heaven of my true allegiance and my new character, which is like the character of Jesus.

Sadly, many people will appreciate all these blessings only after the door of grace has closed forever and nothing can be changed. Then the Gift of Eternal life will truly appear in all its magnificence. But standing and watching a departing ship, knowing that you are irretrievably late and lost forever, is not a pleasant experience.

Once I traveled by ferry from Germany to Russia. After boarding was complete and the order was given to close the bow of the ship, two cars arrived. Their drivers began pleading with the captain through gestures to open the entrance for them. They waved their arms, fell to their knees, and asked the port workers to support their request to board the vessel. But it was already too late. Perhaps the captain could no longer see them. The bow closed, and we set sail without them. They watched the ship in despair and were deeply saddened. As I looked at them, there was nothing I could do to help.

The Gift of Eternal life is still available. It desires to take its place in my structure, blending with all the other bricks. It cannot be seen with the eye, but it is very strong.

Love embraces this material as well. It joins this understanding of life to all the other qualities of my structure.

People of the world can also be happy by using some eternal materials in their structure of happiness, but all these materials must be connected to one another and to the Foundation, and the roof must securely cover them all.

To live without God is like sailing without a sail. It is vanity and vexation of spirit. But to live forever without God—no worse nightmare could be imagined.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 1:1–5, 11–13; 3:14–18, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:39–40; 6:47, 63; 10:27–28; 14:6; 17:2–3; Deuteronomy 30:15, 19; Job 33:4; Proverbs 12:28; 18:21; Luke 12:15; Romans 6:22–23; Revelation 3:7; Matthew 25:10–13; 7:22–23

Chapter 31

The next brick in our little house of happiness is called ‘I obey.’ Like all the other components of my structure, this little stone is very important when it occupies its proper place, for it is eternal in nature and will never cease to adorn my heart. We should pay attention to what this material is made of. Its distinctive feature lies in the word ‘I.’ This word must be present in this stone as well. Without it, the brick of ‘obedience’ will have an outward form of godliness but no human participation. The Chief Engineer will reject such material and place it in the category of dry theory that was never learned through practice.

I know the story of a man who disobeyed God’s instruction and prohibition only once, yet because of his seemingly small act of rebellion, torrents of evil, grief, and suffering poured into our world. That man’s name was Adam.

Obedience begins wherever rules and laws exist and discipline has been established. Without organization from above, everything in the Universe would descend into chaos.

Every statute and ordinance is given to be observed, and special authorities exist to ensure compliance. From a small chat group within an ordinary family or a group of people, to various movements and nations, and ultimately to our entire world, we see that laws exist everywhere. Those who obey the established order are under the protection of the authorities, while lawbreakers are pursued and punished if they are caught.

Even the animal world follows its own unwritten rules, which God governs. And Scripture says that every authority is from God.

When I obey the laws of the country in which I live, I am a law-abiding citizen, and no one bothers me. I live in peace. I attract no one’s attention.

God also has His statutes. When I study them, understand what my Creator expects of me, and live in harmony with His will,

peace reigns in my heart. I rejoice in knowing that my life agrees with God's will and bears the seal of His approval. I then become a person of great interest to the Heavenly host. All Heaven now watches me with special attention, taking note of every thought, motive, and action. And God begins to communicate with me.

I gladly listen to His still, small voice, which speaks to me without an audible sound from the pages of the Bible, through spiritual writings, from the lips of my mentors, and through my conscience.

God knows how to convey to me the laws and truths that will protect me from evil in this world. The Lord expects my obedience, yet He gives me freedom of choice.

There is a problem, however. The laws and practices of the world or society in which I live sometimes conflict with God's requirements, and I must make decisions upon which my Eternal life and salvation depend. I may obey merely from habit, but that will not last long. If I do not know God's plans, I will surely violate them. Therefore, I study the Creator's will and decide how I will live from that point forward in the new light I have received.

God teaches me the truth and expects me to obey according to the light I have received.

Consider a well-ordered family in which the children have been taught the household rules and live by them. The children are under their parents' protection, enjoy peace and joy, and plan a happy life for many years to come. Every violation is restrained through discipline. But the children grow and see other rules around them that influence them. Their young souls enter into conflict, and they make choices. As they continue to grow, they understand life better and compare the world more closely with their family. Although they know their parents' will, teenagers sometimes choose what pleases them. If their mother and father condemn their choice, a conflict between the generations arises. With a spirit of rebellion in their hearts, the children go out into the world and begin to build their own lives. Obedient

daughters and sons, whose hearts are governed by a submissive spirit, continue to live at peace with their parents. Even after becoming independent, they gladly maintain a close bond with them throughout their lives. Obedience to God's principles, which were part of their family and which they learned from their earliest years, protects them for many years along the road ahead.

The world draws people to itself, offering its own rules and laws. But God draws everyone to Jesus. What will I choose?

There is also the problem of understanding. I read God's law and see the letters, but I do not understand their meaning. Then, suddenly, the veil is lifted from my eyes, and I realize what God desires. At times I see myself as naked, as a lawbreaker, or as a rebel. I understand that I cannot climb out of this pit by myself. This is where grace comes into effect, and help from above is offered to me. What will I choose? I cannot resist the power of sin on my own, but God's grace accomplishes my salvation and teaches me obedience. In response to repentance, I receive forgiveness and choose the path of obedience. Along with it come peace with God and happiness.

I remember when the Lord opened the fifth commandment to me and showed me how I could fulfill it. I was afraid because many barriers had been erected within me during childhood, and now I had to break them down. My father and mother continued to live as they were accustomed to living, while I needed to change. But when I began taking steps in this direction and showing love, honor, and respect to my parents, I realized what happiness it is to honor one's father and mother. Although they do not have the light that has been revealed to me, they are glad that I take them into consideration, love them, and respect them. But I experience the greatest joy. What happiness it is to love those who gave you life!

The same is true of the other commandments. I am happy that I do not steal. It is so wonderful to live honestly! I simply delight in this way of life. I was not always like this, so I can compare my life before and after. I am endlessly glad that God is my

Teacher, Who knows what I need to change, what to reveal to me and when, and what still needs to be perfected in me.

I obey. This tells Heaven a great deal and also places significant responsibility upon me. I have chosen the following approach to life: first, I obey God, and then I obey everything that does not contradict His will or sound judgment. I am happy with this choice.

God teaches me to obey His will even in my thoughts. Everything is under the control of my mind. And this is His Gift.

The Lord longs for all of us to be happy. With all His heart, He desires happiness for our entire world. He never ceases to pour out His blessings, hoping that people will notice Him and turn to Him with all their hearts so that they may discover what a wonderful God He is.

Look at the unhappy souls living in the world. If we dig deeper and open their hearts, we will immediately see that they do not have the light and do not abide in it. Sin drives and controls their lives, and the wages of sin is death. That is a very heavy burden. It is impossible to be happy under such dominion of evil. A world in which people become sick and die, go without water and food, and live in fear and anguish of spirit will never become a source of happiness. But we are the light of the world, and this light shines. We have something to give those who are unhappy. Will they want to listen to us? Even if they do not, let that not stop me.

I obey. This happiness can remain mine forever and become the inheritance of my children and of all those who recognize this treasure for the soul and take their stand beneath its banner.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Deuteronomy 6:25; 7:12; Matthew 12:50; Romans 5:19; 6:16; 1 Peter 1:22–23; 2 Corinthians 10:4–6; 1 Samuel 15:22–23; Philippians 2:6–8; Colossians 3:18–25

Chapter 32

To understand the power and appreciate the beauty of obedience, we should consider what one person's seemingly small act of disobedience cost God.

Adam was perfect in every respect. In character he was like the Creator, and he was very happy with all that had been given to him. There was only one small prohibition, which neither overshadowed life in Paradise nor made the young couple unhappy. Adam and his wife were not planning a rebellion against God; such a thought had never even entered their minds. But temptation came, and they did not withstand it. The first human beings disobeyed, thereby opening the way for sin to enter our world.

If they had not sinned, the Universe would have continued to live by its familiar laws. God's Son would have remained that same Eternal God Whom everyone knew. Satan and his army would have been isolated from the entire world. To the sorrow of all the inhabitants of Heaven, his allies would have devoured and destroyed one another. And no one would have understood what sin produces on a universal scale.

Perhaps the fallen angels would already have died through suicide, strife, and various diseases.

But through the disobedience of one deceived man, something very strange happened. The Eternal God offered Himself as a Sacrifice for the sins of His creation. No one expected such a turn of events. It was simply unthinkable. God would become Man in order to die for the sins of the world! Even Satan and his accomplices were deeply shocked and frightened, for he understood that this plan posed a terrible threat to him. Nor did the enemy of souls himself realize where his rebellion would lead him. All his schemes continually collapsed, and he sank lower and lower, realizing that there was no way back.

But the essence of sin is that, while perishing yourself, you drag everything within reach into the same abyss. Even one minute before his eternal death, Satan will be glad to seize or destroy

someone else, if he has the opportunity. Such is the nature of lawlessness.

But God's Son set Himself against all this evil and boldly entered the arena of conflict. He chose to become Man and place His life at risk in order to reveal God's character to humanity through this act, provide an example of absolute obedience in human nature, assume full responsibility for the sins that had been committed, and die in the place of human beings with the very death that the sinner deserves, so that He might give those who believe in Him the Eternal life that the Son deserves. This plan went into effect and was fulfilled, and it is still being carried out in our lives. It has not yet been fully completed. The final point will be placed when sin, death, and the originator of all calamity are utterly destroyed.

I obey. This is not merely my decision; it is God's plan for my life. God expects from me not partial obedience but complete and absolute obedience in every area of His law and of my life. This is impossible without agape love in the heart.

When my daughter was little, it was not difficult for me to make her obey, even against her will. She understood that her father was right and loved her. Even when she did not want to obey but submitted to my authority, she afterward saw that life was better that way and was glad that she had obeyed. The lives of children who submit to God-fearing parents are built upon happiness and lay a firm foundation for the overall direction of their lives. Such people find it easier to obey God's requirements.

It is very difficult for me to say the same about myself. I see that in my corruptible nature I am a sinner with an impaired mind. Yet by God's mercy and grace, and because of my desire to change, the Most High has taught me eternal truths, redeemed me from the power of sin, clothed me with the righteousness of Christ, and appointed me as His witness in this world. Through my life, I am to show others what God does with those who choose Him, believe in Christ, and obey the light they have received.

In order to make me a different person and give me the Gift of Eternal life, Jesus had to pass through unimaginable trials and humiliation and surrender His pure life for my terrible sins. Through the travail of His soul, He gave me an opportunity to change for the better and a beautiful future. And God's plan is working. It began to be fulfilled when I expressed my desire to accept it and took my stand beneath its banner.

Christ gave me an example of obedience to the Father's will. His life, and the record of His actions and words, touch my heart so powerfully and reveal God's love for humanity so deeply that with all my soul I long to be like Him in obedience, faith, love, wisdom, and joy. Jesus teaches people happiness while Himself being a happy Man and God. He sees that the travail of His soul was not in vain, and He will always look upon us with satisfaction. His love will become an Eternal seal upon our faces and in our hearts. Even now, He is teaching us to become like Himself—precisely like Himself—because He is part of me, lives in me, and enables me to live in Him. This is the great mystery of godliness: Christ in us. When this is present, everything else is added as that which naturally accompanies this union. But all of it must be learned.

God expects my willing obedience from a pure heart. He does not need discipline motivated by fear or enforced 'with a stick.' He desires to see loving children who, out of love for Him and for people, are ready to carry out every assignment carefully and wisely, obey all of God's requirements, and heed all of God's counsel. His requirements and counsel are not burdensome; by their very nature, they are full of wisdom.

I know from my own experience how sin entices, and how pleasant it seems at first, especially when everyone lives that way. But God hates sin and gives His light, desiring everyone to understand that the wages of sin is death and that there is no hope of escaping it without repentance. And repentance is God's Gift.

When the Lord began drawing me to Himself and revealing the plan of my Salvation, I understood what God was offering me. Yet in my foolishness I decided, 'For now I will continue

sinning, because I enjoy it; later I will repent, change, and become obedient.' I continually postponed taking that step. But God caught me and confronted me with a choice here and now. I understood that I had to make this decision immediately. I began to repent of my sins and asked Jesus to become the Lord of my life. Then something amazing happened. I suddenly began to hate sin—and I hated it immediately—understanding that it was an abomination I would never commit again. My former life became repulsive to me. I hated myself for having lived that way. It was not difficult at all for me to part with my sins. Jesus became so beautiful and fascinating to me that I read about Him from morning until evening, understanding that He was my Savior. I began to understand the Bible and found it so captivating and wise that I could not put it down. I chose obedience because I had come to love my Savior, and I gladly heeded all His counsel and instruction. The Lord taught me, and He continues to teach me to this day. I find such a life deeply engaging and beautiful. I live at peace with God and commune with Him within my own heart. I do not always understand everything, but faith helps me accept what is unseen and wait for its fulfillment.

And when I earnestly asked the Lord for love, my entire Christian life became rich, delightful, and deeply engaging. In the light of His love, everything fell into its proper place.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:6–13; Colossians 1:24–29; Romans 5:12–17; Hebrews 5:8–10; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Hebrews 10:7–10; Psalm 40:8; 143:10; Ephesians 5:17–18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7; Romans 12:1–3

Chapter 33

Have you ever seen a builder lying on a couch, doing nothing, while a beautiful building rises around him? I think such a person should be called a dreamer who builds castles in the air. But we are building happiness. Strange as it may seem, many people do this while lying on a couch, and then they get up and enjoy strong walls. One of the beautiful bricks for the house of happiness is called, 'I work,' which means being occupied with useful activity.

God did not create idlers so that we would lie around all day, from morning until evening, doing nothing but eating and sleeping, and still be happy. No, that was not part of God's plan. The Creator gave human beings strength, reason, will, and intellect. When He created Adam, He gave him a garden to cultivate and keep, so that in this and in other ways he would find useful occupation for body, soul, and spirit.

Have you noticed that when we are doing something necessary, our day passes joyfully? But if a person does not know what to do, or figuratively lies around with his feet in the air, his time is wasted. The day drags on until evening when there is nothing to do. Today mobile phones have very successfully replaced many useful activities. As a result, these devices plunge many people into the impenetrable darkness of unhappiness caused by idleness, attempting to satisfy the human need to work with informational garbage.

There was a time in my life when I had to rise very early to go to work. I would think how wonderful it would be to keep sleeping, but I got out of bed and began the day with prayer, asking for strength, wisdom, and blessings for myself and those close to me. There were also times when I did not have to go to work and allowed myself to sleep in. I would get up with emptiness in my heart because I was in no hurry to go anywhere and had nothing to do. Of course, one can always find some work around the house or in the garden, but when you allow yourself to relax in this way and fall into idleness, it brings no pleasure. A joyful spirit is more my choice than the

result of attaining some dream. It comes from Jesus Christ, from fellowship with Him, and from accomplishing something.

I knew a young man who planned to become a successful and wealthy businessman—so wealthy that he simply would not know how to spend his millions. But I noticed one problem: he stayed online until late at night and then slept until noon. I think he still has a long way to go before reaching his goal.

We have been given the fourth commandment, which calls us to rest on the seventh-day Sabbath. It begins with the command, 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,' and then continues with another command: 'Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.'

In this commandment, besides Sabbath observance, the Lord also commands us to work and attend to our responsibilities instead of spending our time in idleness. God gave this commandment so that we would be happy—so that after becoming physically, spiritually, morally, and emotionally tired from all our work, we would enter His rest and meet with Him. You begin to appreciate the blessedness of the Sabbath day in a special way when you have spent the whole week observing the fourth commandment by laboring and doing all your work.

Useful work is something that benefits both me and others. Each person must determine for himself what that means. It is something that brings satisfaction to my spirit and soul without destroying my connection with God.

We were made to work on this Earth, and in Eternity we will also be occupied with something. There our creative minds will find a vast field of activity in which to bring to life every good idea that may occur to us.

There is a very common way to kill time: playing computer games, watching worldly television programs, or viewing captivating videos, with which the internet is now oversaturated. Nothing destroys happiness as quickly as these activities. Life becomes filled with emptiness. At times I have

been caught by similar hooks of Satan, and afterward I wondered what I had gained by investing my time in emptiness.

When we enter forbidden territory, we come under the spell of evil spirits who seek to impose their values upon us. The result is vanity of vanities.

But if we devote that wasted time to studying and viewing spiritual things, the mind comes alive. It begins to work. God Himself begins to speak to it, and many things that we had not noticed before appear in our lives for us to do.

The Great Controversy for possession of human minds is now taking place, and we can choose what will fill our minds. Our deeds then follow our spiritual content, bearing the imprint of what is within us and of what we feed our consciousness.

When I perform tasks or work with my hands, creating something useful and beautiful, my life becomes filled with satisfaction and meaning. Yet there is a danger of making work the meaning of life and living for it; then the spiritual side begins to suffer. The Sabbath day becomes a burden and is spent wishing that it would end quickly so that work can continue. Meanwhile, the Lord of the Sabbath remains outside and quietly knocks on my heart. He calls me to spiritual fellowship and is ready to bless me and everyone who hears His voice, opens the door to Him, lets Him in, and sups with Him. On His day Jesus desires fellowship with me and, through my rest, to give me renewed strength for work.

If our muscles receive no exercise, they lose their strength. The same thing happens to the mind. We need to exercise these important faculties continually. Fellowship with God through reading, reflection, communion with Him, and prayer is a very useful activity and excellent exercise for our spiritual nature. This too is work—the building of my spiritual fortress.

It is written, ‘Become as little children.’ Children always find something to do. Everything interests them. They know how to ask persistently for what they need and receive it. They are always moving and looking for new activities, and every little thing makes them happy. Children do not worry needlessly

about anything. Sometimes we should learn these useful skills from them.

I work. In this, it is important to give direction to my activity so that it benefits me and bears good fruit in my life. Then the realization that everything is right will come into my life, and happiness will knock on my heart at all times. I will only need to decide what to do with it: should I let it into my life in the form of joyful emotions, or leave it in the form of deep satisfaction with what has been accomplished?

When God created our world and completed what He had planned, He saw that everything was good; and the final assessment of all the work He had done was, ‘Very good!’

Creative work brings satisfaction. As a builder, I find it very pleasant, after long labor, to pass by the work of my hands and admire what was made with love. It is especially joyful to build the happiness of others and later hear how wonderful it is for people to live with God, to be protected from every evil in their little house of happiness, and to prepare for Eternity by sweeping everything unnecessary out of their hearts.

And love makes all my work right and gives everything I do a very good meaning. It makes everything very good.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Exodus 20:8–11; Genesis 1:31; 2:15; Proverbs 6:6–11; Matthew 25:26; Proverbs 21:25; Acts 18:3; Ephesians 4:28; Galatians 6:9 –10; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 10:18; 11:4–6; 12:13

Chapter 34

It is interesting to note that the commandment concerning work is stated as an imperative. It sounds like a direct duty that a person is required to fulfill.

People’s happiness depends greatly on what they do, the spirit in which they carry out their work, and how what they do benefits others. Of course, the atmosphere at work and the relationships among coworkers should also be taken into account.

There are many kinds of work, and they all differ from one another. Sometimes work considered honorable in one country is regarded as degrading in another. For example, from my school years I was taught that if I did not acquire a good profession, my lifelong lot would be to work as a street cleaner, and I was very afraid of that. When I moved to Germany, I entered the construction trade, trained as a bricklayer, and worked at something I enjoyed. But one day I was laid off, and I began looking for another job. It was winter, however, and all the construction sites had shut down. Then I received an invitation to apply for a position as a street cleaner, but I had to go through a competitive selection process. I had an education, construction experience, excellent references, and met every requirement. Yet I was not hired because I stated that, in obedience to the commandment, I would not work on Saturdays. I do not know what employment conditions are like for street cleaners in Russia today, but here this is a highly desirable position. A person who obtains it comes under state protection and can count on financial security and various benefits until retirement, even if he is frequently ill. He is provided with transportation, clothing, and the necessary tools, and he serves a large area of the city in many different capacities.

I was disappointed that I had not been hired as a street cleaner, but the Lord had something better for me.

Construction is probably one of those fields where people who have no skills, yet do not want to sit idle, come looking for work. You can imagine what kinds of people may be found there. Many have very difficult characters and their own ambitious opinions about various matters. At times the workplace becomes a spiritual battlefield where Satan seeks to corrupt good character and destroy souls. And if the client also refuses to pay, the work becomes very interesting indeed, and the consequences unpredictable. This does not happen everywhere or all the time, but I have been through a great deal.

As a believer, I always tried to be a conscientious worker and to maintain a friendly spirit, something everyone could see. I continually rejoiced in my work and thanked God for giving it to me. Every difficulty became a rigorous school in which I learned to love and to live in the light. Not everyone valued my attitude toward life, and some openly hated me. But I continue to grow and move forward, and the Lord protects me from evil.

Even before I knew the laws of happiness, I noticed that my work gave me pleasure and aesthetic satisfaction—especially when I was paid for it and could later admire the results of my labor. When you put all your love into building walls, those walls somehow seem to glow in your eyes afterward. I enjoy remembering how joyful the work was and what good feelings I experienced. Buildings may be inanimate objects, but the right spirit leaves its mark upon them.

Can you imagine, then, how much happiness I receive from living people into whom I have poured my heart—people whom I was able to help in some way and whose lives I helped make more beautiful? It brings me such joy to know that there are people in this world in whom I was able to invest my love, my life, and my resources. I am happy that I was able to do something good for someone. Even when I am not always appreciated, I am still content that a part of my heart and love lives somewhere in this world and continues to make itself known.

Being busy and having a job do not in themselves bring happiness. They divert our attention from other problems and cares, but they are not the source of the soul's satisfaction, although they help produce it because we have done something meaningful and brought it into the world. True happiness, however, comes from the right spirit and an overall joyful attitude toward life and its problems. And if a person with such a spirit also believes in God and sees Him as the Source of all his blessings, his happiness is ten times stronger and better because it has a firm Foundation.

I work. This is the brick of happiness made for me in God's laboratory. It has been fired in God's kiln and is waiting for its place in my little house, where it will delight my heart forever.

Some deeds are visible, while others are unseen. Unseen deeds are spiritual in nature and can have eternal consequences both for me and for the people for whom they are done. The love invested in every such good deed exerts a very powerful and profound influence on a person's soul. It does not pass without a trace, but accomplishes its purpose in weary hearts and souls, bearing the seal of God's blessing and approval. Like snow and rain, love descends into people's lives to fulfill the purpose for which it was sent. If it falls upon a stone, it washes the stone and causes no harm, then returns to its source so that it may later be poured into another person's life in new blessings.

Deeds of love are beautiful because they have the purest motive and can be performed at any time.

What blessedness it is to invest your love, talents, knowledge, time, and life in another person's happiness—and then to watch that soul rejoice while modestly thinking that you did nothing extraordinary, but merely shared what overflowed within you and was seeking an outlet.

I imagine the joy of the redeemed when they stand before the Great White Throne, bow reverently before their Savior, hear words of blessing, receive their rewards, pass through all the ceremonies and celebrations, and then are sent home to attend to their own affairs. And what will those affairs be? Everyone

will be thinking about what he can do for someone else's happiness.

I have an advantage because I already know that everyone will think this way, and so I am planning many good deeds for the happiness of my friends. Together with others, we will devise campaigns and loving 'attacks' to make the eternal lives of those around us even more beautiful and happy. There will be no limit to our imagination in this area. People will probably line up to join me in bringing happiness to others. At least, that is how I imagine Eternity—and it has already begun here.

A little later I will share my experience of making friends happy in this world. For now I will say that here we will not always be understood by everyone in our happiness and in our desire to make others happy. People suspect a hidden motive and close themselves off so that they will not be deceived and disappointed once again. It simply seems too good to be true.

Some tasks add a great deal of busyness and consume all my time. They too must be done, but we should rest from them on the Sabbath. Deeds of love, however, can be done at any time and woven into every undertaking and conversation.

Happiness flows from deeds of love. It simply adores loving and is ready for any act of agape, if only it can once again experience those happy moments of joy that come from putting love into action and passing goodness on to another.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Ephesians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Titus 2:7–8, 14; 3:14; Hebrews 10:24; 1 Peter 2:11–12; Psalm 39:5–7; Ecclesiastes 6:11; 3:12–13, 22; 5:10, 16–18; Galatians 6:5–10; Isaiah 53:11; 49:4; 55:10–13; 32:20; Galatians 5:25; Colossians 3:23–25

Chapter 35

There was a time in my life when I sat in the prison of sin and considered myself a very enterprising person, more advanced in life than my peers. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life served as my adornments, and I did not understand what an abyss I was plunging into. But my journey through life was only beginning, and I was searching for something that would appeal to my heart—and I chose sin.

Some people may consider themselves kind and good while living without God in their hearts, but I understood very clearly that I was a sinner, that someday I would have to pay for my actions, and that the price would be high. Therefore, I believed that I had no chance of salvation or forgiveness. At one point in my life, I decided to establish a proper family. We decided to have a church wedding in a traditional church.

Before the wedding, however, confession and Communion were required. I learned the procedure for this ceremony and went to confession. I approached the minister and began telling him about all my sins, creating an enormous line behind me. In the end, I was told that my sins were forgiven and that I was clean. I received Communion and left the church. A storm erupted in my mind. I understood that something strange had happened. I felt no relief, but I realized one terrible thing: now I could sin and then come to confession, and everything would be forgiven. This arrangement suited me, but it gave me no peace in my heart. The sins I had become accustomed to committing held me very tightly and drew me toward things that were destroying my life. I lived in constant fear, although I looked like a hero. The prison of my sin was very dark. But God did not leave me in darkness. He sent someone into my life who revealed the true God to me and gave me hope of genuine deliverance. I responded to God’s call and invited the Most High into my problems. Jesus came into my life, and everything changed. He set me free from the power of sin, the fear of death, and impure thoughts. I came out of slavery, and a new

life began for me—a life of light and of knowing God. I broke free from the prison of sin, never to return to it again.

Another brick of happiness is called “I am free.” Once again, I would like to give special emphasis to the word “I.” This “I” is the connecting link between my heart, God’s blessings, and the powers of Heaven. Without my participation, freedom will remain only a grand word in forceful statements. But when I take part, it finds a place in my heart, becomes part of the wall of my little house of happiness, and serves as my eternal adornment. It is an enduring and exceptionally strong material that successfully protects my life from bad weather.

What a sweet word freedom is! It is something placed within every human being. It is what people struggle for, wage wars for, and give their lives for.

And yet, we must understand what freedom is.

Freedom is the ability to act according to one’s personal convictions without harming others; it is independence from another person’s will in choosing one’s own path, and independence from external factors or one’s own sinful addictions when making a decision.

Freedom itself is made possible by the existence of law, which establishes certain boundaries governing a person’s relationship with the society in which he lives. Where there is no law, there can be no concept of freedom.

In relation to the happiness we are discussing, freedom may be defined as personal freedom from the power of lawlessness. Sin, too, is recognized through the law; where there is no law, there is no sin. The Word of God defines sin quite clearly and shows that it is deadly to every person, regardless of age, nationality, or sex.

Jesus assures us that everyone whom He sets free will be truly free.

How can I know that I am not free? For many people, freedom means that they are not in prison and can do whatever they please. But as I study the Bible, I begin to see that the Word of

God calls sin by its name, and I recognize it in myself. In essence, sin damages the mind of its victim, making that person unable to distinguish truth from falsehood and light from darkness. It brings a person into complete dependence on repeatedly performing certain actions or gratifying certain desires. Wickedness progresses within the mind, establishes its dictatorship, and destroys a person's will, reason, and feelings, making him incapable of independent decisions. Thus, he becomes possessed and dependent upon the power of sin. Possession does not always manifest itself in violent behavior. It is the rule of the prince of darkness over my will.

Sin is not a disease but a conscious choice. Where there is no consciousness or reason, there can be no sin. How can we distinguish disease from sin? If a gun were held to someone's temple and he were told that he would be shot in the head if he did a certain thing, and he found within himself the strength not to sin, then the issue is lawlessness. He could not, however, simply choose not to be ill. If his immune system were impaired, fear of death would not make him healthy.

As I study God's will, I come to understand what sin is. In His mercy, God begins to reveal the dark areas of my life, awaiting my repentance so that He may cleanse me. He has given us a beautiful means of deliverance from sin. It includes God's promise, a person's decision, and Power from Above—God's grace, which, by the will of Jesus, sets people free from the power that has ruled their lives and minds.

I am free. This is the clear realization and awareness that Jesus has removed from my mind something that inclined me toward sin and held me in bondage and fear. More precisely, it is freedom from the power of demons.

In the spiritual realm, we cannot belong to ourselves. We are either with God or with Satan and his host of spiritual wickedness in high places. When I am free, I can choose where I belong.

It is interesting that in God I have absolute freedom and may even leave Him at any time if I choose to do so. Under the

power of sin, however, there is no freedom. I cannot simply decide to leave it behind. If I have given myself into Satan's hands, he gives his victim no opportunity to escape and will not release that person, although he may replace one form of bondage with another.

Jesus is the Way to freedom. He is the Truth. He is a full and abundant Life of joy and happiness. When Christ sets a person free, it is genuine deliverance. It is a clean heart, a clean mind, and a clean conscience. It is complete forgiveness and peace with God. It is a new life—life more abundantly.

Just as a person rejoices in a clean body after bathing, so the soul becomes cleaner through fellowship with Christ. Although the process of spiritual cleansing may last a lifetime, the joy of freedom fills life with happiness at every stage of spiritual growth. A person goes from glory to glory, being transformed into the likeness of the One upon Whom he beholds.

God Himself takes an active part in this process of cleansing. He draws all people to Jesus and pours out such an abundance of light and grace that there is enough for the entire world.

In Jesus Christ I am free—absolutely free.

Sadly, I once lived in darkness, and sin had power over me. But Jesus came into my life, set me free, cleansed me, and continues to cleanse me day by day. I have something with which to compare myself, and I see an enormous difference. I do not wish to return to the place of fear, death, Satan, and slavery to sin.

Jesus loves to set the tormented free. He seeks them and uses me and others who have been delivered from slavery so that we may love one another and seek those who want to be happy and free.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Exodus 20:2; Psalm 119:45; John 8:32, 36; Romans 6:5–8, 18–23; 8:1–2; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1–6; 2 Timothy 2:24–26; James 2:12; 1 Peter 2:15–16; 2 Peter 2:18–20

Chapter 36

To understand the true meaning and value of our freedom, we must realize what it cost God and what He gave for it. A proper understanding does not come at once, and not everyone considers what would have happened if Jesus had failed to withstand the temptations of this world and had fallen by making even one small mistake. Our deliverance from slavery depended upon the freedom of choice exercised by the Man Jesus Christ. It was not without a struggle that He chose to drink the mysterious cup of immeasurable suffering that was meant for me. He was free to act as He wished, and no one would have condemned Him. The plan of Salvation for our world depended upon the choice of one Man, Who, while battling the forces of darkness in Gethsemane, could have decided to return to Heaven and leave sinners to bear the punishment for their own sins. Christ's human nature recoiled from the trials before Him, and the mysterious cup trembled in His hand. Three times He asked the Father to provide another way to save sinners. For example, a religion could have been devised in which such a sacrifice was unnecessary and people could attain holiness through reincarnation or pilgrimage. But Jesus knew that there was only one Way, only one Plan, and only one Man Who could save the world—He Himself. The Lord chose death in order to give me life. It was a free choice, and all Heaven waited to see what Jesus' final decision would be and where the culmination of God's plan would lead.

The angels who had accompanied Christ throughout His earthly life and ministered to Him, protecting Him from harm, were forbidden to intervene in the course of events or prevent the forces of evil from carrying out their intentions. All Heaven watched with profound interest and pain the scenes of the trial, the abuse, the sentencing, and the crucifixion of their beloved Commander. A single word asking for help could have set the entire heavenly army in motion, and in one instant the angels would have destroyed every enemy and mocker of the Son of God. But Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of those who tormented Him and drank the bitter cup of our sins in complete

solitude. The agony of the eternal second death tore at Jesus' heart, and He was free to refuse it. The most terrible trial—being forsaken by God—proved immeasurably difficult for the pure heart of my Savior. Enduring unimaginable suffering, the Lord could not see the glorious outcome of the travail of His soul. The only thing He understood at that time was that the wages of sin is death, and He was dying that death without any hope. In the end, the full weight of it broke Jesus' heart. But just before His final breath, He placed His trust by faith in His Father's love and cried out loudly and triumphantly, "It is finished," committing His spirit into God's hands.

The salvation of sinners was accomplished. The way to God's throne was opened to everyone who would accept this Great Sacrifice by faith and allow the Lord to set them free from the slavery of sin. Although the plan of Salvation has not yet been completed and is passing from one phase to another, God's grace is working in all its fullness and power to save everyone who believes and accepts God's Son as his personal Savior. Yet even within this plan of Salvation, the Creator's actions depend upon the sinner's free choice. Despite the immense price paid for me, God waits for my decision before acting in all His strength and authority. He has limited Himself by my choice.

Love cannot act otherwise. As you come to know its depth and power, each of you, my friends, will encounter an insurmountably strong and high wall called the freedom of choice of the one I love. I have neither the authority nor the power to violate that freedom, or even to impose wonderful things upon someone who does not want them. You see and feel this, and it always hurts when, filled with God's Spirit and ready to love and give all of yourself, you encounter the rock of human choice and see yourself rejected by another person. You realize that you are powerless to change anything, yet you gently try to convince that person that you are genuine, that your intentions are pure, that your motives are steadfast, and that God's Spirit is leading you. Sadly, the enemy of souls tries to oppose God's agape love and convinces those you love that you are not genuine but merely one of many who want to force their way into the soul and defile it. Satan succeeds in planting

these suggestions. Therefore, one must wait a very long time and try different approaches to open deceived souls to love.

The very fact that Satan is still alive is the clearest evidence that God respects the freedom of choice of each of His sons and daughters. He allows all His enemies to follow their own paths and choose for themselves the direction in life that appeals to them.

We read in Ecclesiastes 8:11: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” God gives people the right to become settled in their choice, yet He never ceases drawing them to Jesus as the One Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. How great is God’s love for our world and for every sinner!

Love brings me to absolute freedom of choice and waits for a decision of my will. The distinctive feature of God-given freedom is that I can always choose evil, return to darkness, and become a slave to sin, and no one will prevent me from doing so. But I choose life; I choose Jesus; I choose the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

A person can be delivered from the power of sin and Satan when Jesus intervenes in the process and sets the soul free. This is beyond human power, but it is not beyond God’s power. Yet God’s deliverance depends upon my choice. If a person who has been set free decides to return to the filth because he does not wish to live in purity and light, no one will stop him. He has the right to live that way.

I am free. This freedom came at a very high price, and it is valued exceedingly highly in Heaven. We should not deprive ourselves of this heavenly gift merely to live like everyone else and enjoy sin for a season, imagining ourselves free within the limits of a chain with which we ourselves have bound our lives to Satan’s chariot.

Satan knows how to steal, kill, and destroy souls. It is utter foolishness to surrender ourselves to the power of such a master, who can give us nothing but the right to die and languish in spirit.

But I am free to choose love, friendship, and happiness. I invite Christ into my life. I choose freedom in love, freedom in friendship with God, and freedom in making decisions.

I am free. What freedom this is, and what an endless prospect of doing good forever, loving and being happy, and filling everything around me with my delight and joy!

Only a person who is free—free from the power of sin—is capable of being truly happy and loving from a pure heart. The mind of a free soul can always choose its path and always place itself in God’s hands.

Love and freedom are two sisters who support one another and never part to labor alone. Wherever one is invited, the other comes as well. Try forcing someone to love you. It would look utterly absurd. Love accepts no violence. It dwells where there is freedom, and wherever freedom reigns, love comes. This is the truth: whoever the Son of God sets free will be free indeed and able to choose the path he will follow.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Psalm 33:12; John 8:34; Romans 6:6–12, 16–18; Isaiah 53; Matthew 26:36–44; Luke 23:33–34, 46; John 19:30; Romans 5:6–10; Acts 4:12; Luke 4:18–19; Hebrews 3:12–14; John 17:2–3; Proverbs 8:34–36

Chapter 37

God created us for one another—for good works, fellowship, friendship, and love. When I understand this and come into harmony with God's plan, happiness begins following close behind me and stirring me from within by its influence.

The next eternal brick for the walls of my little house is called "I am friendly." It is important to note that it must contain my own "I" so that it can take its place in my wall.

Friendship is a relationship of trust between people, based on love, respect, patience, mercy, selflessness, acceptance, and mutual affection. Shared interests can also bring people together into communities, groups, and circles.

When there is a desire, love for one's neighbors can very easily develop into friendship with a particular person.

I have discovered two kinds of friendship.

The first is emotional friendship. In it, people are drawn together by all or some of the factors described above, but only as long as the other person does not cross the boundaries established in my heart or bring life to a crossroads of conflicting opinions. The other person will do what is good for me or accept the good I do. Such relationships develop very quickly and may last for years or even a lifetime. Yet there is always a possibility that one friend's mistake may quickly destroy them. When a broken friendship is restored, emotional barriers arise that keep the friend within certain limits. Unfortunately, many people build precisely this kind of relationship.

Social networks on the Internet try to bring us together and call it "adding a friend." Then they give us the option to "unfriend" someone. I become accustomed to this state of affairs, live by this rule, and bring it into my real life.

The second kind of friendliness is a conscious decision to be a friend and to accept one's friend regardless of any conditions or circumstances. This attitude and decision have deep roots in a

personal relationship with God, Whose character is reflected in one's life. The conscious decision to be a friend and to act accordingly can be one-sided. The person who has made this choice and does not retreat when trials come remains a friend for life—ready to love, help, accept, forgive, and understand. Such a practice becomes a source of special inspiration and reflection about what else can be done for a friend's happiness and how to do it. God's love lies at the foundation of all such decisions; it is the chief motivating force and source of inspiration. The realization that I am a friend fills my life with happiness.

A special joy comes when two people draw close to each other after both have approached their friendship consciously. Such mutual relationships are especially valuable within a family, and a family like this can confidently be called happy. Its members constantly live in the atmosphere of Heaven, drawing heavenly angels and God's blessings to themselves. They think about one another's happiness, and as they achieve this goal, they experience that happiness themselves.

Friendship is an integral part of society. Without it, life becomes empty; a person becomes spiritually ill and lives without purpose or an understanding of life's meaning.

After creating Adam, God said that it was not good for man to be alone. The longing for fellowship and belonging to someone is placed in every heart.

Believers draw close to one another very quickly, and their relationships often develop into one of these kinds of friendship.

Friendship is not based on age or sex. When a man and a woman are friends, their relationship always includes ethical standards and boundaries consistent with biblical principles and their culture.

Life and relationships in sin cannot be called friendship, even though shared interests or evil deeds may closely bind people together, even against their will. This kind of friendship does not bring happiness, but it does give people a sense of belonging to their group or community.

When people speak different languages, even close relationships between them are unlikely to become a deep, mutual friendship, because friendship involves communicating in a language both can understand.

Whoever desires to have many friends must also be friendly.

I am living through this experience and seeing how this rule works in my life. Long ago, I decided that I would have no former friends: everyone must be either a present friend or a future one. It can be difficult to sort this out, but my decision always shows me the best way out of any interpersonal crisis. When you love your friends at all times, you see a great deal in both them and yourself, yet a friendly spirit helps you notice the virtues and better aspects of life while covering faults with love and mercy. You may have to endure ridicule, betrayal, slander, and rejection, but love for a friend knows how to forgive all these things and wait for change and better times. A special joy comes when your friend returns because he sees that you are genuine and steadfast.

Yet my decision to be a friend does not deprive my friends of their freedom of choice. I respect their decisions and accept them as they choose to be.

Although a friendly person readily enters into relationships, he still remains discerning. Friendship with those who do not share your faith can prove dangerous to the soul. One way or another, we influence each other, and that influence leads either to life or to death.

Therefore, the best decision in life should be to establish a friendship with Jesus, our personal Savior from sin. He is a true Friend. He will never betray or abandon us. He is faithful to His promises and always fulfills them, although not always in the way I desire. He is an expert in every occupation, profession, and aspect of human life. He understands every detail perfectly and always has the best solution to every problem and task. Nothing is too difficult for Him. He never changes and remains faithful to His principles and to His friendship. Friendship with Him, together with His example of friendliness, teaches me how

to relate properly to my earthly friends. By His example and His Spirit, He lays the foundations of love and friendship in my heart and then helps me become firmly established in them.

Jesus is the very best Friend. When I have Him, it is much easier to live amid difficulties and trials. He is always near to help and support me.

Christ also has many helpers: good angels who gladly guard us in all our ways so that our feet will not stumble and we may stand firm.

I am friendly. This is a special kind of inspiration and a way of life. I have chosen this path for myself, and I am very happy. My friends know me and may have personally experienced the influence of my friendliness upon their lives. They are special people in my heart; they know this and respond in kind. When I decide to be a friend, I ask God to establish me in this decision, teach me, and place His seal upon my choice. I see how His intervention makes me steadfast. Yet in all my decisions I remain free and may determine for myself when and how my friendship should be expressed, when I should remain silent, or when we should be apart for a time. None of these factors affects my attitude toward those whom I have chosen as friends for life.

Sometimes the decision to be a friend remains one-sided, and I must carry it throughout my life, waiting and hoping for change and believing that it will come. Then, even when no friendship exists between us, my faithfulness to my decision to be friendly brings me joy.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Proverbs 17:17; 18:24; 27:9; 26:24–25; Song of Solomon 2:9; Colossians 3:12–17; 1 Peter 3:8–9; Acts 2:44–47; 2 Timothy 3:1–5

Chapter 38

To see the full beauty of friendliness, we need to reflect on Who Jesus was when He lived in our world. God came to us and became Man in order to reveal, in mortal flesh, the true character and love of the Almighty. No angel could have revealed God's love and His friendliness to people as clearly and understandably as Christ did.

As I study the life of Jesus, I see how sociable, kind, and friendly He was. If I were asked to describe the qualities my friend should possess, I would most likely describe someone who, by every standard, resembled my Savior. There is, however, one difficulty that troubles many people. Even if my friend is imperfect, I can see, hear, and touch him. Jesus is better than anyone in the world, yet He is invisible and intangible and can be perceived only by faith and in the imagination. Nevertheless, when my spiritual problems need to be resolved, no visible friend can help me as the invisible Jesus can. The very best advice an earthly friend can give when difficulties arise is this: "Let us ask Jesus to solve this problem and help us stand firm." And the Lord helps.

The spirit of friendliness is difficult for many people to understand. I often find myself in situations where I speak to my friends about my friendship, and each person understands me according to how guarded and informed he or she is. I am willing to build relationships within the bounds of my understanding and within the degree of freedom my friends desire to have with me.

Every friendship has stages, and it is worth understanding them so that we do not confuse depth with superficial contact. If I am not permitted to develop a relationship, this does not mean that I am unfriendly or that my neighbor lacks a friendly spirit. It simply means that the freedom within our friendship is unwilling to risk rejection. The higher the stage, the more painful it is when you are rejected or when your openness is used against you. Few people are ready to take the risk of opening their hearts to the deepest level of a relationship.

Remaining guarded helps them avoid the pain of rejection. In that case, the safest friendship can be only with Jesus. He never causes pain without a purpose, nor will He cast out those who come to Him.

Let us consider these stages of friendship. I learned about them in a seminar, and I am sharing them with you.

1. Greeting. I greet you, and you respond in the same way. There is a risk that you may not answer. That is unpleasant, but bearable. I have encountered situations in which I extended my hand for a handshake and was deliberately rejected, leaving me with many questions.

2. Exchanging facts and information. I may ask, “How are you? How are you feeling?” or something similar, or suggest that we share some news or events. A dialogue begins, and we exchange information about life, world problems, or insects. A pleasant conversation develops in which we may discuss mosquito problems or matters of global importance. Yet all my attempts to begin a dialogue may be met with silence.

3. Opinions and judgments. In our casual conversation, I take a risk and express my point of view on a particular issue, while remaining willing to hear my friend’s opinion as well. We begin sharing our thoughts and arguments and may even consider certain controversial questions, disagree about something, or criticize something. Rejection becomes more noticeable here because it may wound my pride or make my friend uncomfortable. Sabbath School is built upon this kind of interaction, where everyone is invited to participate and share an answer.

4. Sharing feelings. At this stage of the relationship, a desire arises to understand a friend’s feelings—to speak heart to heart and share personal experiences. This is risky, but it is the only path to depth in a relationship. When I understand what my friend feels and share what I feel, an affection of the heart develops between us. Our hearts open, and we allow one another to explore our inner experiences and even help resolve certain problems. Every emotionally healthy person needs a

close friend like this to meet this spiritual need. If people have no such friends, they seek a psychologist and are willing to pay someone to listen to all their experiences, simply to find an outlet for their feelings. Those who have suffered the pain of rejection at this stage of friendship tend to close themselves off from everyone and allow no one into their inner world. They do not want to know their friends more closely, and later they themselves suffer because of it.

5. Sharing mistakes and shortcomings. Admitting guilt. At this stage, I take a risk and speak about my inadequacy, my failures, and the spiritual shortcomings that spoil my life and bring many problems into it. I am also willing to listen if my friend wishes to share his own mistakes with me. We pray for each other, comfort one another, forgive, repent, rejoice, and become free. At this stage, a proud heart can very quickly inflict an emotional wound, and therefore few people venture into such depths of trust. Sometimes, when you open yourself in this way, you feel naked, and the last things you want to hear are ridicule and gossip directed at you. Yet I am willing to accept even this, knowing that not everyone will accept me as I am. When teaching others, I always want to set an example of good conduct. The very thought of publicly admitting my mistakes is terrifying because my influence and authority may sink to the point where I am rejected and regarded as a failure and an empty talker. Yet my desire for a deep relationship moves me to take even this risk.

6. Allowing my friend to point out my mistakes. If I gather the courage to speak about my failures and shortcomings, I already take a great risk. But when I allow a friend to point out my mistakes, I take the enormous risk of being judged unfairly or of exposing my heart to constructive criticism that may be inappropriate or biased, causing me pain and perhaps even influencing my behavior and changing my character.

This kind of friendship is usually found within families. If people communicate in a spirit of love and understanding, with mutual courtesy and respect, the union of two hearts becomes very strong and joyful. But if one person decides to act in a way that

violates the freedom of his or her life partner, the relationship breaks down, and the resulting pain causes immeasurable harm to the soul, plunging it into many sorrows.

Respect for another person's freedom must be present at every stage of friendship. I may explore and test these boundaries, but I must not violate them. God forbids me to intrude into another person's life. Yet through my own openness, I can offer my friend a deeper relationship.

7. Having no secrets. Few people allow a friend to enter this stage of friendship. Perhaps it is reached in some families, and here rejection by a friend is equivalent to a catastrophe: the soul closes itself forever and to everyone. Casual friends are not admitted here, and even those closest to us do not have access to this private space. But this stage of friendship is open to God. It is here that I come to know the depth of His love, acceptance, and trust. God also reveals His secrets to me. I believe in Him and rely upon Him forever.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Psalm 111:3; Zechariah 9:16–17; Song of Solomon 5:16; Philippians 2:3; Mark 9:35; Proverbs 25:17; 27:10, 14; John 13:34

Chapter 39

One of the sturdy bricks for the house of happiness bears the words, “I am meek.” In this material, the component called “I” is very important. It is directly connected with my inner world and reveals to Heaven the beauty of the interaction between my human nature and the wondrous touch of Heaven.

Meekness is the ability to govern oneself, keep negative emotions under control, express one’s opinion wisely and appropriately, or remain silent when necessary. Meekness is expressed in kind words and deeds toward others. It is the ability to forgive those who offend you quickly, harbor no evil thoughts, remain attentive to those around you, and at the same time stay faithful to the spiritual principles revealed in God’s laws, commands, and counsels. Meekness is the character of a believer.

People are not born meek; they become meek under the influence of God’s grace when they decide to believe in Christ, obey Him, learn to love, and live according to the light they receive from God.

Meekness is God’s seal upon a person’s character, testifying that he belongs to the family of Heaven.

I am meek. This sounds rather bold and may be perceived as hypocrisy. Not everyone will understand you if you make such a declaration. Therefore, you may keep these words in your heart and speak them to God—preferably with a question mark at the end.

And yet, twice in the Bible we encounter statements made about themselves by the meekest of men: Moses and Jesus (Numbers 12:3; Matthew 11:29).

We read: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

The Sermon on the Mount begins by describing the principles of happiness, and its spiritual meaning can be understood and appreciated only when you have personally experienced these

things. Only a meek person who has been taught by God can see the advantages of meekness.

Meekness is born in a person after the fiery furnace, when he has passed through many difficulties and trials and, through the working of God's grace, has been cleansed of harmful and unnecessary habits and character traits.

Meekness is like a diamond of consecration to Heaven, set in the gold of love from the Holy Spirit, which is given to graduates of Christ's school as a reward for faithfulness and obedience.

God is teaching me to behave this way as well. He draws me to the Example of meekness in His Son. I see the advantage of this condition of soul compared with what I was like at the beginning of my journey to God. The difference is like darkness and light.

I understand that I do not need very much in this world. I know that I will not live forever on this sinful earth among wicked people, and therefore my plans for the future are of a different nature. The closer the day comes when I must leave this world, the more fully I realize that I am a pilgrim on earth and will take with me none of what I have accumulated here. Yet everything I have given away will remain in my luggage. At the same time, I understand that I will take with me everything I have acquired for my character and used to build my happiness. I will take it home.

But while I am here, I will live by the laws of freedom in Jesus, doing what lies within my power, believing what has been promised to me, and obtaining what I need for my life on earth.

Jesus loves me and teaches me happiness. He is preparing me for life among the living, unfallen beings who fill the universe. Even here on earth, He writes the laws of Heaven upon my heart.

I see a great blessing in not feeding my mind and my spiritual nature by watching television, movies, and news, listening to secular radio, or reading secular books and magazines. When

necessity or chance brings me into contact with these things, I see how destructively they can affect me. We have been given so many testimonies and so much light that, whenever we have free time, we can study them and put them into practice.

I live in this world and sometimes do not know what is happening in it, although somehow I remain aware of the major events. When people ask me what is happening in Germany, I can share only what I see around me. And I see everything beautiful, and I live wonderfully in these surroundings.

Meekness is the ability to carry on a conversation while respecting the opinions and feelings of others. Not everything requires my comments, and people do not always want to know my opinion. But when another person's heart opens to kind words, it is a pleasure to fill and inspire that heart.

Meekness perceives the spirit that moves another person and finds the right approach to that soul.

The position in life of a meek person is defined by selfless service. Jesus identified this as the highest quality of the soul: to be the servant of all. A person can be such a servant even when he is in authority. At times it is necessary to exercise authority and discipline others or restrain evil behavior, but while loving people, one can still help them and care for them.

In the greater scheme of things, the earth and its eternal inheritance are promised to the meek, and that is no small promise. When Jesus calls everyone to learn from Him, He says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." He points to meekness and humility in His own character as an example to follow and promises rest for the soul as the reward.

A meek and quiet spirit is the finest adornment for any woman or young lady. Many successfully learn this and then bring joy to their husbands, children, and loved ones throughout their lives.

I once failed to understand the meaning of the beauty of a meek and quiet spirit. I believed that outward beauty should reflect

the inner world, but now I see that it is exactly the opposite. It can be very difficult to explain to my young friends that charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears God is worthy of praise.

Consider the animal world, for example. What kind of pets would you want in your home: those that are meek and obedient toward you, or those that ruin everything around them, show you no respect, and sometimes bite and scratch you? Answer for yourself.

I am meek. This is the happiest disposition of a spirit that is at peace with God, entrusts its plans and life to God, recognizes its dependence upon God, and clings to Him with all its heart. Such people are peacemakers because they see no point in conflict and know how to surrender ambitious positions while winning the battles. Jesus calls them overcomers and promises them very much.

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Meekness is not acquired all at once. It develops and becomes established in the heart throughout a lifetime with Christ. It is God’s gift to His children who love Him.

I am meek. This condition of soul endows its possessor with the peace of Heaven and joy in the Lord. There is no need to speak about it. It is already evident both to the person who possesses a meek spirit and to those around him.

But not everything Heaven values pleases the world. Evil people will always find many taunts, labels, and insults for the meek, and these can be overcome only with love and good deeds. The Lord knows how to protect His children and what to permit in their lives.

Love is humble, meek, obedient, and full of good works.

Blessed are the meek. In this lie strength and truth. The meek know it. They possess it, and they are truly happy.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 5:5–11; Numbers 12:3; Matthew 11:29; Genesis 25:27; Psalm 25:8–9, 14; 34:3; 45:2–9; 141:6; Proverbs 14:30; 15:1; 25:15; 30:32–33; 31:26; Ecclesiastes 10:4

Chapter 40

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. What beautiful words! Shall we reflect on them?

When Jesus was preparing His very first sermon, He understood that it would be the calling card of His mission. The people who came to listen to the Young Teacher were greatly surprised and disappointed. Their ideas and expectations concerning the Messiah were completely shattered because they were offered something that did not fit their culture or way of thinking at all. But Jesus presented to the world the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven—principles by which He Himself lived and which were written in His heart. It is very easy to speak about kindness and meekness when you are kind and meek. Christ's meekness was unique. In it, strength and authority were harmoniously joined with love and tenderness. Jesus did not ask the religious leaders of His people how He should teach. He Himself was the unsurpassed Teacher, Who never made mistakes or became confused in His reasoning. Jesus knew what to say, what to teach, and what to do, and He carried out His ministry in a spirit of meekness.

When the Lord twice cleansed His Temple from defilement, how brief He was in His judgment! He allowed the Father to reveal Divine power through His human nature, and no one dared oppose Christ in this act. The wicked quickly left the holy place, and no one raised his voice against such a display of authority. Then Jesus resumed His customary work: receiving and healing the sick, forgiving sinners, teaching the ignorant, bringing joy to the sorrowful, and enriching those who thirsted. People were drawn to Jesus, and that same attraction can still be seen today.

The essence of Christ's teaching is to humble my proud heart, open my mind to the awareness of sin, reveal to me the beauty of God's character, and restore the image of God in my heart.

God teaches me humility, and for this purpose He allows many different kinds of people to be present in my life. The Lord

helps me to be victorious in my interactions with each of them by using God's Spirit and God's instruments of influence.

At the end of 2015, I received a contract to renovate a house, and the Lord brought Ukrainian nationalists onto my crew. That is what they called themselves. The influence of the media had already formed in me a particular position regarding the events in Ukraine, and this nearly cost me my life and health. I had to learn a great deal in relation to politics—or, more precisely, to listen more and speak less about it, and eventually to leave it altogether. The Lord revealed to me that this is an area of life into which it is not worth delving, for it belongs to this world. I chose the path of love, friendship, and meekness. As a result, I learned much. My coworkers and I became friends, and they became interested in hearing me speak about my friendship with Jesus.

Later, angry people appeared in my life who depended on me and were under my authority. Yet love found common ground with them as well, and we get along in every matter.

I have also had many conversations with members of other denominations. I did not argue with them; I simply looked for paths to their hearts. We have wonderful relationships. We can listen to one another without entering into disputes. Truth sounds beautiful when it is presented in a spirit of meekness and with the authority of Christ, with an understanding of what is being discussed and how important it is.

The meek and quiet spirit to which Christ's Apostles call us adorns not only sisters, but brothers as well.

God also sent medical missionaries into my life who surpass me in every respect. Yet love and friendship found common ground with them too, and we became friends forever.

Being meek and considering others better than yourself is not so bad. Although people see the superiority over you that your humility grants them, they begin to respect you and even listen to you at times. Sometimes they ask questions and wait for an answer. Some even invite you to visit and desire close

fellowship. They want me to speak about love to their friends and loved ones as well.

There are also those who have no need of you, whether you are meek, sociable, or happy. But for the most part, people want a true friend who will understand them, never betray them, help them, and listen to them; yet they do not want Jesus to be that Friend. They need a human being, and when they see such a person in you, they quickly draw near and become attached to you in their hearts. Through you they then come to know Jesus, and they begin to build their own personal relationship with Him.

What happiness it is to be meek!

Everyone is better than you; everyone is wiser, stronger, and more wonderful than you. As a result, you begin to be surrounded by the best people in the world, and they understand this from the way you treat them.

A meek disposition helps me discover many precious qualities in another person's soul. If I come with my pride and ambition and make my friend understand that I am somebody while he is nothing, where will such a relationship lead? I think I will be helped to fall into the mud upon which I decided to build my life —and the sooner and more painfully this happens, the better it will be for me. Meekness, however, opens a beautiful path to people's hearts. Even the proud begin to admire you.

Meekness adorns a person not only at work, but also in the family. It is an imperishable beauty so attractive that one wants to admire it continually.

A meek person knows how to listen and hear another person out, seeking to understand the root and essence of the matter. He takes an interest in another person's life and begins to think about that person's well-being and happiness, planning how to show love and friendliness.

A meek spirit is the eyes of Christ through which I see the entire picture, understand the cause and the problem, and see a

way out, while still waiting for permission and an invitation to take part in someone's needs or life.

Meekness gives me contentment with what I have without excluding prospects for growth and development in what is beautiful. When I find myself in a difficult situation and do not know how to behave or what to do, the example of Christ's life —His attitude toward people, His calmness, and His strength— reveals much to me and teaches me many things. His meekness, even though He possesses supreme strength and authority, is astonishing.

Even now, the Lord humbly offers me the most precious things He has for me: gold refined in the fire, white raiment, and eyesalve, all for my own good. Then He meekly stands at the door of my heart and does not wish to enter without my permission. I look, marvel, am deeply moved, and open the door.

Unfortunately, many never appreciated the beauty of meekness and left their doors closed forever. They want a fearsome king who decides something and does it without consulting anyone. And they will receive one.

Meekness without love is like a ship without an engine or sails. It is cowardice, weakness of spirit, faintheartedness, fear, humiliation, and lack of willpower. Love lays the proper foundation for meek behavior. Meekness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit which, together with the other qualities of God's Spirit, is always present in a converted heart and awaits its development.

Meekness also means understanding that I am meek and studying the principles of such a condition of spirit.

Although every person may have a different temperament and our characters may differ from one another, meekness adorns every saved soul and becomes its eternal seal as a sign that it belongs to Heaven.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Galatians 5:22–23; Matthew 5:5; 11:28–30; 21:5; Zechariah 9:9; Romans 2:3–4; 2 Corinthians 10:1; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:1–3; Philippians 4:5; Colossians 3:12–14; 1 Timothy 6:10–11; James 1:21; 3:13; 1 Peter 3:1–4

Chapter 41

Agape happiness! You will not find this phrase in any dictionary, in the Bible, or in ordinary conversations. Agape is God's Eternal love, which never fails, and Agape happiness is the blessed state of abiding in God and in His love and allowing the Most High to live in me. It is the union of Agape with my own self. I am speaking of the deep emotional experience that comes from knowing that God is present in my life and that I am in His heart—an awareness that fills the soul with unspeakable delight, joy, and gratitude. Although I coined this phrase myself, I believe it makes very clear what kind of happiness I mean.

When holidays, birthdays, or other celebrations come into our lives, it is customary to express good wishes to one another. Everyone wishes others happiness, but whether a person understands what happiness is or not is considered less important. He is left to discover somehow what it is and enter into that state of spirit.

I know of no school in this world that purposefully teaches happiness, examines every component of this process in detail, explains the laws of blessedness, and shows us how they work in life. I would very much like to take a course at such an institution so that I could then live in blessedness.

Someone may say that the Bible teaches happiness. Yes and amen! It is precisely there that all the laws of blessedness are found. Yet one distinctive feature of Holy Scripture is that many of its treasures do not lie on the surface, and if I merely read it as a book, I will not understand the depth and the principles of happiness. Take the Bible and tell a believing friend that it is the Book of Happiness, and he will gladly agree and support your statement. But if you ask someone to show you the laws and principles of a happy life, not many will be able to explain them. At best, they will read the Sermon on the Mount.

Happiness is present truth. It is the surest way out of the lukewarm condition of Laodicea. Happiness is preparation for

the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and He will give abundant growth and strength to every plant. But a weed will not become grain because of this rain, nor will a barren flower bear fruit.

Let the holy be holy still, and the righteous will become purer still, while evil people will remain evil. The final events will not change people’s characters, but they will reveal the true nature of each person, clearly showing the entire visible and invisible world what God’s seal is and how it differs from the mark of the beast.

Being happy is a science that must be understood and mastered in our time. Agape happiness is like oil that keeps the flame burning in my lamp. And this light shines for others as well. It is difficult to hide it from those around me. It will burn through my clothing and testify to everyone that I am happy. Such happiness rests on a Firm Foundation and on eternal principles. And I can put all of this into practice in my life.

Let us consider an example.

God’s part in my happiness is like the design of a car. I have been given this complex machine, which operates according to its own laws. I have been handed an owner’s manual and the ignition keys, and I have been offered a driving course. I can also study how this machine works inside and how it is constructed, but that knowledge will not affect how fast I travel. Where should I begin?

I think I should first learn how to drive, study the rules of the road, and understand the dangers that await me. When I complete this course, I am granted a lifelong right to drive a car, and I may legally travel in it. But once I sit in the car, I realize that it will not move by itself. It needs someone to start it and give commands to its mechanisms by turning the steering wheel and pressing the various pedals. The power steering will not turn the heavy wheels on its own, but it will respond obediently when I take hold of the wheel and turn it in the right direction. The engine will not accelerate or brake without my command, but it will precisely carry out the instructions it

receives from my hands and feet. Unless it has automatic settings, every system inside the vehicle—from the heater to the lights—will not operate by itself, but will wait for me to press the proper control so that it can fulfill its intended purpose. Fuel has a way of running out, so I must make sure there is enough to reach my destination. The engine oil must also be at the proper level and suitable for the engine. All these principles are easy to understand, and anyone who thinks that a car should do everything by itself will be regarded as a fool.

If you decide to sleep while driving and entrust the car with complete control, an inevitable disaster awaits you, and other people may suffer as well. Even knowing the inner workings of the car will not help you avoid an accident if you let go of the steering wheel. There is an alternative to a car—a bicycle. It is much safer and sometimes better suited for traveling in pedestrian areas. There are rules there too, but they are simpler, and anyone, even a child, can operate it. Yet when riding a bicycle, you must do everything yourself and rely only on your own strength.

Now let us consider happiness in this light. God has already created this wonderful and complex mechanism, ready to obey its owner’s commands. A person who has never learned happiness does not even understand the purpose of such a complex car and decides to spend his whole life riding a bicycle and relying on his own strength. But happiness exists, and it awaits a trained driver who will start the engine and begin issuing commands, setting spiritual laws in motion. If the happiness pedal is called the accelerator, it will not slow me down when I press it. If I decide to switch on the light called ‘I believe,’ that is the very light that will shine. God’s mechanism of happiness is very complex in its design and can be studied for a lifetime, yet it is very simple to operate, and even children can drive it. As long as I hold the steering wheel and determine the direction of travel, I arrive where I have decided to go. Without me, happiness will do nothing. Parked in the garage of my laziness and ignorance, it will wait for me all my life and, while offering itself as an alternative, look with kindly envy at my bicycle. Every morning and at every opportunity, God

provides me with unlimited fuel for my happiness. He pours the early rain upon me and opens before me the prospects and possibilities of a blessed life. But I alone decide whether I will be happy. My car will go nowhere without me.

Sometimes I grow weary of myself and ask my friends to take me for a ride in their cars of happiness. It is so wonderful and so much fun there that I would like to live that way without doing anything. Let them keep driving me around! But night comes, my friends go to sleep, and I am left alone with my own happiness once again, without even knowing what it is.

Out of boredom, I decide to start a family, but then I discover that my wife has a car of her own and prefers to drive it, sometimes taking me along on her journeys.

And I begin to realize that my happiness was created for me alone, and I alone decide what kind of life I will live. Happiness waits for my command so that it may obey.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 17:21–23; Joel 2:28; Revelation 22:11; Jeremiah 29:11–14; Luke 9:62; 1 Peter 3:8–17; Psalm 1:1–3; Matthew 13:34–35; Mark 4:11–13; 1 Peter 1:6–8, 12–15

Chapter 42

As we study the laws of a happy life, we would like to compare them with things that figuratively show how all these principles are connected to one another.

Let us consider several comparisons, and you may choose the one that speaks most deeply to your heart.

As a builder, I know that a house is not constructed by taking every kind of material and mixing them all together.

Concrete remains concrete, although it comes in different grades, and the strength of the finished product depends on the quality of the cement and its proper proportion to the water. And if mismatched bricks are used in a wall, it will crack and testify to the incompetence of its builders. But we are building the spiritual house of happiness from the strongest and most durable materials upon the strongest Foundation, and therefore it will withstand every assault without cracking.

Still, it may be better to compare our little house with a living organism—with my body. Then the interaction of all its vital organs, their care for one another, and the importance of their presence in the body become clearer.

If a surgeon approached you and asked which of your organs you would allow him to remove because he had no work to do and did not know how to occupy himself, what would you answer? I think you need all your organs. At most, I would allow him only to trim my fingernails and cut my hair. Why am I so reluctant to give up my organs for the sake of a good man? If some vital part of my body were removed, I might die or become disabled. Therefore, I understand how necessary it is to keep my entire body intact, carefully protecting all its parts from removal and destruction.

Suppose a strong basket were made, I were placed inside it, and it were attached to a long chain and suspended over an abyss. If I were then asked which link in that chain was unnecessary and could be removed to make the chain shorter

and stronger, I think every link would suddenly seem magnificent, and I would not dare shorten it at all. That would probably be the wisest decision and would preserve my life.

Very well, let us consider a locomotive pulling passenger cars and intending to bring all of them to their destination. If there is a faulty coupling somewhere between the cars, how many of them will reach the final destination? Only those that remain securely connected to one another and to the locomotive. Would you want to be left behind in a detached and abandoned car? That would be very dangerous, for the next train could crash into it at full speed.

A passenger airliner has three hundred seats occupied by carefree tourists. In the cockpit are two special seats occupied by two trained pilots. If the people aboard the plane were divided equally between them, each pilot would be responsible for one hundred and fifty people. Here is the question: How many people will die if one pilot makes a fatal mistake while the other remains faithful to his principles? I think you know the correct answer.

As we study the science of happiness, it is very important to understand that all the laws of a happy life are interconnected and that every one of them is vital to practice. There are temporary materials that we will study a little later, and there are foundational truths which, like a golden chain, hold me above the abyss. It is extremely important that there be no defect or miscalculation in the construction of this chain.

I cannot reject any law of happiness without consequence and then enter Eternity without it. The problem with rejecting blessedness is that an automatic substitution takes place.

For example, if I do not need the brick called ‘I forgive,’ its place will be taken by resentment, anger, hatred, malice, revenge, the keeping of grudges, and other such materials. The same thing happens with every law. If Christ is not the Foundation of the house, Satan and demons will immediately take His place. Will Eternity accept me with such a burden?

And if any of you, my friends, think that building happiness is an occupation for naïve girls who have nothing else to do, I believe you will soon be greatly surprised and disappointed, because you will have missed something vitally important in life and failed to arrive where you wanted and dreamed of going.

When many come to Jesus and tell Him about their good works and deeds of faith, He will declare to them, ‘I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity’ (Matthew 7:23). After these words, the Lord tells the parable of the two builders, making it clear that we must build—and that we must build correctly—which is precisely what we are doing.

Those who work iniquity are people who do not live according to the law even though they know its requirements. Such people believe that virtue is more important than obedience and that works of faith are more necessary than faithfulness to God’s requirements.

Sin is destructive in its power, and it does not stand still; it develops. Satan did not know where his rebellion in Heaven would lead or how many innocent souls would be deceived and destroyed by sin. But time revealed the full ruinous nature of the evil spirit and showed what a high price God had to pay to stop this calamity.

My happiness is directly connected with my feelings, emotions, and experiences. It interacts closely with my inner world. And if someone looks at a lesson superficially, studying only its title, he may assume that everything here is based on feelings and merely floats on the surface.

Yes, we touch upon the feelings of the soul, and they cannot be separated from a person. I do not think that beings without emotions will inherit Eternity. Even seriousness, interest, attentiveness, and thoughtfulness are also kinds of feelings.

We were created to experience and to feel. This is a normal process. Happiness consists of positive experiences and is the culmination of completed processes in my mind that have given positive energy to my feelings and allowed my emotions to bring me into a state of absolute optimism.

Happiness has one problem: ignorance. Those who mount this particular hobbyhorse will travel very far in their search for the meaning of life without ever understanding what life is. Their only answer will be the conclusion, ‘I was born to die.’

But I was born to live—to live happily, eternally, always. And even if I die, I will live again. I believe this, and there is something very satisfying and nourishing in it. My taste for life differs from yours, but I can share it with you.

Agape love leads every person into the land of happiness. When I set out on this path, I activate God’s navigation system in my mind, and it shows me the best route to the final destination. If I change my route, the Lord does not argue with me but shows me how and where to proceed, providing the shortest way to my final destination. At the same time, He continues to communicate with me, filling my life with joyful experiences of His nearness, the awareness that I belong to God’s family, and confidence in salvation and in walking in the light.

And if the light of love, friendship, and happiness has been kindled in your life, my friends, you should not turn it off.

Have you ever seen a switch in a house labeled ‘darkness’? You press it, and darkness comes. There is no such switch, for darkness exists wherever there is no light. It does not need to be invited; it is enough simply to reject what Eternal love offers.

Happiness! How natural and simple it is in God—and how impossible it is apart from Him!

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Corinthians 12:12–14, 18, 24–26; Ephesians 4:15–16; John 17:21–23; Colossians 3:12–17; Ephesians 4:3–7; Romans 7:4–6; 8:2; Galatians 6:8–10; Ephesians 3:16–19; Psalm 32:7–10; John 8:12

Chapter 43

The next brick for the walls of our little house of happiness is called ‘I give thanks.’

Gratitude is an expression of appreciation to someone who has taken part in our life in some way. We value that person’s involvement and express it through respect and thanksgiving. It is also our appreciation for the attention or kindness shown to us and for something we have received from another person. Gratitude to God is a manifestation of faith in Him and an understanding that He exists and rewards those who love Him.

Gratitude may be expressed automatically, out of habit, as a sign of good upbringing, or consciously, when we understand that something significant is taking place in our life and, after weighing all the facts and arguments, decide to be grateful.

What should we be thankful for? In society, it is customary to give thanks for every good and beautiful thing that comes into a person’s life and for all the services, blessings, and good deeds performed for his benefit or for the benefit of those near and dear to him. If someone fails to express gratitude for all this, society regards him as ill-mannered.

But what should I do if something bad happens in my life and, instead of blessings, I am overwhelmed by losses, problems, and cares that oppress me and deprive me of peace of mind? Should I give thanks for that? And whom should I thank?

From a worldly person’s point of view, gratitude is out of the question. But when viewed from the position of a believer, everything changes.

Gratitude is a spirit of appreciation for everything that happens to me. It is an expression of a spirit of thanksgiving toward people and toward God.

Christ taught that when I believe in Him, I am in His hand, and no one can pluck me out of it. This means that everything happening in my life is under His control and that He permits only those trials I am able to bear. Therefore, if something

happens to me, it does so only with His permission. At the same time, I have freedom and, through my own foolishness, may harm myself and even deprive myself of the right to Eternal life. But if I hold fast to Jesus in faith and faithfulness, He has the power to protect me and not permit in my life anything that could harm me.

Do you remember when Jesus healed ten lepers and only one returned to thank Him? Jesus told him that his faith had saved him.

Gratitude to God is an expression of my faith in Him as my Lord, Savior, and Friend, to Whom I belong by right of creation and redemption.

And if something bad or very bad happens in my life, it means that God has permitted it in order to teach me something or cleanse me of something.

When I thank God, I thereby express my trust in His providence and find rest in His love.

I give thanks. This decision brings me to the realization that I am evaluating the situation correctly and directing everything toward positive thinking. In this way, I help others understand that I am a grateful person, capable of perceiving what is happening correctly and recognizing its positive side.

The conscious act of giving thanks contains a special power that makes me victorious in every situation and sets my thoughts on the right course.

The apostle Paul counsels us to give thanks for everything. What happiness it is to be grateful to everyone and for everything! At times, amid problems, I cannot understand or see my future or what I will ultimately come to. But if I remain grateful, then after the trials have passed, I see in them the process of my growth and rejoice that I maintained the right spirit. I therefore have no cause to regret failing to value the trial and grumbling at my lot in life.

A spirit of gratitude leads you to be content with everything, and if it is joined with godliness, that is truly wonderful.

I am grateful. This is a source of good cheer, an awareness of my strength for victory in Jesus, and joy for every day. Grateful people are happy by nature. It is pleasant to have any kind of relationship with them, and it is very rewarding to be their friend.

When we give someone a gift, somewhere in our subconscious we expect a reaction and therefore wait with interest for a response. Sometimes sincere words of gratitude bring the giver more joy than the recipient. In this light, imagine how God feels, for He is constantly showering us with gifts.

Our gratitude is also intended to make others happy. Sometimes someone freely does us a favor, and if we notice it and begin thanking our benefactor, we can see that person's face light up with happiness and with the realization that he did something for us that we were able to value—or appreciate even more deeply.

I am so grateful to you! This is the highest expression of respect and appreciation. Try it, and you will see what happiness it is to give thanks—and to give thanks for everything.

Gratitude without love is still an expression of appreciation that inclines people's hearts toward a mutually positive relationship. There is something Heavenly in this approach that beautifies our everyday life. Yet the enemy of souls seeks to distort even this, prompting people to reply, 'You cannot put thanks in your pocket or pour it into a glass.' Under the influence of such a spirit, many people want your gratitude to take material form as money or reciprocal good deeds. If that does not happen, they regard you as a selfish opportunist and therefore stop paying attention to you.

Love moves both the giving heart and the receiving heart to do everything wholeheartedly, thereby filling a person with special joy and happiness. After all, either you have done something pleasant for another person, or through that person's attention, gift, or blessing you have experienced something beautiful and joyful.

Even if there is not a single person in my life who gives me anything, there is always God, Who continually and tenderly cares for me, carries me in His arms, gives me everything I need, thinks about my salvation, longs to meet me personally in His Kingdom, and desires to see me happy in this dark world. I can simply thank Him for all this and, as I meditate on Him, express still more praise for everything that happens in my life, for my life is under God's complete control when it is dedicated and entrusted to the Most High through my obedience and faith.

I give thanks. This is a part of my happiness and a very positive attitude toward everything that happens in my life. Everything that happens to me is worthy of my gratitude.

It is very important that I myself also be present in this spirit of gratitude. This is the vital union of the Heavenly and the human as it passes through my heart. My personal participation and sincere choice are essential in this building process.

There have been times when the police stopped me for minor traffic violations and issued me a ticket requiring me to pay a fine. I sincerely and joyfully thanked the officers because they perform such important work: they care about my safety, protect me, catch criminals, and risk their lives for my well-being. This brought joy and sincere smiles of agreement to the faces of these guardians of the law. After all, it is true.

I am grateful. This is a very good seed of positivity that makes the world around me kinder and more beautiful.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Thessalonians 5:18; Luke 17:12–19; Romans 8:28; Philippians 1:3–4; 4:6–7; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2:13; Ephesians 5:4; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:3; 2 Corinthians 9:10–11; Revelation 4:9–11; 7:11–12; 1 Chronicles 23:30; 2 Corinthians 4:13–15

Chapter 44

Do you enjoy dealing with grateful people? What do you experience when people begin recounting all your good deeds, the important lessons you have taught, and the benefit you bring to others—or when they are simply grateful that you exist?

Giving thanks is one of the most beautiful adornments a person can have. The deeper the spirit of gratitude and the more opportunities a person sees to say thank you, the more beautiful and dependable that person appears. I have noticed that people like this truly stand out in our society.

I live in a region where a spirit of gratitude is encouraged. In every store or public place, all the employees and workers greet and thank you, sometimes even against their will. This is one of the marketing techniques that works very well.

But if I can choose where to shop, I prefer a grateful salesperson. Still, there is a difference between an employer's requirement and the prompting of the heart.

To understand why I need gratitude, it is worth considering the following: How would we feel if our Creator stopped giving us what He freely sends us every day? If God withdrew His protection and His blessings, we would immediately see the difference between what life was like before and what it became afterward.

Unfortunately, we are selfish by nature, and selfishness demands attention for itself and regards the whole world as its debtor, simply obligated to labor for my benefit. In this way of thinking, God should also bring me good things because I am the center of the universe. With ambitions like these, I go out among people and discover that no one needs me or finds me interesting.

In His mercy, God has placed me in a society where my selfish nature simply cannot survive if I think only about myself. Society teaches me sound principles for life, and I learn them.

Yet the enemy of souls introduces his own distortions into the social environment, and the strong begin using the weak to satisfy their ambitions.

Once God allowed people to walk in their own ways, and everything reached the point where humanity became mad in its selfishness and sin, and the Creator had to destroy the whole world with the waters of the Flood. After leaving the ark, Noah and his family offered sacrifices of thanksgiving to God. The Most High blessed Noah and his descendants, giving us the rainbow as a reminder that this world would never again be destroyed by water.

Afterward, God made provision for humanity to receive greater light through Moses and the prophets concerning the holiness of God's character and the possibility for a sinner to become righteous by faith in the coming Savior, to Whom all the feasts and sacrifices pointed, including the sacrifices of thanksgiving.

The whole teaching of the Bible is permeated with the unfolding revelation of God's selflessness. Holy Scripture seeks to impress upon our minds the extent of our dependence on the Creator in everything. The Bible tells us how God loves us—sinful and ungrateful as we are—and how He desires that we should not perish but have Eternal life. What is expected of me is that I accept God's plan, believe in Christ as my Savior, and simply give thanks for what the Lord does for me. By expressing my gratitude, I testify before the entire unseen world that I place my hope in the One Who gave His life so that I might live forever.

I began thinking about how fully I understand all that I owe to God. Looking more deeply within myself, I saw that although I have a grateful spirit, it is very superficial. At times my tongue praises God and people while my heart does not understand why I am doing it. My mind says, 'That is what you are supposed to do.' I am deeply ashamed to admit this. I simply see a kind of barrier that prevents my mind from diving deeper and seeing more. It is difficult for me to envision God, Whom I cannot see. It is difficult for me to comprehend what Eternity, which will never end, will be like, or how long 'forever and

ever' will last. Yet by faith I grasp what lies beyond my imagination, and my lips automatically give thanks for what is unseen. I know that as long as I live in this world, this veil will separate me from my unseen Savior. Only my weak faith will bind us firmly together and give me strength and confidence that all of this truly exists, that my labor is not in vain, that I will receive what was promised, and that I will see what is now unseen.

If you ask me why I believe and deny myself worldly benefits and pleasures, I will honestly say that I find a special delight in living with God and obeying Him. The peace I did not have before now fills my heart with a special joy and gratitude to the Creator for the changes He has brought about in me. God's love fills my mind so completely that without it I simply see no meaning in this life. Happiness follows close behind me; I immerse myself in it and cannot explain why I am the way I am. None of this is accidental. It is the Lord's reward for my interest in holy things and my desire to live in them. How can I fail to thank the One Who cares for us so tenderly? I know that similar blessings are available to other people as well, and therefore I want to share them and find the right words to communicate what is real, what works, and what helps.

My lips cannot remain silent, and even if they grow quiet, my life begins to speak about it. Gratitude flows by itself.

Once I wondered whether I should thank God for the bad things in my life. I decided that I should and began to practice it. Then I noticed that many troubles, severe trials, evil people, grief, and suffering brought far greater blessings in the formation of my character than things that were pleasant and comforting. Yet I am never drawn to what is bad, and evil people do not make me glad. Humanly speaking, I simply want to run away from all of it, but it is there.

The coming fire of trials does not make me glad, and my whole being resists such a turn of events. But I understand that I must pass through it, and I move forward without considering retreat. Amid this struggle, my unseen Friend Jesus supports me. He does not abandon me but promises to remain beside me

in every trial. His love makes the difficulties that arise seem light. It gives me victory.

And when I feel like a victor, and love knows no defeat, the battle becomes so interesting. You can hardly wait to discover what the next victory will be. You enter into it and rejoice. And for everything, there is gratitude to God.

Death is no longer terrifying, and trials do not frighten me. Love casts out all fear and gives far more besides. I cannot even explain it. The greatest difficulty with love is that in my heart I understand and see its power and beauty, but I do not have enough words to describe it. Yet I can say with certainty that without it I am nothing and no one, and nothing will profit me at all.

When all of us stand before the White Throne and look with our own eyes—not with the eyes of faith—upon the Faces of our God, only then will we begin to understand what our salvation cost Him, what He sacrificed, what He risked, and what He left forever in order to save each one of us. I believe that at that moment our gratitude will know no bounds, and all Eternity will seem too short to express our full appreciation for the travail of Jesus' soul.

For now, I am only learning this, but I know that even my smallest sincere expression of thanksgiving brings joy to God's heart.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 11:41–44; Leviticus 7:12–13; 22:29; Matthew 15:36–37; 26:27; Romans 1:8; 7:25; 14:6; 1 Corinthians 10:30; 15:57; 2 Corinthians 9:11–12, 15; Ephesians 4:29; 5:4, 20; Colossians 2:7; Revelation 11:17

Chapter 45

And now we are laying the next brick in the wall of the house of happiness, and it is called ‘I rejoice.’

Joy is a state of the soul that is always confused with happiness. Unlike happiness, joy is often temporary and depends on a person’s emotional state, on changeable external factors, or on the circumstances in which a person finds himself.

Joy is an inner emotional satisfaction with one’s circumstances, pleasures, and awareness of happiness, often expressed through a smile, singing, joyful words and exclamations, and unusual bodily movements.

You can distinguish a joyful person from an ordinary one by his smile and the radiance in his eyes.

I have discovered several kinds of joy for myself.

Malicious joy is gloating. It too is joy, but it is based on distorted moral values and on taking pleasure in the failures or misfortunes of others. But that is not what we are discussing now.

Emotional joy is a temporary state of the soul that depends on various external or internal factors—for example, the weather, one’s physical well-being, one’s surroundings, financial circumstances, and other things.

Joy for no apparent reason. Sometimes it is impossible to identify the source or cause of this state, yet it is there and produces its own results.

Spiritual joy is a more stable and conscious state of mind. It is lasting in nature and depends directly on a person’s connection with the higher, Divine spiritual powers.

Joy in the Holy Spirit is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that results from faith in God and the acceptance of Christ as one’s personal Savior. All believers are expected to be joyful at all times, especially in favorable circumstances.

A tree bears fruit according to its kind. This is the law by which a person's spiritual allegiance can be recognized: 'Ye shall know them by their fruits.' And joy, being the norm, accompanies a son or daughter of God.

Believers also experience spiritual crises, when a dark night of the soul descends or trials of faith come. Then joy retreats deep into the heart and waits for any opportunity to support its owner and comfort him by revealing itself.

I have noticed that spiritual joy is a controllable process that can be called forth very easily under any circumstances, making it easy to remain joyful. It is as easy as it is for an apple tree to bear apples, because it is an apple tree. Sometimes the single word 'joy' is enough to enter this state. And it is even easier to remain joyful when asking for joy in prayer and deciding to be happy and joyful under all circumstances.

When joy is present as a fruit of the Spirit, it only needs to be brought forth, and then it will reveal itself.

There is a very good book titled Pollyanna. It is the story of a girl who found a reason to rejoice in every situation. When I first read it, I thought it was a very good fairy tale for adults, but one that was simply impractical in our age of haste and cares. Yet time passed, and now, simply comparing my life with this girl's, I can say with confidence that I have surpassed her in every respect. My joy is God's plan for this world, which He is carrying out in me at all times. He teaches me to rejoice in grief, sickness, and suffering—when you are hated and humiliated, when you are betrayed and your reputation is ruined.

When darkness gathers all around, this wellspring does not go out. I understand that we are very rapidly approaching special events and that God is preparing me to stand firm. Joy, like love, is the instrument that quite successfully binds together all the elements of happiness and gives meaning to everything that happens, because it arises from a positive outlook on life.

When I meet friends who are going through a crisis or misfortune, I very carefully ask them, 'Would you like to be

happy and learn how to rejoice? These are the best possible circumstances for it.' As a rule, they simply do not understand you.

But it was precisely in such circumstances that I learned to understand joy and bear this fruit. It was amid grief and sickness that I decided to be happy and remain so, no matter what. At times it was very difficult, but Jesus was near; He helped me and taught me.

He taught me—and continues to teach me—to see something positive in everything, to find something good and favorable in people, and to notice their virtues, while at the same time being very strict and exacting with myself. I take any criticism directed at me very seriously and examine whether it is actually true. If it is, I run to Jesus and ask Him to correct it in my life.

I rejoice. And this is my choice. Bible verses help me greatly in making it. Proverbs 17:22 says, 'A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.' I have learned from personal experience that this is true. It is an effective remedy for many illnesses and the most effective one for spiritual maladies.

The passage in Deuteronomy 28:47 especially helped me. Beginning with verse 15, it speaks of various illnesses familiar today, and then identifies their cause: 'Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.' I took note of this and decided to be obedient, joyful, and grateful to God for everything He gives me. That is better than suffering from the ailments listed there. And I will honestly say that these verses work in both directions.

God offers sickness to some, and to others happiness, love, peace, joy, friendship, and so very much more. He gives all of this on certain conditions and also freely, simply because He loves me and desires my good. He loves you too, my friend, and deeply desires to see you happy and joyful in this world. All He needs is your heart and your decision to belong to Him and learn from Him. He is a kind and wise Teacher Who knows

better than you what is best for you. Come to Jesus, and He will not cast you out. He will listen, understand, forgive, and lift you up. All His disciples are former criminals and godless people who believed Him and took their place under His banner, which is called ‘Love, Friendship, Happiness.’

The path to lasting joy leads through many difficulties and trials, but it is possible. The apostle Paul, while in bonds, writes to us: ‘Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.’

Without joy, happiness looks rather dreary and suspicious. Is it truly happiness?

It is written of Christ that ‘He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.’ I think it will be very pleasant for us to see that special joy on the Face of our Savior, expressed in a sincere smile and radiant eyes. Just imagine: He is glad to see you—and He always will be, throughout all Eternity. What happiness it is to be a source of happiness to God and, by your presence, to inspire Him with special joy!

I rejoice! It is like the oil in my lamp, which I cannot give to another person, but which I can teach others to obtain through my example and experience.

Even as I write these lines, I rejoice that I am giving God the opportunity to use me to help someone learn more, improve his life, and fill it with happiness.

I would like to offer a little advice. If you have happy friends or acquaintances who are blessed in God and rejoice at all times, treasure them. They will greatly help you become the same way.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16; Romans 12:15; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Luke 10:20; Matthew 5:11–12; Joel 2:23; Isaiah 49:13; 66:10; Psalm 2:11; 33:1; 68:4; 97:12

Chapter 46

Nothing gladdens the heart like a joyful spirit. If I decide to study the physiology of my body and understand how joy affects my health, I will be amazed at how it restores, heals, and brings my body back into balance. And if I add obedience to the laws of health, I simply marvel at how wonderfully I am made.

God has given me an amazing body that takes care of itself independently of me, receiving impulses and commands from the control center in my head. My brain is directly connected to my mood and is influenced by my feelings. It hears my words, understands my emotions, and processes everything I do and the way I do it. My life tells my body what it is to become.

If I sit behind the wheel of a car, the car does not care what mood I am in while driving it. It will respond only to the commands of my hands and feet. But my body responds very precisely to everything I experience and produces stress hormones or joy hormones, depending on what I feel and what I direct my mind toward.

Joy can be produced artificially through external stimulants, improper nutrition, or even temporary sinful pleasure. My body responds to these things as well, and its ability to function changes accordingly. But I have a unique body that knows the voice of its Creator and understands His commands. It awaits the union of my human nature with the Divine so that, in this harmony, it may do everything that was originally intended.

I rejoice in the Lord. This is a return to the original, natural state of the human soul. It is the harmonious union of the earthly and human with the Heavenly. My heart knows this voice of Eternity and begins to beat joyfully, sending life-giving impulses to every part of my body.

Each of us has two hearts. One is the heart in my chest that pumps my blood; the other is my spiritual perception of the world around me and the choice of my will concerning whom it will belong to. This heart can decide in whose chest it will beat

—in the chest of my carnal nature or in the chest of my Savior. I make this choice, and I make it continually.

When I choose God, I come into harmony with Him. I allow Him to gladden my heart, direct my life, and cleanse my soul from the defilement of this world. Such harmony makes everything within me rejoice. The union of my joy with all the other materials of my house of happiness fills my life with genuine and lasting gladness.

What do joyful people look like? They are beautiful in God's eyes, because they reflect the image of their Creator very faithfully. As a reward, they receive all the bounties of Heaven in the form of abundant blessings from God. Like a snowball, all of this grows larger and larger until it overflows from me in shouts of praise and prayers of thanksgiving and becomes an overwhelming desire to bring joy to those around me as well.

The carnal nature hates joy in the Lord and tries in every way to prevent it from spreading—through cutting reproaches and faultfinding, mockery and insults—in an attempt to ruin my mood. How I meet this attack of the enemy and how I respond to it will affect how I feel afterward.

But to understand the value of my joy and what it cost my Lord, I must consider the One through Whom I have it. My thoughts first take me to the Garden of Eden, where the enemy of humanity stole the character of Heaven from us. Then I ascend to Calvary, where I see the price of my sin in the death of the One Who never committed a single sin, yet loves me so deeply that He chose to take this step in my place in order to restore to me the possibility of living happily and living forever. The price is exceedingly great. In this light, I understand that rejoicing is not merely something I may or may not do. I will remain in this joy continually, because it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Joy includes elements that can be seen and may be expressed on my face or in my emotional behavior. Yet in its depths it has a very complex inner structure and is more like the roots of a fruit tree, continually growing in the depths of God's heart and

seeking sources of nourishment for my soul. Joy is like a grafted grape branch that grows into the Vine with its whole being and becomes one with it, drawing nourishment from its sap and becoming part of the plant. This process has a unique characteristic. If a dark grape variety is grafted onto the Vine, it will bear dark fruit according to the nature of the branch, while a light variety will produce light-colored grapes. In Christ I do not lose my individuality; instead, I harmoniously unite my own qualities with God's laws and principles.

Joy in the Lord is a beautiful opportunity for love to express itself visibly and also to bring inner purity to my heart. Love performs this work very skillfully, with ease and joy. The original plan of love in the creation of our world and of humanity in the person of Adam is described very well in Proverbs 8:30–31: 'Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men.'

Joy in the Lord is the eternal adornment of my life and of my house of happiness. It is the blood of Christ flowing through my veins and nourishing my spiritual nature. It is given to me forever, to be my lifelong companion throughout Eternity and continually nourish my being from the inexhaustible Source of Eternal love.

Do joyful people bring you joy? Aren't they beautiful? They create an atmosphere of life and rejoicing around them. Even when they are silent and not smiling, and even when they carry many cares, they are beautiful. It is very pleasant to be in their company.

If an ordinary person is offered a highly paid job among hostile coworkers, he will not endure that environment for long. He will prefer an average salary on a team of joyful people to a miserable existence under constant stress for a great deal of money. Yet for some, the love of material things overpowers the appeals of reason. These people deprive themselves of much by choosing what is temporary, perishable, and poisonous, and

then wonder where their sickness and suffering came from when everything around them seems so glittering and grand.

There is a common belief that joy and children are the lot of the poor, and this idea is drawn from life. You can see that in some places it is indeed so: the simpler people’s outlook on life, the more happy faces there are. But joy in the Lord is available to every level of society and even to childless families. It can adorn any home and transform any heart into the likeness of God. Yet it cannot live on its own, separated from the whole body. This brick of happiness will not bring me joy apart from the rest of the house. Like a coal taken from the fire, it will very quickly grow cold and die, or it will assume an outward form of godliness while lacking inner power.

Laughter is not always joy in the Lord, but it is better than anger. Joy should not be confused with frivolous joking. Satan tries to introduce this counterfeit in order to bring us under his power, but a pure heart rejects artificial sources and chooses what is eternal. A sense of humor is good in itself when it rests upon obedience to God and love for Him.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Proverbs 15:17; 17:22; 1 Chronicles 16:26–33; Nehemiah 8:10, 17; 12:43; Job 38:5–7; Psalm 16:11; 30:5; 43:4; 47:1; 51:10, 14; 68:3; 105:43; 126:5–6; Proverbs 10:28; 14:10, 13; Ecclesiastes 2:26; 5:19; 11:9; Isaiah 53:11

Chapter 47

In the summer of 2016, I was covering a roof with protective sheeting when I was caught in a downpour that soaked my clothes through. I did not think much of it. I changed my clothes and went on with my life. A day later, I awoke at one o'clock in the morning with severe back pain. I could not move, because the slightest motion caused excruciating pain and made it difficult to breathe. As I lay in bed, I thought that I had become disabled and did not know how I would go on living. No one was nearby to help me. My phone was turned off and out of reach. But I decided to be thankful and rejoice. My face lit up with a smile, and my lips began thanking God for such trials. I still could not move, and then I also needed to use the bathroom. So I decided to fight for my life. After trying in various ways for half an hour, I finally managed to get out of bed and even to walk. I continued to rejoice, and happiness overflowed in my heart. Eventually, I fastened a heating pad to my back and made it through the rest of the night that way.

By morning the pain was gone, and I went to work. The following night it all happened again. Once more I thanked God for such unusual trials, and my joy remained with me. For a week I slept only one or two hours a night, yet I continued going to work and, surprisingly, felt fairly energetic. After a week the pain disappeared, and everything returned to normal. I concluded that it had been sciatica, and I did not like the experience at all. But during that time I learned something.

There have been many other times when the enemy of souls wanted to discourage me and plunge me into despair, but I chose joy. More than anything, I was afraid of losing it, because the diseases and curses described in Deuteronomy 28 frightened me. I decided that it was better to rejoice and obey God than to suffer under curses and become ill. This proved to be a very effective means of protection in my life.

When I learn about problems or sorrow in the lives of my friends, I immediately ask whether they would like to learn happiness and joy during that time. Not everyone understands

me. Yet this is precisely how I learn. For me, every crisis is an occasion for joy, and I immediately begin thanking God that He is near and has not abandoned me.

I have also experienced the following. In business, I sometimes had to invest money in various projects and wait for it to return with a profit. But the money did not come back. I understood that I was on the verge of bankruptcy, and it was not always clear what I should do. Yet I chose the path of joy and gratitude and simply waited to see how the Lord would help me. The words of Habakkuk in Habakkuk 3:17–18 came to mind: ‘Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.’ These verses always sustained me. I understood that as long as I was alive, I could always think of something and continue living. At that moment, however, I could simply rejoice that I belonged to God, that the Lord had not abandoned me, and that even if I lost everything, Jesus would hold me firmly in His hand. This brought me great peace.

It also helps me to know that at the end of time I will have nothing left except my faith and my friends in the Lord. Therefore, I have resolved not to become attached to possessions. If I buy something I need for life, it brings me joy as something temporary, but nothing more. My joy is always with me so that my heart may delight in the Lord.

While preparing lessons and assignments for this school, I have often caught myself thinking that if I had spent that time doing paid work, my financial situation would be much better than it is now. But another thought immediately follows. If even one person benefits from my labor and begins to live and prepare for Eternity, or finds salvation and happiness in Jesus, that will be the finest reward for me—one that will bring me joy throughout Eternity. Then my heart feels so good, while God takes care of the material side of my life and performs astonishing miracles.

Once I invested all my money in materials and hired workers who did the job carelessly while I was away. Everything had to be torn out, thrown away, purchased again, and redone at my own expense, with no prospect of being paid for it. I had no money left. I was already considering what I would do next after the business closed, and I rejoiced over the new prospects of a wonderful future. But everything turned out differently. The workers corrected the defects at their own expense, the project was accepted, I was paid, and I continued moving forward.

Prophecies about the last days teach us that interesting events await us. At that time, it will not be my material possessions and savings that will be of use to me, but the spiritual inheritance being gathered now. That time has come, and one would have to be very blind not to understand that something unusual is happening in the world.

I know that a fire lies ahead of me—one I will not be able to avoid. Yet by faith I see Jesus in that fire, and I desire only one thing: not to lose hold of His hand during the trial and purification. In His Word He assures me that He will be with me. I already rejoice in the prospect of meeting Christ while I am still alive. What happiness this brings to my heart!

I have experienced the deaths of dear friends and loved ones many times, and I do not know how I will respond when this happens again in the future. But even now I am preparing myself to rejoice—not because they will die, but because if they die before I do, they will not have to endure the pain and suffering of our separation. Even now I thank God for giving me all these people, who brought joy to my heart until the day of their death. This temporary separation will be transformed into immeasurable joy on the day we meet at the first resurrection.

My own death does not frighten me either. Instead, it brings me joy to know that I will not even be aware that I have died; the very next moment for me will be awakening in a new body to live forever. That fills me with joy!

I could describe many more experiences and trials from which I emerged with the joy of victory, because love does not lose. I went through them with joy in my spirit because I had chosen to respond to problems that way.

But I will honestly say that my inner joy and cheerfulness are not always visible outwardly. Sometimes I forget to inform my face that I am happy, and many people want to know why I look so serious. I have to correct that misunderstanding at once.

If you think I see everything through rose-colored glasses, I must disappoint you. That is not so. Like yours, my life is subjected to many attacks from Satan. He is constantly ruining something along my path and trying to plunge me into discouragement. But even if I do not immediately understand how to respond, the habit of rejoicing helps me meet the trial in the right way. Then an understanding of how to move forward follows.

In joy I see the wisest solution to many problems. It is the weapon that will sustain me in the last days in a spirit of love and happiness.

And when I consider that my love in the Lord is the source and the underlying cause of my joy in the Lord, no war is frightening with such an arsenal.

It is easy to write and speak about these things after they are over. During a trial, there are times when I want to run away, but joy offers another way out.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Habakkuk 3:17–18; 1 Peter 4:12–14; James 1:1–2; Matthew 5:10–12; Proverbs 14:10; Psalm 126:5–6; Matthew 25:23; Luke 10:20; 15:10; John 15:11; 16:20, 24; 17:13; Romans 14:17; Philemon 1:7

Chapter 48

There is a good tradition in our world that almost everyone observes, regardless of nationality or religion. When a couple marries, the wife takes her husband's last name. There is something meaningful in this act. It is a voluntary expression of the woman's will, by which she shows the entire visible and invisible world that she belongs to a particular person. I have noticed that many women immediately begin adapting to their husbands and, from the first moment after the wedding ceremony, start calling themselves by the name of the man they love. And when children are born, they receive their parents' last name.

There is something very important and meaningful for the spiritual world in this tradition. No matter how relatives, friends, or society may view such a union, even if they do not take it seriously, after two free people have said yes to each other in the sight of Heaven and society, they become husband and wife. The simple, short word yes radically changes a person's life. That person no longer belongs only to himself or herself, but becomes part of the other half of a whole called a family—and, in God's sight, 'one flesh.' Only death can separate this union. Unfortunately, however, death comes to many while they are still alive, and they endure the tragedy of a broken family, in which there are no winners, only victims condemned to suffer.

While I am living on my own, at a certain point God begins drawing me to Jesus and revealing to me the meaning of the events that took place at Calvary about two thousand years ago. I become interested and try to understand what happened by studying related materials. As I come to know the Great Sacrifice, faith is kindled in my heart. Suddenly I realize that Jesus is not merely the Savior of the world; He is my personal Savior. This discovery turns everything in my life upside down. Faith in Him begins to grow, and I seek to learn more about Him and draw closer to Him. A spiritual rebirth takes place in my heart, and I thirst to know God. I desire a relationship with

my Heavenly Friend. His invisible presence brings me joy, and I decide to enter into a covenant with Him, begin a personal relationship, and become one family with Him. I receive water baptism, thereby fulfilling all righteousness, and take this step of faith.

Then something amazing happens in my life. I become a member of God's family and am welcomed as a brother; in the sight of Heaven, I stand as a man of God—Christ's own possession. I have the right to be called a Christian. This new name has a profound meaning in God's sight. I am not merely a believer; I enter into a lawful relationship with the Son of God and become one with Him. We are family. I begin to know Christ more deeply, and I give Him full permission to know me, so that through this deep personal relationship I may bear fruit —or much fruit. And happiness enters my life.

The next brick in my little house of happiness is called 'I belong to God.' It is so simple and natural to bear the name of the One to Whom you belong by right of your choice, by right of creation, and by right of redemption. This is not merely a union between two lonely individuals; it is my return to the purpose of God that was placed within the first human being. Adam was created by God for God, but because of disobedience he was stolen from God's family, thereby bringing immeasurable suffering to his Creator. Yet the Lord paid a very High Price to redeem humanity from the kingdom of darkness and return us to the Heavenly family. When this takes place, I belong to God twice over: by right of creation and by right of redemption.

I belong to God. To bear this name, to be called by it, and to be distinguished from the world by it is the greatest happiness. This name will always be mine, both in this world and throughout Eternity. No one and nothing will be able to deprive me of this status.

But the enemy of souls does not sit quietly and humbly watching me leave his power and, with God's help, break the chains of sin. Satan does not want to lose me, and if he does lose me, he does everything possible to bring me back. He offers me a beautiful death in order to separate me from Jesus.

This death has an enormous influence on people's minds. It is presented as delicious wine, accompanied by all kinds of teachings and entertainment. It does not matter from which side I decide to taste this cup. It is poisonous everywhere, and it exerts its destructive influence upon my mind, separating me from my Savior.

Jesus saves me from death and the power of sin, but if I decide to return to them by flirting with Satan's temptations, I have the right to do so. I am free to make any decision, but my freedom does not mean a return to slavery. My freedom gives me the right to life with God—to Eternal life with the Eternal Lord.

I belong to God. There is a special power in this name, and it fills my heart with an invisible awareness of unique protection, unique belonging, and a special relationship within God's family.

It is important to understand that the key word in this statement is I. However this may be perceived, I am the object of God's special interest throughout the entire Universe. When the Lord enters into a relationship with me, it is toward me personally that He cherishes the warmest feelings, shows the tenderest care, and pours out Eternal love, while always asking my permission for the deepest relationship. I have the right either to give Him permission to bless me or to refuse a relationship with Him because I am too busy.

The chief gift the Lord desires to bestow upon me is Agape love. It seeks that God-sized place in my heart so that it may rightfully occupy it completely. Yet even when presented with such an inviting offer, I am free to refuse the Creator and explain that I have bought new oxen and want to try them out, or that I have acquired a new field of activity and am going to examine it, or that I am entering a new union, or that something else of importance requires my attention.

What amazes and astonishes me most is God's respect for my choice. Even though He has every right to me and all power over me, He takes my character and desires into account. He

always asks politely whether He may enter my personal space in order to change something there.

I belong to God. This is absolute freedom; it is the highest authority, an Eternal seal, and personal belonging to my Heavenly Bridegroom. This name will be mine throughout Eternity if I remain faithful and allow the Lord to accomplish all His plans in me—if I permit Him to work in me both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

Heaven is my home, for I belong to God. God is my Heavenly Father, for I am His son, born for Him of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is my Savior and my lawful Bridegroom by right of His redeeming Sacrifice and by virtue of my choice and consent. I have every right to bear this Heavenly name and to show the world the beauty of our union through my transformed and sanctified character.

This brick fits perfectly into the wall of my little house of happiness, adorning it forever, for it becomes one with the Foundation and eternally gladdens my heart. I cannot imagine what I would become if I lost the right to this name. My entire little house would collapse.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 John 3:1–3; Romans 8:14–18; Matthew 6:9; 18:3; Luke 11:2; Psalm 29:1; Matthew 5:9; Galatians 3:26–29; Acts 11:26; Isaiah 4:1–3; John 3:5–7; 1 Peter 2:4–5, 9–10; 4:14–18

Chapter 49

There are very important laws at work in the spiritual world. At times I attach little importance to them and pay no attention to them, yet they carry tremendous weight and exert a powerful influence on my life.

God is very wise and sparing with words in the way He reveals Himself. When He begins to speak, every word He says has been carefully considered. It has a definite purpose: to accomplish that for which it was spoken and sent.

To understand the importance of the brick called ‘I belong to God,’ let us look at Jesus and try to grasp the depth of this awareness of identity. Why is it so important to understand Whom I belong to, and what does this mean for me?

Jesus came to the Jordan to receive water baptism from John the Baptist by full immersion. John did not understand why he should baptize the One Who was pure and holy, but Jesus persuaded him to do it in order to fulfill all righteousness. The Lord gave us an example and showed the importance of this ordinance. Christ also underwent this baptism on behalf of those who, for some reason, would be unable to be baptized, such as the thief on the cross. When our Lord came up out of the water and prayed concerning the mission before Him, God the Father answered this prayer in a special way with the words, ‘Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased’ (Luke 3:22).

Picture the following scene. Jesus is praying about the mission before Him, waiting to see how the Father will answer. He does not know whether there will be a visible response, but by faith He places His life in God’s hands and assures Heaven that He is ready to fulfill the mission entrusted to Him. Then Christ hears that He is the beloved Son in Whom God is well pleased. Jesus is told that He belongs to God. Did He not already know this? He did. Even at the age of twelve, while visiting the Temple, Jesus made it clear to Joseph and Mary that He was God’s Son (Luke 2:49).

But God knows what He is doing. This declaration of identity given to Jesus held the key to victory in the trials that soon followed. For the people who had come to the Jordan, it was also a special sign that turned their hearts toward a deeper study of the prophecies about the Messiah and drew their attention to Jesus' mission itself.

After being baptized, however, the Lord went into the wilderness completely alone. No one had expected events to take this turn. The people were waiting for a King Who would proclaim a New Kingdom and establish supreme authority, but the Messiah appeared and then disappeared—not for a day, but for forty days. Yet the voice from Heaven testified that He was indeed the One Who was to come.

After forty days of fasting, the Son of God became hungry. Satan immediately approached Him with a very strange proposal that began with the words, 'If Thou be the Son of God…' Did you notice what the enemy of souls was trying to exploit? He was trying to make Christ doubt that He belonged to God. Then the devil set Jesus on a pinnacle of the Temple and repeated the same challenge. Satan had prepared for this encounter for a long time, choosing just the right words to dishearten Jesus, and his deceptions possessed tremendous power. But the Lord did not enter into a debate with Satan or try to prove anything to him. He calmly answered with words from Scripture, which He carried in His heart as a weapon for both defense and attack.

The enemy of souls had no answer to such resistance, so he withdrew to prepare the next temptation.

Today the enemy uses the same methods against God's children, who often doubt who they are and try to prove something, falling into his cunning traps. 'If you are a Christian, then you must prove it in this or that way!' We rush to respond, only to hear, 'That does not convince me. Now do this as well!' And again we hurry to prove something. But why?

Sometimes people ask me to prove whom I belong to, or to prove my love, by doing things I had not planned to do. I calmly

reply that I will not do them because I see no need, and that I will instead do what the Lord places upon my heart. Yet the enemy hurls his accusations again and again.

The time of the Great Sacrifice that Christ would have to endure was approaching. He invited three disciples to go up a mountain and pray with Him. As He prayed, He was transfigured; His garments began to shine, two men appeared to Him, and a cloud came over them. We read in Luke 9:35: ‘And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him.’ Once again God speaks very briefly and repeats what He said before, adding that we must obey Him. Why did He say so little, and why these particular words? We need to understand their depth. Christ’s identity was being reaffirmed.

When the Lord was crucified, Satan once again addressed Him through wicked people, saying: ‘If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us’ (Luke 23:39); ‘Save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross’ (Matthew 27:40); and ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him’ (Matthew 27:42).

Once again Christ hears that terrible if. He could have given them proof, and this was a severe trial for Him, because He possessed the strength and authority to do so and was capable of using them. But Jesus did not try to prove anything to anyone. Instead, He prayed for His enemies, understanding that He was saving them from a terrible fate and that there was no other way to deliver the sinner from the anguish of eternal death. Jesus did not doubt that He belonged to God, and this knowledge helped Him stand firm in the most difficult trial.

Every human being has a need to be part of a family. Every child longs to belong to someone. Even a troubled family is better than a good orphanage. I have heard the testimonies of people who adopted children from orphanages and described how the children immediately began calling their adoptive parents Mom and Dad. This awareness of identity brings a sense of belonging, being needed, and protection in this sinful

world. It is very important for every child to know whose child he or she is. God's children also need this awareness. A proper understanding of whom I belong to gives me strength and confidence in many trials, because I know Who my Father is, that He loves me, and that He will protect me as His son, just as He promised. This knowledge helps me find my bearings and courageously endure everything God permits in my life.

I belong to God. This is not only my protection during trials; it is also my weapon for taking new territory. The Lord gave His children power to tread on serpents and scorpions and assured us that He is with us always, even unto the end of the world. I believe this, and with this knowledge I face many trials, and nothing can harm me.

I belong to God. As simple as this may sound, this identity makes me part of the Heavenly family and gives me an understanding of my status and authority.

How would a man feel if his wife were ashamed to tell others that she was married, publicly denied her husband, and kept her distance to avoid ridicule? The disciple Peter once chose to do this, and afterward he bitterly regretted it.

I belong to God. I know Whom I have believed. I know Whose I am. I believe that God is my Father, that I have been born again to live forever, that Jesus loves me, that He is my Savior, and that I am in His hand. Every hair on my head is numbered, and I have nothing to fear. All this is so natural, yet for some reason many of God's children do not know it or are ashamed to acknowledge it. But it is so important to carry this assurance in the heart.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 3:16–17; 4:3, 6; 17:5; 27:39–43, 54; 2 Peter 1:16–18; Daniel 3:24–25; Matthew 26:62–66; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; John 3:16–18; 5:25–29; 1:25–27; Acts 9:19–20; Hebrews 4:14; 1 John 4:15; 5:12; Revelation 2:18

Chapter 50

Peace in the heart is a state of inner rest, quietness of soul, tranquility, and an awareness of being safe. There are various sources from which such a state may be attained, and peace itself may be either temporary or lasting. Its stability depends directly on the foundation upon which it rests.

The finest example of peace can be seen in children who are not burdened with the cares of this world but are busy discovering the world around them and have loving parents. An infant in its mother's arms is a symbol of that very peace which each of us tasted from birth and therefore understands inwardly.

But we grow, and the older we become, the more cares we acquire. Eventually we realize that this peace of heart has been lost, and anxiety, worry, dissatisfaction, and fear enter our lives. If my life is being lived in sin, this condition only becomes worse.

The next brick in our little house of happiness is called 'I am a peacemaker.'

In Matthew 5:9 we read: 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.' The Lord Himself calls such a state of soul blessedness, and He calls those who live this way the children of God. In the preceding chapters, we studied the brick called 'I belong to God,' and now we have come to the qualities of soul possessed by a person who belongs to God.

The very word peacemaker tells us that such a person is interested in resolving matters peacefully, both within himself and in his relationships with those around him.

In Russian, the word peace has many meanings in the spiritual context. It can also mean the absence of armed conflict, a truce between opposing sides, the absence of war, tolerance between adversaries, and similar things.

But in the light of Christ's teaching, we see that He is speaking about the state of a person's soul. If the heart has no living

connection with God, it cannot possess the true peace that Jesus means in His description of blessedness.

I have God's peace, and I understand what it is. I know the Source of this condition and the principles by which it operates.

For me personally, a peaceful state of soul is God's barometer, which shows me very clearly the shortcomings, sins, and problems that arise in my life.

God did not intend a happy and blessed life for a sinner who is unwilling to change his condition. Sin brings the soul painful suffering and pangs of conscience; a person loses peace and begins searching for a way out.

The enemy of souls has many counterfeits and substitutes in his arsenal. They closely resemble the original and can even provide temporary comfort and pleasure: relaxation techniques, alcohol, drugs, sex, extreme experiences, medication, and the pursuit of supernatural knowledge. But these things draw the soul into slavery to sin and make it dependent upon Satan's services. As a result, a person begins to suffer mental disorders, illness, and anguish. Many come to realize that such a life is unbearably hard and decide to end it forever.

But God has a plan to bring the soul back to pure springs and to perfect peace, in which a person finds true happiness.

The peace of God is the result of my relationship with God; it is a reward from the Lord for my labor. It is an adornment of my life that I alone can behold. No one but me can fully understand and appreciate peace with God, because it is my personal, inward participation in God's plan for my salvation.

A peacemaker is someone who creates peace in his own heart, in his home, and among those around him. He does not settle down or give up until he reaches his intended goal. Knowing God and having a personal relationship with Him give me the right to possess God's peace, which produces rest within me and gives me the authority and wisdom to tell others how this state may be attained and Who gives this blessedness to the soul.

God is called our Heavenly Father, and by this He helps me understand that I am His son, that I am not a stranger to Him but His own child, for whom He cares with the love of a tender Parent. The Lord also compares Himself to a mother, saying that He is better, more faithful, more tender, and will never forsake His children. Such knowledge gives me confidence that I am under special protection and in the safest of hands. My security depends less on how firmly I hold on to God and His hand than on how firmly He holds me.

My strength may fail, my faith may waver, and my interests may change, but God’s faithfulness remains constant, and His love for me is unchanging.

As a result of wrong decisions or actions, I lose peace in my heart, because the Lord does not want me to be at peace with Him while I am following the wrong path. This is His way of influencing my conscience and communicating with my mind. But if my conscience becomes hardened, my ears cease to hear this Voice, and I become satisfied with a counterfeit.

Satan has mastered the art of replacing true values with false ones. He even uses religious experiences to give temporary comfort to deceived souls. But if God’s law, written by God’s hand, is not in a person’s heart, there can be no true peace. The soul is in opposition to Christ and will never be able to win that battle.

A victor’s peace is a familiar arrangement in society in which the winning side establishes its own order and laws and maintains them through superiority and force, dictating its will to the defeated side.

God could very quickly overcome all His enemies and impose His rules and order upon them. But love employs a different approach: when it conquers the heart, it gives that heart freedom to choose and decide, offering itself and its advantages.

Peace with God and peace in the heart are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Together with the other qualities of God’s grace, this fruit shapes my inward character and brings true blessedness

to the soul. Unlike the other bricks of happiness, which I can produce through my decisions, choices, and actions, the material called ‘I am a peacemaker’ is the result of all the other components being present in my structure. It cannot rest peacefully in its place within my walls if a breach has appeared in them. It immediately sounds the alarm and signals that trouble has come, that a deadly danger to my happiness has arisen, and that another spirit has entered the house. When I examine my heart deeply, I quickly find the cause and, with God’s help, correct the problem.

I am a peacemaker. This is a character formed in God’s image, and its result is order in my house, because everything is brought into harmony with the will of the Most High and into accord with His expectations.

The enemy of souls has distorted this name by applying it to those who, armed with weapons or the authority to destroy, are ready to eliminate anyone who intensifies a conflict or disturbs the peace. Those are not the people meant here.

God’s peacemaker is one who lives at peace with God and studies His will in order to make it part of his being, adorn his life with it, fill his free time with it, and share this light with others. This is oil for the lamp in the last days, which will sustain the light and keep it from going out.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Psalm 119:165; Matthew 5:9; Philippians 4:6–7; Colossians 3:14–15; John 14:27; Galatians 5:22–23; Isaiah 48:18–19; 57:19–21; Psalm 34:14; 37:11; 85:10; 132:6–9; Romans 15:13, 33; 1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Chapter 51

In Psalm 119:165 we read: ‘Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them.’

The Word of God tells us a great deal about God’s peace—how wonderful it is to be in this state of spirit, how to attain it, and Who gives it. To understand what my peace cost God, I need to remember what He did to give me the opportunity to live calmly, believe, and deal with the pressing matters of life. In order for things to be well with me, God allowed things to become terrible for Himself—so terrible that nothing worse could be imagined.

The presence of God’s peace was part of the plan of my salvation, and it was the strongest evidence that I have peace with God.

The finest example of this peace was the life of Jesus. As I observe the Savior’s conduct, I marvel at how calmly He behaved in critical situations, when dealing with evil people and facing Satan’s furious attacks.

When Christ had to confront people possessed by Satan—the two demoniacs who terrified the entire region—He met them without fear, cast the demons out of these tormented souls with a simple command, and told them to relate what the Lord had done for them. Because of their lawlessness, these people, tormented by Satan, had reached the very bottom of the dark abyss of sin, from which there was no return; for a person who has lost his mind and fallen under the power of demons can no longer help himself. But their encounter with Christ changed the destiny of these unfortunate men, and they found God’s peace. They sat calmly at the feet of their Deliverer and listened to His every word. Both were ready to follow Christ and become His most faithful disciples, but He commanded them to become His witnesses and tell everyone about the miracle that had taken place. The people of that region, overcome with fear, asked Jesus to leave, and He did. Yet they could not drive away their two countrymen, who had once kept the whole region in

fear. They listened with interest to these two witnesses of God's power, and later they gladly received Christ and brought all their sick to Him for healing.

Wherever Jesus went, God's peace appeared as well. Troubled hearts found healing from fear and various diseases. Jesus healed bodies and souls. He forgave people's sins. He gave the Bread of Life, which He Himself was.

Very often, while in mortal danger, the Lord moved boldly forward and never lost His self-control. He always treated His bitter enemies with respect and never insulted them in return. He did not display the spirit that characterized them. Christ's perfect love drove every misunderstanding and doubt from the hearts of those who associated with Him and desired to know the truth. Christ did not turn away those who came to Him with questions or personal needs.

For every person, the Lord had something that brought joy and peace to the soul.

Oh, how many unhappy souls are now rushing about in search of this Heavenly peace and are ready to give everything to find rest, yet they seek counsel from Satan, who offers them anything except the True Source of peace and love. But some of these deceived people hear about Jesus and decide to turn to Him for salvation and help. And they receive what they ask for. God's peace heals their weary souls.

Peace with God is what friendship with Jesus gives. It is part of the Plan of Salvation and healing, and it is what every person needs.

Overindulgence and idleness will not give rest to the soul; they will lead it to despondency and emptiness. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life will not satisfy a person or give him peace; instead, they will plunge his heart into the darkness of despair and hopelessness. No one but Christ can help him escape from there. Satan can offer his prisoners only a different cell in his prison and a chance to destroy themselves in another sphere of life. The whole world chooses this fate and then blames God for all its suffering and for the suffering of its

children. But God offers His Plan, and He is ready to save everyone who turns to Him.

There was an occasion in the life of Jesus when, after a hard day's work, He and His disciples needed to cross a lake. Jesus lay down in the boat and peacefully fell asleep, entrusting His life to the Father. Satan decided to sink the vessel and stirred up a storm. The boat was tossed from side to side, the disciples were terrified, and when the vessel began taking on water, they realized that death was inevitable. Then they remembered Jesus, Who was sleeping serenely. They woke Him and began lamenting their fate. The Lord quickly assessed the situation and commanded the wind and waves to be still. God's peace came—first to nature, and then to the hearts of the disciples. And they asked one another: 'What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!' (Matthew 8:27). Nature knows the voice of its Master and obeys Him, growing calm at His command. And the One Who calms storms at sea is also able to calm human passions.

God's peace is beautiful because everyone who comes to possess it begins to change for the better. A soul that has come under the influence of God's Spirit grows calm amid the turmoil and is ready to learn whatever establishes it in God's peace and does not deprive it of this condition.

I have often noticed situations that threw me off balance and brought anxiety into my life. But when I began giving these cares to Christ and following the example of my Savior, trying not to lose self-control and to remain calm, everything was resolved in a completely different way, and eventually the temptations themselves stopped occurring.

Being adventurous by nature, I was constantly seeking excitement and suffered greatly because of it, for the world and its laws are stronger than I am, and the consequences followed close behind me. Wherever I appeared, problems began. But Jesus met me and drew me to Himself, teaching me not to take part in the works of darkness.

At first, I tried to bring my rebellious spirit into the church as well, and my conduct discouraged many fellow believers. Some still avoid me, but there were also those who treated me with love and continue to rejoice in my changes and victories in Jesus.

When, in response to this revolutionary's thirst for change, God gave me His love, I realized that I had found the most precious treasure, which brought peace into my heart. And I began to study this gift of Heaven.

I see that this same peace in Agape love, which became available to me through my testimonies about God's love, is being passed on to other people as well. This brings such joy that I want to dig even deeper and give even more.

Those who meet me now see the product of God's grace and think that I have always been this way. I do not disappoint them; I give them God's love as best I can. But I know who I was and through Whom I have changed. Therefore, I work out my salvation with fear and trembling and carefully carry my heart like a fragile vase, so that I will not stumble and break it. Yet I am comforted by the knowledge that if I fall now, I fall into Christ's hand or into the ocean of God's love. These falls do not destroy my life, but teach me that there is still something I need to leave behind and change with God's help. And God's peace fills me. I continually admire it and ceaselessly thank Jesus for everything He is doing with me. It is not that I am so strong in spirit; it is He Who overcomes every evil within me. And this is such happiness!

Bible verses for this chapter:

Luke 2:14; 2 Corinthians 5:17–20; Romans 5:1; 8:5–6; Matthew 10:12–13; Luke 10:5–7; 24:36; John 20:19–22, 26; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; Numbers 6:24–26; Proverbs 17:1

Chapter 52

‘Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted’ (Matthew 5:4).

How do you picture the happiest person in the world? Perhaps you imagine a constant smile, delight in life, joy seeking an outlet, irrepressible initiative continually inventing something, and an inexplicable love flowing in waves from that person’s presence. You are picturing it correctly. All of this will be part of life in Heaven. But what does a happy person look like in our time? I think our ideas about Eternity and our earthly reality will differ noticeably from one another. Sometimes the deep, visible expression of happiness can be discerned only by those who come into close contact with a blessed person and understand that he has a very solid foundation, strong walls, and firm principles, while also being very kind in conversation and gentle in his treatment of others. Happy people do no harm to those around them; instead, they bring a little piece of Heaven into our lives.

Even if you become the happiest person in the world and the sun of joy shines constantly in your heart and home, always remember that the world around us was not made for such people. A world in which innocent people lose their lives, children become ill and die, selfishness, malice, envy, and pride rule human hearts, and sin reigns will never be home to happy and redeemed people. We are surrounded on every side by grief, pain, and suffering. Living amid these things, we experience their influence, struggle, search, and find something better.

And that something better is the Kingdom of Heaven within us —a Kingdom whose King is Jesus.

As we live in this perishable world by faith in God and His salvation, we come under special protection and learn to walk a better path governed by better laws. This lifts us above the world and its vanity. Yet the cares of life weigh us down,

constant spiritual strain wearies us, age wears away our strength, and the effects of our battles make themselves felt.

No matter how strong and steadfast we may be in faith, God sometimes allows tears into our lives: tears of joy, tears of sorrow, tears of suffering, tears that come from recognizing our weakness and helplessness, tears of tender emotion, and simply tears brought by a sense of God’s special presence.

It is impossible to live amid this unceasing struggle and never weep. Through such tears shed by His beloved children, our loving Lord gives them special comfort. Their tears carry away the inward strain, and peace comes. God wipes away our tears and weeps with us, knowing how hard life can be for us. His sufferings for us are as much greater than ours as He is greater than we are. And He is to us as a loving Father.

When all the redeemed stand before the great I AM, tears of joy and gratitude will flow down their cheeks. On their radiant faces, their tears and memories of past battles, victories, sorrows, and privations will testify that they know the price of their salvation and will carry that knowledge throughout Eternity.

When the redeemed look around, hoping to see those whom they loved—the faces of those for whom they prayed and those to whom they bore witness of Eternal Love—and do not find them among the saved, tears of indescribable grief will flow from their eyes. The Lord will comfort them and wipe away every tear. There will be no more weeping, sorrow, or crying. Each person made his own choice and received what he chose.

And God will be their God.

Blessed are those who mourn in the Lord.

But do not become absorbed in this blessedness. Let it be the exception rather than the constant rule.

I know a sister who believed that it was her duty before God to cry every day over anything at all. I spoke with her and persuaded her that this was not right, and now she rejoices and smiles at all times.

If I weep often, especially in public, I will not be able to convince others that this is the path to happiness. Let my tears be a welcome and long-awaited comfort to me rather than a way of life. This is something intimate between my Savior and me. It is something that belongs only to my Lord and me.

At times I have had special spiritual experiences when something extraordinary touched me and tears flowed down my cheeks. They were not tears of joy, delight, pain, or suffering. Instead, it felt as though an extremely heavy burden that had constantly oppressed me was being lifted, and my heart became very light and clean. In these rare experiences, I understood how beneficial it can sometimes be to weep simply to release the inward strain under which my whole life passes. Yet I cannot make myself cry, nor do I know how. It has always interested me to see how easily women can do this, and in this they have an emotional advantage. Sometimes I even pray that God will give me tears and lead me into a state of mourning so that through it I may lay down the burden of cares and anxieties that, one way or another, clings to my heart. When this happens, such blessedness and peace with God come over my soul. At such a time, I want to tell God everything so that He will take it all away. Such gratitude for God's care and mercy then arises, along with such joy over a clean heart, that my lips praise God of their own accord and sing a song of victory.

But we should not bring a material called 'I weep' into our little house of happiness. It is not so much a brick of happiness as a cleansing agent that should sometimes be used on the interior to give the whole structure a special brilliance and purity. We greatly need this cleansing agent during earthly life, and it will serve us once more at the very beginning of Eternity, helping us endure the pain of losing forever those whom we loved, for whom we prayed, and with whom our lives and destinies were intertwined—those who could have been with us in Eternity but did not want to be, or who were deceived and did not see the light. At Christ's Second Coming, when all the righteous are raised, I will search with my eyes for the earthly soul closest to me. If I do not find that face among the redeemed, indescribable pain will pierce my heart and tears of utter

despair will pour from my eyes. The sorrow will be so bitter. I will see that I am not alone—that every redeemed person will fail to meet someone and will discover someone missing. Our joy will turn to bitter sobbing. We will all weep for the last time as we bid farewell forever to everyone who rejected salvation. Jesus Himself and all the good angels will weep with us over those whom they loved so deeply and for whom they did everything possible, yet whom they could not compel to accept salvation. How painful it will be for all of us to realize that these souls will never receive what God gives in Jesus.

But this weeping too will subside, and the Lord will wipe away every tear. Jesus will speak kind words of comfort, encouragement, and joy to us. Once again, the full power of Heaven’s triumph will descend upon all the redeemed, never to leave them again. A song of glory and praise to our Savior will flow naturally from the pure lips of the righteous and will never fall silent throughout all Eternity.

Then with our own eyes we will see and understand what it means that God is Love. This will be the most beautiful reality, continually delighting us through its endless discoveries and revelations. There will be no more death or sorrow.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 5:4; Luke 6:21; 7:12–13, 37–38; Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 7:29–31; Isaiah 38:2–6; Psalm 30:5; 42:3; 56:8; 84:6; 126:6; Ecclesiastes 7:2–4; John 11:35; Luke 19:41; Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:4

Chapter 53

Blessed are the happy, for they shall remain happy.

When I tell strangers that I am happy, I see them begin to examine me with great suspicion, inwardly considering me an impostor. They have every right to do so. But when we begin to talk about this subject and get to know one another better, and I have an opportunity to share my knowledge and experience of a happy life, people begin to believe that it is possible to be happy. They try it, and it works.

The next brick for our little house of happiness is called ‘I am happy.’ Yes, that is exactly what it says. It is like a large sign on my house, telling other people what kind of structure it is and what is taking place inside. I believe that the wonderful processes occurring in my life and mind are worth speaking about. They need to be made known. Light from God is sent to illuminate everything around it, and happiness within that radiance is given so that we may live in blessedness.

It is important to note that the word ‘I’ must be present in this brick so that people will understand that what is happening is not a process of evolution, but the natural result of God’s sovereign plans finding a response in my heart.

Knowledge, understanding, application, enjoyment, and my decision to live by all the laws of happiness together lead me to become a happy person. I am not afraid to be one. This is a challenge to the world. The world could not tolerate the fact that I love, and my friendliness greatly angered it. But when I declared that I was happy despite every evil influence and everything around me, Satan’s fury knew no bounds. He has not merely lost me forever; he also understands that I will lead many of his captives to cling to Jesus and receive freedom. The world accepts this challenge and attacks happy people, but darkness cannot prevent light from shining. It simply does not have enough darkness to do so.

At times I am serious and thoughtful. Sometimes I find myself under the pressure of everyday cares, and very often—

especially during trials—I do not smile. Yet this outward expression does not change the laws written in my heart, and my love is always with me, ready to act whenever an opportunity arises.

Tell me, how do you keep God’s commandments? Do you carry a list of these commands and promises with you and constantly compare what is written with what is happening in your life? Or, as you study these principles of God’s will, do you allow God to write them on your heart with His finger? When this writing takes place, the heart begins to experience peace and to guide my conduct in the light of God’s law engraved upon my thoughts.

Being happy is present truth, and God desires to write it on my heart with His finger as well. The heart is my thoughts and feelings, which together express my will and constitute my character. The formation of my character is the most important task that God Himself has set before me.

As I study the laws of happiness, I do not memorize them immediately; rather, I continually return to learning them as I grasp their depth. In order for them to become mine, I give God the right to place them in my mind and then establish me in their practical application and testing.

Every field of study teaches me the purpose for which it was developed. This is one of its defining qualities. For example, if I decide to become an electrician and first enroll in a vocational school and then at a university in this field, if I study it meticulously while also receiving practical training, I am confident that after completing such an education and passing the examinations, I will become an electrician and possess the mind of an electrician. My practical skills, combined with the knowledge I have gained, will establish me in my profession. I will become a specialist in this field and may even be entrusted with teaching others.

This can be achieved in any field of study.

When I tell others that I am an electrician, they immediately entrust complex projects to me and expect me to solve difficult problems and repair various faults.

If an accident occurs and something stops working, I do not run to builders or police officers, hoping to repair the fault by applying their fields of knowledge. Instead, I recall all the principles of electrical engineering and begin tracing the entire chain of relationships among these rules until I find the damage or malfunction. Once I discover the cause, I repair the fault. I do not consult my school textbooks to understand how what is written corresponds to reality. All this knowledge is in my heart, and I have a feel for my work because I possess the mind and heart of an electrician. Everything has already been placed within me.

The science of happiness, love, and friendship works in the same way. It is worth studying, reviewing, and rereading, because this material is very complex and at the same time simple to learn. It has limitless depth, which I can continue to explore independently through practical life.

In the course of learning, what initially seemed great and unattainable, unknown and difficult, becomes mine. I reveal the laws of happiness to you and explain how they work in my life; then we read about them in the Bible. Afterward, I ask what you have understood and pose questions so that, by processing this knowledge personally and expressing it, you may allow the Holy Spirit to establish what you have learned in your mind. Once knowledge has been received, the practical application of the theory begins with those close to you. Prayers for your life to be changed according to the light you have received give God authority to write the laws of love, happiness, and friendship upon your heart. You then become a living textbook of the Heavenly sciences you have studied, and God entrusts new students to you with whom you can share your knowledge and experience. You have something to tell them, because you possess a loving heart, the mind of a happy person, and a friendly spirit. These qualities of the soul cannot be counterfeited. Either they are present, or they must be learned.

A prayer of faith and longing is very helpful in the learning process. In it I express my desires and plans, share my experiences and difficulties, give God authority to act in my life and change my mind by writing the laws of love upon my heart, become established in the truth, and experience many other things. My prayer moves the hand of God by opening every door and window of my soul before Him.

‘I am happy’ is not merely a phrase, but the condition and disposition of my mind. This is how I live and think. This is how God desires to see me, and this is what Jesus taught throughout Scripture. Why should I remain silent about it?

If a comedian stands onstage, smiles, and declares that he is happy, everyone believes him and applauds. They want to imitate him, even though it is a counterfeit and a soap bubble. Yet this is exactly what many people want. But when a Christian declares that he is happy because the Bible teaches it and because he lives this way, people regard him as abnormal—for happy Christians do not exist, and the very idea sounds like fantasy. Even when every proof of happiness is presented, people still wait for a mistake so that they can point a finger and loudly proclaim, ‘You see! I told you that you were a liar and that such a thing was impossible!’

But happiness exists, and I am happy. It is true, it is from God, and on this I stand.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Hebrews 8:10–12; Revelation 22:14–15; Romans 10:9–10; 11:32–33; 12:1–2; Matthew 5:39–48; Revelation 12:11–12, 17; 19:10; 21:6–7; 22:8–12; 1 John 3:11; Psalm 42:1–2

Chapter 54

To understand and appreciate the full importance and power of our happiness, we should understand what it cost God and how important it is to accept this gift of Heaven in order to live continually in such a state.

As soon as a small seed of sin arose in Heaven, God already knew where it would lead the universe and what price would have to be paid to destroy the evil that had appeared forever. It could not be done immediately; sin had to develop and reveal its true nature to every inhabitant of Heaven. How a malicious rebellion arose in the purity of Heaven is a mystery, but it happened. God created free beings who could choose. Anxiety and suspicion replaced universal happiness. God's family divided into opposing sides. During the conflict in Heaven, the Earth and its beautiful inhabitants were created. They fell under Satan's spell and thus joined the rebellion. To restore His deceived creation to a happy life, God had to pay a very high price. Now all Heaven is interested in those who show an interest in God's plan for a happy life, which has its own rules and laws. Happiness is not given freely to people who do not even try to understand its true cost. To be happy in the sight of Heaven is a very great responsibility and an extraordinarily high trust that God places in everyone who begins to show a living interest in and longing for what is better and pure.

The Bible contains an interesting warning in Deuteronomy 29:18–20: 'Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall

lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.'

Therefore, I consider it important to point out the following. If someone considers himself happy, decides to be happy, and calls himself happy, his life must meet all the criteria of the laws of blessedness that God has revealed in the Bible and that we find and study in our school. If the heart has no connection with God and is filled with lawlessness, I feel sorry for such people, even if they consider themselves happy. Although judgment upon evil deeds is not executed speedily, when God gives a warning or command, He watches to see that it is carried out and expects obedience.

To be happy is blessedness; to call oneself happy is a risk.

As I read the Word of God, I wanted to know what it says about human happiness, and I saw myself in it. I am glad that this narrow path on which the Lord has called me to walk is my path and my personal choice. I see that, living this way, I am happy in Christ Jesus. The Bible affirms that all who enter the narrow path will be blessed. Even in death they are called blessed.

But if we look up the word 'happiness' in a concordance, it appears very few times—only thirteen. What other word speaks of biblical happiness? What is it? Blessedness. It appears ninety-nine times. I looked in Wikipedia, where it is briefly described as happiness—a state of goodness and enjoyment. Even the world understands blessedness as happiness. And the Bible has much to say about such a state of mind.

I decided to look at pictures on this subject, and the world understands blessedness in its own way. There are idyllic scenes of nature in shades of pink and blue, tranquility, clear waters, and sunshine. There are also images in which, against the background of these landscapes, naked women are depicted for some reason, their nude bodies combined with the beauty of nature. Or you may see a naked man and woman embracing. One gets the impression that the world imagines blessedness as sand, palm trees, a calm sea, a carefree life, sex between beautiful people, exquisite food, fashionable things, beautiful

homes, and cars. And all this requires money—the more, the better. This is blessedness to the world. And a person lying on the shore amid such pleasures is blessed. He is truly ‘happy.’ But is he really?

I remember a family vacation by the sea many years ago. I lay on the sand, but I had no peace in my heart. My eyes looked at naked bodies, and impure thoughts entered my mind. The cares that had not gone anywhere and promised to continue after the vacation weighed upon me, while the money we had saved throughout the year was rapidly running out. Yet the position of my body fit the world’s idea of blessedness. At one point I realized that all of it was vanity and utter emptiness.

If someone asked me to paint a picture portraying true blessedness in Christ Jesus, what would it look like? I think it would be a picture in which, against a background of bloodshed, sickness, suffering, grief, misfortune, deception, and lies, there sits a person who has peace in his heart and peace with God, and whose will rests in obedience to God’s laws. This is how I see happiness. Happiness is God’s gift to His children. It is a reward for obedience and friendship with God. And my answer is, ‘Yes, Lord!’

Darkness and every kind of passion may surround us. We ourselves may be sick or surrounded by unhealthy people. We may be burdened with cares and anxiety, lose money, lose our health, and grow gray from these worries, yet within we are happy because we have found a quiet haven in Christ Jesus. Only in His hand do we truly find rest. He alone is the true Source and Originator of genuine blessedness.

I also came to understand that happiness, or blessedness, is not a generally accepted state reserved for people who are fortunate or favored by fate. It is my desire to be this way and my movement in this direction, guided by the right landmarks. It is my personal choice to become this way as I learn. I decide how I will live and respond to each event. I have the right not to allow others to decide for me how I should regard people who want to spoil my mood.

The world offers many counterfeits of blessedness, but true happiness leads me to God the Father, Who gave His Son so that, believing in Him, I might have Eternal life in Eternal blessedness. Today this may sound vulgar, because to a worldly person a longing for blessedness sounds like a craving for a high, an artificial state of nirvana, or an escape from this world. But God's blessedness means being continually occupied with good deeds, planning the happiness of others, studying the laws of the universe, bringing all one's ideas and projects to life, gaining a deep knowledge of God and His Son, enjoying friendly fellowship with all the saints, and doing many, many other things that are deeply interesting and bring joy to the heart. Agape love pays for it all. With every new day of Eternity, it will overflow your mind and seek an outlet for its next investment. Such a life begins here and now. Why, then, do we approach it so cautiously? Why must we be persuaded to be happy? Why is there no line of people waiting to come to God? Yet it is available.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Deuteronomy 33:29; Job 5:17; Psalm 1:1–3; 32:1–2; 33:12; 34:8; 40:4; 41:1; 84:4, 12; 89:15; 106:3; 112:1; 119:1–3; 128:1–2; 144:15

Chapter 55

Do my thoughts and feelings have power? Yes, they influence my will and shape my character according to what I think about, what I feel, and what I behold. Yet the people around me may not even realize that something meaningful or interesting is taking place in my heart. I may come to a gathering filled with inspiration from above and shining like a sunflower, but no one will learn anything about me or what moves me if I remain resolutely silent and share nothing.

But when I open my mouth and begin to share the good news, my words can exert a tremendous influence on the lives and minds of other people.

The enemy of souls knows the persuasive power of words, and he never tires of sowing doubt and unbelief in the hearts of naive and unwary people. For his purposes, Satan uses those who have not accepted God's plan for their salvation, or believers who have entered enemy territory and tasted the forbidden fruit.

My words have persuasive power when spiritual power is added to them. But which spirit will give authority to what is said is decided by my heart, which chooses who will become my spiritual husband and lord. I choose Christ.

The next brick in the house of happiness is called 'I share the good news.' In recent years, thanks to the Internet, many people have appeared who want to share their knowledge, worldview, and experience with others—or simply talk about whatever comes to mind. Each of them has an audience and followers, and all of these people come under the influence of the words they hear or read. Yet behind all words stand two spirits and two powers that oppose one another and pursue different goals.

Evangelism is the sharing of information that reveals different aspects of God's plan of Salvation and is good news to those who hear it. Evangelism may be personal or public and may be informational in nature. It may edify, comfort, strengthen,

teach, persuade people of the truth, or reveal what was previously unknown. When it is supported by influence from above, it possesses a special creative power and can bring change to the minds and lives of those who listen.

Let us consider our School as an example. Is there someone in it who shares the good news? I think there is. Do you think this person is happy in what he does? I believe he is very happy. What spirit leads the person who writes these lessons for you? This can easily be determined by the fruit that what you study produces in you. I believe that God's Spirit directs our entire learning process.

Would you have learned anything useful if this brother had not shared with you the good news that gladdens and fills his heart? I do not think he is the only person in the world through whom knowledge is given. But when a heart is open to God and longs to share its blessings with others, God begins to use that soul and work through it.

In the phrase 'I share the good news,' the connection between both parts is very important: the human factor—my participation—and the good news, which is given and revealed by the Holy Spirit. When the human and the Divine are united, the words spoken or written by the hand of a believer are strengthened by the Holy Spirit and possess convincing power that establishes people in the truth, even after time passes and that person dies. The best example of this is the Bible. All who wrote it, except Moses, have fallen asleep in the Lord, but their words continue to turn souls to Christ to this day.

And what is the purpose of this School? We can only suppose that, in the future, someone may also study our lessons and that his life will become better. But today we have what we have, and this already brings joy.

I share the good news. What happiness it is to be God's herald, to share His light, to speak about love and blessedness, to see and hear the influence your words have, and to be a little paintbrush in God's hands, allowing Him to paint in the hearts of your friends beautiful landscapes of the Eternal Homeland

with its unshakable laws of love and happiness. This truly brings blessedness into life and gladdens the heart.

In recent years, an abundance of different messages has filled the airwaves. We are simply overwhelmed with all kinds of information, and its excess causes many people to become weary and repulsed. When I become merely a conduit for someone else's ideas by sharing a link or a good quotation, I do not receive the same satisfaction and joy from evangelism as I do when I study the message deeply, make it a part of my life, and personally explain to others the essence of what I have understood and accepted. Otherwise, my heart remains without the fruit of happiness.

I receive many messages every day. I immediately look at the content and quickly determine whether it is a personal message or something sent out to many people. It is such a joy to hear living words spoken especially for you and to read a letter written to you from the heart. All these personal letters have an influence. This, too, is personal evangelism.

Our lessons are public evangelism and are written for a broad audience. No matter how interesting they may be or how much love is invested in them, they do not contain the same deep warmth of heart that can be given only through personal conversation or a personal message. But those who wish to learn or hear something always have the opportunity to receive something meant especially for them.

Every one of you, my friends, is God's messenger of the good news. The Lord begins to work through your words and letters when you open your mouth or begin to write. A part of your heart mingles with Heavenly truths and is passed on to another person to become a seed, water for a seed already sown, a tool that prunes away what is unnecessary, or kind hands that gather good fruit. All of this is in your hands and in your words.

God always uses people who entrust their lives and wills to Him and who desire to multiply God's talents so that they may return to their Master the riches entrusted to their souls, together with a profit. God will ask each of us to give an

account of what we have done with the talents and opportunities we received.

When I share someone else's experiences or revelations, that information may do good, people may change, and they may find solutions to their problems, but I remain without profit. However, if I have learned a lesson from another person's experience or revelation, passed it through my own heart, tested it in my life, and then given it to others, my own heart begins to tremble with happiness, because I am sharing the good news.

If the Apostle Paul had decided only to make sturdy tents of such quality that everyone admired his work, what benefit would that have brought us? I do not think we would even know his name. But he chose the better path and, while working with his hands, continued to share the good news.

I enjoy building, and I can show you photographs of what I do, but that will not change your life. However, if I reveal to you what God is doing in my life and on my construction sites, that testimony will have a certain measure of success in influencing your life as well. But if you have no interest in me and all my work of evangelism is empty to you, then I think that even God will not be able to help you through me. In that case, all my efforts for others will be in vain, but I will still be happy.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 John 1:1–5; 1 Corinthians 9:16–18; 1 Chronicles 16:23; Psalm 96:1–3; Isaiah 40:9–10; 52:7–8; 61:1–3; Nahum 1:15; Acts 5:42; 8:4, 12, 35, 40; 2 Corinthians 4:3–7; Luke 12:42–44

Chapter 56

Do you enjoy sharing with others the light and knowledge of God that you receive? Have you ever wondered why you have such a strong desire to pass on everything good that comes from the Lord or reveals the beauty of God's character? Why does the heart long to know God more closely and then tell other people about Him? Jesus Himself taught us that it is impossible to hide a burning lamp—and that we should not do so.

As we observe the life of Christ, we see that after His baptism and His trials in the wilderness of temptation, He labored tirelessly for this world and did everything possible for the good of humanity. When the disciples joined the Lord, He first gave them His personal example, and then He began sending them out ahead of Him.

Read Luke 8:1: 'And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him.'

We read further in Luke 9:1: 'Then He called His twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.'

And also in Luke 10:1: 'After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself would come.'

In these verses, we see how the movement of evangelists grew. Jesus understood the importance of evangelism and taught that light must be received and intentionally shared, for this brings joy to the soul and fills life with the awareness of something very good—something that brings happiness.

What does an evangelist experience? He has found the Living Source of Eternal blessings, and as he partakes of the Water of Life and Heavenly Manna, he experiences the greatest blessedness. And this is only the beginning. The heart is set

aflame by God, Who is an Unquenchable Fire in the soul, and it becomes simply impossible not to shine. How can you hide the joy of Salvation when you understand that you are free, that you are forgiven, that you are accepted by God, and that this makes you shine with happiness?

When Jesus began His ministry to the world, these words were on His lips. We read in Mark 1:15: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.’

‘The time is fulfilled’ points to the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning His First Coming.

The Kingdom of God is the Land of Happiness whose laws we study in this School. Repentance and belief in the gospel are the conditions for obtaining citizenship in this Land, which is within us.

And the message of repentance remains relevant in our day.

The One Who knows the end from the beginning declares that we are lukewarm and miserable and offers us a way out of such a condition. He comes Himself to help us and teach us the laws of a happy life in His Land of Blessedness.

Jesus could not remain silent about what brings joy into life. His works testified to God’s power, which becomes the possession of those who repent and believe the gospel.

From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus knew why He had come and what the salvation of humanity would cost Him, but He boldly moved toward that decision and made no attempt to change anything in God’s plan.

Agape love is the result of my personal relationship with Jesus and my desire to be like Him. It is not merely a set of new feelings and experiences; it is Christ endowing me with His character, creating a new mind within me, placing a new heart in me, and producing new feelings in me. Jesus gives me the mindset of a righteous person. In the light of love, all the teachings of Christ become dear and understandable to me. And the same desire that Jesus had—to share the good news with other people—moves me at all times.

Every person whom God brings into my life has unique qualities, and I must always take them into account. A method of evangelism and an expression of love that are suitable for one person may be unacceptable to another. Love senses this.

Love sees everything and understands whom it is dealing with, but it is obedient to the person in whom it dwells. It waits for the permission of my will before revealing itself to the world. Love takes my desires and abilities into account and does not judge me if I have irretrievably missed an opportunity or failed to tell someone something. Not every seed that is sown sprouts or falls on good ground, but this does not stop us. The work continues.

We know from Bible prophecy that the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 are now being proclaimed. God will entrust the proclamation of this message to those who are bound to Him by strong ties of love and deep knowledge of Him. Anyone can speak this message, but only someone who is led by the Holy Spirit and has a new heart overflowing with love will be able to convey its spirit to the world and persuade a sinner to reconsider his life and repent. Although these messages sound like a sentence of judgment, they also carry the hope that repentance and conversion are still possible. And, of course, they are addressed first of all to God's children who have become lost in the labyrinths of allurements and temptations, becoming miserable and lukewarm in their failure to understand what is happening. They need evangelists who have found the way out and come alive—people who have studied the laws of happiness and invited Christ in by opening their hearts to Him.

For the Savior, there is no greater joy than sharing supper with those who have received Him and, with Him, have acquired all the riches of Heaven—those who have become happy and desire to share this happiness with others. This delights Jesus so greatly that, in the outpouring of His joy, He promises to seat these witnesses of God beside Him on His throne. Satan could not have imagined a worse testimony against himself. He lost Heaven because he desired to sit upon that throne, yet here

this authority is offered to mere sinful human beings if they accept what is offered to them for victory in the last days. Burning with anger and envy, the enemy of souls, like a roaring lion, seeks to keep this light from us and fill our minds with anything at all, as long as we do not receive the oil for our lamps that the Lord counsels us to buy.

But God's evangelists easily overturn all of Satan's plans and plant the banner of truth and love wherever their feet tread. And the Lord calls the feet of these people beautiful.

I share the good news. This is the brick in my building that brings me joy now and, throughout Eternity, will move me to tell all the inhabitants of Heaven how good the Lord is, how wonderful He is, and how many fascinating things are revealed in Him with every Eternal day. The beginning of such evangelism is here and now. There will be no better day for sharing the good news than today. And happiness is mine if I share the good news.

Through His life, Jesus revealed God's character to us. He was a faithful Witness of what the Heavenly Father is like and how He relates to people. The entire life of Christ was a life of love, mercy, and truth. By His example, the Lord revealed to us the path to follow, the path to Salvation, and the path to being established in the truth.

As I look at the life of Christ, I understand that if God the Father had been born into our world, He would have lived His life in exactly the same way as the Son of Man lived His. And I rejoice that the Heavenly Father is just as tender, loving, and friendly as Jesus, even though the enemy of souls is always trying to distort this understanding.

And it brings me joy, having love, to share the good news about love, about the One Who is love, and about the victory of God's love. For our testimony is also a victory—one that makes us a special people and brings happiness.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 John 3:11; Revelation 10:7; 14:8; Luke 4:16–19, 43; 9:59–60; 16:16; Romans 10:14–17; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 4:15; 9:13–18; Galatians 1:6–12; Ephesians 1:13–14; 6:13–17; Philippians 1:27; 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:8

Chapter 57

The first followers of Christ were called disciples. Disciples in those days differed from what we understand by that word today. The standards for teachers and students in the culture of Israel were very high. A teacher had to meet particular, generally accepted criteria. He could not be younger than a certain age, and he was expected to have an appropriate social standing. John the Baptist and Jesus did not fit these expectations, which continually displeased the religious leaders of that time. Yet their popularity among the people restrained those in power, and the religious leaders had to look for errors in the very words of Jesus and John in order to bring charges against them. Nevertheless, both Christ and His forerunner had disciples who desired to learn more and to delve into the mysteries of knowing God that were accessible to their teachers.

It was customary for disciples to live with their teacher and sit at his feet while he shared his knowledge and revelations with them.

Many people called Christ Himself ‘Rabbi,’ which means ‘Teacher.’ This process contains a special Divine providence and a truth for our time. Even today, God desires to have disciples with whom He can share great and mighty things that we do not know.

The next brick in my house of happiness is called ‘I learn.’ This status must belong to me personally and be my voluntary decision and choice. It may be the desire of my heart or my response to God’s call.

The School of Christ did not close with His death; instead, it acquired an Eternal status with an Eternal curriculum about how enduring laws can interact with earthly values and ideas about life. It offers a firm, stable foundation of faith in God that extends into every sphere of human activity.

We are not born into this world with knowledge of earthly existence already placed within us. From the very first day of

life, we begin to discover the world around us and to study its laws and the principles governing the interaction of the spiritual and the material. Our parents give us our native language and instill in us the culture of relationships and the pattern of behavior accepted in their own lives. And as we learn about this world, we learn everything else as well.

In the past, schooling or higher education was available only to certain classes of society, while everyone else was raised to be a labor force. Today, school education is compulsory for every child living in a country.

Education in the School of Christ, however, is voluntary, and success in learning depends directly on my personal relationship with the Heavenly Teacher and on my desire to know Heavenly truths. The Heavenly School is highly diverse in its structure and may be individual or communal, depending on circumstances and opportunities.

Yet whatever form my education in the School of Christ takes, I have the Best Teacher in the entire Universe. He Himself, either directly or through His representatives, teaches me the Heavenly truths that change my life according to God’s requirements and standards. This knowledge brings light and happiness into my life.

Knowing the Only True God and Jesus Christ, Whom He sent, gives me the right to Eternal life and teaches me the laws of Eternity, which I can apply to myself even during my earthly life. The realization that my name is written in the Book of Life fills my heart with indescribable joy.

Without education in the School of Christ, my spiritual growth is impossible. The moment my learning stops, the life support of my spiritual being also stops. Hunger begins, the principles I have received start to break down, and spiritual death follows. Yet the distinctive feature of God’s School is that God knows how to resurrect and restore to life what has died and is perishing. He delights in working with newborn infants who are ready to learn everything and find everything interesting. Those who were born again but later turned away because of unbelief,

temptations, or heresies form a special group of students who receive their own work of rehabilitation and restoration.

Alongside God's School, there is also a school of Satan in our world, and he will stop at nothing. He may call his school a Christian institution and use the name of God to conceal his abominations and false teachings, trying to present them as biblical truth so that, if possible, he might deceive even the elect. He has no objection to creating new denominations and movements and confusing the minds of trusting people with elaborate theological interpretations of his own conjectures.

But God has very clearly defined the standards of discipleship and the boundary between darkness and light. We read in Isaiah 8:20: 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' And God's Spirit shows those who seek and thirst for righteousness what they need to know, and they are filled.

For example, let us consider our School of Agape Love. Who is its Teacher? If you name me, that would be the wrong answer. Although I write these lessons and share my experiences, I do not draw your attention to myself. I am God's instrument through whom the Lord teaches both you and me His Heavenly laws and principles. I make sure that every lesson agrees with biblical truth, sound reason, and the teaching of the church chosen by God to be His instrument in the last days. We study God's law and discover in it the beauty of God's character. The Lord teaches us the principles of happiness, love, and friendship as foundations of Eternal life. As we master this Heavenly science, we live a Heavenly life even here and apply its principles in our earthly experience, overcoming the world's resistance and avoiding its temptations.

I study in the School of Christ, and this is my choice. Agape love is the character of God that becomes mine through the process of learning. And love knows all things. It knows the deep things of God. It can penetrate the Heart of the Most High to reveal to me the beauty of Divine holiness and apply it to my life. My thirst to know God and my desire to learn love and happiness give the Most High the right to reveal to me great and mighty

things about Himself and to make this knowledge a part of my being. Knowing God is the manifestation of His Spirit of love in my daily concerns for those whom I meet and those who live near me. But this education begins with simple truths that become more complex as I grow. At the beginning of my education, I had many mentors and teachers, but in time I come to the point where the Lord Himself, through the Holy Spirit, continues my education in His School, arranging tests and trials of the knowledge I have received. Yet I remain an ordinary person who considers himself a sinner in constant need of the Savior. I have nothing in which to boast except that I love even when loving is impossible. And even this is not mine; it was given to me by Jesus as a gift for Eternal use. Otherwise, I simply would not survive. Love teaches me to know God. Sometimes I think that if God loves me as I love my neighbors, that is wonderful! But God’s love is better than mine, purer and stronger, which means there is much for me to learn. And I am learning, dreaming that one day I will become very much like Jesus in love and will see all people in its light.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 5:1–2; 9:14; 10:1; 23:7–8; Mark 2:18; 4:34; Luke 6:20–21; 14:26–27; John 8:31–32; 13:13–14, 34–35; Isaiah 8:16; 50:4; Proverbs 30:2–3; Galatians 1:11–12; Philippians 4:12

Chapter 58

In this lesson, I will share with you a parable that I wrote a very long time ago, but I would like it to become part of our curriculum as well.

When I ask God to give me love, what do I feel? What happens to me? By and large, nothing. I am still the same, and everyone around me is still the same. What am I expecting? I expect something suddenly to happen and cause me to love everyone. But everything remains as it was. Yet God has heard and answered. He delights in such prayers, and He has a very good school called life. So He places me in the first grade—or, better yet, in the preparatory class—and begins to teach me.

I look at the eighth-grade students and think, 'Why am I not like them?' They seem to love all their enemies, friends, and relatives so easily. I want to do the same, but I do not know what it takes, so I continue to pray. Just in case, I also consider many of the older students hypocrites. But the Teacher continues to instruct me. He surrounds me with angry people. He sends deceivers my way. He permits circumstances in which I fall and get dirty as I interact with different people. I learn that my friends are gossiping about me, and I do not understand how to go on living, yet I still want to learn and ask Him to give me love.

Suddenly, I realize that I am very dirty and that, in this condition, my love for my neighbor will repel him and provoke disgust and ridicule. So I ask for a clean heart, the water of life, and undefiled air. The Teacher takes me to the bathhouse and washes me; then He gives me clean clothes and leads me back to school. And I continue learning.

I observe other people and observe myself. Once again, angry people come, and they all want me to show them Jesus. I tell them that He is in Heaven, but they want to see Him in me. Once again, I fall; once again, I get dirty; and once again, I go to the bathhouse. But the Teacher takes me by the right hand and tells me about His love, about how precious I am to Him,

and about how He helps and instructs me. I begin to notice that, with time, I am becoming calmer, growing less irritable, and seeing something beautiful in my neighbors.

The angry people no longer seem as bad or as dangerous as they once did; now they simply seem unhappy. They desperately long to find a friend who will love them for no reason at all. I am looking for such a friend too. When I find one among the older students, I walk with him until we reach the first crossroads of differing opinions. Then I continue alone in my own direction, while my friend waits and smiles.

I fall, but now I know what to do next. I run to the Teacher, and He instructs and comforts me, then once again takes me to the bathhouse. Afterward, He leads me back to school, where I again see angry people with unkind hearts, but they no longer trouble me. I understand that this is how they defend themselves, for I was once the same way. Now they look rather pitiful to me because they do not attend my school; they only linger nearby. They beat the students and shout at us to show them Jesus. But the older students urge us to pray for these unhappy people and to think about how we can help them recognize the Teacher in my life and how we can show them the way of salvation by our example. I see that many students closely resemble my Teacher; their character and their manner of conduct are the same as His. I feel myself being drawn ever more strongly to my Mentor, spend more and more time with Him, and sense His support in every circumstance.

I notice that many new students are entering our school. They constantly fall and get dirty, and I want so much to help them, but they look at me and see a hypocrite. Yet as I look at them, I recognize myself. Then I understand that I love. I had realized it before but did not know how to explain it, so I quietly rejoiced within, thinking that it would pass. Instead, it grows ever greater and deeper. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. It is nothing short of a miracle! I look at the graduates of our school. Each of them bears the seal of our Teacher upon the forehead, and they have a special message for the whole world. How I long to be among them! I begin to pray for greater love.

It seems that nothing is happening, but I know that the Teacher has already devised something for me, and I ask Him to give me strength to stand. I see that my clothes no longer become dirty and that my legs have grown stronger, yet I understand that the ground around me is very slippery. So I grasp my Mentor's hand more firmly and continue on my way, dreaming of greater love. The Teacher holds me securely, and throughout my education He has never left me unattended. I am no longer disappointed because I know Him Whom I have believed. The crossroads of differing opinions no longer lead me astray. I see the goal and move confidently toward it. The Teacher leads me to school and surrounds me with angry people whom I now simply love. Then He invites me to become a mentor to the students who enter the school, so that I too may experience the joy of passing God's treasures from heart to heart. What happiness this is! I teach others!

Another brick in our little house of happiness is called 'I teach.' It is the twin brother of the brick called 'I learn.' They form one whole and cannot live without each other.

If I only receive knowledge about Eternal things and do not share it with others, my little river will turn into a stagnant, foul-smelling swamp. If I teach others without continuing to learn myself, my spring will run dry. I will burn out emotionally, my heart will become empty, and I will turn into 'a squeezed lemon.'

But God has a plan. This is His plan: if I desire to understand something better, I need to explain it to others. I should not claim the title of teacher for myself. Yet as I learn, I can pass on my knowledge. When I receive knowledge, I am going through the learning process; when I begin answering questions or completing assignments, I am also instructing those who listen to me, and this has a mutual influence on us.

I evangelize. This is a form of mentoring. During this process, I share the light I have received and teach others what I have only just learned myself. The most beautiful understanding of truth comes precisely when I begin sharing it with others.

To have the testimony of Jesus is to receive knowledge and light from Him and pass them on. It is impossible to testify about something you do not know, have not learned, or that does not correspond to the truth.

The Eternal School of Agape Love will never end, and we have been given a good beginning so that we may develop continually in this knowledge of God. A student cannot rise above his teacher, but if both are studying an Eternal science, they will continually grow and will never comprehend the full measure of its knowledge. Yet they will ceaselessly discover something new about God’s love so that they may share it with others throughout Eternity.

I teach. This means Eternal dependence upon my Heavenly Teacher, Who has prepared immeasurable riches of knowledge for us so that He may gradually give them to us and grant us the joy of passing this knowledge on to other students.

Does the Eternal prospect of forever being both a student and a teacher frighten you? When we consider that the Eternal subject of our study and discoveries will be God’s Eternal Agape Love, I believe even Eternity itself will not be enough to contain all the knowledge we receive.

We are only just beginning, so that we may continue this learning without end and always remain witnesses of God’s love. Yet a school journey lasting billions of years begins with the first lesson, one small step, and the decision to become a disciple of Christ. And He will teach us and establish us.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 5:1–2; 9:14; 10:1; 23:7–8; Mark 2:18; 4:34; Luke 6:20–21; 14:26–27; John 8:31–32; 13:13–14, 34–35; Isaiah 8:16; 50:4; Proverbs 30:2–3; Galatians 1:11–12; Philippians 4:12

Chapter 59

When someone speaks to me about studying, I picture a classroom with a strict teacher, where I have to sit through forty-five minutes and acquire some knowledge. My interest in the lesson or subject depends more on who will teach it and how than on its content. And when a test or exam begins, I think more about how to avoid making a mistake so that I can get a good grade than about sharing answers based on the knowledge I have gained and becoming even more firmly established in it. This stereotype greatly hinders me from studying in the School of Christ. When I hear the word ‘study,’ I want to stay far away from it and have nothing to do with it, because even the thought that I will have to remain still for a certain amount of time makes me very tense.

Yet if I am interested in a particular field of study, want to learn more about something and gain the knowledge I need, and can choose a method of learning or a teacher who appeals to me, a spark of thirst for knowledge is kindled within me. Then I am ready to listen attentively to everything and absorb a great deal, for as long as my mind is able to receive and process information.

But this way of thinking can play a fatal trick on me, and I may simply reject something extremely important and vitally necessary for my soul merely because I associate it with something boring and tedious.

The science of salvation, the science of love and happiness, and the science of Eternal values possess a special beauty. They readily transform my mind and are easily received by my heart when the Holy Spirit reveals them through a consecrated person. I hear a message spoken from heart to heart; my walls of aversion collapse, and my mind becomes attuned to the speaker. During the examination, the Lord reminds me of the simple truths that will help me pass the test correctly and emerge victorious, or experience the greatest possible joy from having done something right. None of my mistakes provokes indignation in the Teacher; instead, each one shows me that

something still remains in my heart that must be corrected. There are no grades, no reproaches, and no coercion of the will.

At times, I myself desire to gain the knowledge I need, gather books, and set aside time to study them. Today, we can learn even while our hands are busy by listening through headphones to useful information or fascinating experiences.

If the School of Christ is already quite diverse today, touching many areas of our lives and opening beautiful prospects of happiness, love, and friendship, can you imagine what it will be like in Eternity?

Even when I merely try to picture Eternity with my limited mind, my imagination is not enough, so I envision it only within the bounds of my earthly knowledge and stereotypes.

Even now, when the boundless expanses of God’s love are being revealed to me, I confine this knowledge within the dimensions of my shell, which I am so reluctant to leave. Yet Eternity is far greater and more fascinating than even the boldest mind and most expansive imagination can conceive.

For example, how will we communicate there? I think that even now our guardian angels smile as they listen to our limited suppositions. Yet they also marvel at how, without seeing what has been promised, we believe in it and strive with all our might to attain, understand, and receive it.

There will be very many of us, and there will be even more Eternal friends. Life with them will be still more fascinating. Every new friend will be like a unique planet that I will want to know, discover, and explore, learning about that soul with special love and interest. At the same time, our old earthly friends will remain, and we will need to continue developing our relationships with them as well. How can my earthly mind contain this entire wealth of information? And where will there be time for all of it?

In Eternity, Jesus will be alive and visible, and He will outshine everything and everyone. Knowing Him personally will bring immeasurable delight and joy.

God the Father will always be accessible for fellowship, ready to give me a new revelation or blessing. His great and kind Heart will always be open to me, so that in Him I may continually find new treasures and rejoice forever in the depths of knowing Eternal love.

The Holy Spirit Himself will be my Eternal Teacher. I will hear His voice with my ears and my heart, and He will continually tell me about His love, reveal the vastness of God's revelations, and show me new qualities in every one of my Eternal friends. He will give me a unique memory so that I may retain all this knowledge in my mind and recall it at the proper time in all its purity and beauty.

It will also be deeply fascinating to learn the entire history of Creation, beginning with the first speck of dust in the Universe, then proceeding to the creation of the angels, new galaxies, and our Earth. How instructive it will be to hear personal testimonies about how people lived before the Flood and after it, how they believed, how they fought against sin and overcame temptations, and why others did not enter Eternity.

To take in all of this at once, I will need an expansive mind capable of being present everywhere, analyzing everything, learning everything, and never growing weary, but always thirsting for new knowledge, instruction, and revelations. I believe the Lord will endow all of us with such capacities for thought and communication that, even when far apart, we will be able to remain connected with one another and make new discoveries in the hearts of those who are very dear to us, while also communing with the Eternal God and learning His character through a personal relationship with Him.

Our kind and faithful angels, who served us throughout our lives, will also long to meet us personally. They will want to tell us about our lives from the perspective of their ministry and show us how many dangers they saved us from and how many blessings they brought into our lives. How modestly they wait for me to desire friendship with them, so that within this relationship they too may open their hearts and show me how angels are made, how they live, what they eat, how they think,

and what their personal lives are like. All of this will require time and a perceptive mind, which God will give me so that I may be filled forever with new discoveries and blessings.

We will be given other means of communication and travel. Great distances on Earth and throughout the cosmos will no longer trouble us. No matter where in the Universe we may be, we will always remain connected with one another and with our dear Jesus, continuing to open our hearts and discover something new in the lives of those we love.

A little more should also be said about love. It will be present everywhere and, like air, will unite us in one universal fellowship, passing through our hearts and bringing joy to everyone with whom we share fellowship and relationships.

We should also remember all the Heavenly inhabitants of the unfallen worlds, who patiently await the opportunity to meet each of us, share their joys and knowledge, and come to know us personally so that we will never part again. They will tell us about their understanding of God and about what they experienced as they watched us.

All this knowledge is called the Eternal School of Christ, in which we will ceaselessly learn that God is Love. And this School has already begun here.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 14:1–6; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 12:1–9; Revelation 21:1–27; 22:1–7; Isaiah 11:6–9; Job 38:3–41; 39:1–35

Chapter 60

I would like to share an unusual experience with you.

In the summer of 2019, an idea came to me: I would try to make one of my friends very happy. I liked this idea very much. But I had to choose someone for this role, and that was the hardest part, because all my other friends would then remain unhappy. In the end, I chose two people, a brother and a sister. I chose them so that I could understand what a woman experiences and what happens to a man when someone begins thinking about their happiness and doing something to promote it.

Then, before beginning this process, I decided not to carry out this experiment alone, so I invited my friends Arthur and Arsen to support me in this endeavor. They agreed.

As a result, we formed a coalition devoted to making people happy and called it “AAA: Happiness in Every Home.”

And so the team came together. We began discussing our strategy of attack and devising different ways to bring happiness from the outside into the life of the neighbor we had chosen—something that would interest that person, meet a need, and bring joy. This was an entirely new period in our lives, and we were searching for the best approaches. Another difficulty was that I was the only one who personally knew the brother we had chosen, and we did not know how he would respond to such actions.

We decided to pray earnestly for these people every day, contact them and tell them about our undertaking, ask their permission, and then begin looking for the beautiful qualities within them and doing something unusual for them that could bring joy to their hearts.

We were pioneers in this endeavor and did not know where it would lead or what would come of it.

But we got up and set out.

First, we contacted our friends, told them what we had decided to do for them, and asked them not to be afraid, but to be patient and attentive toward us. The names of our fortunate recipients were Sergey and Violetta. They were very surprised, but they gave their consent. And the happiness train began to move.

Every day, we prayed for the people we had chosen, contacted them, and told them the good things that came to mind. Then our team met and shared what each of us had experienced.

After that, I decided to approach the friends of our fortunate recipients with a request that sounded approximately like this: “Peace be with you, friend of Violetta. Could you write or record something good about Violetta for me? What kind of person is she? What does she enjoy most in life? Please also tell me what you like about her. And please write something else that is very good. I will explain later why we need this.

Thank you in advance. We truly need this information. Thank you.”

And the friends of our friends began responding, sending letters and voice messages. We shared all of this with one another in our team’s group chat, studied the responses carefully, and used this information to continue building personal communication with those in our care, telling them about all the new discoveries we had made through our research.

The results did not take long to appear. The surprise and bewilderment of our fortunate recipients grew into delight and anticipation of our new messages. We gathered all our messages and all their responses in our group chat and shared new discoveries with one another as a team. When I approached Violetta’s own sister with a similar request, she decided to find out more about why we needed this and for whom we were gathering the information. Once she learned what we had undertaken, Vitalina decided to join our team. We then called ourselves “AVAA.” The endeavor began to gain momentum.

It was no longer clear who among us was becoming happier: we ourselves, or the people whose happiness we thought about every day and for whom we made plans to improve their lives. It was a deeply inspiring endeavor that brought everyone a great deal of joy.

Interestingly, when you ask the friend of someone in your care to tell you something especially good about that person, everyone immediately has many questions: “Why? Why do you need this? Who is it for?” And when you begin explaining your plans, people become even more puzzled about how such a thing could be possible. Yet we succeeded.

Most interesting of all is hearing the fortunate recipients describe how they see and understand everything and what is happening within them. And something beautiful is happening—something they have never experienced before.

For example, answer this question: “Which of the people close to you continually thinks about your happiness and does everything possible to promote it, acting on every idea that comes to mind?” I do not think the answer needs to be spoken aloud.

But we lived through this experience and tasted a little piece of Eternity, imagining how we would ceaselessly devise ways to bring good to all our friends, how we would engage in this forever, inventing new plans of attack.

And when you later hear the fortunate recipients themselves describe their experience, your heart fills with joy because you did something very, very good and kind, and it filled your neighbor’s heart with joy, light, and some new and unusual experience. This makes you feel very good as well. And when you know what it is to feel good, you know how to bring good to others too.

After some time, Arthur proposed two more candidates for us to make happy. Then another two people were added as recipients, and we supported the idea and poured an avalanche of kind words and good wishes into their lives as well. It was fascinating to see how simple words of friendliness, love,

happiness, admiration, and sincere delight gladdened the hearts of our friends and filled their lives with light. And you too feel very warm and joyful because someone has become happier through you.

But to make their happiness complete, I shared in my messages the laws of blessedness that we are now studying and discovering, understanding that emotions cannot be a firm foundation for happiness and that a more solid foundation is needed.

Yet the joy of our relationships did not disappear. Instead, it beautifully enriched our common endeavor and inspired us to devise new methods of attack and ways of winning hearts.

An experience like this does not pass without leaving a mark. All these people are inscribed upon my heart as special friends toward whom I have a special affection. The relationships themselves changed, and we became still closer and dearer to one another. And this brings such joy!

I can only tell others about experiences like these and show that they are possible and that the results will exceed every expectation. Yet all of this must remain within the bounds of love and friendship in Christ and must not cross over into carnal pleasures. Without such boundaries, Satan can turn every blessing into a curse, especially in relationships between men and women. But the Lord protects us and gives pure thoughts and ideas to those whose hearts are pure.

Experiences like these are worth having within your family and among your friends. They will add much joy and happiness.

As for me, I will say that it is deeply pleasant to think from morning until evening about the happiness of my friends, devising new ways to bless them and praying for those whom you love. Love for these people arises naturally, and you begin to long for their lives to become even better. And I simply love.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Proverbs 17:17; 27:9; Ecclesiastes 3:12; Galatians 6:10; James 4:17; Romans 12:10; Isaiah 65:13, 18–19; John 13:34–35; 15:12–

13; Ephesians 5:25–28; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Corinthians 8:6; Philippians 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 18

Chapter 61

To grasp the depth and importance of the earthly happiness we experience in our lives, we must understand what it cost Heaven and the price that was paid for us to receive it.

If we reflect on the life and teaching of Jesus, we can conclude that the Lord was a very happy Man Who continually thought about the happiness of those around Him and did everything possible and seemingly impossible for them—everything within His power. Every morning He pleaded for special Power from above so that through His hands and words that Power could do good to people, heal their bodies and souls, and give them the Bread of life.

Although Jesus was an active Worker throughout His entire life, we know most about His final years, when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for a special ministry to the world. And the world was shaken. Through His life, Christ showed everyone how God regards people, how He loves them, and what He is truly like. In the light of Jesus' life, we see that He brought happiness everywhere He went. But not everyone wanted to be happy.

If we tear down all the stereotypes and false ideas about a happy life and try to understand what a person truly needs in order to be happy, we will be surprised to discover that we do not need very much. There is a special advantage in simplicity of life, and Christ's teaching meets every human need and every need of the soul.

Jesus began His ministry by preaching about blessedness, and He will bring the history of our world to its close through events that will reveal how necessary this happiness is for enduring difficult times and the time of trouble. To endure the great tribulation, we will need great happiness—the very happiness that is founded upon the Rock and built of eternal, durable materials with no cracks or openings through which temptations and heresies can enter.

God’s prophets warn us that in the last days life will become very difficult for everyone and that terrible trials will be prepared for God’s people. All whose names are written in the Book of Life, who have the Seal of God, who have obtained the Heavenly goods from the True and Faithful Witness, and who have oil in their lamps will endure those trials. We understand all these things symbolically, but we should examine what these images mean and whether my life has anything to do with what they describe.

The third chapter of Daniel describes the experience of three young men who resolved to remain faithful to God unto death and were not afraid to die while preserving that faithfulness. I believe they were at peace with their choice. When the young men were cast into the fiery furnace, they were happy, because in that trial they met the One Whom they loved without having seen Him, in Whom they trusted, and to Whom they remained faithful unto death. I imagine the joy that came upon those three men after they had said farewell to one another and to life, yet did not perish, but walked in the blazing flames, amazed that they were not burning. Their eyes saw their Savior, Who was the Son of God. Their happiness knew no bounds. When King Nebuchadnezzar called them back to him, they came out as victors. Their faces shone with rejoicing, and they did not hide their joy or fear anyone. But all who were present trembled with fear at the miracle of deliverance they had witnessed.

Something similar will take place during the great tribulation. The oil of happiness will keep the flame burning in the lamp of the soul even during the darkest time in earth’s history. That flame will not go out, and that oil will not run dry, because all these symbols point to an Eternal connection with the eternal Source.

What will those experience who have learned the laws of blessedness, received them into their hearts, tested them in their lives, and chosen to be happy in every trial—trials that will not be long in coming? These people will preserve intact their

priceless treasure of a happy spirit, so that during the crisis they may nourish their thoughts and feelings with this oil.

Preparation for the events ahead is taking place now, at this very time, as you read these lessons.

Why has God chosen truth, happiness, and love for the final conflict? The answer is simple. This is precisely the condition of the believing soul to which everyone who studies and embraces God’s will eventually reaches. It is impossible to be unhappy in the presence of God. Only a sinful heart will faint from fear and terror.

Happiness in the Lord is the best indication that all is well between you and God, that you are on the rails of truth, and that you are God’s possession called the Bride of Christ.

The very word “happiness” sounds deeply attractive and desirable to the human ear. It draws attention and persuades the listener of the truth.

What do you think would arouse greater interest today: an invitation to meetings with an obscure title, or an offer to help people find happiness, love, and friendship? Sadly, the enemy of souls has already introduced his own distortions everywhere. Nevertheless, happiness still means that the soul is well. This definition remains stable for now. But whether this “well-being” is eternal or temporary is determined by the source from which it comes.

Another danger of the last days is that although we know from prophecy that a crisis is coming, understand the sequence of events and the signs of the times, and have a good command of the theory, we do not always understand correctly what all this looks like within my own life and heart.

For many years I have studied the sequence of the final events of history. I see everything being fulfilled and know what to expect next, yet the condition of my heart troubles me. Is it truly with God? Is there oil within me? Do I understand God’s plan for my Salvation at this time? What must I personally do? Simply saying, “I will only believe, and I will be saved,” sounds

rather presumptuous to me, because I understand that there must be something more within me that will give me firm assurance of Salvation and bring peace to my soul.

The science of love and happiness, the possession of this knowledge and these skills, and an understanding and acceptance of the meaning of the symbols of Salvation bring my heart into harmony with God. They give me confidence that I am building upon the Rock and that my little house of happiness will stand firm in every trial.

When God commanded Noah to build the ark, it was the most absurd-looking structure of its time and provoked ridicule and abuse. Yet that very structure withstood every trial of those days. Today the Lord commands us to build our houses upon the Rock, because a trial will come just as it did in the days of Noah, and everything flimsy or without a foundation will collapse. It will be a spectacular collapse of faith and hope. The time of trouble will become a great tribulation for every superficial Christian. I understand this, and my mission of Salvation is directed first of all toward my own heart. Is it happy in God? Upon what is it founded, and how firmly is it joined to the Foundation? God gives light to the seeking soul; it receives the knowledge it needs and brings the heart into harmony with God. Then peace comes. And in a time of peace, it is very easy to build what is strong and eternal.

Love does not lead the soul into deception or offer it error. It warns of danger, reveals light, and brings present truth. It cares for the purity of the soul in which it has made its home and will give no place to anything evil. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

Bible verses for this chapter:

Daniel 3:23–26; 12:1–3; Luke 21:25; Philippians 2:12; 4:19; John 14:1; Matthew 24:9–10, 21–22; 28:18–20; Isaiah 42:13–16; 46:3–4; Genesis 28:15; Joshua 1:5; Psalm 51:10; 91; Hebrews 4:15–16; Revelation 16:15

Chapter 62

When I build houses or some other structure that must bear a structural load, I usually do the work in good weather, when there is no frost, rain, or snow. All such conditions cause a certain amount of discomfort and can affect the quality of the structure. Yet in my mind I calculate how strong my construction will be, even when I have its plans in hand. In good, calm weather, it is very difficult to know how a building will behave if an earthquake suddenly strikes or a hurricane comes. But there are certain principles that enable me to calculate the expected load and pressure in advance, and I take those calculations into account when erecting the building. When I order construction materials, I do not ask them to bring me just anything, as long as it is some kind of material. I specify the exact product and grade indicated in the plans, or materials that have already stood the test of time and are suitable for constructing buildings.

When I first began working in construction, we laid walls with mortar, just as people had done a thousand years ago. Then a new technology appeared, and we began laying bricks with adhesive, which both surprised and delighted me. The first course had to be laid perfectly level; after that, we dipped each brick into the prepared adhesive and placed it in the wall, where it bonded on its own. This method quickly became popular everywhere.

But when I began building a house for an engineer, he decided to do everything the old-fashioned way. He explained that every new method had to stand the test of time for at least fifteen years before it could be used.

My neighbor at our garden property built himself a beautiful greenhouse and planted tomatoes in it. But a small hurricane came, and the entire greenhouse ended up in pieces on my property. I took note of this and made adjustments to my own construction, paying careful attention to the proper foundation and to fastening the structure together. Over the years, it has had to endure many hurricanes, rains, and snowfalls.

Everything I once built is still holding up very well. The process of building delighted me then; now the strength and beauty of what was built delight me.

The next brick for our little house of happiness is called “I am steadfast.”

Steadfastness is the ability to endure all kinds of trials with dignity without allowing my heart to be destroyed. Difficulties do not make my structure better, but they reveal its strong and weak points, expose defects that were overlooked, and confirm me in the right choice.

Jesus taught that temptations would come, that trials would descend upon us, and that the enemy of souls had not grown weaker, but would continually persecute those who choose to enter the true path that leads the soul to Salvation. And the Lord promises that we will be happy during such trials. In Matthew 5:10–12 we read: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

When such a trial comes for the first time, you become confused and disoriented, not knowing what to do. It seems that I am setting out to begin a new life—to be righteous, kind, and loving—yet people begin to hate me for it. Sometimes a response according to the flesh could settle everything very quickly, but I choose the narrow way and enter a path of years of attacks and accusations against me, to which I cannot respond in the same spirit.

Not every trial brings me pleasure and joy, but pain is always present, especially when those closest to me cause it. Yet Jesus commands me to rejoice in such situations and to look at the things that are unseen. I began to put this into practice, and it worked. What blessedness it is to be happy when everything is

going badly, knowing that a special blessing for you is hidden within it!

Having passed through all these trials, I know that they are not over and that a surprise lies ahead—one that not everyone will endure. Yet no one who lives with Jesus in the heart will avoid this confrontation, so it is worth preparing for it right now, today. But how?

If I know what I will face, I begin to study what will help me stand firm. The Lord instructs me, first in small things and then through increasingly difficult assignments, so that I may gain personal experience in the struggle and learn to use spiritual weapons skillfully.

Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in high places and against the rulers of the darkness of this world. For such a battle, I need the proper weapons and tactics. Power tools and helpful pills will not drive the darkness out of my heart, but the presence of God’s light will very quickly deliver me from every kind of darkness.

What determines my steadfastness? If I do not know what the Lord expects of me, I will most likely behave as I am accustomed to behaving, or as is customary in the society where I live. But the knowledge of the Truth reveals what awaits me and how I should respond correctly to each trial. The Holy Spirit brings to my remembrance at the right time all the counsel I learned while studying God’s will. And the Lord’s grace gives me the strength to overcome every trial in the right spirit. All these factors together bring me victory, and I rejoice.

In every difficulty, my connection with my Heavenly Father is extremely important. My victory depends more upon my relationship with God than upon my theoretical knowledge of the truth or my knowledge of Who God is. Such a connection with the Most High is formed within me and changes my heart. In this warfare, my choice to remain faithful to God is more important than my strength and wisdom.

Jesus warned us that all who believe in Him would be persecuted and hated. And so it is. Yet this is precisely what strengthens us.

I remember collecting tin as a child and enjoying melting it over a gas burner. I was surprised that after being melted, the tin changed from a soft material into something very hard. We also know that hardened iron is much harder than ordinary iron, though at the same time it becomes brittle.

The benefit of firing can be seen in the example of a clay pitcher. While it is being made, it can be shaped in any way; it can be moistened and remade. But when the pitcher enters the fire, irreversible processes take place within it, making it strong, water-resistant, and fit for use. Afterward, the vessel can be painted and used for its intended purpose.

The same principles operate in my life. All the knowledge I receive shapes my character and behavior, while various trials reveal how strong I am. They fix that knowledge firmly within me and form my will.

None of God’s children will escape fiery trials, and we should not fear them. They will not destroy our lives. Trials also come into the lives of unbelievers, but they make them even more unhappy. On my path, however, every spiritual victory brings me joy from the realization that I stood firm, and this strengthens my faith and my connection with God.

Persecution deprives me of my familiar surroundings and way of life, but it opens new opportunities and paths in my search for a closer relationship with Jesus. He does not abandon me, but gives peace to my soul.

I am steadfast. This material gives special strength to the entire structure of my happiness and holds the whole construction in its intended shape, while revealing weak places that need to be strengthened. And this brings a special blessedness.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Ephesians 6:10–18; 2 Timothy 3:12; Luke 21:12–19; Matthew 5:39–41; 24:13; John 15:17–23; Romans 5:4; 15:4–5; 2

Corinthians 4:5–12; Hebrews 12:1; Revelation 2:3, 10; 3:10; 14:12

Chapter 63

We find the best example of steadfastness in the life of Jesus. He is the very Teacher of righteousness Who, by His life, gave us an example of courage and patience in every circumstance of life, and by His death established forever all His laws and principles, which were given for our good.

The distinctive feature of Christ's teaching is that He first personally experienced the working of all the laws of happiness and, from childhood, endured every trial of His faith that continually came upon Him.

Jesus' steadfastness was determined by His deep knowledge of God's will through the study of the Scriptures and by His unwavering obedience to the light He had received. Living amid moral darkness and ignorance, our Lord remained faithful to God's principles and never compromised when the requirements of the law were at stake.

The books of the Old Testament give many examples of how the steadfastness of God's faithful people is rewarded and what happens to those who choose to follow their own way.

These examples strengthened Jesus during His trials, and they can also be a source of support and comfort for us in difficult times.

The steadfastness of the captives in the book of Daniel amazes us and inspires us to display the same spirit when trials come to us. Yet Christ's later life and His example of steadfastness provide even more material for deep study and reflection.

Jesus not only gave an example of faithfulness to all God's requirements, but also became the Savior of humanity from inevitable death and the power of sin.

By His example, the Son of God showed us how it is possible to live without sinning, how to overcome the temptations of this world, and how to trust God during difficult periods of life. Jesus revealed God's true character, demonstrating in His own

life how God loves the sinner, how He desires to save everyone, and how God's power can work in any faithful person.

The enemy of souls trembled in the presence of Jesus, yet sought every possible way to shake His faith. But Christ's steadfastness was determined by His daily commitment of Himself into God's hands.

I am steadfast. This is not something new in the spiritual world, but the result of my close relationship with God, Who becomes so dear and close to me that it is easier for me to die than to sin and betray His sacred trust.

But the principle of steadfastness does not enter my life all at once or in a single day. Sadly, the path to this condition of heart leads through many tests, falls, mistakes, and various trials. And every victory in Jesus is preceded by the study of God's will as set forth in the Bible. Spiritual books have played an important role in my growth—books that tell about the lives of believers, offer a deeper understanding of God's will, and explain His plans for the last days. All this strengthened me in the truth.

It is not difficult to endure trials steadfastly when your heart is with God. You simply can no longer live any other way, and obstacles along the path of faith do not throw you off course but become a normal part of life. The troubles of future events no longer frighten you, but prompt you to establish the closest possible relationship with Christ. And Christ leads me onward.

My path to God leads through Mount Calvary. When I came there, I realized my need of a Savior, repented, and received forgiveness of my sins. And the Lord led me onward, opening new horizons of God's love and the prospect of a happy life with Christ and in Christ. Abiding in this blessing, I begin to understand that the greatest reward for my soul is to look upon the world from the height of the cross, experiencing the love that Jesus has for fallen humanity. Faith expressed through steadfastness lifts me above this world, and death does not frighten me. Only one thing causes me fear: what if my human heart fails to withstand the coming trials and lets me down at

the most crucial moment? Yet God, knowing my fallen nature, gives me His grace and His Spirit and preserves me from all evil in this struggle. When trials come, I simply declare my decision to remain faithful to God, to love no matter what, and I set my mind in that direction. Help from above comes, and I emerge victorious, although in the eyes of the world I appear to be a pitiful and naive person who cannot stand up for himself or fight back.

I look at how the Lord conducted Himself when He was led to His death, and I marvel at His courage and steadfastness. Possessing power and authority, and knowing that legions of angels would come to His aid if He only asked, Jesus chose not to turn aside from the plan laid out for my Salvation and stood firm in that decision. He did not waver and remained faithful unto death, regardless of everything.

Does the Lord expect the same courage from His children? Yes. And He prepares each of His sons and daughters for the coming trials of faith—not in fear and horror of the events ahead, but in the love and happiness of advance preparation, anticipating the next test, which will be a little more difficult than the one before it.

And the Lord commands us to rejoice. He assures me that it is a special blessing to be persecuted and to suffer for my faith and my love for the Savior. Perhaps many will not experience this Heavenly joy during the trials themselves and will lose their lives without ever tasting this earthly blessedness. But Eternity will fully make up for what they lacked and will forever gladden the hearts of those who chose to be faithful unto death and received the Crown of Life.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad—this is the goal we must set for ourselves during tribulation and persecution. And if the Lord Himself commands it, then we should ask Him to teach us how to do it. From the example of the apostles' trials, we see that this is possible.

To be steadfast means also to preserve a happy spirit, which is not difficult when the heart has been trained and loves those

who cause you pain and trouble. During trials, I repeatedly noticed that when I asked myself whether I was happy in that situation and saw that the motives of love and faithfulness dominated my mind, I continually experienced a special joy because I had overcome. My love helped me through every trial. Although my face might not have expressed any special joy or gladness at the time, that too came later.

It is very easy to rejoice when you know that this is God's will and that these laws have been written in your heart by God's hand. Then you see every trial as a new opportunity for victory and coming joy.

I have also noticed that unbelievers do not escape the fire of trials either. But they suffer greatly from them and sometimes lose their minds as they recall the horrors they experienced. Yet for many of them, the hardships of life can revive their interest in spiritual values. I feel very sorry for them, but if they can be saved even in this way, then may God's will be done. This too is worth rejoicing over, in the hope that the Lord will save these lost souls as well.

While we still live in peaceful times, we need to build our little house of happiness so that in the near future we may remain in the warmth and comfort of its strong walls, trusting in God and awaiting a joyful meeting with Him.

And the Lord promises steadfast people a great reward in Heaven. I believe it will be something very good and wonderful. For now, I have a choice: to be steadfast, rejoice, and be exceeding glad, or to fall, become discouraged, and be unhappy. I choose happiness.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 5:10–12; Isaiah 53:7–8; Matthew 26:62–68; Luke 23:8–9, 27–34, 46; John 18:36–37; 1 Peter 3:17; 4:12–16; 1 Corinthians 10:10–13; Philippians 2:5–16; Daniel 12:10; Luke 8:13; Acts 5:40–42; Hebrews 2:17–18; James 1:2–4, 12; Revelation 3:10

Chapter 64

What do you feel when you hear the word “I”? It depends on who says it, in what situation, in what tone, and from whose lips it comes. The same word can have different meanings depending on the spirit in which it is spoken. Yet in every case, it belongs to me and points to me.

I am who I am, without any unnecessary embellishment. And what you see in me with your own eyes is only the outward facade, which I can present however I wish. My “I” may represent my carnal nature or my thirsty, searching soul.

This is worth discussing, because my “I” is something exceedingly precious to Heaven—so important that the Lord Jesus Himself decided to give His “I AM” in order to save my “I am nothing.” We should not underestimate that for which such a high price was paid.

My “I” is called the soul, the will, the person, the personality, and the heart—and that is what it truly is. It is the center of my being, very closely connected with my body, my choices, and my emotional and spiritual distinctiveness. It is that to which my character becomes attached through its union with my thoughts and feelings.

I am of special interest in God’s eyes, and I am so precious to the Lord that He calls Himself my Husband and calls my “I” His bride. He does everything possible on His part to bring our relationship to the wedding. In His desire to attain this cherished goal, the Lord, in the Person of His Son, gave all Heaven to acquire something that I sometimes neither value nor consider important.

The enemy of souls gave humanity the theory of evolution in order to discourage many minds and deprive them of life’s meaning. He declared my “I” to be the accidental result of certain changes in nature, and nature itself to be the result of some cosmic explosion. But the absence of a Supreme Intelligence would reduce the entire universe to chaos. We are intelligent, highly organized beings, and such organization

simply could not arise, exist, and continue by itself without Power from above.

Sadly, however, many people believe the theory of evolution, which no one has ever proved.

Yet God gives knowledge of Himself and reveals Himself in all His majesty and simplicity to everyone who desires to know Him personally. He is my Creator, my Heavenly Father, my Savior, and the Lord of my body and soul. Whatever I may think about myself, I belong to God: first, by right of creation; and second, if this comes to pass, by right of redemption and a second birth from above into spiritual life.

No matter how I may try to belittle and diminish my “I,” this very center of my being is the object of God’s interest and of my Salvation. This is the person whom God calls His Own and loves with all His heart. If I consent, He endows this person with His own qualities of soul, while respecting my choice and my desires.

The Lord allows people to experience His attitude toward the human soul by placing an attraction to one another in their hearts, so that He may kindle love in seeking souls and unite two opposite “I’s” into one “we.” God’s greatest desire for this union called the family is the merging of hearts—two lonely souls and two different characters—so that in this unity they may become one whole person, continually delighting one another with new discoveries in their other half.

But the enemy of souls seeks to convince people of the value of superficial relationships and the enjoyment of a partner’s body. Then, when they have had their fill, he offers other bodies for variety, so as to break hearts and bring the pain of separation and the rupture of relationships. When this happens, my “I” begins to suffer the pain of betrayal.

If we speak about the essence of the spiritual struggle being waged between good and evil, between God and Satan, it is centered on the possession of my “I.” And the spiritual powers just mentioned do not rest when they lose their authority over me. In that case, they seek ways to bring me back.

But the two sides in this struggle differ from one another. God respects my choice and offers me the very best while awaiting my decision. He gives me freedom of choice, whereas Satan invades my mind and imposes his values without regard for my opinion. Yet my will still remains free to make whatever decision it considers right. If the enemy of souls gains authority over my “I” through my consent to be with him, my will loses the strength to fight and can no longer free itself from the power of sin. It is from this state of soul that the Lord saves me, asking whether I want to be made whole.

Even when I am in the cruelest bondage, at the very bottom of human degradation, I remain within reach of God’s grace, and at any moment it can lift me up, no matter how low I have fallen. The only obstacle to my deliverance from the power of sin may be the decision of my “I” to reject the call of the Holy Spirit, Who desires to help me recognize my wretched condition. I cannot be saved if I refuse to receive strength from above to change something in my life. In doing so, I insult the Spirit of grace by choosing darkness, and God respects my decision and leaves me forever.

Agape love is God’s best gift to my “I.” It is the assurance that, from the moment I receive this gift, I become God’s own—desired and most precious. For love is the heart of God within my “I,” and through it I begin to understand and see the Invisible One, learn to become like Him in love, and prepare for the Heavenly wedding.

In love, the full depth of God’s heart is revealed to me. As I study these mysteries, I enter so deeply into the presence of the Most High that I recognize my inability to do anything without Him—and I do not want to.

But I must still pass through the trial called “earthly life,” leaving behind everything I cannot take to Heaven and preparing my “I” to meet Jesus, when I will entrust this treasure to Him as His eternal possession. My new eyes will see Him—not the eyes of another, but my own. My new body will feel His embrace—not someone else’s flesh, but my own, given to me for eternal use. My new heart, given to me by the hand of

God, will tremble and beat joyfully with happiness because of my closeness with Jesus. It will not be another's heart, but my own eternal heart. And I myself will become God's forever, always to belong to Him and continually to have the closest and most enduring relationship with Him.

This is a great mystery, but my "I" is worth becoming God's own—eternally God's own.

So that my "I" may be ready for the wonderful Heavenly Meeting with my dear Jesus, it is already beginning to be transformed by studying Heaven's constitution, learning the eternal laws of happiness, and becoming established in the enduring principles of love. The Lord Himself teaches me these things and rejoices in the day when my happy and holy "I" will be lifted up to God's Great White Throne, where He will present me as His bride and receive the eternal Fatherly blessing, so that I may become Jesus' eternal companion in life.

This is difficult for the human mind to imagine, but it is God's plan for people who are happy in Jesus. The fulfillment of this plan in my life is worth fighting for. Then my "I" will take the very place God has prepared for me.

And this will become the greatest happiness, eternally mine, continually bringing joy to my heart.

But I am not the only one, and your "I" also desires to belong to God forever.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Job 19:25–27; Matthew 16:26; Isaiah 54:5; Ephesians 5:29; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 15:50–54; Romans 7:24; Proverbs 4:20–23; John 17:25

Chapter 65

A distinguishing feature of our time is that all humanity lives from harvest to harvest, and all of us depend on grocery stores, where food is not given away free but must be purchased—and that requires money. Money, in turn, has to be earned, so we rent out our strength and knowledge to an employer or a customer and trust that we will receive the agreed payment. Heat and electricity must also be paid for, so we have to work even more. Life passes by while you run like a squirrel in a wheel.

But there was a time when food grew throughout the earth on fruit and nut trees, the weather was warm everywhere, and neither money nor stores existed. Sin, however, made its own changes to the way human needs are supplied.

Even now, many people wish to return to a simpler life so that they can be independent of this world. To do this, they leave the cities and settle in the countryside, where they can have their own garden and live from the land. The land yields its fruit and feeds those who begin to befriend it by caring for the seed they have sown.

But if all of us must earn something in order to live normally, how are those who decide to devote themselves to serving God to live? Some kinds of ministry are paid, and at times it is difficult to understand whether I am doing something from the heart or for the salary. Yet there is also service that demands much strength and time without bringing material profit. A person nevertheless performs it and receives true blessedness from it, especially when seeing the fruit of the labor or Heaven’s approval. It is true that sometimes I do something out of necessity, because there is no one else to do it.

Another brick for our little house of happiness is called “I serve.” There are many different kinds of service, but among them is one that is special—the longest-lasting and unsurpassed kind. No one ever pays for it, and it requires a high degree of self-sacrifice twenty-four hours a day. It takes a toll on one’s

health, develops patience and steadfastness in unforeseen circumstances, and prompts a person to seek strength from above when human strength is exhausted. Yet despite all this, nearly all ordinary people dream of such service from childhood, and they are very happy when the Lord entrusts them with this responsibility. People are willing to spend sleepless nights, deprive themselves of many pleasures and everyday comforts, live for this service, and set aside their education and work, because they see special meaning in this activity and receive a continual reward in the form of joy and love. Of course, many of you have guessed what I mean. Yes, this service is called motherhood. To say that such labor does not bring happiness is to understand nothing about life. But along with happiness come cares and all kinds of trials. Certainly, some people consciously avoid this service, but they are more the exception than the rule. The most unsurpassed work—a work that even angels do not dream of, because it is beyond their ability—is to be a mother and to shape a person's character according to one's own understanding and judgment. Blessed are the children who have God-fearing mothers.

Besides this important service, however, there are many other kinds of activity for the good of our neighbors and for God. They bring the soul true delight and satisfaction.

Service is that to which I voluntarily give my time, strength, and knowledge in order to bring benefit or make a contribution to a public or personal endeavor.

Jesus identified two kinds of service that cannot be combined because each demands complete devotion: service to God and service to mammon, meaning wealth. Both require my time and strength, and both bring happiness. The only difference is that happiness comes in different forms.

By considering the structure and principles of my service, I can immediately identify what is temporary, earthly, and worldly and therefore cannot be used as sound material, because it will not withstand trials and will bring down my building.

My main criterion for determining the purity and holiness of my building materials is how much my Heavenly Father is glorified in them and whether I will be able to take them with me into Eternity.

The Bible contains the expression “servant of God.” I used to think that it applied to all God’s children, but as I studied Scripture, I noticed that this title belongs only to those who have completely devoted themselves to serving God and live by preaching the Gospel, depending entirely upon God’s provision. This is more likely a calling and a dedication to such a life than something common to all ordinary Christians.

How, then, can I avoid serving mammon if I live in a material world where everything must be paid for, while I cannot imagine earning money through my ministry because I perform it wholeheartedly and without charge and receive joy from it? Is there some inconsistency here?

God does not forbid me to work in the world and earn a living, but He calls me to remember Him, to reserve time for Him, and to make obedience to His will the priority of my life. My service to God captures all my attention and draws all my interests to itself so fully that even during my regular work I constantly think about how to please God, how to improve my ministry, and how to finish what I have begun.

But one kind of service differs from another. What I am able to do successfully and joyfully may be beyond another person’s strength or competence. Many kinds of ministry are distributed by God as gifts of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the body of Christ.

And because I belong to God, I understand that the Lord expects me to show initiative in His work so that it may grow and I may develop.

At the same time, the world offers its own values, which cost money and demand an investment of my strength and time. Enticing advertisements, happy faces, new possessions, and amazing inventions—all of this beckons me and asks me to serve it. The world does not object to my faith in God, as long as

I keep it somewhere deep inside, hold firmly to traditions, and take out plenty of loans to acquire the things I need.

But the world's time of grace is coming to an end. Everyone lives as though they will never die, and no one thinks about the fact that the Second Coming of Christ is drawing near, that it will take place, that all earthly things will come to an end, and that Eternity will begin. Then I will understand the true value of my service and how firmly, through it, I held God's hand, giving Him the opportunity to teach me happiness and love.

Then everyone will suddenly realize what true happiness is. They will understand that God exists, that He is alive, and that He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. All money and accumulated wealth will become the refuse of this world, needed by neither moles nor mice.

But why is it so difficult for many people to understand these simple truths now and to build something enduring upon the Eternal Foundation?

I serve. This is the direction of my thoughts that helps me see God in everything and use every opportunity to make the lives of my neighbors better, draw their attention to what is Eternal and imperishable, and preserve me from moral decay. Even in Eternity, this brick will adorn my little house of happiness and continually bring joy to those whom I will serve forever.

And love makes my service right and very appealing to everyone. I become useful to God and greatly needed as I bring love, happiness, and friendship to my neighbors.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 6:24; 10:24–25; 20:25–28; 23:11–12; Deuteronomy 6:13; 13:4; 10:20; Joshua 24:14; Luke 17:7–10; Romans 12:1–2, 11; Psalm 2:11; 100:2; Revelation 14:13; 22:12; 1 Peter 2:18; 4:10; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 15:58

Chapter 66

To understand the full importance of the spirit of service in the closing period of earth's history, we should consider how it was revealed in the life of Jesus. He was born into our world to serve humanity and to demonstrate by His own example God's attitude toward people. We know little about Christ's life before His baptism, but when He was presented to the world as the long-awaited Messiah, His life became one unending ministry. Even now, our Savior serves humanity day and night, desiring to draw everyone to Himself.

When Satan, in the wilderness of temptation, offered himself as the object of worship, Christ answered: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." The enemy of souls could not withstand such a rebuff.

Serving and worshiping God provide special protection from the power of the devil. The very act of such service helps me look to the invisible God in Whom I believe and to Whom I give my best time and strength. God, in turn, gives me His blessings so that I may experience special joy in serving Him and my neighbors.

In the example of Jesus, we see how He desired what was good for people and did everything possible to make their lives better, more meaningful, and more joyful. The Savior healed every kind of sickness, raised the dead, and restored the sorrowful and weary to the joy of life, drawing strength for all of this from Heavenly sources. He gave us an example of true service. And while meeting people's physical needs, Jesus also provided spiritual bread for thirsty souls.

I have always been amazed that He chose a small number of disciples and never left them, serving them in word and deed even as He moved on from everyone else. When Jesus came to a place, He carried out His ministry there and then continued on. The seed was sown and bore fruit. No one knew where the Lord would appear next, but Christ never left His chosen disciples.

As I reflected on my own ministry and on what I could do for God in my life, I closely observed what was taking place in the

church so that I could understand what results each kind of activity produced, what worked better, and what was not always successful. I noticed that my greatest joy comes from serving those who have already set out on the path of truth and dedicated their lives to God but still know very little, even though they already bear the name of Christ. These people have a greater need to be served, for they already belong to God: they are hungry and desire nourishing, wholesome food. It always pains me to see every effort directed toward people who do not need salvation or have no interest in it, while our own people are neglected, their flame dies down, and they perish, sadly returning to the place from which the Lord rescued them.

I am not responsible for another person's choice, but I can help by giving that person something that will sustain a smoldering flame or kindle an unquenchable fire of love and happiness.

Our School of Love is also devoted to serving those who are already with Christ but do not know what to do next, or who have become entangled in their cares and are losing their hold on God's hand. Love presents the plan of salvation to people very simply and opens beautiful prospects for spiritual growth and renewal. It is accessible and appealing to every level of society, but the mind of a person who belongs to God is already tuned to this wavelength and longs to fathom the depths of God's heart, to grow, and to rise still higher in this knowledge.

Jesus poured all His love and all His knowledge into His disciples, while they went about arguing over which of them was the greatest. The Lord answered them that the greatest would be the one who became everyone's servant. I can imagine their surprise and the disappointment of their ambitious claims and expectations. Yet the example of Christ's life said exactly this. When the Lord died, rose again, and ascended to the Father, the disciples understood very clearly what Christ's mission had been and what was expected of them. After receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, they began to serve and, within a short time, accomplished an immense work among the people of their day.

Ministers of the Gospel have always been the objects of God's special care and the targets of Satan's attacks. Their lives are constantly in mortal danger, but through God's protection and the ministry of angels, these servants continue to do the work that bears witness to the world of God's love and the plan of salvation. Christianity has entered every sphere of society and has exerted a beautiful influence on the worldview and culture of many peoples.

The beauty of service lies in the fact that God's love is revealed to the world through my deeds for the good of others. It may be a simple conversation or something commonplace, but when it contains the motive of love and the desire to make the lives of others better and more beautiful, another person's heart hears this voice and is drawn to it. Love reveals itself in action when I begin to move and direct my strength toward service.

The forms of service are clearly varied and diverse. It may take place in a personal meeting or in a virtual setting, but the spirit of love invested in every deed is conveyed by God to other people.

I have sometimes noticed that the very emotions and motives I put into ordinary letters are experienced in exactly the same way by those to whom I send my messages, even though I remain unseen.

Consider the Bible. Its writers did not know that their letters would be studied throughout the world or that these writings would be revered as the Word of God. Yet we have them, and through His Spirit the Lord reveals to us depths in Holy Scripture that even its writers may not have fully understood.

Every act of our service is supported by the Holy Spirit and exerts a tremendous influence both on those whom we serve and on those who serve.

I remember an occasion at a camp meeting when the cafeteria workers left after a long day of labor, but one sister remained behind to finish small details that could easily have been left undone. She dried the wet dishes, swept the floor, arranged everything neatly, and looked around the room several times to

make sure everything was in order. Then, satisfied with her work, she went to rest. I sat off to the side, admiring this person's attitude toward God's work. No one saw her except me, and I do not think she saw me either, but I was impressed by such dedication, and later we became friends. I noticed that she is diligent in every task and will not rest until everything has been done accurately and properly, without drawing needless attention to herself. Even now she quietly labors for God, performing work that no one may ever notice or appreciate as she edits Spirit of Prophecy audiobooks. I remember the words that whoever is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and I am continually convinced that this is true.

Even if, from a human perspective, we fail to notice something in the service of others or in our own service, God sees everything, and not even the smallest detail escapes Him. Our little deeds mean more to Him than many great accomplishments. Just remember the account of the poor widow and her two mites. What a small thing—and yet what a tremendous influence her act had upon God's work, and how many hearts were opened to God because, despite her need, she decided to give all that she had. We do not even know her name.

Do not be afraid to put your love into everything you do for God, even if no one sees you. Angels watch us, and they are deeply moved when they observe our dedication; with special tenderness, they minister to us.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Peter 4:8–11; Galatians 6:3–10; Hebrews 1:7, 13–14; Matthew 23:11; 24:44–51; John 12:26; 13:12–17; Mark 9:35; Deuteronomy 28:45–47; Luke 16:10–12; Isaiah 61:6

Chapter 67

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

The construction of the house of happiness and my personal diligence in this process lead to my being given a brick called “I am pure.” And I already know for myself that this is true, because with all my heart I long for such purity of heart and do everything possible to keep myself unspotted from the world and to work out my salvation in the fear of God.

Purity of heart is the harmony of all my virtues, light, knowledge, desires, thoughts, and feelings with God’s will, revealed to me by the Holy Spirit through my personal relationship with Jesus.

God sees my desire to have a pure heart and to guard it from the corrupting influence of the world, and He gives me His blessing and power from above, drawing my mind to the true Source of Light—His beloved Son.

Some people are kind by nature. With their mother’s milk they absorbed all that is beautiful, carried diligent habits with them from their parents’ home, live with purity of thought and feeling, and dearly love to do good by doing kind and pleasant things for those around them. I have often met such people, and it seemed to me that they were deeply religious and enjoyed close fellowship with Jesus, for the purity of their conduct was plainly visible. I wanted to rejoice with them in the beauty of the Salvation they had found in Jesus. But to my surprise, I would hear a modest refusal to discuss this subject and a firm unwillingness to enter into a conversation about God’s love. They made it clear to me that they were very good and kind and did not need God, since they knew many people with evil manners who called themselves believers. I always felt sad for such people.

This brings the following parable to mind. In my home there are disobedient children who constantly break and damage things, sometimes rebel against all my instruction, and do not like to

put things in order. There is also a dog that loves everyone, is always obedient, gladly follows every command, and senses my mood. Which of them do you think will be my heir? Certainly not the dog, although anything can happen in this world.

God loves kind people with clean hands and pure thoughts, but He gave the world His Son, and by believing in Him I receive a new heart and the gift of Eternal life. The holy blood of Christ, which was shed for my sins, gives me the right to salvation, and I receive this gift through my faith, even if I am the most corrupt person. God accepts me in His beloved Son just as I am, but He does not leave me that way forever; He begins the process of cleansing me.

To say that a pure heart is my own personal possession is to insult God and take all the glory for myself, diminishing the part of the Most High in this work. It is God Who gives me a new heart, and it is He Who writes His laws upon it, giving me the mind of a righteous person. Yet all of this becomes possible through my consent, personal participation, and cooperation with the Creator. More than anything, the Lord desires to transform my heart, for from it flow all the springs of a pure and happy life. My conduct, in turn, reflects everything that is within my soul.

To have a pure heart is a special happiness for every person. It is especially joyful when you have peace with God and live in friendly fellowship with Jesus, asking Him for special blessings for the new day; when you immediately respond to every temptation that tries to enter your life with firm resistance and prayer for help from above.

Purity of heart depends directly on the strength and integrity of the entire structure of my “house of happiness.” Any damage, deficiency, or absence of even one brick brings unrest to my soul and defiles my conscience. My house then becomes vulnerable to the attacks of the powers of darkness. But I am also encouraged that I am not the only one overseeing the building process. The Lord Himself shows me what deserves my attention.

From the very beginning of my work, He erected a wonderful roof above me. It rests upon four pillars connected to the Foundation and, like a covering, protects me from bad weather outside while I gather materials and put up the walls.

When I see that something is lacking in my structure, I begin asking the Chief Designer to give me the necessary materials, to create in me a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within me. And the answer comes.

When I have purity of heart, I know that it is there because my perception is sharpened, and I react quickly to everything that is alien to God. Where everything is clean and bright, one has little desire to litter, and every speck of dirt becomes noticeable. Purity of heart attracts good thoughts and produces pure feelings. This cannot be hidden.

People sometimes sarcastically call me a holy man, a righteous man, a little angel without wings, or a fanatic. But I take these as compliments and quietly rejoice that, even in this way, people recognize that I am different from the world.

I become pure before God when I open my heart to agape love and ask that this gift of Heaven live within me. Love knows how to bring purity. It very quickly fills every part of my house, dissolving and removing every impurity and allowing nothing defiling or dangerous to enter the heart. It teaches me good deeds and dearly loves to perform them.

My purity of heart toward those around me comes from a soul overflowing with love. Love thinks no evil, but constantly thinks about the happiness of others, devising something interesting that lies within my power to do. And there are good deeds that those close to me will never discover. These are my prayers for them. I plead with God to give a particular friend a special blessing and to intervene in that person’s life in a special way. The Lord listens and answers, and later I see the answer and rejoice. Often I do not even say that I am praying for that person. Prayer from a pure heart has great power, for Isaiah 44:26 says of God: “That confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers.” A pure heart is

pleasing to the Lord when it intercedes in prayer for the needs of friends and neighbors. I cannot imagine what would happen to the world if God's children stopped praying for it and for those who live in it.

The greatest secret of my pure heart is that it is very closely connected to the pure heart of Jesus, drinks from His springs of living water, and feeds upon Him as the Bread of Life. My love knows the voice of Christ and senses His nearness. It does not allow me to part from Him. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. Yet I live by faith in Him.

I long to share this purity. How I wish that the purity of Jesus' heart could be reflected from my heart and become purity in the heart of my neighbor. Sadly, this path can only be demonstrated; each person must choose it for himself.

My eyes of faith see the invisible God, Who takes part in my life, Who preserves me from evil, Who protects me on every side, and Who prepares me for a personal, face-to-face meeting with Himself, so that I may behold His Face forever and continually reflect His purity and glory. This path is open to the pure in heart because Jesus said so, and it is true.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:5–6; Proverbs 20:9; 22:11; Ezekiel 36:22–31; Jeremiah 31:33; Psalm 51:10; 73:1–3; 1 Chronicles 29:17–19; Luke 8:15; 1 Peter 1:22–23

Chapter 68

Have you ever experienced the joy of an answered prayer? Do you know that our Heavenly Father answers every request His beloved children bring to Him? Yet unlike what we may expect, He gives us exactly what He considers right and beneficial.

Let us consider an example. When my little daughter asked me for candy for breakfast because she thought it was very tasty, how do you think I responded to her request? I gave her what was actually good for her. Now my daughter has a daughter of her own who does not even know that candy exists in this world. But when this little person begins asking for something, I listen to her requests very attentively and, whenever possible, give her what she wants from me. It pleases me to see a child's happiness when her requests are granted.

Do you often ask God to do something for you, give you something, or change something in your life? I think these lessons are read by people who already have a relationship with God and have witnessed many answers to other people's prayers. God performs miracles that cannot be explained or proven in any way, yet they continually happen. This is God's gift to His children.

The next brick for our house of happiness is called "I pray." I believe this wonderful material and distinctive feature of our structure contributes far more to God's work than we realize.

When I pray, I receive according to my faith what I ask for and so deeply desire.

The path to my Salvation begins with a short prayer of repentance or a desire to know God more closely. It begins with the event that prompts me to address the invisible Lord personally and to start expressing my thoughts, feelings, desires, and questions. And the Lord answers.

It is also important to understand that prayer takes different forms. Prayer may be a request, thanksgiving, praise, glorification, an expression of joy, a conversation with God,

asking questions, repentance for sins, a desire to know God more closely, an honest discussion of one's relationship with Him, or even a silent appeal to the One Who knows everything. Together, all of this forms the complete picture called "my life with God."

And if we take into account that God is Spirit, that He lives in me, and that I abide in Him, then our relationship is so interwoven with every area of life that I can communicate with Him and be heard everywhere and in every circumstance. Although the Lord does not speak to me in an audible voice, He skillfully places His thoughts within me and reveals His will. In all of this, God respects my freedom and treats me very tenderly. He does not force His principles upon me, but offers them as the best path and the best solution.

Prayer to God brings comfort, encouragement, blessedness, and the joy of knowing that God is involved in my life. The answers I receive bring such joy that sometimes I do not have enough words of thanks to express all my gratitude.

The Christian life begins with the first prayer of faith and never ends as long as those prayers continue to be offered.

The Ruler of Heaven—the Lord Jesus—became Man and showed us how necessary prayer is in the life of every person. He continually prayed for everyone and everything and emerged victorious from every circumstance because of His unbroken connection with the Father.

In Christ's prayer, the destiny of our world was decided. As He struggled against the powers of darkness in the Garden of Gethsemane, He chose whether or not to drink the mysterious cup of our sins and iniquities. In that prayer He gained the greatest victory, the victory through which we are alive today and have the hope of Eternity.

All Eternity will be filled with prayers of praise, joy, and gratitude to God for the struggle of soul that Jesus endured in that terrible conflict when He chose the path of sacrifice for our sins.

I pray. This is the way a righteous person thinks. In this communion with God, I have a very close relationship with Heaven. I can speak with the Heavenly Father, seek counsel from Jesus, and ask the Holy Spirit to open my understanding of various questions. These relationships are completely real, for through the shed blood of my dear Savior I commune with the living Persons of the Godhead.

This communion in prayer to Heaven brings happiness into my life—eternal happiness. I have a relationship with the Eternal Strongholds of the Universe, and this only strengthens my faith.

From a human perspective, there is so much I would like to have, and much of it is simply beyond my reach in this world. If I consider something impossible, I will not even try or attempt to achieve it. But the prayer of faith knows how to find other ways to solve impossible problems.

For example, a loaded truck has parked in front of the entrance to my home, and the driver has gone to visit my neighbor, leaving me unable to drive out of the garage. I do not have enough physical strength to lift the truck and move it aside, and I would not even try. But why not try? I decide to do it. Believing that all things are possible for me, I walk over, grab the side of the truck, and pull upward, but nothing happens. The neighbors laugh at me, yet I do not give up. My wife does not even try to help me, because she knows that we cannot accomplish this by our own strength. Instead, she goes to the neighbor and asks the truck driver to move aside, believing that her request will be heard. The driver responds to her request and very quickly solves all my problems in a different way.

Faith makes my prayers remarkable and effective, and the power of words is able to accomplish great things. I sometimes show my listeners how simple words produce astonishing actions in people’s lives. I ask them to stand, and everyone stands. I ask everyone to look up, and they all look up. I ask them to sit down, and they sit. I did nothing; I simply asked people to do what I requested without exerting any physical effort. Yet my words produced the specific actions I requested in their lives. We should not underestimate the power of our

requests to Heaven. Our prayers move God’s hand, and He is pleased to do what He desires to accomplish when we begin asking Him for it, because He has promised us.

For example, I know that God wants us to love one another and has even given us this commandment. If I begin asking Him for this love, what do you think He will give me? Or if He counsels me to buy something very important from Him, and I come to Him for it in prayer, will He give me what He has prepared for me? Yes. The Bible contains many promises for me. They are mine, and I can always receive what they promise—and I do receive it—because He Who promised is faithful.

Why, then, do I not ask? Perhaps I do not know what has been promised to me. Or perhaps I do not believe that I will be given it. Most likely, however, I do not need it. To be even more precise, I have no interest in it and am indifferent to it. What can such a person expect? He will certainly receive nothing. God does not give holy things to those who have no need of them. God loves us and respects our freedom. He will not force upon us what is repulsive to us.

But I want to love. I desire to be happy in Jesus. I thirst to have all of God’s blessings, and I ask for more. I plead with God Himself to be my God. I believe, I receive answers, I love, and I am happy.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Thessalonians 5:17–18, 25; Jeremiah 29:11–13; Matthew 5:44; 6:9–13; 21:13, 22; 26:41; Mark 9:29; 11:24; 13:32–33; Luke 6:12; Hebrews 13:18; James 5:13–18; Psalm 39:12; 42:8; 54:2–3; Proverbs 15:8, 29; 28:9; Romans 12:12; Revelation 8:3–4

Chapter 69

The house of happiness must be strong. I do not think any of you would want to live in a building that looks attractive but was not designed to withstand severe weather, cannot protect you from disaster, and will collapse on you and crush everyone inside. When an ordinary building is involved, people act wisely and are willing to invest whatever is necessary to make everything reliable. Yet for some reason they show astonishing carelessness toward their own souls, assuming that they can build haphazardly, build only a little, or build nothing at all. But this, too, deserves our attention.

Jesus began His ministry with the Sermon on the Mount. From His opening words, He revealed the laws of happiness, explained the details of a blessed life, and concluded His discourse with the building of a house of happiness. Perhaps in earlier centuries it was not as important to pay attention to the quality of the walls; the main thing was for the house to be built on the Rock. But in the last days, God wishes to draw our attention both to what we are building and to the foundation on which we build, as well as to how and from what we build. His purpose is not merely to teach us happiness, but to show the entire visible and invisible world what role love and the laws of blessedness play even in a critical time, and how they protect the soul that belongs to Christ.

The Lord Himself has chosen the means and instruments by which the final battle between good and evil will be fought. The final victory will not be won through the blood of the saints or through their agonizing deaths for the faith, as Satan would so greatly desire. It will be won through the very things that the Lord counsels us to obtain in His message to Laodicea.

And in this message He assures us that He Himself will come so that, through His personal presence, He may sanctify our home and fellowship with us in its warm and welcoming atmosphere.

The Lord assures me of His love, calls me to repentance, and gently knocks and calls, longing for me to open the door. He

offers me gold tried in the fire, which, when melted, closely resembles golden oil reflecting the light of Heaven in brilliant shimmering colors. And when I consider that the walls of my house are strong but hollow, I understand that this gold must be poured into the walls so that every part of them will be filled with golden material which, once hardened, will give them exceptional strength. This process is so important that Jesus has come personally to oversee it. How tenderly He asks to enter my little house! How gently, yet persistently! Will I open the door?

I understand that if I ignore the voice of Christ, I will have problems. But I am deeply troubled that the goods offered to me must be purchased. In exchange for them, the Lord expects to receive everything that makes me wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. He also wishes to take all my time in order to teach me how to use these goods, while I value my time greatly and strive to spend it on anything except studying what He has offered me. Besides, I have grown very accustomed to an unhappy life, and I have no desire to change anything in it.

But the Lord does not leave me alone. He tells me the story of ten young women, five of whom were wise, while the others were like me. I began watching what the wise women did. They started stocking up on oil from the Laodicean shop and spent a great deal of time doing so. I watched without understanding why they were spending so much. Everything seemed to be continuing as usual, so why did they need such strong houses in which to store this oil? Meanwhile, the knocking and the voice at my door continually urged me to join the wise women. I know that they are doing something interesting, and I see from Whom they are buying their oil, but I have no time to join them. After all, I must serve and accomplish things, while they are constantly studying something and rejoicing over new discoveries and revelations. They continually invite me to join them. But I decide to wait.

Besides, I am exhausted by my workload. I ought to rest. And the wise women do not mind sleeping either. I know that the Lord will warn me if events begin to draw near, so there is no

reason to worry about the future. If something happens, I know where I can buy everything I need, and my foolish companions support my way of thinking. I look and see that the wise women have already dozed off. We are getting sleepy too, and eventually we all fall asleep.

The Lord will not forsake us, for He promised to be with us until the end of the world. Besides, He has already come and is standing at the door, although He wishes to enter only after I make my purchase.

Oh, that gold, those white garments, and that eyesalve! How long can He keep offering them? I even dream about all of it constantly.

How pleasant it is to sleep! They say the brain resets during sleep and can then continue working with renewed strength.

Oh, I will rest! And if there is any danger, the Lord will warn me in advance. He loves to give warnings.

But then the midnight cry awakens us. How dark it is! And the Bridegroom is coming. Where is my lamp? Everything is in place. But for some reason it will not light. Yes, there is no way to manage without oil. And no one will be admitted to the wedding feast without a lamp. The wise women cannot give me any of theirs and advise me to go to those who sell and buy some. But the Seller has gone away! What am I to do? I did not expect this turn of events. The wise really were wise, while we laughed at them and twirled our fingers at our temples. And now they are already at the celebration. Well, I have managed to buy something, and my lamp seems to be burning. I must hurry so that I can make it in time. But the doors leading to the celebration have closed. Wait!!! I am still here!!! Wait for me!!! We want to come too!!! Oh, Jesus, it is us; please open the door! We are here now. Do You not know us? Stop making a mockery of us! You called me by name for so many years and held me by my right hand, and now You say that You do not know me? Did we not prophesy in Your name? And in Your name did we not cast out devils? And in Your name did we not do many wonderful works?

Why do You not know us? Must we depart from You? Are we workers of iniquity? What makes You say that? Please open the door, I beg You, Lord!!!

How terrifying it is to find oneself outside the door! Yet for so many years I heard that voice and those warnings. I saw how the wise were preparing and knew that they possessed something valuable, but I was ignorant, expecting the Lord to tenderly rebuke me once again and offer me something else without expecting anything from me. I was accustomed to receiving everything freely and at no cost. But He did not warn me again; He simply withdrew from me when I finally fell asleep. I was so certain that the time of grace would never end and that I could use it to improve my financial position and build larger barns for my goods. Oh, how much I possess, and how rich I have become! And who will receive it all? Now I am miserable, and everyone around me is miserable too. Suddenly we realize that we have lost something vitally important and precious that will never be ours. Yet it was so near! So accessible!

My house could not withstand the pressure of the waters, which represent the passions of the wicked, and it collapsed. All my plans collapsed with it. What did I live for? What did I believe for? Why was I not interested in what mattered most, and why did I not listen to those who spoke so much about love and happiness in Jesus?

Even now their messages can be watched on YouTube and their books can be read. But it is no longer possible to become what they became. I never imagined that everything would end so quickly. How dark it is! How painful! Oh, if only I could turn everything back, I would devote all my time to seeking!

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 25:1–13; Revelation 3:14–22, especially Revelation 3:18; Matthew 7:21–27; Habakkuk 2:9–14; Psalm 127:1–2; Jeremiah 29:5–7; 1 Corinthians 3:10–17; 4:1–5; 1 Peter 4:10

Chapter 70

Prayer is the channel through which great prospects for development, growth, and renewal open before me. It is an entire science that one may explore intuitively and eventually come to understand its power, or one may find people of prayer who will reveal its secret and teach one how to use it properly.

At times I get the impression that the subjects of studying the Bible together and praying together are not very popular among God's people. People do not like to talk about these things, much less practice them, and only through the personal initiative of certain individuals does anything move forward. I am not claiming that this is universally the case, but from my observations I draw conclusions about what I see around me.

When we hold prayer groups after the worship service, I always invite everyone who is still in the church to join us. Surprisingly, however, many take my invitation as a request to leave the room, and they quickly depart or step outside. These people are willing simply to sit and do nothing, but not to be with us in prayer. Meanwhile, we turn to our Heavenly Father and ask for His blessing and His involvement in the life of our entire congregation. We also ask Him to answer other needs, and then we part until our next meeting.

In my own life, I have noticed the following. It is difficult to pray together with those who have no interest in you as a friend, who do not desire a close relationship with you, and who avoid you. This is why one does not feel drawn to any fellowship: the prayers offered together become formal and empty, even though we are addressing God, and He hears us.

Yet we need to pray together. There is a special power in it. But when Jesus and I are left alone together, my heart pours out all its needs and concerns, and joy comes.

I remember my first prayer to God. When I was a boy of about seven, I was walking into a room where my parents were waiting to beat me with a belt for my misdeeds. I was very afraid, and I prayed, "God, if You exist, protect me from being

beaten.” I prayed that prayer only once, and I do not even remember how it ended.

Now I ask the Lord to help me in everything, and I bother Him with every little matter at any time. I believe that He hears me and takes part in my life.

The beauty of prayer depends on the relationships among the people who are praying, on my relationship with God, and on how deeply we believe in the power of prayer. We can receive God’s finest and most beautiful blessings only in answer to the prayer of faith. The Lord has many precious treasures that we will not receive casually, without thirsting and asking for them, because He respects our freedom and will not impose anything upon us against our will. He therefore waits with joy for those who understand that He is abundantly rich toward everyone who asks Him to give what is needed.

If I had a great deal of extra money, went out into the street, and began approaching every passerby with the offer, “May I give you a million?” people would consider me a fraud and avoid me. Giving away millions is not customary among us.

Once my friends were in an accident, and their car was reduced to a heap of scrap metal. They began asking God for another car, and the Lord answered in an interesting way. They were given something resembling a car, and then they complained to me that the thing could barely move. In the end, we established that it really was a car, that it had been given to them in answer to their prayer for an automobile, and that because their prayer had not specified what the gift should be like, the Lord had presented them with something that was called a car and could even move. We concluded that in requests like this, we need to specify every detail to God, even the desired color.

I know people who believe that one should ask God only about major problems, but from personal experience I understand that our Lord is the God of little things and details. When He created us, He carefully designed every cell so that it would fit perfectly into the overall composition of the body. And when I examine any flower or living creature—even a fly—I marvel at

the harmony, perfection, and every carefully conceived detail that the Lord placed within His creation.

Can it really be that the One Who cared so wisely for every detail of my body and gave it a mind and soul has no concern for the little things in my life? I will not believe it.

The prayers of people who are estranged in spirit and relationship differ radically from the prayers of those who love one another and do everything possible to bring joy to their neighbors. There is a special beauty in the union of souls, which brings like-minded people together into teams. Through them, God very successfully carries out His plans while allowing these people to choose for themselves how they will serve.

There is a special power and a secret in united prayer that, for some reason, not everyone knows.

In Matthew 18:20 we read: “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” In the past, when I read these words, I understood them to mean that God is among us when there are two or more of us, and I believed it. This is indeed true, but the preceding verse reveals another meaning of this promise. Matthew 18:19 says: “Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father Which is in Heaven.” Christ’s lesson is that if we decide to ask Him for a new car, then all of us who are praying should discuss the matter in detail and afterward pray only for the new car, without mentioning our friends, relatives, every possible need, and global problems. God desires to teach us to concentrate on what we need and, when we are together, to ask Him specifically for it. Then we should also mention these shared needs in our personal prayers. And it will be granted to us.

Sometimes I conduct an experiment and ask my friends to pray for me, because I too greatly need support from others. Then I watch and listen attentively to what they will pray about, and somewhere deep within my soul I modestly hope to hear my own name. Usually, however, they offer the familiar requests

for everything we need each day, and then I pray for myself, remaining alone with Jesus. Yet specific prayer offered together works miracles, and we receive what we ask for.

If we decide to ask for something together, then everyone praying should understand and remember exactly what we are praying for and ask only for that, though approaching it from different aspects of our understanding. During such a prayer, we must also remember Jesus' promise to answer prayers of this kind.

It is a simple lesson, but for some reason we do not know this secret of success in our prayer life.

If I have a splinter in my finger that is causing me constant discomfort and I want to remove it, what is happening in the world and the current exchange rate of the dollar are not very important to me. If I direct all my strength toward solving my problem and enlist specialists to help, I believe the outcome will be exactly what was intended.

In prayer itself, I receive satisfaction, peace, and comfort from communicating with God. Often peace comes to my heart as soon as I begin speaking with the Lord. But the beauty of prayer is found in the answer. I understand that my Heavenly Father is alive and takes part in my life. And I love.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 18:19–20; Psalm 139:2–10; Isaiah 65:23–24; 66:1–2; James 1:5–8; Acts 4:24–31; 7:59; 8:14–17; 9:40; 12:5–8, 12; Nehemiah 4:8–9; John 17:1–26; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 9:28–29; 24:44

Chapter 71

There was a time when I rented an apartment in a basement, and I asked the owner of the house for permission to expand our living space. He agreed. I drew up a plan, made a doorway in the wall adjoining the basement, prepared materials for the partitions, and began building them, incorporating part of the basement into my new apartment. My four-year-old daughter volunteered to be my helper, so I set aside some tools and materials for her and kept an eye on what she would build. Her enthusiasm knew no bounds. She worked with all her heart, creating something unlike anything else. I could hardly think of a name for her structure, but it was her masterpiece, and it brought great joy to her heart. As a loving father, I praised her, and together we enjoyed what we were doing. In the end, we had a new room—and something very strange standing in the middle of it. We decided to leave the walls in place but dismantle our daughter's strange masterpiece. Our joy knew no bounds when we realized that we now had a larger apartment for the same rent. Several years later, however, the owner of the house died, and we had to move elsewhere.

As I worked in construction and renovated other people's homes, I often noticed that the owners were always delighted with what I did. I would think about how happy I would be if I were building for myself. Yet because of certain circumstances, I never ventured to take that step.

At last, my dream has come true. I am building my own little house of happiness, in which I will live forever and forever rejoice in its strong walls and firm Foundation.

The next brick for my little house of happiness is called "I build happiness." I believe that the very process of building my happiness brings that happiness into my life. If it does not, then I am doing something wrong, doing it in the wrong way, or using the wrong materials. When I have God's plans and set before myself a goal toward which I begin to move, I have every opportunity to build what is called happiness. Knowledge of the

theory helps me choose the most suitable materials for my little house and build upon the firmest Foundation.

Without a plan, without knowing the laws of construction, or without understanding the materials, I too will build something, and it will delight my heart until trials come. Then I will sit in the dampness of my tears and shiver from the cold of my fears, unable to understand why everything is so bad, even though I am a believer who has read the Bible and attended worship services all my life.

Every kind of construction has its laws and rests upon them, not upon my imagination. If the walls and all the load-bearing structures have been built properly, the house can be furnished however one wishes and painted any color.

But after building happiness, I must continually inspect it and protect it from damage and plunder, because the world in which I still live is very dangerous and unpredictable.

I build happiness. This is perhaps the most fascinating occupation of my life, and the little word “I” gives special meaning to the process under way and opens the captivating prospect of building throughout Eternity. My personal participation in constructing my little house of happiness brings remarkable satisfaction to my heart. I understand that if I begin to build and adhere to all of God’s designs and the laws of construction, I will build precisely what is called happiness. But whether or not I will be happy within it is also for me to decide. And I choose happiness.

Many questions arise:

What are we building? Happiness.

Are you sure we will succeed? Yes, because the Bible teaches this.

Will it withstand the trials to come? Yes, if all the necessary materials are present and there are no breaches in it.

Are you sure this is the very house needed for the last days? Yes, this one, because we have been given no instructions for

any other structure. Therefore, we should not invent something that has no biblical foundation.

But not everyone wants to build. Will no alternative be given to others? God will give His light to everyone who has a relationship with Him and will convince each person that it is necessary to build, upon Whom to build, and what materials to use in the work.

I do not believe in your construction project; it sounds rather absurd and childish! That is your right and your choice. You may call it by another name, but the laws of construction will remain the same, and the building materials will not change.

Are you not being overly self-confident in your undertakings? If I build according to God's laws, this is called trusting in the One Who never makes a mistake and having confidence in the Salvation given to everyone who chooses the narrow path.

What if I refuse to believe you and choose a better path? You do not need to believe me. Believe God and follow Him, and we will certainly meet. Our paths will cross. If we are traveling south but each chooses his own route according to his own compass, we will all meet at the South Pole at the end of the journey. So have a good journey, friends.

What if it turns out that you are deceiving us and leading us astray with your stories, and that we will all perish if we believe your publications? If there is deceit in my words, God's Spirit will certainly show it to you and, on the basis of the Bible, give you a correct understanding of the person with whom you are dealing.

You are most likely a performer who wants to gain more followers! If my followers enter Eternity because of my publications, then I am willing to play this role until the Second Coming.

But you are building outside the Church, and you have no official construction permit from the governing body of God's Organization! Our work does not contradict God's requirements; it is founded upon His counsels and laws and is

directed toward building up the body of the Church and strengthening the love of its members for one another within this Organization of God. It is not an independent channel for the salvation of a narrow circle of chosen people.

Everything we build is not done in a corner. We are open to every examination and will welcome any suggestions and recommendations. We are also very happy as we carry out this important work.

What is your attitude toward politics? We are not of this world. We have more important work to do, and we have no time to be distracted by what is temporary and changeable.

I am bored with you. You have so much material, and it all requires a great deal of time, which I do not have! We too have no time for what is passing away, but we find and set aside time for what is Eternal. Once I have established my priorities, I will not do what I consider unimportant and unnecessary. Every construction project requires time, which must be found, set apart, and invested in exchange for the goods offered to Laodicea. The house will not build itself without my effort; without my knowledge it will not be strong; and without God it will not be protected.

You irritate me! Like a parrot, you talk about nothing but love, happiness, and friendship!!! There are many parrots in our world; choose one that suits your heart. As for us, we are building happiness, and we are very happy. We love one another and are becoming friends forever. We will never grow weary of telling others about it. God is with us, teaching us this love, and we are succeeding. What joy it is!

It would be strange to build happiness and be unhappy while doing so.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Genesis 6:11–17; Luke 17:26–30; 6:46–49; Exodus 36:1–2; 39:32; 40:16, 34–35; Psalm 118:21–26; 1 Corinthians 3:9–17; 4:1–5; Ephesians 3:2–21; Titus 1:7; Colossians 1:25–27; 1 Peter 4:10

Chapter 72

A window is an opening designed in the wall or roof of a house during construction to let light and fresh air into the room. Such an opening is the quickest way for a room to lose heat, so glazed frames were placed in the walls to retain the warmth inside the house. These are what we call windows.

Our little house of happiness also has windows designed by God. All the building materials from which my house is constructed are within me and are securely protected from physical impact. But because I live in a physical world, the windows of the soul connect my inner world with the world outside through my senses. I have five of them: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. Yet there are also such things as intuition, discernment, and love, which connect my heart with the spiritual world.

We human beings are very complex creatures, possessing higher and lower powers of self-government. The higher powers include the will, reason, and intellect; the lower powers include feelings, emotions, appetite, and instincts. Calling them lower does not mean that they are bad or sinful. It means that they must remain subordinate to the higher powers and obey every decision from above. But sin has overturned the spiritual order, and now it has become normal for the lower powers to control a person’s reason and will and destroy the intellect within people, reducing them to the level of animals.

The windows of the soul in my little house of happiness are the part of the structure most often attacked. Every wind of doctrine tries to enter the house, while darkness seeks to engulf everything within me and fill me with all kinds of rubbish.

The enemy of the soul looks for every opportunity to enter the house specifically through its windows. The walls are very strong, there are no gaps in the joints between the bricks, and love gives the entire structure exceptional strength. If the enemy cannot find a breach in the wall or replace the true bricks with false ones, he climbs through the windows of the

soul, inviting me to look at, listen to, or taste something that will revive within me the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and will open the doors of my heart to every kind of temptation. A constant battle is being waged for my reason, which sits by the window to warm itself in the sunshine of truth, while something gloomy and dark is offered to it instead. But even here I can choose.

My reason consults my intellect, reads the law written in my heart, alerts my will to the danger, and restrains my senses so that they do not come into contact with the powers of darkness.

Jesus often warned me that whoever has an ear should hear—not merely sounds, but the meaning of what God has said.

My ears are inclined to listen to everything indiscriminately. But because of my friendship with Christ, my heart receives a Heavenly filter that is firmly oriented toward biblical truth and immediately signals my reason about approaching danger or special blessings. When pure Divine light streams through these windows, my will opens the doors of my heart to admit both the light and its Author. When He enters the house, He sets it in order and writes His laws and statutes upon my heart. They teach me to distinguish truth from falsehood and warn my conscience of danger.

For example, if you hear a story claiming that Moses brought pairs of clean and unclean animals into the ark, God’s filter immediately engages and reminds me of what the Bible actually says. If I have heard this account from Holy Scripture, I will recognize the truth at once, though I may overlook some details.

Some people may interpret Bible verses incorrectly while neither distorting their meaning nor misrepresenting the spirit of truth, and my filter allows this to pass. Yet the enemy of the soul may quote God’s words precisely but present them in a false light. Then my heart senses the danger and closes itself.

For example, if I understand the parable of the rich man and Lazarus literally and build upon it an entire doctrine of eternal torment and a fiery hell, my heart may admit this teaching and

convince my will that it must be true because it agrees with what is written. In this way, however, God's character is distorted, and I begin to let the enemy of the soul into the house. He then attaches his own doctrines to this account: the immortality of the soul; an eternal hell where sinful souls suffer forever; and the cruelty of a God Who gives sinners Eternal life so that they will never die. As a result, my happiness collapses from within and my heart loses its peace. It begins to serve such a Creator as a Tyrant Who is capable of punishing me at any moment if I betray the faith of my ancestors. And how can such people be helped? The windows of their souls are closed to the truth because their hearts will admit nothing else.

My eyes are directly connected to my heart. They love to look and can never be satisfied with seeing. They see everything. But my heart guides my eyes and warns them about indecent and dangerous things that I should not set before myself.

For example, if I see a woman dressed indecently, my eyes immediately notice every exposed feature of her body and her manner of behavior. My carnal nature comes alive and seeks to lead me into lust, but my reason, purified by love, alerts me to the danger by reminding me of Christ's words about purity of thought. My will activates its defenses, and I now see before me a deceived soul who may not even realize that she has become an instrument of Satan, sowing temptation by her very appearance. My reason begins to look for an opportunity to help this deceived soul understand that she has become an unclean source of degrading temptation. But because outward appearance is not a doctrinal criterion, I can only protect my own conscience from temptation.

Yet my eyes want to see everything. If my heart installs filters in one area, the enemy tries to tempt my soul in another, offering every possible form of sin. Large cities are filled with many temptations to which the heart becomes accustomed until it no longer reacts to them. But a journey into the countryside shows the soul the striking contrast between God's beauty and the achievements of civilization, and the heart finds peace in nature as my eyes connect it with God's creation.

Different scents attract my attention and send signals that awaken either a healthy or a perverted appetite. Once again, reason analyzes the situation and gives directions to my will. I once tried smelling an onion while eating an apple with my eyes closed. It seemed as though I were eating the onion.

If my sense of taste is not under the God-guided control of reason, it can fill my body with anything at all. Then my will grows weak and allows appetite to control my desires.

My body responds to temperature, touch, and physical pain, and the enemy of the soul can also use these windows of the soul for his temptations. Many people surrender their bodies to the power of sensual pleasures, depriving their souls of Divine protection while imagining themselves to be happy.

My intellect desires to develop, but the direction my will gives it depends on the kind of light I allow through the windows of my soul.

Agape love is the very best filter for my heart. It is God’s voice and responds instantly to every danger that threatens the soul. It commands my will to take precautions. Then the windows close, still admitting light but protecting my little house from storms and sinful temptations.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Luke 11:34; Psalm 101:2–8; Matthew 5:27–30; 6:22–23; 11:6; 16:22–23; 18:6–9; Mark 4:9–20; Romans 14:20; 16:17; 1 John 2:10; Song of Solomon 2:9; Isaiah 54:11–15; Jeremiah 9:21; John 10:1–2, 10

Chapter 73

A door is an opening in the wall of a building designed for entering and leaving it, which is opened or closed by one or more panels. These panels are called doors or gates. We can also speak of interior doorways that allow movement from one room of a house to another. A door is usually planned for the most visible, accessible, and convenient location.

In my little house of happiness, the door represents the entrance into my soul, into my very heart, which can be opened or closed only with my personal consent.

My heart is the most important part of the little house of happiness. It determines what my happiness will be, whether it will exist at all, what it will be built from, and how it will be preserved. This is my self, which is the object of God's special love and His cherished desire, as well as a special target for the attacks of Satan and his forces. Yet I have been given the right to choose and decide whom and what I may allow into my heart and what I will feed the spiritual person within me called the soul.

The door of the soul is that vitally important opening through which only those whom I consider necessary to admit may enter and leave. My freedom gives me the right to choose my guests and the standards of conduct accepted in my little house.

Jesus deeply desires to have me as His friend, as someone dear and close to Him. With all His Heart, He offers Himself to me, declaring that He is the true entrance into my little house.

As we read John chapter 10, we see Christ's declaration that He Himself is the Door. John 10:6 says, "This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them." Do you, my friends, understand the meaning of these symbols? The Lord gives a direct answer. We read in John 10:9: "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

Is this definition clear to you? What does a door have to do with it? What is this pasture or grazing land? We could spend a very long time trying to guess. And if we recall the message to Laodicea—that Jesus has come, is standing at the door, and is knocking—it becomes even more intriguing and puzzling. How can Someone, while being Someone, knock upon Himself?

But the Lord had a special purpose in speaking through parables. He wished to protect His mission from superficial listeners. In essence, every parable or allegory is a closed door to anyone who wishes to enter merely out of curiosity or who has evil intentions. The Lord could have explained every detail of the plan of Salvation, carefully written out all the instructions step by step, and revealed every danger—and He did so when speaking with His disciples. But the most important truths are concealed within mysterious symbols.

Consider, for example, the possessions that are most vital for the last days: my name in the Book of Life, oil for the lamp, God's seal, the goods offered to Laodicea, belonging to the 144,000, and the building of a sturdy house. If you are hearing these things for the first time, what do you understand? Only what is written. But what do they mean? Their meaning is revealed to those who have a personal friendship with Jesus and desire to delve into His teaching so that they may find a precious treasure for themselves and discover joy and salvation in it.

The Door is the teaching of Christ, which enables my mind to enter God's storehouses of love and happiness and continually discover the beauty of the Lord's character, filling my soul with these discoveries and bringing joy to my heart. Jesus desires His teaching to become the door of my heart and to open for His personal presence as my Interpreter and Inspirer. This is the meaning and wisdom of God's plan for my happiness. No one understands the laws of blessedness better than Jesus, and no one loves as He does. Therefore, by choosing His teaching as the door of my soul, I run the risk of becoming the happiest and most loving person.

Yet Jesus' parable of the door contains the following statement. We read in John 10:2–3: "But he that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. To Him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear His voice…" Here we encounter the word "porter." Who is this? It is my will, connected to my intellect, which considers the information it receives, consults with my reason, and is the very part of my heart that Christ desires to have as His bride. My will knows the voice of the Heavenly Friend and distinguishes it from a thousand other voices that seek to burst into my little house through the windows and doors or find cracks in its walls. Although the Lord knows all my peculiarities and weaknesses, He still chooses to enter only through the Door—which is His teaching—and only I can open it to Him by a decision of my will. Everything is so simple and yet wonderfully mysterious. Everything within me belongs to God; I myself belong to God; I am in God, and He is in me. Yet He always waits for my decision, even after I have admitted Him into my heart. Jesus sets my soul in order and makes it clean, but at the slightest indication from me, He is ready to stop His work and leave.

The special protection of my house, however, consists in this: it is not I who hold God in my hand and decide what to do with Him; rather, He holds me firmly in His great and mighty hand, allowing no one to steal my love or destroy my happiness.

The enemy of the soul also desires to become a door. He is ready to call himself by any name or even pass himself off as a god, and woe to me if I install that door. Satan's teaching has much in common with God's truth. It is logical and harmonizes with my carnal nature. But this door leads to death, and through it unhappiness enters my life.

By telling me that I am unhappy, the Lord makes it clear that my life is not in order, the door of my heart is very flimsy, and the windows of my soul admit many unnecessary things into the house. But by becoming my Door, Jesus can give me true treasure for my soul and joy for my heart. He will spend time with me and teach me everything that I desire to discover and

understand. My thirst will unseal new springs of wonderful discoveries.

The teaching of Christ is unique because it possesses crystalline purity without dangerous impurities and reveals new qualities of God’s love and wisdom, which become mine as I dig them out and acquire them.

My little house of happiness is a dwelling place for my self. It is the abode of my heart and a home for my soul. I personally decide where to place my soul. I choose happiness—happiness in Jesus. I install the right doors, inspect the windows, and begin to live. I notice that my path becomes beautiful in such pure surroundings. My life is abundant, and no end to it can be seen. Somewhere at the conclusion of my earthly journey, I see the place where I will rest, but then comes the beautiful morning of the glorious Resurrection, when I will continue my discoveries throughout unending Eternity. If my happiness already brings me joy here, I can only imagine what it will be like there, where there will be no unhappiness. If I already love here, how wonderful it will be to love there, where all of this will be Eternal!

Love is the little key to the door of my house of happiness. With this key, each of you may come to visit me and bring even greater joy to Jesus and me. We dearly love helping unhappy people build something beautiful in their lives and become a blessing to those around them. And we are very good at it.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Proverbs 3:5; 4:23; James 5:8–9; John 10:1–10; Exodus 12:22–23; Psalm 24:7–10; Isaiah 26:20–21; Jeremiah 49:31–32; Micah 7:5–7; Malachi 1:7–10; Matthew 6:6; 25:10; Colossians 4:3; Revelation 3:7–8, 20

Chapter 74

A roof is the uppermost part of a house. It gives the building a finished appearance and protects it from all kinds of precipitation, wind, cold, and heat.

When I began building houses, I was always interested in the steel connections between their various parts. I understood that these connections had to be there because they provided special strength. We built most houses so that the foundation was firmly connected to the roof by reinforcing steel that passed through all the walls of the house, from the very bottom to the very top. As I reflected on this design, I realized that such a connection gives the building itself special strength in the event of an earthquake and holds the roof firmly in place during a hurricane.

Once I attended a camp meeting in another country. As I visited my friends' homes, I was surprised to discover that roofs in their region were simply laid upon the brickwork and lightly fastened with ordinary screws. When I asked whether their village had ever experienced problems with roofs, one man told me which roofs had been blown away during the most recent hurricane and where it had happened. I took note of this information.

Have you ever heard Russian expressions that literally mean, "His roof has been blown off," or "His roof has slipped"? I think a Russian-speaking person understands what they mean, but if a foreigner wishes to grasp these phrases, someone will have to explain that the person has "lost his marbles" or has "bats in his belfry." Germans express the same idea by saying that someone has "a bird in his head," "is acting like a spider," or "has eaten spiders." And so we enrich our vocabulary.

As I built my little house of happiness, I took all these features into account and decided to construct it in such a way that my roof would always remain in place and would cover the entire building, strong, beautiful, and reliable. This structure is called "imputed and imparted righteousness." At first, I did not

understand why it had such a complicated name, but while building my little house, I discovered that this unique structure is given to me by the Chief Engineer Himself when I choose the Rock as the Foundation of my building. It covers me throughout the entire construction process like a cloud by day and gives light like a pillar of fire by night, thereby protecting me from every kind of bad weather and making everything bright and visible.

This roof is imputed to me as my own possession at the very beginning of construction, simply because I have decided to step onto this narrow path, even though I have not yet made any effort to acquire it and know nothing about its design. As I build my little house of happiness, I discover new features of my roof, study the principles of its strength, become better acquainted with its Designer, test all its load-bearing characteristics, examine its outward appearance, insulate it, and decorate it from within. In time, I realize that it would be very good for my roof to be firmly connected to the Foundation. To accomplish this, I extend the corners of the building—“I love,” “I believe,” “I am faithful,” and “I thirst”—all the way to the top and install a reinforced bond beam called “I am steadfast” around the entire perimeter. I secure the roof firmly with the bolts of “light and truth.” In the middle of the little house, I decide to support the roof with two pillars, “I pray” and “I fast,” further connecting them to the foundation with the “hooks of trust,” filling them inside with the “golden oil of love,” and also attaching them to the roof with the bolts of “light and truth.”

On hot summer days or in the bitter cold of winter, I climb to the space directly beneath the roof of my little house of happiness and check how hot or cold it becomes. To protect the interior of my little house from excessive heat or cold, I insulate the inside of the roof with eight layers of insulation called “the laws of health.” To keep any infection or disease from penetrating this thermal insulation, I decide to study its composition and keep its quality under constant supervision. Although this material cannot serve as the Foundation of

happiness, its absence brings much suffering and premature death; therefore, I decide that the roof ought to be insulated.

While I am building my little house of happiness and securing and insulating its roof, I notice that my roof is being transformed from “imputed righteousness” into “imparted righteousness.” I did not invent these terms; they are part of the Chief Engineer’s plans. I see how harmoniously my little house is designed, how wisely its Architect planned every detail and component, and how visible it becomes to everyone else. It is like a city set upon a hill, and it shines especially brightly even at night.

Throughout the construction process, love is constantly bustling around my feet and testing every part for strength and every little brick for quality. It permits no defects and keeps everything under control. At the proper time, it opens the windows of the soul to let in light and fresh air and to welcome my friends and neighbors. At the very first knock, love runs to the door and brings the Good Shepherd into my little house—the One Who calls out when He approaches the door and knocks. Love knows this voice and always responds to it. It never mistakes it for the voices of strangers and does not admit outsiders; when danger arises, it immediately closes every window and door.

When I invite the Good Shepherd to supper, we sit down at the table, and love begins to serve us. It confidently takes all His gifts and provisions out of the Dear Guest’s basket and offers them to me, while I share my own preserves and delicacies. We enjoy pleasant fellowship around the abundant table, and our love serves us and gladdens our hearts.

My Good Friend promises that in the near future He will seat me beside Himself on His throne if I remain faithful in love, friendship, and happiness and use these instruments to overcome every temptation. I listen to all this and realize that much is still not entirely clear to me, yet I decide to love and be happy in every situation and in every kind of weather. My Shepherd tells me about a wonderful future and explains that the laws of Eternal happiness are available even now and that

my little house meets their standards. Together we rejoice in life and sing Heavenly melodies, touching the strings of each other's souls.

Yet I am constantly drawn to speak about visible things, about what is relevant to my present life, and I greatly desire to learn more about the insulation in the roof. My Good Friend begins to reveal to me the mysteries of health, which prove to be so simple and unique that even children can understand them.

He teaches me that the insulation called "the laws of health" is given to all people at birth as a gift from Heaven and must be carefully preserved without damaging its overall structure. Then it will protect you from the cold of disease and the scorching heat of bacteria until you squander or lose it. But if you lose it, your little house of happiness will be filled from within with difficult trials. They will not deprive you of Eternal hope, but they will bring many cares and needless sufferings.

How interesting, simple, and mysterious all this is! The Lord has already planned everything for me. He has given me everything necessary for happiness, builds together with me, repairs every defect, tenderly cares for the building's strength and integrity, and fills it all with agape love. Yet at times I look at it and wonder whether I really need all this and whether I truly want to be happy. Should I study all of it and spend my precious time on it?

Bible verses for this chapter:

Matthew 5:19–20; Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1–8; James 2:23; Deuteronomy 6:25; 9:3–6; Proverbs 11:19; 14:34; Isaiah 64:6; Ezekiel 33:12–13; Romans 5:1–2, 19–21; 14:17; Galatians 3:21; Revelation 19:8

Chapter 75

Have you ever had this experience? Your heart is rejoicing, but it forgets to tell your face about it. This often happens to me. How can such a phenomenon be explained? It is a very difficult mystery. Sometimes people remind me that a smile looks very good on me. I quickly take it out, put it on, and smile. A smile conveys my mood very well. It can reveal the condition of my heart to those who see it.

A smile is the contraction of the muscles on both sides of the face, stretching the mouth toward the ears in order to communicate your mood or inner condition to others.

Someone has counted about twenty kinds of smiles, six of which are associated with happiness.

A sincere smile of joy and pleasure is especially attractive because of its purity and beauty. It has a charming effect on the person for whom it is intended. Smiling people attract attention, make others feel comfortable talking with them, possess persuasive power, and are simply pleasant to look at.

Psychologists have taken note of the influence of a smile and have successfully introduced it into show business and business culture. If you want to sell something, you need to adorn your product with the happy smile of the person who owns it.

If you want people to elect you to some office, you need to smile broadly on your campaign posters.

A smile is also the calling card of my happiness. It is difficult to imagine happiness without a smile. If I speak about happiness with a frightening expression of pain and suffering, I do not think my words will be as convincing as I would like them to be.

A smile knows how to speak, and it tells us a great deal. When I talk with someone on the phone, I can quickly tell from the sound of the voice whether that person is smiling. Even the simple act of drawing the lips into a smile immediately changes the voice and gives it a special beauty.

How do you picture joy? I think it must include a smiling face—one that expresses its feelings with complete sincerity.

When I meet face-to-face with those I love, those who bring joy to my heart and are very dear to me, I cannot hide my smile. It automatically reveals what I am feeling. It presents the real me to others. There is something very precious in this that brightens our everyday lives.

The enemy of souls has also taken note of the distinctive power of a smile. A smiling Satan, together with his cheerful agents and representatives, appears more pleasant to the world and can deceive far more people than the angry grimace of a horned creature. Unfortunately, many take this bait and decide to follow a smiling leader without using their reason to understand who that person really is and what he is offering.

But we are building happiness. True happiness possesses genuine love, and that love naturally expresses itself in a sincere smile. It is difficult to believe that a person is happy when he looks very gloomy. Although our little house is built of the most substantial materials and carries us through the fire of trials, it is still worth smiling—or at least always remembering that a smile is good advertising for my happiness.

When I read that Jesus will behold the travail of His soul and be satisfied, I somehow picture Him smiling joyfully. Beside Him I see the Heavenly Father and the angels smiling as well. It is very difficult for me to imagine God’s satisfaction in any other way. I believe the happy smile of Jesus will dispel all our fears, answer many difficult questions, solve many problems, and give us peace and confidence that we have been accepted. Without a word, Christ’s simple smile will show us how precious we are to Him and how deeply He loves us. When my eyes meet the gaze of my Savior, I believe my heart will tremble with an overwhelming joy that I will be unable to contain. My face will spread into a happy smile, and without unnecessary words I will let my Lord know that I love Him and am deeply grateful for everything He has done for me. He will smile back at me, and it will be the smile of His infinite love—the love that led Him to Calvary. One day that meeting will take place.

It is difficult for me to picture a stern Jesus addressing the redeemed without a smile of satisfaction: “Well then, sinners, enter into the joy of your Lord!” I think panic would break out among the saved: “Are we sure we came to the right place?”

Joy includes a joyful smile.

If I live in sin, my smile will not be able to hide it; any impurity makes my happiness seem false.

Have you watched little children smile? How genuine they are in expressing their emotions, and how pure and sincere their smiles are! There is a lesson in this for us. In our happiness and sincerity, we become like children, and it shows very clearly on our faces.

Whatever your mood may be, try right now to stretch your lips into a smile and hold them in that position. The contraction of those muscles immediately signals the brain that something good is happening in your life, and the forced smile becomes genuine and happy. This is a law of our emotional world. So smile, friends, and your smile will help you become the person happiness is making you.

A gloomy face also sends signals to the brain and fills the heart with sadness. But that is not who we are.

Love knows how to smile, and it always does so joyfully and from a pure heart.

One day my wife and I went to hear a preacher. I sat there concentrating on the meaning of what he said and did not notice the details. But after the sermon, my wife told me indignantly that the man was dry and lifeless because he had not smiled even once.

Do you want those closest to you to see you as dry and unapproachable? Then forget about smiling, and that is exactly what you will become. The best way to find yourself without friends is to stop smiling. Even those closest to us subconsciously prefer to keep their distance from friends who never smile. The bolder ones ask, “Why are you so sad?”

But a smile is a spiritual magnet that draws everyone and everything toward it. Even though I know how empty advertising can be, my eyes still stop on a smiling face. I study it closely and try to understand how truly happy that person is.

A smile makes a person beautiful. Even the least attractive appearance is transformed into something lovely and kind by a happy smile.

A smile of happiness brings joy not only to me but also to those at whom I smile. It is the most effective seed, instantly producing abundant fruit. Smile at anyone, and that person will immediately smile back.

Once I was in Moscow and early in the morning went to meet my sister. We met, smiled, and headed to her workplace. I was happy, smiling broadly and sharing my feelings with someone dear to me. She told me how tired she was and how much she wanted to sleep, smiling from time to time. I began to notice the people traveling somewhere at seven in the morning. There was not a single smile—only a gray mass of worried faces—and against that background my joy was strikingly conspicuous. But I choose a happy life, and I share that happiness with others.

I can imagine how dangerous it will be to smile during the time of trouble, when chaos reigns everywhere. I believe that a heart at peace with God and living in the little house of happiness will spread into a smile even when everything around it is going badly. The preparation for that time is taking place now. Smile!

Bible verses for this chapter:

Isaiah 53:11; Zephaniah 3:17; 1 Timothy 6:6–8; Ecclesiastes 8:15; 9:7–9; Isaiah 35:10; Esther 8:16–17; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Psalms 31:8; 35:9; 89:14; James 1:2; 3 John 1:3–4; Job 38:6–7; Habakkuk 3:17–18

Chapter 76

If you ask any young person what happiness is, he will most likely tell you about the prospect of personal growth and about the goals and plans whose fulfillment will bring him the joy of bliss. Or he may say that happiness is being loved and valued, or having parents who do not quarrel.

But if I ask the same question of people of retirement age, they will all answer unequivocally that happiness is being healthy and having nothing that hurts.

Although health is neither the foundation of happiness nor one of the bricks in our little house, its presence creates comfort and warmth and allows us to think calmly about other things as we plan a happy life.

Why can health not be a component of my happiness? Because it is something that can be lost at any time, regardless of my plans for life. Health may be lost through a viral illness, injury, accident, disability, mental disorder, an unhealthy lifestyle, sinful addictions, self-harm, and many other causes. We invariably begin to value what has been irretrievably lost. If my happiness rested on my health or the health of my family and household, then when that health is lost, my bliss collapses with it.

Health and family are additional sources of joy and pleasure that beautify life and fill it with meaning and satisfaction, but when they are lost, they cause immeasurable pain to the heart and anguish to the mind. If my little house rests on such a temporary foundation, I risk its collapse, after which recovery may be impossible or extremely difficult.

Health is given to me as a gift by my Creator when I enter the world. If I have no congenital defects or hereditary diseases, my body develops according to the ordinary laws of health. This initial endowment, given to me in childhood, sustains me into middle age, protecting me from various ailments and building my immunity to all kinds of diseases. But if I do not understand the need to safeguard my health, one day I may realize that it

has suddenly run out and that a season of ailments and diseases has begun. They now cling to me from every side and spoil my life. If I hasten this process through ignorance and an improper lifestyle, I may cause chronic diseases to become my best and most faithful lifelong companions at a very early age, unwilling ever to leave me.

To prevent such a prospect, I am offered eight layers of insulation for my little house of happiness, called the Laws of Health.

The physical well-being of each of us is governed by universal laws that protect us from harm and misfortune. It is worth knowing these laws and building our lives within their boundaries. When problems arise in my body, I am usually offered treatment and products for healing or therapy. But it would be wise first to learn the cause of my illness and examine my lifestyle according to every one of the laws of health.

In our day, a healthy lifestyle has become a trend, and everyone who feels so inclined talks about it. Yet many folk healers do not even know that laws governing this healthy lifestyle exist—laws that operate in the life of everyone who pursues health and bring consequences upon those who violate them.

I think every sensible person understands that illness is not caused by a deficiency of pills or medications in the body. Unfortunately, many people want to use precisely these means to restore their health quickly or eliminate emerging ailments. They do not even ask why they became ill. Meanwhile, the enemy of souls plunges the world into ignorance regarding the laws of health and replaces them with human discoveries and achievements.

Does a joint hurt? We will replace it with a prosthesis.

Do you have a fever? We will bring it down with pills.

Does your throat hurt? We will remove your tonsils.

Do you have cancer? We will give you chemotherapy.

But perhaps I should first consider what is wrong in my life and, after identifying the cause of the damage to my health, return to God’s standards.

The following often happens: when I examine myself in the light of the laws of health, find what is wrong, and correct it, my well-being is restored. The body activates its natural mechanisms, and the illness goes away.

It is also worth noting that nature and health are not blind forces filled with random patterns. They are God’s instruments through which our Creator governs our bodies, giving them what He considers necessary. Sometimes a sick person who desires to return to the laws of nature and live in harmony with its Creator receives Divine healing as a gift from the Lord and understands that a miracle has taken place in his life. He then begins to treat his body more carefully and care for it tenderly.

The eight layers of insulation that together, in their complete integrity, constitute the laws of health are called:

1. Fresh air.

2. Pure water.

3. Sunlight.

4. Proper nutrition.

5. Temperance and abstinence from harmful things.

6. Rest.

7. Physical activity.

8. Faith in God.

If I want to be healthy, all these components must be present in my life in complete harmony with one another. If even one component is removed or replaced with a counterfeit, illness will not be long in coming. It will attach itself to the body like an invited guest and begin dictating how I should suppress its symptoms and flare-ups.

The purpose of this lesson is not to belittle medicine, but to turn the mind toward the natural, original, Divine laws that operate in every person's life in the same way and promote health.

If I begin drinking pure water instead of contaminated water, it renews my body, and the Lord works together with this process, bringing about great changes within me. The same is true of every law. A law operates regardless of my status in the world and applies equally to all people. It protects from illness those who observe it.

If, for example, I faithfully observe all seven laws of health but do not believe in God or entrust my life to Him, then the eighth law will read this way in my life:

8. Faith in the devil.

And he will make sure to ruin my life and make me very unhappy as he sees fit, even though he may leave my health untouched.

The Creator has reserved within my heart a special, God-sized place for Himself. If that space is not occupied by the Lord, the enemy of souls immediately fills it with anything he can and begins to reign in my life, giving me a claim to death and anguish of soul.

Faith in God is also the foundation of my health. The Lord Himself directs all the other processes of life, performing miracles of grace and healing.

Health is worth possessing and preserving. When the time of old age and the sunset of this temporary life arrives, it is better to meet that season in a healthy and happy body than in a hospital bed, dependent on doctors and medications.

And love brings special meaning to all the laws of health, writing them upon my mind and heart.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Exodus 16:26; Hosea 6:1–2; James 5:15–16; Matthew 12:15; John 5:6; Romans 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Isaiah 58:6–8; Malachi 4:1–2; Acts 3:1–8, 12, 16

Chapter 77

When God created human beings, He did not intend for us to become ill, suffer from mental disorders, or lose our sanity. We have been given marvelous bodies that know what to do and how to maintain our health in harmony with nature and with God’s will.

How wonderfully I am made, O God! From birth until old age, my body is constantly occupied with maintaining my health and doing everything possible to accomplish this purpose. When it is attacked, it concentrates all its strength on resisting every kind of abuse and ailment.

Sin brought its own changes to our health. We became mortal beings, and our bodies became subject to deterioration, disease, and death. Yet despite all this, my body continues to fight persistently for my well-being. It wants me to feel comfortable in it and, in return for its labor, to care for it tenderly, keeping it warm and nourishing it with everything it needs. My body cannot provide for itself what is required to sustain its normal operation and vital functions. It depends on my mercy and my choices. It longs for me to study the laws of health and live by them, giving it everything it needs to function effectively.

If I begin doing something wrong, my body sends me distress signals and warns me that something is destroying it. Illness is not an accident; it is my body’s response to my way of living and thinking.

When I consider that my little house of happiness is within me and therefore must be very strong and in harmony with my entire body, insulating it through a study of the laws of health becomes important. Knowing these principles will help me avoid many problems and teach me to give my body what it continually needs.

If I owned a car and began pouring into it any substance I happened to find, as long as it was liquid, I think it would break down very quickly. I do not know any drivers who fill the fuel

tank with water instead of the proper fuel. Water, though good in itself, is intended in a car only for cooling and washing the windows.

But when you look at what people pour into their bodies, you cannot help being amazed at human foolishness and ignorance. They treat themselves so cruelly.

My body asks for food, light, rest, and everything else it desperately needs.

The first law: Fresh air.

Air is the primary nourishment for my body, and I need it greatly because my entire being is designed to breathe continually. I inhale and exhale without even thinking about it. But if I am deprived of that ability, I will lose consciousness within a couple of minutes, and after ten minutes my brain will die and can no longer be saved. I breathe so that this will not happen, and I keep breathing throughout my life. Breathing is good, but what I breathe and how I breathe are also important.

The Lord filled our world with air. At the beginning of creation, He divided the waters that covered the earth and created the atmosphere—a realm in which life could breathe. God blended various gases in a special concentration and continues to maintain their composition in precise proportions so that I can breathe safely.

My body demands fresh air. It can never get enough of it. My body is ready to inhale it from morning until evening and never grows tired of doing so, even while I sleep. But what happens when I enter an enclosed room? I inhale whatever is in it and exhale what my body wants to remove from within me. If the room is not ventilated, I fill my lungs only with what is available there, gradually poisoning the air with my body’s waste products. And if someone is also smoking in that enclosed space, it destroys my health like a time bomb.

With all this in mind, I must choose what I will feed my lungs. Cool, fresh air is more beneficial than the warmth of an

enclosed space, and my body needs the freshness of what it breathes.

The atmosphere of large cities is not the best nourishment for my body. Exhaust fumes, industrial waste, and various chemical emissions poison the air of large cities and turn them into destroyers of health. Yet cities offer people employment, material prosperity, comfort, and entertainment. This is like tasty cheese in a mousetrap: once you have tasted it, you can no longer imagine life outside the city.

Nature breathes purity. It is simple in its beauty and delights my body with its harmony. But I do not always think about breathing. I look for occupations and employment, and sometimes I find them under conditions that are far from favorable.

Yet this law also includes the breathing of the soul. The soul needs God so that it may breathe Him in.

Psalm 150:6 says, “Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.” Because I have the breath of life, I can speak, sing, and commune with my Creator. It was He Who breathed life into me, and it is in Him that I live, move, and have my being. Without Him, my body will become breathless and dead. The Spirit breathes where He wills, and you hear His voice. Job 33:4 says, “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.”

The second law: Pure water.

Someone has calculated that my body is 70 percent water. Water nourishes my cells, gives my body elasticity, protects it from shock, supplies all my organs with what they need, dissolves everything that enters me, and does many other things I never even consider. As the saying goes, “We simply cannot manage without water.” I need water every day. I can live without it only a little longer than I can live without air. Dehydration will also lead me quickly to death. Fortunately, our world is full of water. Our air is saturated with it. It is in the sky, in rivers, and in underground springs. All this has been given to us in abundance. But what do we drink? My body

needs pure water. It does not need flavorful beverages, even though they contain liquid. It needs plain water. If I drink a soft drink, my body must filter it in order to extract the water, separating what is necessary and nourishing for the whole body. I can help my body and make this task easier by drinking pure water. But the flesh demands flavor, and I yield to its call, sometimes spending my money on things that destroy me, especially when such beverages contain poisons or alcohol. And I can never get my fill of water once and for all. I will always need it. I decide for myself who will teach me to drink properly —my reason or my flesh.

Jesus said that there is also Living Water. This Water is Jesus Himself and His teaching, which are equally essential to the whole body and soul. The Lord gives this Water of Life to everyone who thirsts. Come and drink. He is the purest Fountain, Which will never run dry. He quenches spiritual thirst, satisfies the soul, dissolves all knowledge, and carries it to every cell of my being, making the teaching of Christ a part of me. The Water of Life washes all impurity out of me and protects my spirit from shock.

All this is given to me with love so that I may live in it and be healthy.

Large cities offer water, but it is not the best drink for my body or my soul. God’s natural world gives me everything in a pure and beautiful form, receiving these bounties from the hands of the Creator. It is important to understand both what I am drinking and from Whom I am drinking.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Proverbs 30:1–2; Isaiah 32:6; Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4; Isaiah 42:5; Acts 17:24–25, 28; Psalm 150:1–6; John 3:8; 4:13–14; 7:37–38; Psalms 23:2; 63:2; Proverbs 25:25; Job 14:19; Isaiah 33:14–16; 55:1; James 3:11

Chapter 78

When I decide to study the laws that govern and influence my health, I enter the boundless world of the microcosm of which I am made. If someone looks at me with ordinary eyes, he will see only my body and form a superficial impression of me. But the eyes of faith and medical science penetrate beneath the surface and help us understand how wonderfully I am made within and how harmoniously my organs work together.

And if we take a microscope and begin examining all my components through it, an astonishing picture of the universe hidden within an ordinary human being appears before us.

If we then take an even more powerful microscope that allows us to see everything of which I am made, an entire galaxy of complex structures and connections will open before us. All of it lives, moves continually, and exists. The Author of this astonishing masterpiece called a human being is our Heavenly God, Who created me in His image and, through faith in Him, imparts His likeness to me.

This entire microcosm within me operates according to its own strict and impartial rules and laws, which protect my body.

God desires that the happiness I build upon His principles of conduct and relationships not be darkened by my personal illnesses or premature death. My Designer wants me to be happy while living in a healthy body and wants my little house of happiness to be cozy, warm, and welcoming. He longs for every good thought and wonderful revelation to find a place and a response in my heart, which will always remain open to God’s abundant blessings.

Every loving mother cares about her children being healthy and happy beside her, and she is ready to sacrifice everything—even herself—to achieve this goal, if only her children may be well. This example reveals the truth of how tenderly God cares for His children and how wisely He reveals His will to those who desire to know it.

But God has an enemy who offers his own laws in order to give people temporary pleasure and take away their happiness and health.

Being healthy is a heroic achievement in our time and a challenge to the entire world. Although people talk a great deal about health, the purpose of such conversations often amounts to enabling them to sin even more.

One distinctive feature of the laws of health is that they are impartial and operate regardless of a person's faith, carrying within themselves the blessings of health. God sends rain and sunshine upon the righteous and the unrighteous, and evil people sometimes enjoy excellent health and live long lives. But the blessing of health does not save the soul; it makes life easier and more interesting and opens many opportunities for growth.

A person who goes to a hospital for an examination has thousands of plans and is ready to carry them out as his strength allows, but someone who has been admitted to a medical facility has only one desire—to leave it as soon as possible, and to leave healthy.

The third law of health: Sunlight.

A little earlier, we already spoke about the sun and even decided to visit it together with Jesus at some point in Eternity. But it is also worth considering the sun as a source of nourishment for our bodies.

The sun's rays are streams of light with the special ability to give and sustain life throughout the living world that inhabits the surface of the earth. Because of this light, we can see everything around us, admire the abundance of colors and the diversity of creation, and enjoy warmth and comfort.

Sunlight possesses many beneficial properties that favorably affect human health. The scientific world studies the characteristics of sunlight and continually makes discoveries in this field. The general direction of this new knowledge indicates that sunlight brings irreplaceable benefits to human beings and

to all living things. It is unique and unlike anything else. It gladdens the heart and the eyes.

It is also interesting that sunlight contains seven colors, which can paint a rainbow across the sky. The proportionate combination of these colors fills our world with its variety of hues and landscapes.

We see color because rays of light reflect from a surface and convey the object's spectrum. Through light impulses, this spectrum reaches the retina of the eye and, traveling as electromagnetic waves, transmits all the information about what we see to the brain; the brain then creates the picture before our eyes. And all this happens far more quickly than I have attempted to describe it.

Sunlight promotes healthy blood formation and strengthens the body's immune system. It improves digestion, kills disease-causing microbes, normalizes metabolism, establishes within my body an entire production system for forming essential vitamins and minerals, transforms and changes the chemical composition of many components of my body, helps prevent depression, promotes healthy sleep, and simply gladdens the heart. People who live in the northern regions of the planet greatly value sunshine and its warmth and are ready to spend any amount of money to bask in its rays at some southern resort. But two weeks a year is not enough to restore the body's need for sunlight.

What would happen if you were placed in an enclosed space with artificial lighting and given everything you needed? Very soon you would notice your body sending distress signals and your nerves beginning to fail. Illness would come and bring many problems with it. And the cause would be a lack of sunlight.

In recent times, however, with the development of civilization and changes in the climate, unusual diseases have appeared, including skin cancer and allergies to sunlight, which cause many difficulties. Therefore, we hear doctors recommend that we protect ourselves from overheating and sunburn and not

look directly at the sun, so that its rays do not enter our eyes and burn them.

And yet we need the sun; we need its light. The eye delights in seeing the sun, and the heart rejoices in this miracle of God.

On the New Earth, our sun will shine seven times brighter, and the moon will shine like the sun. We will live in an abundance of light.

But our souls also need the Sun of Righteousness—Jesus. His absence brings death. The Bible very often compares the greatness and power of God with the heavenly light, helping us understand that the presence of this Light is as essential to a person as the warmth of the sun.

God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Jesus is presented to us as the Eternal Source of true light.

John 1:4–5 says, “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

This Light is vitally necessary for every one of us. If I do not allow God’s Light to shine continually in my little house of happiness, gloom will come, and everything will become gray and dreary. To enter a state of darkness, it is enough to remove the Source of Light from myself. Darkness is not sold, nor is it offered as a gift. It naturally comes wherever light departs. Whoever walks in darkness does not know where he is going and does not understand what surrounds him.

For my happiness to be complete and my little house to be comfortable, I need two Heavenly Lights: my God and my sun, so that in their rays my love, happiness, and friendship may be visible to all those around me and available at the first request.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Genesis 1:14–19; Ecclesiastes 11:7; Isaiah 30:26; 60:19–21; Psalm 19:4–6; 74:16; 84:11; 89:36; Ecclesiastes 7:11–12; Song of Solomon 6:10; John 1:1–10; Malachi 4:2; Matthew 5:45; Revelation 21:23; 22:5

Chapter 79

Our time is unique in that city dwellers are tied to grocery stores and depend on the goods offered there. If these stores were suddenly to close, everyone would face an unpleasant trial called, ‘What shall we eat?’

Food is an inseparable part of our existence. Without it, human life loses its vitality, and death from starvation follows.

Yet many of us have never experienced hunger and have never even wondered why there is so much food around us. In essence, however, we all live from harvest to harvest and depend in this matter on God’s care and mercy.

Food has become part of the cultural heritage of every country and people, and each region has its own dietary traditions and cuisine.

Modern logistics makes it possible to have foods from all over the world on our tables, and stores amaze us with their selection.

I remember when my mother used to send me to the store to buy milk, bread, sausage, and sour cream, and this was our usual diet and a normal part of life. I stood in long lines to buy these products. Today, when we enter a supermarket, our eyes are overwhelmed by the abundance and variety of everything. But whether there is much or little does not yet mean that it is healthful.

The fourth law of health: Proper nutrition.

Every person has his own understanding of proper nutrition, and everyone has the right to decide for himself what to eat and what and how to feed his family. Our bodies are able to adapt to any way of life and extract the greatest possible benefit from whatever enters the stomach.

Although air and water are essential nourishment for my body and blood, the most important source of energy and vitality is still the proper choice of food.

Proper means conforming to certain rules and laws of health. We are made up of what we drink and eat. We have been given taste and smell so that eating may bring pleasure, while our eyes tell us how a dish looks and send a signal to the stomach so that it may prepare for the next portion of food that will delight the body. When we have a choice, we do not eat just anything; we buy and prepare what we want and what gives us pleasure.

If I build my happiness upon what I eat, I am doomed to inevitable disaster, because my appetite may change or begin dictating its demands to my mind. I may find myself in circumstances where I am forced to eat what I do not want, or I may simply have no money to buy food. Then my happiness will quickly fly away as I long for former times.

Healthful nutrition is food that benefits me and does not destroy my body. As a rule, its value is determined not by taste or appearance but by its composition, method of preparation, and compatibility with the other foods I eat at the same meal.

When God created our world, He gave humanity plant food, which grew abundantly upon the earth. People did not need to labor hard in order to buy it. They could simply pick it and eat it, without any worries. Such food still grows today, but in other people’s gardens and fields. To eat something now, it must first be grown or purchased.

My body knows what I need and what is beneficial for me, but it cannot tell me about it. Therefore, it longs for me to show wisdom and study the laws of health and proper nutrition, so that I may begin caring for my body and feeding it what will not destroy or kill me.

Improper nutrition causes my body to lose its protective properties and brings about all kinds of diseases, which begin appearing in my life as a consequence of my ignorance concerning health.

Proper nutrition includes:

- the particular ability of my body to digest and accept one food or another;

- a regular meal schedule—two or three meals at set times;

- the amount of food consumed;

- the quality and freshness of the ingredients and the prepared dish;

- the compatibility of foods with one another;

- the time of meals and the intervals between them;

- my emotional state;

- attention focused on the food;

- the taste of the food;

- the regularity of meals;

- a grateful spirit;

- the method of preparation;

- the body’s needs;

- the food’s conformity to biblical standards, so that it is not something God has forbidden us to eat—for example, the flesh of unclean animals or a product containing animal blood;

- genetic safety;

- nutritional value;

- an abundance of vitamins and minerals;

- the absence of disease-causing organisms;

- conformity to common sense and ethical standards;

- the presence of love.

These rules are universal, but every person needs an individual approach.

The laws of health also give preference to plant foods grown without special chemical treatment.

Meat is not the best food at the present time, because nearly all animals are diseased, and they may be injected with various medications so that they will survive until slaughter and grow quickly. When they are killed, the animals experience stress, and their blood is not drained but remains within the body, contaminating the meat. The stores sell us the flesh of strangled animals with the blood still in it. All of this contradicts the teaching of the Bible. If it is the flesh of an unclean animal, God forbids even touching it, much less preparing it. If I do not eat such food myself but feed it to members of my household, knowing that it is forbidden, my conscience is defiled, and I become unclean and accountable before God, even if others demand this of me.

I cannot impose my tastes and principles on other people. But I can clearly state my firm position and say what I want and what I will not eat or do.

In preparing and eating food, the spirit in which it is prepared and served is very important. If the food is tasty and healthful, but stress and curses are present, such dishes will bring little benefit.

If you think that God does not care what is on your plate or what your state of mind is, you are mistaken.

There is more religion in every meal than you may realize. The abundance we possess is available to us because one day the Son of God left Heaven and died for our sins to give us hope of a better life.

Jesus calls Himself the Bread of Life and true Drink. He compares Himself to the Heavenly manna, and He desires us to feed upon Him daily. All of this is symbolic, but we should understand it and do as He commanded.

His teaching will nourish every thirsty and seeking soul and will give a long and meaningful life that will continue forever.

Proper and healthful nutrition is a harmonious combination of spiritual and physical food that does not defile the conscience

or the body but gives life and strength to my spirit, soul, and body.

And God cares for those who think, seek, study, believe, and trust Him.

We were not born merely to eat. Yet food is necessary to sustain our lives, and eating is a pleasant process that requires time, talent, wisdom, and skill. We will eat throughout Eternity. We will forever breathe pure air, forever enjoy the Water of Life and brilliant light. Our love will be with us, and everything between us will be done with love and thanksgiving.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 6:48–58; Romans 14:17; Matthew 6:31–33; Genesis 1:29; Leviticus 11:1–47; 17:14; 22:7; Ezekiel 4:14; 44:31; Acts 15:19–20; Proverbs 23:1–3; 1 Corinthians 8:8, 13; John 4:31–34; Hebrews 5:14; Luke 24:41–43; John 21:12–13; Proverbs 3:7–8; 1 Timothy 6:6–8

Chapter 80

When I was serving in the military, I noticed that all the soldiers had two favorite commands: ‘Begin your meal!’ and ‘Lights out!’ Everyone eagerly awaited these commands so they could obey them immediately.

Food and rest are very interesting parts of every person’s life, and many people live and work in order to eat and rest. For most people, this has become a modern-day cult. But because of the pandemic, many people’s rest dragged on for a very long time and lost its appeal.

I remember the festive feasts of my former life. When such an event was announced, our whole life began to revolve around preparing for the coming celebration. The anticipation of the festivities always brought joy. New Year’s Day was a feast for the stomach. And what happened on such days? We gathered with friends and stuffed ourselves like pigs. If alcohol was present in some homes, the consequences of such a celebration turned into something incomprehensible, with very serious repercussions and headaches. After recovering from severe overeating and poisoning, we resolved never to do it again. But such intentions vanished very quickly when the next holiday approached. And money and health paid for it all.

And how many different pleasures the world offers! Eat and drink whatever you want, party and have fun as much as you can, travel and see as much as your money allows.

An emperor of the past uttered the now-famous phrase: ‘Give the people bread and circuses, and you can rule them however you please.’

The fifth law: Temperance and abstinence from what is harmful.

It is written that the fruit of the Spirit is temperance. Throughout the Bible, there is also much counsel about what we should abstain from.

Temperance is the moderate use of what is beneficial and complete abstinence from everything that destroys and causes harm.

Have you ever overeaten food that made you nauseated and disgusted you? I do not think anyone would go that far. People usually overeat what is very tasty and very beneficial. The taste buds received pleasure, the brain experienced delight, while the poor body went to work emptying the stomach and neutralizing and eliminating the poisons produced as an excessive amount of food decayed and fermented.

But if I eat in moderation while consuming something dangerous to my health, my body is still exposed to mortal danger as it tries to cleanse me as quickly as possible of all the toxins and poisons that I thoughtlessly take into myself. And if I both overeat and poison my body, all the powers within me labor only to save my life from such abuse.

But time passes, and my ignorance regarding temperance eventually causes my body to stop resisting and break down, allowing diseases to establish their own rule. Then I go to a doctor or other specialists to receive some magic medicine that would allow me to continue living afterward however I please, without thinking about the future.

There is a very strange motto in our time: ‘If you are going to party, then party all the way!’ It sends foolish people to an early grave.

Temperance and moderation preserve the soul and body from much unnecessary suffering, temptation, and sin.

While moderation is needed most in relation to beneficial things, abstinence protects me from the influence of harmful and poisonous temptations that are offered everywhere.

Food is not the only avenue through which the temptations of intemperance and excess can come. Some substances destroy and kill my body and my spirituality. These include alcohol, tobacco, drugs, coffee, medicinal and chemical substances, and other things. There is also spiritual food that I must avoid and

not partake of. It includes everything that brings sickness and death to my soul—for example, pornography, gossip, evil company, witchcraft, Satanism, idolatry, theft, and other things called sin.

The enemy of souls has set his traps everywhere so that foolish and curious people will fall into them and become addicted. Through these addictions, Satan can control their minds so that they tempt others like themselves. And Satan has achieved remarkable success in his plans.

But God's laws and principles remain unchangeable, and everyone who desires to know God and His plan of Salvation receives freedom from every form of slavery and addiction and gains the power of temperance. God begins to teach those who believe in Jesus as their personal Savior. These people receive deliverance and can choose their future path according to God's will and the laws of happiness, love, and health.

And the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of those who were captives of Satan and languished in the prison of sin without knowing a way out, but who believed God, cried out for help from above, and came to know Jesus as the True Deliverer.

I was one of those slaves of sin. I received temporary pleasure from what I did, but I had no peace in my heart and lived with constant pangs of conscience. If anyone considered himself a good and kind person, it certainly was not I. Appetite, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life dictated their rules to me, and I did their will, receiving fleeting pleasure while my soul lived in fear. How sweet sin seems to those who wish to taste it out of curiosity, and how tightly it holds its victims afterward.

But fortunately, Jesus came into my prison and offered me Himself and His friendship, making it clear that He was ready to forgive me completely and give me a new beginning with wonderful prospects. I believed Him, responded, and followed wherever He led me. I could not even imagine that there was an entire world of the Heavenly Kingdom that would be opened to

me in this very life, but I tasted it and learned that the Lord is good.

Many rules for temperance can be devised, and many prohibitions can be written. But they will not have the power to set people free. For example, how would the slogan ‘Drug addicts against drugs’ sound? Foolish. Or consider a person who sees the direct warning ‘Smoking kills’ on a pack of cigarettes, along with pictures of disease and death, yet buys it, fails to notice the warning, or is already unable to break free and continues smoking. Or when a tobacco company runs an anti-smoking campaign among young people, saying that children must not smoke and that it is permissible only for adults, what does a teenager hear? You can guess for yourself.

But Jesus destroys all of this, forbidding nothing yet giving Himself. The eyes are opened, the will is set free, the mind comes alive, and the power appears to say ‘no’ to lawlessness. Obedience to God becomes so natural that you look upon sin with disgust, and the enchanting pleasures and beautiful landscapes of sinful enjoyment no longer entice you. All of it becomes the refuse of this world, and you no longer want to feed at the garbage dump. The soul seeks the Heavenly Bread and finds Him in abundance.

The enemy of souls tries to bring back memories of sensual experiences, but he meets firm resistance. Yet sometimes you become careless and eat too much of something beneficial, burdening your body or mind. You immediately lose your peace and seek a solution to the problem, remember the laws of happiness and health, and ask for forgiveness and healing. The spirit of temperance brings you to the point where you simply know the proper measure in everything and can stop in time, politely refusing everyone who tries to tempt you. And this is written by God in the heart.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Exodus 20:1–3; Galatians 5:22–23; Ezekiel 16:49; Ecclesiastes 5:11; 10:17; 2 Peter 1:5–7; Luke 6:25; Proverbs 17:27; 23:27–35; 1 Samuel 21:4; Exodus 19:14–15; Acts 15:19–20, 28–29;

24:24–25; 1 Corinthians 7:5–9; 9:24–27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7; 2 Timothy 3:1–5; Titus 1:7–9

Chapter 81

In recent years, people have begun traveling a great deal, visiting different countries and vacationing at various resorts. At one point in my life, I decided to try it too, and I discovered something very interesting: it is an extremely expensive pleasure, especially when you live on a single salary. I know families who took out loans to vacation in an exotic country, then spent the entire year paying off the debt, only to do the same thing again the following year. I also know people who buy all-inclusive vacation packages, eat and drink at any hour without moderation or restraint, and afterward tell everyone how they stuffed themselves and how wonderful it was.

There is another kind of rest: a person comes home from work, collapses on the couch, turns on the television, and shuts out the whole world. Today smartphones and tablets have replaced the television. In the past, people sat on the Internet; now they lie on it.

But my body, which loves to work, needs rest from everything.

The sixth law of health: Rest.

We were not created for work, study, or travel. All these things and other activities were given to adorn our lives, bring variety to our daily routines, and make us happy—but not to become the meaning of life. We choose what brings satisfaction to the soul. Yet in all of this, our Creator provided pauses in time. God gave humanity daily and weekly rest and even commanded us to rest on the Sabbath from sunset to sunset. This reveals the special love and wisdom of our Lord, so that we may always remember Whose creatures we are and that we are not robots laboring day and night.

Sleep is the time when I rest from my daily cares. I disconnect from the outer and inner worlds, slip into unconsciousness, and allow my body to reset my mind, repair various kinds of damage, cleanse my body, renew its internal life processes, rest my muscles, and do many other things that will sustain me through the new day. Sleep is an essential part of every

person’s life, and our entire routine and all our activities are arranged so that we rest at a certain time of day. No one finds this surprising.

Sleep is an amazing process of life that holds many mysteries and has still not been fully understood. But everyone knows that every person needs it.

My little house of happiness is also designed so that, as I live by its principles, I find time to rest both body and soul. This brings special pleasure to my heart when it is in harmonious interaction with the other features of my house.

My health is directly connected with my sleep. If this function is disrupted or absent, the world of disease opens its doors wide to me, and I enter a land of stress and suffering.

My internal biological rhythms are set for sleep at night, when the sun is not shining. We are designed to rest when it is dark around us, and this is worth taking into account.

I know many stories about people who worked the night shift and slept during the day. In the end, all of them developed very serious sleep problems, and stress became one of the gifts of this world—a world that does not spare those who violate the laws of health but uses up human resources to achieve its goals.

Studies show that normal sleep should last seven to eight hours, allowing our bodies time to recover and renew themselves. It is also desirable to begin sleeping at 10:00 p.m. But if I deliberately shorten this time, I will soon discover that my body adapts to such a lifestyle and can no longer sleep for the time God has allotted to it, choosing instead to spend those hours awake and sleepless.

Of course, there are exceptions to all these rules. But it is best for them to remain exceptions rather than become the rule.

The next kind of rest is connected to the weekly cycle and is very important for every person’s spiritual and physical health.

God commanded us to work for six days and do all our work, but to dedicate the seventh day, the Sabbath, to Him, doing no

work ourselves and requiring neither people nor animals to work on that day. So that humanity would always remember this, God gave this command as one of the Ten Commandments, writing it with His Own Hand on stone.

Our world has a tradition of pausing once a week, but not everyone manages to do so on the Sabbath. God did not merely tell us to rest once a week; He explained very clearly when this rest should take place. Obedience to the Almighty in this matter brings the blessing of this commandment into my life.

Keeping the Sabbath does not save me from the power of sin or from punishment for other transgressions, but it shows the entire visible and invisible world that I belong to the One Who saved me at the cost of His Own life. Through such obedience, I express my respect for my Savior and Creator. And God especially blesses all who honor Him and remain faithful under every condition and circumstance.

Some people wish to dedicate another day to God, or even every day. But however good these desires may be, they have no biblical foundation and are human rules or traditions that people try to follow in their desire to please God. Quoting the words of Isaiah, Jesus said that they worship Him in vain, teaching human doctrines and commandments (Mark 7:7).

There is something unique in Sabbath rest that cannot be received on other days. The body rests, while the soul is invisibly united with its Designer, Who meets with His creation at that time. During the worship service, Jesus strengthens the believers who come to worship. I see none of this with my physical eyes, but the eyes of faith perceive the invisible. My body senses its Creator and obeys Him in this long-awaited rest, allowing Him to restore in spirit, soul, and body what the organism cannot restore by its own strength.

As I work in this world, even in the spiritual realm, I become physically and emotionally weary. My nightly sleep and my Sabbath pauses restore me. But Jesus also advises us at times to withdraw to deserted places and rest there for a while. In addition, the Lord invites us three times a year to attend camp

meetings organized by those who love God and desire to share this love with others. Amazing changes take place in hearts and lives at such gatherings, and God Himself blesses these meetings. This is the best time for the body and spirit to receive well-rounded restoration.

Proper rest has its own laws, which we have considered. Love teaches obedience and leads me toward a healthy way of life, because it delights to dwell in a strong body and focus its attention on the well-being of those it serves. Love loves to rest, because during that time it can very effectively convince me of its authority and establish me in it. Then, restored and strengthened, I can love and build my happiness with renewed energy, setting an example for those close to me, loving them with a pure heart, and bringing a special light into their lives. And my health, joined with a happy spirit, rightly testifies to God’s love, making that love accessible and desirable.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 20:8–11; Deuteronomy 5:12–15; Exodus 16:23; Hebrews 4:9–11; Matthew 11:28–30; Mark 6:30–32; Genesis 31:40; Psalm 127:1–2; Proverbs 3:24; 4:14–18; 6:6–11; 20:13; Ecclesiastes 5:11; Jeremiah 31:26; Lamentations 5:4–6; Ezekiel 34:25; 1 Thessalonians 5:5–7; Daniel 6:18; Acts 20:9; Romans 13:11

Chapter 82

If someone’s arm were strapped to their body and they were asked to walk around that way for several months, at the end of that time we would see that the immobilized arm had grown weak and no longer possessed its former strength. Our bodies understand very well what to do with muscles that are not being used: they simply allow them to weaken or atrophy.

The seventh law of health: Physical activity.

In our age of transportation, comfort, and speed, many people have forgotten how to move. If my daily physical activity is limited to walking from the couch to the kitchen and the bathroom, it is safe to say that serious health problems will begin.

But God made provision for us to be active beings. He designed our bodies so wisely and embedded within them the laws of health and happiness, weaving them together in harmonious unity, that when I live by these principles, my body brings joy to my heart by producing hormones associated with happiness. Physical activity contributes greatly to my good mood and my sense of purpose.

Although I should not build my happiness on physical activity, since illness and accidents can change everything very quickly, without movement my life will turn into a meaningless existence and bring many problems into my beautiful little house of happiness.

One of the bricks of happiness is the material called ‘I Work,’ and physical labor involves both bodily activity and spiritual engagement.

In the modern world, people sometimes use expressions such as ‘mindless work’ to describe physical labor as something that requires no particular intelligence. I try to avoid such expressions, because a thinking person does not stop thinking while working with his hands. At times, one must be extremely

attentive and careful in order to perform a task accurately and correctly.

I have noticed that when I work with my hands, my mind is also able to receive needed information or do something useful. Therefore, when I do not need to communicate with coworkers during working hours, I can use my phone to talk with friends or listen to something beneficial. This has become a habit for me. Yet many people do not understand how one can work and address important matters at the same time. But the Lord teaches us even this. Of course, in order to write or read something, I have to stop and turn my attention away from the work.

I cannot speak for everyone, but my mind also absorbs information very well while I am physically occupied. Then, when my body is at rest, my mind continues working and looks for yet another task to engage it.

When God created humanity, He united mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical powers in one body and designed our organism to be harmoniously engaged in all these areas of life.

Today many people understand physical activity to mean following a specialized exercise program on machines at a gym. But that is not so. Physical activity begins the moment I rise from the couch or chair and start moving. My movements may vary, but they are active.

The comforts and conveniences of civilization have also brought particular illnesses that might otherwise never have existed. Back pain, indigestion, depression, stress, and other problems have swept over our civilized society like an avalanche. If I always choose a car instead of walking, this may affect my health. And if all my work is centered on a computer, or if I have to spend a great deal of time sitting for other reasons, I should look for an additional activity that will give my body physical exercise and get my blood circulating.

When a person stops moving and remains in one position for a long time, the blood no longer flows through the vessels at the same speed, and all the processes that cleanse and supply the

cells slow down. If the brain is occupied with important or interesting questions, blood is directed toward that organ, while the body receives no additional nourishment from the bloodstream. If this happens continually, the body adapts to such a routine and decides to weaken muscles and organs it considers unnecessary so that it will not spend its resources on them. And troublesome ailments are only waiting for this opportunity to fill every space they are allowed to occupy.

Physical activity helps prevent and reduce many illnesses. Purposeful exercise of the body and muscles gets our blood circulating very effectively, allowing it to nourish the whole body with beneficial substances while clearing harmful and stagnant waste from our blood vessels and body.

Gyms have not always existed, so there is no reason to be discouraged if there is not one nearby. You can simply walk at a brisk pace and devise many exercises for the body that require no special equipment.

Morning exercise helps keep the body toned and brings it into an energetic rhythm for the new day.

The various machines in a gym can help develop certain muscle groups that are difficult to train in other ways, but special wisdom and caution are needed so that you do not overdo it or place excessive strain on your heart and body. Such strain can lead to injuries or particular illnesses and hasten your death.

Temperance must be present in every area governed by the laws of health.

Only love and concern for the happiness of your friends can be practiced without measure; everything else requires wise self-control.

Physical exercise gives the body a special beauty, grace, and flexibility. You realize that your body is beautiful when it develops in harmony with the laws of health.

The enemy of souls took note of this quality and decided to make the body an object of worship, so that people would pay more attention to their outward appearance than to their

spiritual condition. If you look at magazine covers, happy people smile back at you whose bodies conform to all the standards of our time. They appear so perfect that it seems we should imitate them, doing everything possible to reach that ideal through years of training and financial investment. It is also interesting that some people are willing only to pay for someone to make them beautiful, while making no personal effort and engaging in no physical activity. Advertising teaches that to reach the ideal, you need to eat, drink, or buy something special.

But if you have an expensive car or a great deal of money, you may look however you please. You will be considered attractive no matter what you look like. The world believes this and places such people on a pedestal. If I am a billionaire, for example, it does not matter what my health or appearance is like: the power of money makes my every word authoritative and persuasive—and makes me attractive as well.

My body, however, needs harmonious physical exercise combined with mental and spiritual activity. It has no interest in my wallet. It obeys its own laws, which are not tied to money or to the customs of this world.

Love teaches me that I am a person full of life, created not for whatever is fashionable or in demand, but for active service and growth.

We all know that stagnant water turns foul, and the same laws operate in my body.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Proverbs 6:6–11; 10:4–6, 26; 12:24, 27; 13:4; 19:24; 22:29; 24:30–34; Matthew 16:26; 25:26; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 10:7

Chapter 83

When I tell people about the laws of health, I see that they have a genuine interest in the subject and listen to me attentively. But when I reach the eighth law, for some reason certain people begin to grow nervous and call me a cult member, trying to change the subject or end the conversation. Those who are bolder ask, ‘What does God have to do with it? What does He have to do with my health?’

Unfortunately, for many people God has become some kind of entity that is supposed to remain somewhere inside a special church and never go beyond its walls. Some are surprised that God has anything to do with human health. There are also those who believe that they are the product of some accident that led the world through evolution and eventually produced extraordinarily complex organisms that suddenly decided to acquire intelligence and become thinking human beings with a full range of feelings and emotions.

Even a simple listing of the qualities of the human soul and the amazingly thoughtful design of the human being tell us that such a creature cannot be the product of chance.

For example, if I took any book and claimed that it had been written by accident by a monkey allowed to play with a typewriter, I think you would consider me strange. And if I said that the book had appeared as the result of an explosion at a printing house, you would tap your temple and let me know that something was wrong with my head. Yet when people are told that God is the Creator and Designer of our world and of us, they do not want to listen. And it is the Almighty Who rules this world, establishing His laws, which apply to everyone.

The eighth law of health: Trust in God.

My health directly depends on how faithfully I obey all the laws of health and practice them in my life. When I violate or neglect one of these principles, my body begins to signal that something is wrong. And if I do not listen to its voice, my body

offers me an exciting journey into the land of ailments and diseases.

To say that illness comes by chance because it is simply part of human existence is to suppose that we are playing a health lottery, with lucky winners who just happen to be fortunate and losers who can safely be thrown on the scrap heap. Unfortunately, such ignorance is very popular in our world, and many say, ‘Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die.’ Isaiah 22:13.

The Bible calls people who reject God fools. We read this in Psalms 14 and 53.

There is only one Book in the world that begins with the words, ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’

God exists, and He is alive. He does what He considers right and necessary. All physical and spiritual laws are in His hand and operate in the same way for everyone. And the Lord watches over everything in our world so that it proceeds within the bounds of His laws.

Trust in God is not blind faith in something; it is a relationship with a creative, personal Being. Such a relationship forms within me a correct understanding of who I am, where this world came from, what awaits us in the future, how to live, and what to do in the present. Every question ultimately leads to the answer that the Lord knows what is happening and that He directs all the processes of this diverse world and everything that takes place in my life.

When I begin to believe in Jesus as my Savior from the power of sin, I long to know God more closely, and I find a detailed account of Him in the Bible.

As I read this Book, I find many warnings that those who violate God’s law will face sickness, fear, and suffering. Such a prospect is not very inspiring, but this is precisely what the Bible teaches: illness is not accidental; it follows cause and effect.

Although illness is a curse of our time, for many people it becomes a blessing because it brings them to their senses and makes them consider why they became sick. They begin to seek God and find Him.

Trust in God does not come at once, but grows as a person learns His will and His character. A person learns something new about the Lord, tests His promises, tries asking Him for something and receives an answer, begins telling Him what is on the heart and receives comfort. Through knowledge and experience in this relationship, a person entrusts life into God's hands and, through baptism by immersion, enters into a covenant of personal relationship with God, becoming a full member of God's family. And the Lord calls everyone who seeks and accepts Him. Hope enters my life. I do not merely believe that God exists; I entrust Him with all my secrets and all my cares. I seek His counsel and ask Him for many things. A close friendship grows between us, and I entrust my life into God's hands, knowing that this is the very best place for my soul.

For my part, I do everything possible to learn more about my Heavenly Friend, study His law, and understand with both mind and heart what I should do and what I should avoid. And when I see that my strength is not sufficient for me to obey in everything, the Lord gives me His grace and writes His law upon my heart.

When the laws of health are written somewhere outside me, on my phone or on paper, they simply give me useful information and show me a better way to live. But when they are inscribed upon my heart by the hand of God, they become a motivating power within me, and I live by them because I want to and believe it is right. And the Lord adds His hand to my efforts and blesses me where others fail.

Consider our planet. Are there miracles on it? The logic of this world denies miracles, but I believe in them and ask for one in every prayer. For example, do I understand the composition of everything around me? The air I breathe is invisible to me, and I do not know how many dangerous substances it contains, yet I consider it fresh, and God blesses and protects me. The water I

drink may contain poisons harmful to my body, but in faith I consider it clean and drink it, and God preserves me. I do not know where the food on my table came from or whether it was properly grown and watered. It may contain something very harmful, yet I pray and eat it with thanksgiving, believing that everything is under God’s control, and I receive strength. Frail or addicted parents give birth to healthy children; terminally ill people are healed in answer to a simple prayer; evil people become kind and gentle as they listen to accounts of God’s love. My very life is a miracle, and the Author of all these miracles is my Savior, through Whom this world came into being.

And how can I explain the love that surpasses all understanding and is given to me for victory and a joyful life? Such a thing should be impossible, yet it exists.

My life itself is a miracle, my life with God is a miracle of miracles, and Jesus is the most wonderful Friend.

Trust in God gives me a right to Eternity, which is governed by eternal laws, and this right makes all the other laws of health my eternal principles. If God preserves me here from the evil and dangers that surround me, then in Eternity everything will be pure, and health will become the everlasting reward of my trust in God.

And God is the Author of my health, its Engineer and its Restorer, and He has designed every detail.

Do you feel warm living with such a material? Do you feel comfortable and at home in good health?

Bible verses for this chapter:

Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 28:14, 58–61; Genesis 20:17; John 5:5–6; Matthew 10:1; Luke 5:15; 9:1; Psalm 6:3; 14:1–4; 30:3; 107:20; Jeremiah 17:14; 51:9–10; Hosea 11:3–4; Isaiah 6:10; 53:5

Chapter 84

One day I was operating an excavator, and my coworkers placed a radio nearby and turned on some music. When I started the excavator and began working, I could no longer hear the radio because the roar of the engine drowned out every other sound. The radio kept playing, sending out its music and trying to make itself heard above my noise, but I simply could not hear it.

I know people who are ready to listen to anything and welcome every kind of noise except silence.

Like light, sound has its own amazing laws and exerts an unseen influence on both people's health and their minds. Scientists are still making remarkable discoveries in the field of sound and cannot claim to know everything about it, because new research and discoveries lead to further advances in this field. Yet I do not even stop to think about what surrounds me.

In the nineteenth century, there lived a man named Ernst Chladni. He is known for making an interesting discovery in the field of sound, visually demonstrating that sound can draw—and can even draw very complex, symmetrical figures. Each sound vibration creates a new and unique pattern. Ernst made a plate, sprinkled salt on it, and drew a bow along its edge. The sounds produced certain vibrations, and the salt gathered on the surface in proportional geometric patterns. When the sound changed, the patterns changed as well. The salt responded to the commands of sound and assumed the shape assigned to it by that sound. Ernst later replaced the bow with a loudspeaker, and these new possibilities led to further discoveries. Any granular substance—salt, sugar, sand, or flour—obeys the command of sound and immediately gathers into the patterns it dictates. Ernst gave his name to this discovery, and today these patterns are known as Chladni plates or Chladni figures.

We are surrounded by thousands of different sounds and vibrations that affect us in one way or another—our mood and our well-being. Our ears hear far more than we realize. These

sounds send spiritual or physical impulses to the body, and the body carries out the commands it has heard. But unlike a Chladni plate, my mind has a decision-making command center called the will, which determines my final actions. If my will has been weakened by the influence of sin, my body begins receiving various signals through my ears and obeying them.

Have you ever experienced heartfelt joy or sorrow because of ordinary music? I have. Some songs moved me to tears, while others made my mind rejoice. Some plunged me into sadness, stirring up emotions and memories. At times my personal space was filled with different noises that created discomfort, interfered with my living and thinking, and made me irritable.

I decide within myself to decorate my little house of happiness with silence, so that in this stillness I may learn to hear something very important and very, very quiet that speaks to my heart.

The sounds of this world drown out the most important sounds and voices, and only silence helps me hear what I need most. God desires to speak with me.

Silence is the natural state of matter and space when there is no source of sound, just as darkness and cold exist where there is no source of light or heat. As a human being, I cannot listen to absolute silence, because the sounds of my own body become very loud and I hear ringing in my ears. There is even an expression: ‘It is so quiet that my ears are ringing.’

Someone measured and studied sound in decibels, and physicians concluded that sound up to 60 dB is pleasant, up to 70 dB is safe, and anything above that is harmful to health and the nervous system. These findings are worth considering and understanding so that we do not deprive ourselves of the blessings of health.

I know people who cannot bear silence and do everything possible to avoid it. I did not understand such fears. But when silence entered my life, I discovered that it is the best setting for my existence, one in which the Lord can speak with me. His is a special Voice—gentle, calm, and inaudible to the ear.

Silence keeps anything from distracting me; my body begins to recover, my hearing grows sharper, and my perception of the spiritual world comes into harmony with nature.

I was not created to listen to the radio, and artificial noise brings no rest to my soul. Instead, it distracts me and fills my inner world with all kinds of things. Amid this noise, I simply cannot hear the still, small Voice of God. Yet He desires to communicate with me. He has something to tell me. He wants to teach me something and bring me joy, but I do not hear Him. There are empty background sounds that create noise and convey no information, but there are also voices with definite plans for me—to rob, kill, destroy, and provoke me.

My words are also sounds. They carry meaning and information, and they accomplish what they were spoken to do. With a simple request, I can prompt another person to do what I ask. And if spiritual meaning is placed within those words, they can change people's consciousness and worldview.

Silence cannot be the source of happiness, because silence itself is empty and contains nothing. But creating conditions of silence in my house helps me hear God, Who comes to dine with me and desires fellowship and a relationship with me. In moments of silence, I learn to listen to this Voice when my heart lives in harmony with God's laws and my soul longs to know the Most High.

This Voice speaks to everyone. Perhaps that is why many people are afraid to find themselves in silence.

Silence also implies peaceful coexistence with those around me where I live. They may be noisy people, but they do no harm, and it is good and peaceful to be near them. It may mean friendly relationships at work and the absence of conflict with those around me.

One song contains these words: 'It is well and peaceful with the soul where silence reigns.' Silence within the soul brings joy and peace to the heart. It is the absence of sin, assurance of salvation, and harmony with nature and with God.

Love is also given to me to bring order to my soul and lead it into a state of silence and inner balance. Silence of soul is self-control in the realm of feelings and thoughts, a calmness and attentiveness that shape my character into the likeness of God.

If we consider God's actions and character, we can see that He calmly carries out what He has purposed. He does not hurry or shout. At times He speaks very loudly, but for the most part His Voice is quiet and convincing. God's words are understood by a pure heart.

Lifeless salt understands the sounds of this world and obeys them. How much more will my body and mind recognize the Voice of their Creator and do what He tells them.

When I sleep, my body carries out what the Holy Spirit directs it to do. Yet within all this creation there is one supremely independent and free faculty—my will, which is capable of choosing. By its very nature, it cannot remain unattached; it must belong to a husband. Yet it has the right to choose which husband it will accept.

Jesus and my carnal nature are two powers that desire to possess my will. Once the will marries one of them, it listens only to the husband's voice and carries out his requests.

And my heart seeks silence of soul.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Jeremiah 6:16; Isaiah 26:20–21; 30:7, 15; 38:14–15; 57:20; Job 4:15–16; 34:29; Psalm 4:8; 23:2; 91:1; 107:29; Matthew 8:24–27; 11:28–30; 1 Kings 19:10–12; 1 Thessalonians 4:9–11; Exodus 33:14–15; Joshua 21:44; Proverbs 1:33; Ecclesiastes 9:17; Habakkuk 2:4; Hebrews 4:9–11

Chapter 85

The theme of a happy life is very ancient and has always been present in the world. The Lord has always desired to have a happy people. But there are other forces that seek to distort the truth, portraying Christianity as something gloomy, dark, and stern. According to this view, the more solemn a believer looks, the more convincing his testimony to his faith appears. This stereotype has become so deeply embedded in the minds of people in the world, leaving such a profound impression, that it has also influenced the thinking of those who belong to God's church.

There is another extreme as well, in which God's law is nullified and the Creator Himself is portrayed as permissive and as saving everyone indiscriminately. All these ideas distort God's true character and give us a very strange picture of the Most High.

There is a story about a preacher who was expected to arrive in a certain city, and representatives of the church went to meet him at the train station. They did not know what he looked like and instinctively searched for him among the arriving passengers. Then they saw a somber-faced man dressed in black. After greeting him, they took him by the arms, intending to lead him to their car. It turned out that he was not the preacher. The man was on his way to a funeral.

As we have studied the laws of a happy life, we have seen that we have a very happy God, Who desires all of us to be happy. In the message to Laodicea, the Faithful Witness reproves us for being miserable, making it clear that this is a very poor state of mind amid an abundance of light. He offers us something to buy that provides a way out of this condition. Through these symbols, the Lord gives us Himself. Jesus personally comes to each one of us to teach us happiness, and He promises us an exciting future.

With such an abundance of opportunities and light, to remain unhappy is a sin that will destroy many people. But if I decide

to receive blessedness, I am destined to possess it for the rest of my earthly days and throughout Eternity.

I remember meeting a family at a camp meeting. Sister Lilia had brought her teenage daughter, hoping that the girl would find friends there or want to take part in some missionary project. But it was evident that her daughter was far removed from her mother's plans and had her own views on life. Her unusual hairstyle and black clothing suggested that she belonged to some movement in which that style was customary. I tried to find common interests and a way to connect with the girl, but something stood in the way, and we parted until the following year.

The next year, only the mother came to the camp meeting. Lilia was as gloomy as a storm cloud, and her appearance filled others with sadness. She did not want to speak with anyone about anything. It was clear that she was experiencing some form of depression. I asked her friend what had happened and learned that Lilia's daughter had taken her own life six months earlier. It is very painful to hear of such experiences. But we have Jesus, Who can help even in a situation like this. All my attention became focused on this sister. I asked for wisdom and strength from above so that I might somehow help this poor woman, and I began talking with her. Lilia listened with tears in her eyes as I told her what the Lord placed upon my lips. I spoke about God's love, happiness, freedom, and many other things. Then I began assuring Lilia that Jesus desired to give her happiness and fill her life with joy, preserving her in that condition until His Second Coming. It was so remarkable to watch the change in this sister's mood. She began to smile and ask questions. Her face was transformed, and joy in the Lord found a place in her heart. In the end, she and her friend looked very much like two sunflowers basking in the rays of God's love, rejoicing in life and giving their smiles to the world. Whenever I happened to meet them, I heard words of praise and gratitude to the Lord.

The study of love and happiness is wonderful because everyone who decides to pursue it discovers many laws that benefit the

soul and makes remarkable discoveries for the heart. What makes this study unique is that God Himself extends His hand and gives the students exactly what they desire to learn. This is a process of spiritual growth, and it does not happen in a single day, but gradually and consistently.

It is also worth recognizing that being happy is an act of courage even within the church. You will not be understood even by those who live according to the commonly accepted belief that happiness does not exist and that there are only temporary joys amid the gray routine of the Christian life.

But when we go to a worship service, we do not come to bury someone; we come to worship the One Who desires to give us happiness and Who has done everything to make it simple and accessible.

Yet even when you know everything about happiness and live in it, you should be very careful in expressing your emotions. Many people simply will not understand you and will begin to treat you like a traitor.

The best support at such a time is the teaching of Christ and His life. Jesus said that if they persecuted Him, they would also persecute us. Everything that happened to Jesus may also happen in my life, and when it does, I remember that the Lord endured a similar trial. Then it becomes easier for me. I am simply following in His footsteps.

The enemy of souls seeks to discourage and deceive me, but the example of Jesus' life always gives me strength to understand correctly what is happening.

Satan desires to convince me that happiness does not exist because the Lord suffered greatly and we must suffer with Him. There was suffering, and there was death, and all of it was in my place. This is worth remembering, but it is also important to understand that the Lord died so that I might be happy.

My happiness is always with me, bringing joy to my heart and giving itself to those around me. Love teaches me to live by it

and always remain connected with Heaven so that I may put love into everything I do.

When difficult people or challenging situations appear, the Lord reminds me of everything I have learned and experienced in fellowship with Him. And I choose the best response—to love.

The decision to love is not always an easy choice, because my old nature is also present. It always wants to settle everything according to the flesh, sends me its offers of assistance, or distracts my mind from holy things. And so I struggle with myself.

But if I have formed the habit of feeding my spiritual nature every day while starving the carnal nature, it becomes easier for me to live according to the Spirit and the truth, and in that very Spirit to love those around me.

A happy smile attracts attention. It communicates that there is something special in my heart. And a joyful spirit gives me away and tries to spread its joy to everyone around me.

As I studied the laws of happiness, I paid attention to everything related to happiness, immersed myself in individual Bible verses, and discovered new depths. But I also realized that when I had previously read those same verses in an ordinary way, I had not even noticed how my thoughts skimmed over them. I did not fully grasp what I was reading or what the passage was about. Yet there is such depth there that one can go deeper and deeper.

The Bible says a great deal about happiness and love, but this becomes visible and understandable only when—and only to those who—thirst for it. The Water of Life benefits everyone, but it is extraordinarily sweet to those who long to drink even a single sip so that they will not die. And God pours out His Spirit upon the thirsty and the parched. And I am happy.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 15:16–21; Isaiah 44:2–4; 55:1–6; 60:1–5; Psalm 1:1–6; 34:8; 84:4–7; Job 5:17; Revelation 3:18

Chapter 86

As we study in the School of Agape Love, we have become the objects of God's special care and have drawn the attention of all Heaven. Although this is not shown to us and we feel nothing, I believe that what we are doing has special significance in the Heavenly realms.

Imagine the joy the inhabitants of Heaven experience when they see us learning eternal laws and values so that we may live by them on this Earth. What happiness God experiences as He sees His love being sought after and taken freely from Heaven's storehouses, so that it may pour out in mighty streams upon those around us. And what we do not see with our eyes, but ask for and study in faith, becomes ours forever.

I love. This is my choice, my decision to treat people in this way, my declaration of will concerning God and His law. This is my way of life and my challenge to this world. This is the direction of the path that will lead me to the beautiful land of Heavenly treasures and immerse me in the depths of extraordinary revelations and amazing knowledge. This is the unearthly wealth that will truly enrich my soul and deliver me from poverty. This is the gold refined in the fire that will adorn my house, pay all my bills, and open new paths to the hearts of my friends and those around me. This is what the Lord desires most of all to see in my life.

I am happy! How joyful it is for Heaven to see this decision of mine and to watch my little house of happiness being confidently built and established with imperishable material upon the Eternal Foundation!

God's love has found its permanent dwelling place in my happiness and delights me with new blessings and revelations of its depth in relation to people.

Our earthly life is very short and is rapidly rushing toward its end, but it is intended to show the entire unseen world what God's grace can do with a believer, or how sin disfigures people who have not accepted God's mercy for their salvation.

As the Lord observes this world and those who are not of this world, He seeks people who thirst for greater blessings, greater victories, greater love, and greater happiness. God's mercy has not been exhausted in its power to save. And the Lord watches very carefully what each of us is building, what we are building with, and upon what foundation. Imagine His joy when He sees something truly right, strong, and beautiful. Do you think such a structure will become an object of God's special attention? In his indescribable fury, the enemy of souls asks Heaven for permission to test our structure, expose its weak points, and find a way inside. And the Lord sometimes allows Satan to display his power so that through these difficulties He may purify us, make us even more beautiful, and bind us still more firmly to Jesus.

I heard a story that in a certain country houses are built from stone ore containing resin. Once a house has been built, it is set on fire and burns for several days until all the resin is gone. After this purification, the building is finished. Such a house no longer fears fire and becomes very strong and fire-resistant. Something similar happens to those who build their happiness upon the Rock.

At the end of time, the most terrible trial will come, and it will be sent by God. Everything temporary, unstable, and counterfeit will be destroyed and swept away. And what will remain with us? It is not very pleasant to speak about this or to attribute to God the spirit of a punishing Judge, but at the end of time the Lord will carry out a sifting and gather the pure wheat into the garner, while the tares and straw will be burned with unquenchable fire. Then we will see an extraordinary manifestation of God's love, in which mercy will authorize God's justice to act. And who will be able to stand?

The Bible is filled with warnings about this remarkable time, and all the events described in it are drawing near to their fulfillment. Only what has been built correctly and upon the right Foundation will stand.

We are not merely building something so that we may feel good. What we are studying and desiring to have in our lives is

not a product of human imagination, but God's plan for us. Therefore, the Lord has a special interest in the strength of every structure. As He watches the construction of our little house of happiness, He gives it a special designation: 'Holiness unto the Lord.' I cannot call myself that or apply such a title to myself. My inborn sinful nature gives me no right to do so. But other people who are consecrated to God, or the Lord Himself, may do so. Even if someone considers me holy, I do not. My lips will never say, 'I am holy.' But when Eternity comes, God Himself will call His redeemed by this name. Then I will agree with that assessment and gladly receive all God's marks of distinction and the crown of Eternal glory, so that I may testify to the whole universe of the victory of the Lord's love in my life.

The fact that I cannot call myself holy does not mean that I should not strive for this holiness. Holiness is the goal of my life and the destination of my earthly journey. It is what I desire most to possess and to live in.

Holiness means belonging to God and being wholly consecrated to His service within the boundaries established by His rules and His law. Holy people and things are God's property and cannot be used for other purposes.

The little house of happiness is the place God has chosen for His dwelling in my heart, where He desires to have a personal relationship with me and teach me this very happiness and love. Our friendship becomes a school of love and happiness in which Jesus Himself is my personal Teacher, so that through His revelations He may teach me directly what only I can understand. All earthly friends, teachers, and mentors are an integral part of my education, but I cannot grow beyond their knowledge. Therefore, at the time appointed by Him, Christ Himself undertakes my education in order to lead me further. This process begins here and will continue throughout Eternity.

The Heavenly angels joyfully await us so that they may share their mysteries and reveal to us the secrets of the universe. But one day we will reach even their level of knowledge, and then, leaving them, we will again sit at the feet of Jesus and learn the eternal Heavenly revelations He has prepared for us in

inexhaustible abundance, so that we may share them with everyone else. This education began when I decided to make Jesus the Lord of my life, the Husband of my will, and entered into a covenant with Him through water baptism. The School of Agape Love opened new opportunities for Christ to reveal to me the depths of God's heart, so that I might draw from them the countless riches of God's imperishable Agape and make them my adornment and the meaning of my existence. People with this frame of mind and direction in life come under God's special watch and become the objects of His continual care and protection.

God has no favorites, but those who, exerting all their strength, know how to enter the depths of the Great Loving Heart will not be cast out. Instead, they will come under a special blessing while still appearing to our world as ordinary, strange people.

Happiness is what invisibly connects us with the Heavenly reality and gives us the right to partake of the Bread and Water of Life. And the Eternal laws of happiness become ours. And we love.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Romans 6:22; Hebrews 12:14; Exodus 15:11; 28:36–38; 29:32–33; 30:10, 28–29, 31–37; Leviticus 27:30; Deuteronomy 14:2, 21; Isaiah 5:16; Mark 6:20; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:9; Ezekiel 28:25–26; 36:22–23; 38:23; Amos 4:2; 1 Corinthians 7:14; Revelation 22:11

Chapter 87

Television, radio, the internet, social media, books, newspapers, movies, and magazines—all these are forms of mass media that invite the world to accept a particular point of view. The purity of the information they provide depends on whose hands it comes from and what purpose it serves. In one way or another, however, all information shapes my thinking and changes my life, filling the empty shelves of my little house of happiness.

One distinctive feature of our time is the rapid transmission of information to every corner of the world. We have grown accustomed to it, and it has become part of our lives. It seems that a person is now defined by the saying, ‘You are what you know,’ or, ‘Tell me what you watch, and I will tell you who you are.’

Friendship, communication, relationships, and love have moved from the real world into the virtual one. People have become dependent on this second reality. As a result, new psychological disorders have begun to appear. Most of the prosperous, developed world has fallen into electronic slavery to its information devices and can no longer imagine life without them. This is a sad picture of our time. It has come and become part of our reality. We must live with it and act wisely.

It is becoming clear to me that all this has been given to us from above for a particular purpose. We are to give every person the opportunity to learn something vitally important and to receive additional information that can lead to salvation.

The internet has a unique characteristic. It belongs to no one, and across its vast expanse everyone can publish whatever they want and consider necessary, while anyone can find whatever their soul desires. This human invention can be a great blessing to me or a terrible curse, depending on how I use it and what I publish.

Holiness means my complete dedication to God in the realm of information as well. God calls me to possess this purity and to bear an uncorrupted witness about Him through every resource

to which I have access and where I can publish anything. When my life is weighed, I believe my social media pages and everything made public on them will testify very clearly either to my holiness or to its absence.

There was a time when I did not have the fullness of light and published what I considered right. But truth entered my life as well. It revealed the sin and impurity of my former views and understanding, and it called me to repentance. My repentance means that I no longer desire to watch or share anything indecent or impure and that, whenever possible, I remove what I previously published in ignorance and foolishness.

Absolute purity is the motto of holiness. God will accept nothing less, nor will He allow into His Kingdom anything that contains the seeds of rebellion and revolt, love for the world, or impurity.

What amazes me most is that, while God sees humanity selling itself into slavery for next to nothing, He calmly and gently offers a way of deliverance from this yoke. He offers Himself in His fullness, and dependence upon His power, as the only way out and the only worthy substitute. The Lord has made Himself so accessible across the internet that everyone who seeks Him can find, know, and understand Him. Knowing this, the enemy of souls has offered a vast amount of false information that misrepresents God’s character and testifies against Him by portraying Him in a false light. To understand the truth, one must know the One Who is the Truth. This is possible only through personal communion with God and the personal acceptance of Jesus as one’s Savior from the power of sin. And the Lord sets us free.

All the information we allow into our minds changes us and our way of thinking. Whether we want it to or not, when we decide to watch something, we unwittingly come under the influence of the person who created the information being presented and unconsciously agree with what we have seen, thus making it part of ourselves. If we have a pure spiritual filter, we recognize what is impure and reject it forever, never to touch it again. But if I have no protective mechanisms, all the garbage being offered enters me unhindered and defiles my conscience. We

are transformed into the likeness of what we behold and become what we have believed.

Our brain has the unique ability to remember everything that enters it through our eyes and ears and to retain this information throughout our lives. What I use to fill the cells of my memory can lead either to my destruction or to my blessing. The enemy of souls knows how to direct my carnal nature toward what I have allowed into my mind and how to replay it in my memory. Satan knows how to remind me of something evil with which I once filled my mind. I cannot simply erase it from my memory, because I myself allowed it in. Yet such evil can be resisted by power from above, and I can receive that power only in response to my repentance, my sincere prayer for help, and my complete dedication to God.

For many people, it would be a great blessing not to have smartphones, tablets, social media, the internet, television, or radio in their lives. Unfortunately, we have surrounded ourselves with these sources at our own expense—and we continue paying for them. Yet even in this situation, God gives us the power to choose.

Humanity is losing the ability to think independently amid such an abundance of information. People refuse to think and make decisions, giving others the opportunity to do it for them. It is even said that whoever controls information controls the world. Meanwhile, intelligence declines, the ability to analyze grows dull, a video longer than three minutes is no longer interesting, and a message longer than one screen is not read but merely scrolled past. Just as it was said of people at the end of time that ‘they did not consider,’ so it is being fulfilled. People believe whatever is presented to them without trying to understand whether it benefits them. Will I be saved by possessing this knowledge?

Everything has become mixed together. Truth and falsehood have been skillfully blended, and the chosen people, without thinking, drink a full cup of this wine of Babylon. But Babylon has fallen, and we should come out of her.

My victory and holiness may consist not only in taking all these things and throwing them away, but also in using them, while they remain around me, to instruct, edify, and teach others in love and righteousness by choosing and presenting what is pure and useful. God teaches us this as well.

Love knows how to recognize danger and makes a conscious choice when entering questionable territory. It is very cautious and selective about what it allows into my mind. Love may accidentally find itself in the enemy’s territory, but it reacts immediately and leaves that place, deciding never to visit it again.

Pursue holiness, without which we will not see the Lord and will not be able to live in His presence.

To help others, I must begin with myself.

Every piece of information becomes part of the furnishings of my little house of happiness. It creates a cozy atmosphere within it, or it brings darkness and anxiety. Holiness in what I watch, read, and listen to protects my happiness from being destroyed from within and creates in me a thirst for pure spiritual food that makes my life even more beautiful and interesting. And love receives all this and covers it with its presence and hospitality.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Philippians 4:8; Romans 6:22; Revelation 21:27; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Psalm 51:10; 101:2–4; 1 Peter 4:3–4, 8; James 1:27; Matthew 6:22–23; Isaiah 60:1–5; Ezekiel 37:26–28; Hebrews 2:11; 12:14; 1 John 2:16

Chapter 88

What would our school become if we began discussing politics in it, debating which course of social development is right and what consequences particular laws and decisions would bring? I do not think we would have unity among us or the joy that happiness, love, and friendship bring.

I have noticed that peace and friendship in relationships are very quickly destroyed when people begin expressing political views or ambitions. I always have many questions for those who consider themselves invincible within the borders of their own country while remaining enslaved to sin.

‘For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’

If I raise above my little house of happiness the national flag of the country I consider my homeland or a great power, what will my building testify to? It may testify to anything—but not to my holiness in this matter.

Politics is the study of the state, its governing institutions and political power, relations between two or more nations, the work of public organizations that influence life in a particular country, and trade relations both within a country and in foreign markets. Everyone is connected with the country in which they live or work, or whose citizenship they hold.

Whether I want it or not, I am surrounded on every side by political information, which is sometimes highly contradictory or inconsistent with my convictions. How should I respond properly to various events?

As a believer, I can see in world events the fulfillment of Bible prophecy and the approach of the final events of human history. The Lord Jesus foretold what would happen at the end, and now we can hear about—and even see—His prophecies being fulfilled day by day. In the past, only believers spoke about this; now the whole world does, realizing that something dreadful is approaching and is ready to overtake all humanity.

Widespread tension, fear, and uncertainty paralyze the minds of people who seek answers to their questions but cannot find them. Politicians try to solve such problems by forming alliances, imposing sanctions, or engaging in military conflicts. Yet nothing changes for the better; matters only grow worse.

The rich become even richer or lose their savings, while the poor become still poorer. Some people are simply trying to survive. There is chaos and turmoil everywhere.

Where can I find an answer to the question of how I should live?

The life of Jesus helps me understand His attitude toward the politics of His day. He knew what was happening around Him. He knew who governed the country in which He lived and the places He visited. He was surrounded by cruelty, corruption, lawlessness, moral depravity, nationalism, hatred, and a spirit of rebellion. Yet Jesus never once expressed political views and never condemned government officials. When people came to Him with questions about world events and the lawlessness in His own country, He declined to discuss those subjects and directed their minds toward eternal values. Jesus taught that unless we repent, we will likewise perish. By His attitude toward politics, Jesus gave us an example of holiness and of His separation from this world and its passions.

By His life, Jesus showed which values and interests must come first and which should have no place at all. He is the true Example for us to follow.

Holiness in politics means that although I live in this world and see and understand what is happening in it, I should not publicly express my political views, participate in political programs, or belong to political parties, alliances, or movements. Instead, I should seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

God created this world and permitted events to unfold, but He set His Kingdom apart and declared that it is not of this world. The Kingdom of God exists; it has its own laws, and it is spiritual. It is planted in the heart and is within a person. My faith in this determines my actions.

God has much to teach everyone, and He has enough information to occupy my mind with what is useful and necessary. He knows better than we do what a person needs for happiness and peace, and He provides it. The choice is mine.

The book of Revelation tells us in symbols about the early and final events of history. It describes the succession of eras and ruling powers. In harmony with the book of Daniel, it reveals the periods in which nations rise and fall. Both books of Scripture lift the curtain on future events, and through their prophecies God prepares us for what we will face and cannot avoid. At the same time, He offers a way of escape and protection from disaster through union with Himself. God alone can preserve us, protect us, and give us victory. By revealing future events to me, Jesus calls me to complete and absolute dedication to Him. He knows what to do and what to teach me. He is very wise and therefore makes no mistakes. And He is very kind and therefore understands and accepts me.

If I decide to remain outside politics and seek His Kingdom and His righteousness, He will be able to use me as His witness in this world—someone who can direct people's minds away from turmoil and toward eternal values.

Jesus gives His love. He establishes me in this love and teaches me to use it to heal deceived souls, support the discouraged, comfort those who suffer, and satisfy those who thirst. Love stands outside politics; it is given so that we may love people, transform them inwardly, and bring them healing.

Love lives in this world, but it is not of this world. It is a Heavenly treasure that lifts the soul toward Heavenly values and reveals the true character of its Creator and Lord.

Love stands outside politics, yet it influences politicians as well, for they too are people originally created for love and for a happy life in Jesus.

Politics unites only those who share the same political views, but love unites everyone and establishes its kingdom wherever it goes. Its banner can safely adorn any home and draw thirsty souls to itself.

The prophetic books tell us that at the end of time certain religious and political powers will form an alliance to impose the mark and image of the beast upon everyone living on Earth. This plan will succeed, but it will not touch those who remain outside politics and bear the seal of God.

Love directs my eyes to Jesus, Who is the King of kings and Lord over every authority. As I learn the science of love and happiness, I withdraw from politics and receive Heavenly citizenship. This citizenship gives me the right to Eternal life in God's Kingdom. And the seal of God's approval will be my permanent visa, opening the borders of the entire Universe so that I may travel freely through its vast expanses.

I cannot avoid political events, and I must respect and obey the laws of the country where I live. But no law can dictate to my conscience how I should serve God or obey God's commandments. For example, if a country's laws approve of adultery, that does not mean I must live that way.

The safest course in life is faith in God, love, happiness, and friendship. Even if every earthly power should rise against such an outlook on life, none of them can deprive me of this state of mind. And no force can conquer a country armed with agape love.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 15:17–20; Jeremiah 29:7, 11–13; Luke 13:1–9; 1 John 2:15–21; Matthew 20:20–28; Romans 13:1–10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12; 1 Peter 2:11–25; John 19:8–16; Revelation 13:5–8, 15–17; 17:12–18; Daniel 2:21, 28, 46–47; 6:13

Chapter 89

Can you identify a police officer by his face? What distinguishes restaurant employees from ordinary patrons, or military personnel from civilians?

A person’s clothing tells us a great deal, and at times it reveals more about the condition of the heart and mind than we realize.

The nearer the end comes, the more active and fierce the enemy of souls becomes, together with his spiritual forces of wickedness in high places and those who support them. One of the ways they tempt people in the last days is through moral corruption.

In the past, this was far away and known only by hearsay, but now this sin has taken an aggressive position and is being imposed everywhere, even to the point of administrative penalties for anyone who tries to resist its influence.

Sin stripped the first human beings, and they saw that they were naked. God clothed humanity. He gave people clothing and an understanding of decency. He taught humanity holiness in dress.

The nakedness of the human body can attract the attention of people with base passions, which, breaking free from the control of reason and will, will lead the soul into sin, and sin will lead to death.

Why are there so many drug addicts and alcoholics in our society? For one reason: there are those who sell them this poison. If all drug dealers were removed, the problem would quickly be solved.

If there is no temptation, there will be no one who yields to it, although the seed of evil will remain in the heart.

God expects holiness in outward appearance from His people and purity of conduct from those who could become a temptation to consecrated souls.

The influence of moral corruption has also entered the community of God's people. Believers have begun to resemble the world, undressing and exposing themselves without considering what God desires to see. Yet the True Witness says, '...thou art...naked...'

Jesus allowed Himself to be stripped naked, nailed to the cross, and lifted above the earth in that condition as He bore one of humanity's curses. He took this upon Himself together with the other sins and diseases of the world, so that by His wounds we might be healed. And He redeemed humanity from this influence.

But what are God's people doing in the last days? They are undressing, exposing themselves, and displaying what God, in His love and wisdom, decided to cover and conceal.

Not everything fashionable in the world is beneficial or decent for God's children. And God expects His chosen ones to have a clear understanding of modest dress and to resist the temptations that surround us.

God desires to see a holy people, a royal priesthood, who through their consecration, outward appearance, habits, and way of life—in eating and drinking—differ from the world and bear a clear testimony that they are God's possession.

When I choose the clothes I will wear, I make a conscious decision. I do not simply put on the first item I find and go around in it. I examine it, try it on, look at myself in the mirror, set it aside if it does not fit, consider whether it is suitable for the weather, the situation, and the place where I will wear it, and then decide to purchase it, buy it, put it on, and go out in public. The choice has been made, and it was deliberate. I must also consider whether my appearance meets God's standards of decency and whether it might be a temptation to someone. The influence of moral corruption is very great, and if I become its instrument, I bear responsibility for those whom I lead into temptation. If I tempt someone, then in God's eyes I acquire the status of a drug dealer, and at the judgment He will ask me to give an account.

There are two kingdoms: the Kingdom of holiness and the kingdom of sin, and I represent one of them.

My public, complete or partial exposure of my body, or my wearing of indecent clothing, testifies to the world that I have consciously chosen this way of life. The world regards me as one of its own, even if I bear a holy name. And God accepts my choice and respects it.

In cold weather, I am compelled to dress decently, or else I will freeze. Yet I am sometimes amazed that, for the sake of fashion, many people are willing to be cold just to display exposed parts of their bodies to the entire world.

When hot or warm weather arrives, undressing becomes common and habitual among Christians. Today people are no longer disciplined, reprimanded, or even warned for this. Yet the temptation for many weak souls becomes so unbearable that they fall and sin—first in their thoughts, and then in their lives—leaving God forever. Meanwhile, the ‘drug dealers’ merely laugh, believing that weak people have problems they must solve for themselves.

Unfortunately, many sisters do not understand the difference between the way men and women think. They attach little importance to how they look, what they display, and the influence an indecent appearance has on their brothers. When asked to be modest and decent, they become angry and offended and change nothing. But God expects holiness and attentiveness to His light. And He will certainly ask me what I did with the revelation and the truths He sent me for my sanctification.

Woe unto the world because of moral corruption! For it must come; but woe to the person through whom it comes.

Doctors, firefighters, military personnel, and police officers have special clothing that distinguishes them from the world and from other people. This clothing is carefully designed. It tells us about the authority these representatives possess. Should God’s representatives also differ from the world? Does

the Bible teach that the priests' garments were to be special? Yes, it does. And are we a royal priesthood for this world? Yes.

One late evening, I met my wife and daughter at the train station. As we drove home, there were women standing on one of the streets near the station. My teenage daughter noticed them and assured me that they were prostitutes. I asked how she had determined this. She replied that their clothing said so. I thought sadly about the many believers I know whose clothing is no different from the clothing of prostitutes. Should there be a difference? If, in hot weather, a worship service looks like a gathering at the beach, can it be called an assembly of saints?

Church doctrines and policies do not teach that clothing should become a criterion for membership in the fellowship; therefore, this matter does not receive proper attention, and attempts to address it are often stopped.

But it is very important to understand how God regards my outward appearance. I studied this matter very carefully and made many discoveries for myself about what my clothing should be, what decency means, and what can become a temptation to others. At one point in my life, I reviewed my entire wardrobe, removed everything indecent from it, and decided never to wear those things again.

I also decided that even when I am alone in a room, I will never kneel in prayer before God if any parts of my body are indecently exposed. I do not require this of others, but I choose for myself to be set apart in my outward appearance.

I also decided never to visit beaches or places where public exposure is expected. I deleted every photograph in which I appeared indecently dressed. And I made many changes regarding holiness. Although this is not the basis of Salvation, it tells Heaven that I understand this matter correctly and live according to the light I have received. And God decides whether I am holy in this respect or not.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Peter 2:9; Ecclesiastes 9:8; Deuteronomy 8:2–5; 14:2; Exodus 19:10, 14; 28:2; 29:25–26; 28:36–43; 30:30; 40:13–15; Genesis 3:6–11, 21; Leviticus 10:6; 20:7–8, 26; 21:10; Matthew 26:65; Deuteronomy 22:5; Proverbs 7:10–11; 25:20; 31:21–25; Song of Solomon 4:11; Isaiah 3:16–23; 47:2–3; 64:6; Ezekiel 28:13; Joel 2:13; Matthew 6:25, 28–33; 17:2; 22:11–13; 27:35; Luke 12:22–24; 1 Timothy 2:9–10; 1 Peter 3:1–5; James 2:1–4; Revelation 3:4–5, 17–18; 7:9, 13–15; 16:15; 19:8, 11

Chapter 90

The question of holiness has always been of great importance among God's people, and it has not lost its relevance in recent times. Bible prophecy also speaks to us about this.

The Bible's final warning reads: Revelation 22:11: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' Very soon this verdict will be pronounced upon the whole world, and a final separation will take place that no one will ever be able to change.

But this separation will not be made at random, as in a lottery. Even now, the life of each one of us is the object of Heaven's special observation. All the inhabitants of Heaven want to be certain that no one with a spirit of rebellion will enter Heaven and that those who are taken into the eternal dwellings can be entrusted with God's treasures.

The holiness of a person who has placed his life in God's hands becomes visible to the entire host of Heaven. The angels gladly bring light into the lives of God's children and carefully observe whether that light is accepted or rejected.

Yet any human decision may be thoughtful and deliberate, or it may be spontaneous and lack inner conviction. If I understand what is being discussed and what is being offered to me, then I make a choice that is recorded beside my name in the records of Heaven.

The question of what is decent and holy in music is rather difficult, because we have not been given specific examples that could serve as a standard and pattern. What was considered vulgar in the nineteenth century appears quite decent today against the background of modern music. Moreover, we all have different ideas about decency. There are clear recommendations on this subject, yet the disputes among God's people have never ceased.

It is very difficult to give examples of decent music in written form, but it is possible to define the criteria that should guide us.

Do not think that music has nothing to do with your Salvation. When Jesus draws me to Himself, what I enjoy listening to is not His primary concern. He accepts me just as I am, with all my sins, and reveals His love to me. If I decide to enter into a covenant with the Lord and take that step, He begins to cleanse and teach me. I then leave behind many old habits and attachments and acquire new interests and tastes. My life changes, my perception of the world becomes different, and I begin to enjoy what pleases Heaven, while certain unclean things become repulsive to me.

If someone believes that music has no influence at all upon the mind and emotions and that it makes no difference what one listens to, it is difficult to argue with such a person. One might even agree if the music were being played for crocodiles. A human being, however, has special organs of hearing that receive sound signals and tell the emotions that something pleasant is taking place.

If you have ever watched movies, you have probably noticed that they always include music, which shapes your perception of what is happening in the way the director intended. If something mysterious or evil is about to happen, the music creates tension in the emotions and intensifies the atmosphere. If the audience is meant to feel joyful, an appropriate melody must be played.

Psychologists know very well how one melody or another affects a person’s life, and they have identified patterns in this influence. Yet God’s children are often unwilling even to listen to scientific research concerning the laws of the human soul, believing that they understand such matters better than anyone else. Ignorance will not be an excuse at the judgment; rather, it will testify to the true spirit of the heart.

Music does exert an influence, and it can penetrate depths of the heart that nothing else can reach.

When I came to believe in Jesus, I did not understand that my tastes were corrupted. I listened to everything indiscriminately, unable to distinguish what was pure from what was holy. I could play rock music in the car, then sing hymns during a worship service, and afterward continue listening to pop music, as long as it pleased me. Music videos amazed me with their artistry, and I greatly enjoyed their intricate storylines. But the Lord sent me light, and I received a cassette containing a Christian program called 'The Bells of Hell.' I was horrified by the way I was living. As I watched it, I understood that I was unclean—deeply unclean. I realized that I was serving and glorifying Satan by listening to debased songs. The first thing I immediately did was destroy every music cassette I had in my home. I decided never again to listen to secular radio. I became terribly afraid that I might lose Eternity by surrendering my mind to Satan in matters of music. Since that time, I have always carefully analyzed what is playing, what I turn on, and what I prefer.

One of my friends shared an observation with me. He enjoys visiting his friends' pages on the Odnoklassniki social network and listening to what they have placed in their music collections. He told me that mine was the only collection in which all the music was pure and decent. It was pleasant to hear this, but I felt sorrow for my fellow believers.

To understand what kind of music I am going to listen to, I should pay attention to its composer and to the source through which it is presented. The rhythm and arrangement of music can sometimes enhance it, or very quickly turn it from something beautiful into something dangerous to the soul.

To understand whether everything is right with me in this area, I need to devote time to prayerfully studying the subject for myself and then make a decision.

The words of a song have a special influence, but if the words are good while the melody is not, it is like preparing delicious food in a toilet and feeding it to others. A person may be filled, but the place where the food was prepared will defile everything it contains.

Stop beside almost any car, and you will hear music. People cannot tolerate silence. The following is typical: if someone turns on a pop-music station, no one objects, but if I play sacred singing, unbelieving listeners become nervous and demand silence.

Holiness in music is the result of a personal relationship with Jesus, and He will certainly reveal His will. I cannot impose my tastes on others or convince someone else about what is pure and what is not, but I have established certain criteria for myself and follow them. My approach to music is that I would rather listen to nothing than allow anything questionable to influence me.

While working in construction, I also faced times when my coworkers turned on the radio and listened to it all day. When I asked them to turn the music off, they refused or made the radio even louder. This was an interesting trial for me. I noticed how different melodies would cling to my thoughts and how the enemy would replay them afterward. I then had to struggle continually, day and night, not to hum that garbage. But the Lord taught me how to resist this as well. When I cannot change anything, I pray for protection for as long as the attack continues. Or I put my own compositions in my ears and redirect my attention to them. And the Lord, seeing my desire to resist evil, blesses me on His part.

I hear everything that is playing, filter those sounds, and activate my defenses whenever necessary.

I do not want to lose Eternity because of my ignorance, and therefore I watch very carefully everything with which I come into contact, allowing only what is pure to enter.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Exodus 32:4–8, 17–20; Proverbs 25:20; Ecclesiastes 2:8–11; Revelation 18:22; Genesis 4:21; 1 Samuel 16:23; 18:6–7; 2 Kings 3:15; 1 Chronicles 13:7–8; Psalms 33:1–4; 57:7–12; 87:7; 107:21–22; 81:2–4; 149:1–5; 150:1–6; Isaiah 12:2; 51:11; Luke 15:25; Revelation 14:1–3; 15:2–4

Chapter 91

Holiness is the dedication of one's life to God in every sphere of one's existence. A holy place is a place where the Almighty is present or where He is worshiped. A holy life implies knowing God's will, understanding it, and precisely fulfilling all the Creator's requirements and expectations.

Obedience and temperance are two sisters of holiness. And the presence of wisdom and understanding is simply essential.

God speaks to us very often about His holiness, giving His attitude toward various things as an example, and He expects us to imitate Him in these matters. The Lord calls His people holy, making it clear that this title is bestowed upon a person under certain conditions—in advance, before that person has actually become holy. And the Lord expects me to hear Him, to think, to examine my life, and to obey.

When studying the Bible, one can see that holiness applies to outward appearance, nutrition, tithing, worship, religious services, and everything dedicated to God. But does this have anything to do with me and with our time? Perhaps holiness was necessary in the days of Moses and the apostles, but now we live in an age of grace and spiritual enlightenment, and our knowledge surpasses everything our ancestors understood?

For all ages, we have been given the warning to possess holiness, without which no one will be able to see God. A high goal has been set before us, and it is worth understanding and attaining.

The Bible speaks very often about holiness in nutrition. Moreover, the Lord emphasizes that it is His people who are to possess such holiness, while everyone else is free to live as they please. Yet obedience to God's will brings abundant blessing to all nations. And every commandment contains something good. Although the law neither saves nor makes us holy, it reveals the problem lodged within my heart. Every command of God is like a mirror in which I can see my life in the light of Heaven's

revelations. Yet whenever God proposes or counsels something, He also gives the power of grace to obey.

Eating is a process vital to every human being. At birth, every child has an instinct to take in food, and the body knows how much a person needs, while the mother receives the milk necessary to give to her infant. But an infant does not choose; it accepts what it is given.

As a person grows, however, his tastes and needs change, and he begins to make conscious choices. That is when God's requirements come into effect.

In speaking about holiness, the Bible says a great deal about abstaining from unclean food, from animals that have been strangled, from animals found dead, and from meat containing blood. Yes, in earlier times there was not the same knowledge of hygiene, and animal products could not be stored for long. Meat spoiled very quickly. It became rotten and infested with worms, but subsequent cooking concealed these characteristics, and the dish looked delicious and appetizing. Yet the problem of spoilage remained.

In Genesis 9:4 we read: 'But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat'; Leviticus 3:17: '...ye eat neither fat nor blood'; Deuteronomy 14:3: 'Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing'; Deuteronomy 14:21: 'Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself...'; Leviticus 11:44: 'For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth'; Acts 15:29: 'That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication....'

When I read these passages from the Bible, I find them wise. But when I enter a supermarket, I see attractive packages of sausages and meat products, and nowhere does it say that they are abominable, that they come from an animal found dead, or that these products contain blood. So with a clear conscience I buy and eat them without thinking. And what happens to my

holiness? It becomes highly questionable. Holiness teaches me that I must think, and that it is especially important to think whenever something is unclear.

Let us take an ordinary beef sausage and think about what it is. We will not quibble but simply consider the facts.

I suggest that we examine a German product. It looks attractive, bears an expiration date, has no unpleasant smell, and tastes good. All that remains is to pray and eat it, for 1 Timothy 4:4–5 says: ‘For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.’ I continue thinking.

The food industry exists to make a large profit with the lowest possible costs and losses. This means that an animal must not become ill and must grow and gain weight quickly. To accomplish this, preventive and medicinal injections must be administered, and the animal must be given precisely the feed that promotes rapid bodily growth. No one is concerned about the medications contained in the feed, because they help build muscle mass.

The animal must move less so that it does not expend unnecessary energy.

The slaughterhouse is usually located at a meat-processing plant, and the animal must be transported there. Living creatures experience stress as they sense their approaching death. Their bodies release adrenaline and other hormones.

In Germany, it is forbidden to cause animals pain, so they are killed by electric current or by other methods in which the blood does not drain out but remains in the body, producing meat from an animal that has been strangled and still contains blood.

Food companies are permitted to omit certain safe components from a product’s ingredient list in order to keep their recipes secret. Fat or pork lard is added to many sausages to give them

a distinctive flavor and tenderness, and this is not always stated in the list of ingredients.

For sausage to keep for a long time, preservatives must be added, many of which are dangerous to human health.

I do not know what illnesses the animal had before its death. But it was a living soul that enjoyed its existence and did not understand why it was being raised.

After thinking about this, I come to a simple conclusion. All meat products sold in ordinary German stores come from animals that have been strangled and still contain blood, and they may also contain fat and unclean additives. These attractively packaged products are saturated with harmful substances. After reflecting for a while, I decide not to eat them, while the scientific world seeks to convince me that my body needs protein and amino acids found only in meat. It takes effort to hold to my position. But such a decision is usually made not at the grocery counter, where the sight of abundance makes one's mouth water, but during reflection, study, and prayer for the desire to obey God's will.

I believe that in these last days it is worth thinking about what is on my plate and in my refrigerator.

Prophecy tells us that the very final trials of God's people will be directly related to their holiness. It is therefore important to take time to learn what holiness is and whether it is present in my life, even when I am hidden from human eyes.

A display of holiness does not save from sin; rather, it resembles hypocrisy and double-mindedness. It is therefore better to show love while being holy—that is, while being a special person who builds his life upon Eternal principles.

I cannot say that I am holy, but I am studying this subject and striving to become holy.

My prayer will not turn something abominable into something beneficial, and my love will not change the composition of my food. In this matter, there must be strict 'yes' and 'no' answers. But a person must come to this conclusion for himself,

understanding what is happening and why it is right. And such awareness takes time.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Romans 6:22; Hebrews 12:14; 2 Corinthians 6:16–18; Genesis 7:1–3; Leviticus 7:22–27; 11:1–47; 17:10–16; 19:26; Isaiah 66:15–17; 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 8:1–13; Revelation 21:27; 22:11; Acts 15:19–20

Chapter 92

At the age of sixteen, I crossed the threshold of a church for the first time. As we were walking from vocational school to the subway, my classmates suggested that we go into an Orthodox church and look at the worshipers. I was surprised, because I believed that there were no religious people in our country, but I accepted their suggestion. We studied not far from the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in Leningrad. As I approached the church, I felt afraid of something mysterious, yet I was also curious. A sign on the door said that head coverings had to be removed, and so we took ours off. We had joked a great deal while walking there, but once inside we became serious. Everything seemed very interesting to me. A choir was singing, candles were burning, and some people were making the sign of the cross before the icons. I walked around, examining with interest the church's interior, the clergy's vestments, and the visitors' behavior. I wanted to see the God in Whom I did not believe at that time. I peered at the icons, trying to understand whether God really existed. After that experience, I occasionally went into this church, observed the people there, and listened to the unfamiliar singing. But I remained an atheist who knew nothing about his Creator.

Perestroika came, bringing a spiritual thaw with it. After returning from the army, I decided to become a traditional Orthodox churchgoer. My faith consisted of occasionally entering a church, buying a candle, lighting it, and leaving. I could not even make the sign of the cross. My hand simply would not rise. And I understood absolutely nothing beyond the fact that my mother had had me baptized as an infant and that I was therefore a believer from birth. Yet I did not know what I believed.

At that time, I could not even imagine that I would one day write lessons for believers and tell others about agape love. But God's grace works miracles.

In time, I learned to observe the traditions of the church, but I did not understand their meaning. I knew only one thing: I was

a sinner who would burn in the fire. For some reason I believed this, although I had heard nothing about the lake of fire. I worshiped an unknown God without understanding what I was doing or what meaning such a life could have when I was living in sin and enjoying it while my soul trembled with fear. And no one explained anything to me.

But the light of truth came into my life as well, and I accepted it. I discovered the beauty of the Bible, which I had previously read without understanding. Jesus became a living Friend to me, and I began to grow spiritually.

As I came to know the truth, my worship of God also began to change. I started to understand what pleases the Lord and what grieves Him. The beauty of God's law and the joy of obeying His commandments were revealed to me. And I began to realize that the purity of my worship depends directly on my understanding of God's will and my obedience to His law. I studied all of this and compared it with what was taking place in my life.

When I read in the Bible about the holiness of God and of everything dedicated to Him, I always desired to be a special person as well. But I was not born into the tribe of Levi, and this saddened me. Yet the Lord revealed to me that in Christ we all become God's priests and receive the blessing of this calling. And that inspired me.

But despite all my knowledge and spiritual growth, I realized that I lacked agape love. I had friendly relationships with my fellow believers, but those relationships were confined within boundaries that could not be crossed. My heart longed for greater closeness, like that which existed among believers in the first centuries. And I began to ask for what I did not possess and did not understand—this very agape love. The Lord answered in such an extraordinary way that I could not even have imagined anything like it was possible. I will be honest: my whole life was turned upside down. A previously unknown depth of biblical teaching opened before my mind, becoming accessible and understandable to my heart through careful study.

In the light of God's love, the events of the last days also appeared in a completely different light, and many new questions for God arose along with this. But it also became clear that the question of true worship of the Creator will become the decisive factor in the final spiritual battle, in which there will no longer be any neutrality.

True worship rests upon my personal belonging to Christ; upon my understanding of His teaching, which He gave to His people; upon my obedience to this teaching and my living according to its spirit, rather than merely having a formal affiliation; and upon my love for my neighbors and fellow believers. All these elements must be present in my life.

Membership among God's people gives me the privilege of belonging among holy people, but it does not save me from the influence of the world and sin or give me a right to Eternity. But belonging in the spirit of love and obedience to the truth makes me a person who is special and of interest to Heaven. And when I worship the Creator in such a spirit, He accepts my worship and begins to minister to me, endowing me with His Spirit and His gifts so that I may serve others. This does not make me competent in everything, but I receive a blessing from using the gift I have received from the Holy Spirit.

Bible prophecy teaches us that true worship of God will be portrayed as a danger to society and that God's children will be sentenced to death. Like the three young men in Daniel chapter 3, I will have to pass through the fire of this trial and remain faithful.

But in order to be faithful to something, one must understand God's will and possess His armor for the final battle. Blind faith that God will somehow protect me will not help. Even now Jesus rebukes me for being lukewarm and offers me both a way out and that which will become my weapon and protection. And if I do not seek to understand the meaning of the symbols in Revelation 3:18 and do not desire to obtain them, then my entire Christianity will suffer a colossal catastrophe, and my house will collapse.

If God counsels me to buy something, then I need wisdom to do it now instead of waiting like the foolish virgins, who postponed everything until later and consequently arrived too late.

Humanly speaking, I desire to bring everyone into the saving Ark of God's grace and to save everyone for Eternity, and that is what I am doing. But the Bible says that immediately before the Second Coming, everything will enter the final stage of the great controversy between good and evil, and when the door of grace closes, only the chosen will be saved. I cannot count myself among these people, but I can do everything that depends on me and exercise wisdom in studying God's plan for the last days, so that I may become a candidate for the mysterious group of 144,000.

And one day this group will be complete. Love gives me an enormous advantage because it allows God Himself, within my heart, to prepare me for the final trials. And as He gathers the chosen for the final battle, He will not overlook Himself within my heart, but will confirm His love in me with His seal, so that He may never again deprive me of this special privilege of deep inner consecration.

It is very easy to serve the One Whom you love and to worship the One Who lives in your heart when you understand what you are doing and know what is expected of you. But one must thirst for this and ask for it; and after receiving it, one must develop and guard it as the most precious treasure—a treasure that must be shared.

My mind must understand what is happening and examine whether I am on a dangerous path and whether I possess everything the Lord counsels me to have. By my choice today, I decide on which side of the door of grace I will stand when it closes.

Bible verses for this chapter:

John 4:19–24; Romans 6:22; Hebrews 12:14; Revelation 3:14–18; 13:3–4, 8, 15–18; 14:6–12; 19:9–10; 22:8–9; Daniel 3:1–28; Isaiah 66:23; Psalm 29:2; 45:12; 66:4; 95:6–7; 96:9; 132:7; Deuteronomy 4:15–19; 26:8–11

Chapter 93

As you approach my little house of happiness from a distance, what do you see? Before you stands an ordinary building, surrounded by the fence of God's law and no different from other structures. And the question arises: Was it worth working so hard only to end up with such a modest appearance?

Although this building stands on a mountaintop and can be seen from everywhere and by everyone, it still does not look grand and does not amaze anyone by its outward appearance, except that from time to time it displays a beautiful smile.

But not everyone enters the house to see what it is built of or how strong and comfortable it is.

Yet all the comfort within this home brings joy to my heart. This little house was also built to bring joy to the hearts of my friends, my neighbors, and everyone with whom I come in contact in this world.

I dedicate everything I have and possess to my Lord. I understand that there is nothing good in me with which I could boast before Him or justify myself. And what I have built was given to me from above as a gift in response to my prayers, longing, and efforts. Therefore, I return to Him everything I have received from God's hand and dedicate it to my Lord. This includes my entire house and everything in it. I desire that all I have, all I have managed to accumulate and build, should rightfully belong to its true Owner.

And as I bow in prayer, I surrender and dedicate my entire self into God's hands.

My prayer is heard. From now on, my structure no longer belongs to me, but becomes the property of Heaven. Yet all of it is now entrusted back to me so that I may continue living in it and filling my little house with everything that will adorn it and make it comfortable within.

And so that I may live joyfully, I invite my other half into this undertaking—the one who has long been mine or who became

my other half during the building process. As a result of our relationship, living beings called children and grandchildren appear in our home. They create indescribable warmth and comfort, love to explore everything and test its strength, and at the same time bring great joy to the heart. All of this is given to me from above to fill my life with activity and merriment and to polish the walls of my little house of happiness from within. But the main task is to teach all these people to build their own houses on a firm foundation with eternal materials.

It is a great joy and very easy for me to share what I have in my little house. I continually demonstrate the strength of the bonds and the durability of the material. The walls of the house are sometimes attacked from within, leaving scars and marks on them, but love covers all things.

At the entrance I hang a sign that says, ‘I Am Hospitable,’ to draw into my home even those who do not know me personally, and I joyfully serve those who come to me out of curiosity or friendship. Every visitor or guest receives as a gift a part of my heart, my love, and my friendliness, and then decides what to do with it. I cannot keep from giving love. I have forgotten how to live any other way. Although I am taught not to offer what is holy to suspicious people, I still keep making mistakes and giving love to everyone without distinction. I know that many will reject my gifts and misrepresent the purity of my heart, but I would rather err on the side of love and kindness toward people than withdraw into my selfishness and lose all the blessings of Heaven.

Heaven watches me very closely—how I handle spiritual riches, how I manage the property entrusted to me, and how I treat my neighbors. My life is weighed on Heaven's scales, and my weight is determined solely by the presence of Jesus in my life. With Him I am very heavy, but without Him my structure weighs nothing.

All my words and actions are carefully recorded by Heaven's cameras. All my motives and thoughts are attentively examined by my Creator. What interests Him most is not the number of

my good deeds, but how much of His love was invested in each one.

The holiness of my character and of my relationships with other people is determined by my personal relationship with Jesus and by the presence of the Spirit of love in every area of my life. It is not I, but God's love, that draws me to good deeds. And everything done with love and out of love entitles me to receive even more love. My deeds become like a snowball that grows larger and larger as it rolls, until it turns into an avalanche that pours into the lives of my neighbors and brings them joy amid their gray weekdays. Unlike a real avalanche, however, my love destroys nothing; it only restores.

I am learning holiness in relationships. How deeply I desire them to be pure and special. Every person is given to me to test my love, to help me discover a new approach, and to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of my character. And while I am studying in the school of Christ, I should not be afraid of mistakes, for mistakes also teach many lessons. I stop, review my life and behavior, recognize my failures, and run to my Jesus for help. And He instructs me, cleansing me with His blood.

Although I try to do everything personally, I nevertheless understand that I am only one part of the whole body of Christ and that I am not being saved alone. In this body of Christ, every member has his own task and function. And God dreams of having a well-coordinated body that is holy in every respect and works faultlessly for His glory.

Although my love is considered mine, it is drawn from the common ocean of God's Love and is given equally to everyone so that each may love according to the need. And in this love we become one while remaining unique individuals and not losing our personal responsibility before God.

The most pleasant and interesting examination of love is called ‘My Family.’ My family is a lifelong source of constant influence. I was born into one family, I created another, and I observe the families of my children and grandchildren. All of us are closely intertwined by family relationships that remain

strong only in the light of love and mutual respect. And we continue to stay connected.

The holiness of every relationship is determined by my conscious understanding that it must be pure, friendly, and consistent with God's principles of love.

The holiness of my character must bear the seal of God's approval, and then it will also be reflected in my behavior. And God can approve only what He plants and nurtures in my heart with His own hand.

Love is a plant of Heavenly origin that has been entrusted to my care so that it may bear much fruit in my life.

The holiness of our relationships with our neighbors and fellow believers will bear the seal of God's approval when the fruit of our love for one another continually brings joy to God's heart. This is possible, and it is worth striving for.

If there is friction and disagreement between us, it means that we are still in the process of building, and we greatly need love to bind our hearts to one another.

In every situation, my character, dedicated to God, will depend on the presence of God's love in my heart. And I am learning this condition of the soul so that I may always abide in it and so that my faith may work through love.

Please come and visit. My doors are open to all of you, my friends. Jesus and I are waiting for your attacks so that we may respond to everything with love. And do not forget to bring Jesus with you.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 Chronicles 29:14; Romans 6:22; Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 6:1–8, 16–18; 2 Corinthians 3:18; John 13:34–35; 14:18–21; 15:5–10; 1 Corinthians 7:2; Ecclesiastes 9:9; Proverbs 5:18–19; Psalm 127:1–5; Daniel 12:3; 1 Timothy 4:16; 5:8; Ephesians 4:15–16; Micah 6:8; 1 John 4:7; 3:23–24

Chapter 94

Money is not evil; it is a means of payment used to establish and preserve the value of goods. Money is a measure of value, a medium of exchange between people or countries, and a means of accumulation, saving, and influencing other people.

Let me tell you a parable that I shared earlier.

Once two close friends, Love (Lyuba) and Money (Monya), met and decided to spend the evening together. They embraced, sat down at the table, and began a warm, heart-to-heart conversation. Monya decided to pour out her heart to her friend and was the first to share what troubled her.

‘Lyuba, even though we are different, we have so much in common. Everyone confuses us and does not understand which one of us they are dealing with.’

‘In what way, Monya, do you see us as being alike?’

‘We have the same power to influence people, and that influence transforms the mind. Those who begin to learn about and study us change. Their minds grasp the laws and depths of our existence. People who come into very close contact with us become different.

We often use each other to achieve our goals.

Those who do not know us closely call us evil and are afraid to possess us.

You and I never run out; we have unlimited potential and possibilities.

The inhabitants of this Earth serve both you and me, but they do not understand that it is impossible to please us both at once. Nevertheless, they still try to combine the two kinds of service.

We have One Father. Although you are older than I am, Lyuba, and I was born for this world and will remain in it, we still have

a common purpose: to pay for the services of other people and to serve as a means of settlement in human relationships.

Those who study the laws of our influence begin to grow spiritually and acquire the mind of a person who is rich in us. And by knowing us personally, they can successfully use our influence for their own interests and for the interests of our Father.'

'Monya, I have noticed that when people serve us, they divide into two camps. Although this service is described by the same general word, the directions of development are entirely different.'

'Yes, Lyuba, I see that too. What saddens me especially is that our brother Lucifer distorts our character and misrepresents us to this world. Unlike you, I am only a means of paying for services and achieving certain goals, yet he presents me as the goal and meaning of life—which is what you are. Many believe him, begin to serve me, and use my influence to bring about their own destruction.

Throughout the history of the world's development, I have changed my form many times, and now I have become completely virtual, but my essence remains the same. I am only a means, yet I have been placed on a pedestal and worshiped. People do not understand that they are not bowing to me, but to Lucifer, who uses my name to achieve his base purposes.'

'Yes, Monya, I know Lucifer's ability to distort everything. Do you remember when I revealed myself to this world in all the beauty and purity of my influence and showed people the true character of our Father? Under our brother's influence, they rejected me, crucified me, made a mockery of me, and killed me. But that very event revealed my entire essence and Lucifer's true character. Despite being rejected, I live on and win many souls.

Yet now Lucifer has reduced me to the level of passion and has made my name commonplace and frivolous. Poor people have become afraid of me. They have stopped believing in my power.

But I am strong. No barriers can stop me, and wherever I am, there is victory.'

'Yes, Lyuba, I have noticed that, unlike me, no one can ever have too much of you. Although you are boundless, everyone who possesses you becomes wise, strong, calm, and very much like our Father.

Those who serve me, however, very quickly become satiated and corrupt their ways so badly that they use me to destroy themselves and others. At times it seems to me that people have simply gone mad. Even those who possess you, Lyuba, very often fall under the evil influence of my worshipers and turn to them for help in carrying out their plans and solving their problems.

People think that we give them freedom. But my freedom is conditional and depends on the stability of financial institutions. It has no firm foundation, while your freedom is real and eternal, and those whom you set free, Lyuba, are truly free. I so enjoy giving myself to these people who possess you, Lyuba. They know how to use me, and, armed with my influence, they successfully achieve their goals. At the same time, they do not become attached to me; possessing you, Lyuba, they love one another and remain faithful to you.

But unfortunately, if I cease to be merely a means even in the hands of these people and become their goal and meaning, these unfortunate souls very quickly lose sight of you, even though they continue to bear your name.

What a fine line!'

'But it will not always be this way, Monya. Very soon I will bring this world to an end, and I will give everyone who possesses me an eternal inheritance for their everlasting enjoyment. I will become eternal joy upon their faces and eternal happiness within their hearts. Very soon all of this will end, and I will show everyone living on this planet my true value and unfading beauty.'

‘It is so good to be with you, Lyuba. Let us meet more often. Perhaps my followers will also hear your voice and open their hearts to you. How deeply I desire this! Then I too will be able, through them, to direct all my power and influence toward accomplishing your plans and purposes.’

‘How glad I am that you understand me, Monya. I also enjoy using you in my projects, but where can I find managers to whom I can entrust you, so that they will become channels rather than bags for abundance? I hope our Father has many such children. I am preparing them for this mission, and the more of me they possess, the more of you I can entrust to them, Monya. And now I must go. I sense the thirst of those who sought me, found me, and are asking me to come. Until we meet again. Do not forget me, and I will give you, Monya, to all those who long to hasten my day.’

‘Goodbye, Lyuba. Until we meet next week.’

Holiness in finances is my personal understanding of the One to Whom all the material blessings entrusted for my use belong, and the corresponding attitude toward these resources as an opportunity to use them in serving people.

God is the Owner of all earthly riches, and He carefully watches how I manage everything entrusted to me.

My proper understanding of Who the true Owner of my finances and wealth is opens opportunities for me to use them properly.

My financial illiteracy, even when my income is high, brings poverty and a constant shortage of money into my life.

Holiness in finances means knowing how to earn money, understanding Whose it is, knowing how to spend it wisely on essential needs, knowing how to invest it in good deeds, knowing how to store it in Heavenly treasuries, and being able to increase it honestly. It is sincerity in dedicating it to God.

The presence or absence of money does not indicate my spirituality and cannot be the foundation of my happiness. Yet poverty or abundance can become a great temptation to my soul, bring vanity into my life, or deprive me of Eternal hope.

Love teaches me to relate properly to everything entrusted to my earthly possession, to earn and spend it wisely, and to invest all my love in every undertaking.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Proverbs 30:7–9; Matthew 6:24; Luke 12:15–21; 18:24–30; 19:8–10; Psalm 37:16–17; 52:9–11; 73:1–28; Proverbs 3:13–18; 11:4, 16, 28; 13:7–11; 14:24; 19:4; 22:4, 16; 23:4–5; 28:22; Ecclesiastes 5:9–18; 9:11; Song of Solomon 8:7

Chapter 95

As I studied the subject of holiness, I realized that it must be present in absolutely every area of my life and, at the same time, bear a pure and joyful witness about my God to the world around me. The Lord desires to be glorified in my life, and He longs for that glorification to be faithful and complete.

There is much I do not know how to do, and there are many things I do not understand correctly. There are areas of life in which I am no expert at all. But when I understand that God expects something special from me while offering to teach me everything I need to know, I become responsible for accepting or rejecting the opportunities He gives me.

Knowing the peculiarities of human thinking, the Lord treats us very gently and patiently when He offers us something.

It is very important for me not to forget the path along which the Lord has led me. I need to remember how He taught me and fed me with Heavenly Bread, how He carried me in His arms when I fell and could go no farther, how tenderly He reproved me, and with what love He disciplined me. Jesus poured all His love into me to help me rise above the vanity of this world and acquire the mind of a righteous person.

The Lord expects holiness from me in my personal dedication of every area of my life to Him, and therefore He sends an abundance of His light through the windows of my soul. To keep them clean, He offers me eyesalve from Him that washes every trace of dirt from the windows of the soul in my little house of happiness and protects me from alien light and from uninvited visitors who do not wish to enter through the door.

I once noticed a very unpleasant trait in myself, one that I am ashamed to speak about. When the Lord sent me His light and revealed His will in that light, I began applying the truths I received to my neighbors or to the members of my church. I even became great in my own eyes when I saw how far my friends fell short of God's standards, and I always hurried to tell them about it. I wondered why they became upset with me and

then avoided spending time with me. If I could not find a particular person who fit God's criteria, I would invent one in my mind and might even speak publicly about certain believers who did not live as the Bible teaches and yet still called themselves Christians. Against the backdrop of such people, of course, I was very holy in my own eyes. I was bursting with this kind of holiness and was ready to denounce everyone and everything around me. The saddest part was that I had support in this ministry. I was especially popular among those who possessed the same critical spirit and regarded it as an important gift from God.

I did not invent support for my ambitions out of thin air; I had what seemed to me a solid Biblical foundation. I read the appeal in Isaiah 58:1: ‘Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.’ I understood it literally, so I began searching for those sins in other people's lives in order to point out their transgressions to believers. I am not the only one who has fallen into this trap of self-righteousness. Unfortunately, many people today are engaged in this work or support those who dare to behave this way openly.

But this is not the holiness the Lord wants to see in me. When He sends me light, He wants to persuade me to reconsider my own life, look into my heart, weigh my motives, examine my words and actions, and draw conclusions. When I set out on this path of self-examination, I begin to see what a wretched person I am, for I do what I should not do, and my motives are not always right. Sadly, however, I try to deceive God by justifying myself. I want to convince Him that I am not so bad and that everything within me is clean, while my entire soul, in all its impurity and sinfulness, lies open before Him as if in the palm of His hand. What can God do with such a person? He cannot force me to repent or acknowledge my impurity, but He gently reveals these defects to my mind, desiring that I myself confess them to Him.

When I tell the Lord about my sins, I am not informing Him of something new or sorrowful that destroys our relationship; I am

freeing my heart from this refuse. If some corrupt passion or fascination overcomes me, God sees it immediately, even before I recognize it, while my conscience may grow dull, become seared, or fall asleep. Yet I attach no importance to the sin and try to convince God that, compared with other people, I am not so bad after all.

For example, let us talk about health reform. Try publicly stating that you eat or drink something from which God asks us to abstain, and you will be surprised by how many quotations have been written on the subject. Some people will simply bury you under every imaginable excerpt from the works of inspired authors. If you do not repent, your public statement will be regarded as a public renunciation of the faith, and opponents will arise who begin saving the other church members from your harmful influence.

I will not say that someone in this situation is right or that someone is wrong, but this is what is now taking place among God's people. We are so occupied with the holiness of other people that we forget our own. I am not saying this about all of us. I am writing this about myself. I know this situation firsthand. I have stood on both sides of this barricade. But God calls us to build bridges, not walls, in our relationships.

It is impossible to escape this whirlpool by our own strength, and many become discouraged, leave their churches, and perish. Some grow weary of gossips and judges, while others are dissatisfied with being among fallen sinners. How can this dilemma be resolved?

Love very quickly teaches me an entirely different way of seeing and approaching things. It gives the most accurate answer to all my ambitions, questions, and claims. It reveals my heart to me and invites me to put it in order. Then love removes the beams from my eyes and teaches me how I may remove a speck from my friend's eye—or shows me that this is not the time to do so.

Love leads me to holiness in every matter. It does this very wisely and delicately. It waits and does not hurry me, yet it

does not abandon its intended goal. If I choose another path, then, like a navigation system, it shows me the best possible routes and guides me toward my destination.

Eternity is the place every one of us should make certain to reach. Love is the most direct and immediate representative of Eternity. It teaches me eternal and righteous laws. It simply knows no other rules of life—only God's principles and standards. Yet it understands the sinner and gently teaches that person righteousness and purity.

Love never ceases to work in the hearts of those who have received it, accepted it, made it their own, and give it to others.

It restrains and destroys my ambitions, inviting me to reconsider my life and bring it into harmony with the standards of Eternal values.

Happiness is a conscious, purposeful life lived according to the rules of Heaven. I may decide to be happy while living in sin, and I may even succeed to some extent, but not for long, because such happiness will not bear the seal of God's approval. But my conformity to Heaven and my Heavenward direction will give God both the right and the desire to bless me as I grow in love.

Bible verses for this chapter:

1 John 3:11–18; Matthew 5:39–42; 7:1–5; Luke 6:37; John 7:24; 12:47–48; Romans 2:17–24; 14:12–13; 1 Corinthians 2:10–16; 4:1–5; 6:1–8; 1 Kings 3:8–14; Psalm 7:9; 82:2–3; 96:10–13; Ecclesiastes 3:17; James 4:7–12; 2 Peter 1:5–11

Chapter 96

As I build my happiness and pursue holiness, I leave behind many things that bind me to this world and hinder me from living a pure life. If someone were to look at my life and try to understand why I deprive myself of many earthly pleasures and sinful enjoyments, it would be worth considering the ultimate purpose of my building. Why do I want to be holy, and what benefit do I gain from practicing self-control in everything?

If my faith is judged from the perspective of this world, it is easy to imagine how strange I appear, and I am given the label ‘sectarian,’ which tells everyone that I am not as ‘normal’ as other people. To many, a sectarian is not a person but a religious fanatic, and few try to understand what I believe or how my hope has changed my life.

Every year, people all over the world wish one another happiness without even understanding the foundations and principles of a happy life. Yes, happiness exists, and it is available to everyone who desires to have it, but its principles and laws must be studied in order to live in it. A house of happiness built on sin will inevitably collapse one day, but a house with a firm Biblical Foundation will stand.

The culmination of my building will be a special event that will change everything and bring an end to this world, to all earthly plans and claims. I am speaking of the Second Coming of Christ. It is also called ‘the end of the world,’ but I cannot understand how something that begins in order never to end can itself be an end. The Second Coming is the beginning of the fullness of light. It is the end of the history of sin and the continuation of life in Eternity. If this event were not to take place, our entire faith, with all its foundations and claims, would be in vain. And what benefit would all our building bring us? At most, a brief existence in this bustling world, only with less bustle.

Death brings all our plans to an end, and if there is no resurrection, we are of all people most miserable. But this is

not so. Christ will come, and His Second Coming will take place. I believe this, and it is the foundation of my hope. Everything I do while living in this world is shaped by this expectation. And this event will show all people very clearly what an enormous difference there will be between those who believe in God and await Him and those who gave no thought to their salvation or did nothing in order to be saved.

My love languishes in this world, surrounded by sin. Sin brazenly raises its ugly head and seeks to plant its banner in my heart as well, but love preserves me in this struggle and gives me victory. I do not know how much longer I have been given to live in this world or whether I will be among the living when I meet my Lord, but I am preparing for His Coming and trying to learn as much as possible about my Savior. I strive to become very much like Him in love and character. I am truly eager to meet the One Who saved me from the power of sin, gave me light and strength to live a pure life, taught me to love, and brought about many changes in my heart. My eyes will behold the eyes of my Lord, my arms will embrace Him, my knees will bow before Him, and my lips will praise Him. I will be taken from this world to live forever in the presence of God the Father and the Son.

What a glorious scene will unfold before the entire world! Far away in the sky, a small shining point appears, about half the size of a human hand. As it draws nearer, the light of indescribable glory illuminates the whole Earth.

The attention of everyone alive is fixed on this light. Suddenly, people begin to understand that something momentous is happening in the history of the planet. Its Creator, through Whom all things came into being, is approaching the Earth. Every voice falls silent. The Heavenly procession draws nearer. We see angels and hear their singing. The heavens roll up like a scroll, opening the way for the Lord as He descends closer and closer to the Earth.

The Earth begins to tremble at God’s presence, and a great earthquake takes place, destroying every structure except my little house of happiness. In awe, I watch this glorious event,

and my lips whisper words of blessing that come to mind. Oh, that all-penetrating gaze of Jesus! Like a sharp sword, it enters the very depths of my heart, and I look on in fear and trembling, not knowing what will happen to me. Will I be able to stand in His presence? For a time, everything becomes silent. Christ surveys the whole Earth with His all-seeing gaze and pronounces words of Eternal blessing upon His people. A cry of indescribable joy fills all space. The Lord commands all who lie in darkness to awaken. The trumpet of the Archangel announces the hour of awakening; the earth trembles and opens its depths to give back to the Lord all who rest in its dust. The dead in Christ rise first. Their new bodies are clothed in garments of light. Loving friends recognize one another. Mothers receive their children. Those who died in agony cry out with joy at their deliverance and the new incorruptible bodies they have received. The pain of their former death gives way to rapture. This entire joyful company, shouting praises and delight, looks upon the smiling Jesus, and an unseen Power lifts these people onto the cloud upon which the Lord is seated.

Then we who remain alive are changed in the twinkling of an eye, receiving new bodies, and an unseen Power lifts us from the surface of the earth and carries us to meet Jesus. I draw near to my Heavenly Friend, Whom I loved without seeing, Whom I came to know so well without having met Him that I could not live without Him; for Whom I was ready to die and left everything behind. My heart trembles. I do not know what I will hear or what will happen next; I simply fly toward this meeting, anticipating something wonderful. My invisible God has become visible. Our eyes meet, and I cannot hold back tears of joy. My heart tells me that all trials are behind me and that what I have pursued by faith for so long is now beginning. I worship my Savior and cannot take my eyes off Him. Here He is, my dear Jesus, so precious and so near! How beautiful He is—better than ten thousand times ten thousand!

I hear painfully familiar voices calling me by name. I turn and see the radiant faces of my happy friends, many of whom were separated from us by death and the trials of the last days. I am joyfully astonished as I recognize dear, familiar faces, and I fall

into their arms. Tears of joy and shouts of happiness fill all space. Then, together and in complete harmony, we begin to look at Jesus once again. How we long to embrace Him too! And He lets us know that this will happen soon.

Out of the corners of our eyes, we look at the Earth and see that it is entirely engulfed by winds and fire. But our gaze returns to Jesus, our voices blend with the singing of the angels, and together we sing a song of victory to the One Who sits upon the throne of glory and is King of kings and Lord of lords.

What wonderful prospects unfold before our imagination!

Our joyful procession begins to move away from the Earth and into outer space. We fly swiftly toward the Heavenly City that has been prepared for us and is rightfully ours.

The entire Heavenly family unites as one rejoicing company. God the Father tenderly embraces each one of us and invites us to enter into His joy, which we gladly do.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Psalm 50:3–6; Mark 8:38; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; John 14:1–3; Acts 1:9–11; 1 Corinthians 15:51–54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 5:1–6; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10; 2:8; 2 Timothy 3:1–5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28; Revelation 1:7; 14:14–20; 19:11–21

Chapter 97

We are living on the eve of great events that are certain to take place because they were foretold in the Bible. Yet one great event is unfolding before my very eyes, right in my own life. It is the approaching end of my journey in this earthly history. Even if I do not believe it or think about it, I cannot escape it; I too will cross this boundary in my life story. But first I will enter the final stage of my growth in order to experience all the delights of life.

Have you ever become discouraged because you cannot fly? Have you ever been disappointed in life because you cannot live underwater or in permafrost? These are strange questions that bring a sympathetic smile at the person asking them.

There are various physical abilities and characteristics that we accept as facts and inevitabilities, and we live with them without being troubled in the least that they are not meant for us.

But there is one inevitable problem that deprives many people of peace, keeps them in fear, plunges them into discouragement, and brings them no joy at all. It is the approach of old age.

No one knows at what age it begins, but I so wish that it would never come to me. I so want to remain young and energetic, to have a reserve of vitality and health, and to be attractive and smooth-skinned. But time passes and spares no one. We even know approximately how much longer we have to live in this world, yet at times we act as though we will never die.

Every year people are born into this world, and we are surrounded by others from different age groups. Together with everyone else, we move from year to year, crossing every age threshold and approaching the destination called the grave. Some meet it early and unexpectedly; others wait for it and long to descend into it as soon as possible but cannot. And the whole meaning of life is reduced to the fact that we are born in order to die. It is the existence of death that deprives our entire

life and everything we accomplish here of meaning if everything ends there.

But God gives us hope that death is only a sleep and a transitional stage leading to something new and wonderful. If I believe in Him—in Jesus, my Savior from sin—and live in obedience to His will and law, then Eternal life is given to me already on this Earth and in God's Kingdom.

My age is a series of stages in life through which I pass regardless of my desire to stop or accelerate them. Each stage of my life opens new opportunities and prospects to me, teaches me something, and permanently takes away what has remained in the past.

The important question is not how long I will live, but how I will live. With what will I fill my mind? Why do I need all of this?

When God originally gave us life, He did not plan to shorten or end it. But sin entered the world, and death came with it. In His mercy, God shortened our span of life in this bustling world because He desires to give us something better and Eternal. Only with Him and in Him does life acquire meaning and significance. And to make this span of time beautiful, God gives us various talents with which to serve one another, so that we may adorn our lives with happiness, love, and friendship and make our everyday lives beautiful and joyful.

Each new age opens new prospects for my development and for learning the mysteries of existence. For example, we see that a nursery, kindergarten, school, vocational school, and university are transitional forms of life that develop the personality, impart knowledge, educate a person, and prepare one for something better. The wisdom of life is not something accidental but something assembled piece by piece throughout one's entire lifetime. Over the years, you begin to understand what is best to do and how to do it, as well as what should not be done. At twenty comes the realization that you are independent; at thirty, that you are already an adult; at forty, that you have already lived quite a while; at fifty, that life goes

on; and what comes at sixty, I do not yet know, but I will tell you later.

I used to hear about a midlife crisis and kept waiting for mine to begin, but it never came. Apparently, love distracted me from those expectations and silenced all my anxieties.

Love is the miracle of life and the best thing with which to fill it. It gives meaning to everything at any age. It makes all my deeds beautiful and meaningful not only to me but also to those around me. It carries within itself seeds of joy, peace, and happiness and scatters them wherever it can.

When you love, the problems of aging recede into the background, and the only goal that remains is to become like Jesus in your love for people and to reveal God's character to others through your life. My years only add practical experience so that, possessing it, I do not repeat past mistakes.

Albert Einstein once said, 'We are all geniuses. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.'

And I notice that at times I think of myself in exactly this way when I begin comparing myself with those who are unlike me and who have achieved something I was unable to achieve. I write myself out of history, giving way to the young and promising—not because I want to, but because this world has conditioned me to do so. I stop striving for anything or learning anything because I have been convinced that I am old and have nothing left to do but die. They have even invented a slogan: 'Live while you are young!'

And the declaration 'I am young!' sometimes sounds so proud, as though it were a lifelong decision. But life runs its course, and time calmly destroys all these ambitions.

Love and friendship are the best alternative to any midlife crisis, any painful perception of approaching old age, and any awareness of the inevitability of death.

Love is Eternity in my heart. Just as Eternal life opens the prospect of Eternal growth, love gives me the prospect of

endless development and the joy of unending victories in this earthly life. It leaves behind an indelible mark of its influence. A loving person has no age. He has love, which covers everything. When I meet someone who loves me and I feel that influence upon me, the question of how old that person is concerns me least of all. I enjoy that person's company and draw from his attitude toward me the very thing my soul longs for most—to be loved and needed by him. It is love that makes every person needed and full of promise. It accepts a person completely and holds him in that acceptance throughout his life, rejoicing that he exists, no matter how old he is.

Love and friendship are the most sought-after currency in relationships. No counterfeit is accepted, and it is recognized very quickly. Only the genuine article has value.

God gave us the laws of health to make our lives happier, to protect us from disease, and to keep our minds from becoming clouded. Love draws us toward this knowledge because it delights in developing and living in a healthy body. It has an immortal motto: 'It is never too late to begin, and there is always something new to learn.'

Choose to live, my friend! Live with purpose. Live in order to love. Then you will not even notice the worldly monster called old age. There simply will be no time left to pay attention to it. Every age will be beautiful in its own way, and love will become the finest adornment and continuation of your life.

Bible verses for this chapter:

Leviticus 19:32; Job 12:12; Psalm 90:10, 12; Psalm 24:6; 37:25; 71:9, 17–18; 91:16; 92:13–16; Isaiah 46:3–4; Job 42:17; Proverbs 3:1–2, 16; 9:10–11; 19:27; 16:31; 20:29; Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 5:33; 6:2; 1 Timothy 5:1–2