

MORNING HOURS.

BEGINNING THE DAY WITH GOD.

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A man of average duration of life (thirty years) sees about ten thousand mornings in the course of his existence.—He begins ten thousand days; and, as the after-issues and conduct of the day depend so much upon the beginnings, we wish to say a few practical words on beginning every day with God. Morning piety has much to do with household piety and with the whole current of one's everyday religion.

1. Every morning gives us (in a limited sense, of course) a new birth and commencement of life afresh. Sleep is the twin-sister of death. We lie for hours mute, motionless, and irresponsible. The outward world is a blank; the mind is virtually a silent chamber, through which incoherent dreams sometimes flit to and fro; life is suspended as to thought, action, and moral agency.

After a few hours of deep slumber—practically as devoid of activity as a sleep in the grave would be—the rosy finger of the morning touches us, as the divine Restorer touched the motionless form of the dead maiden in Jairus' house, and says, *Arise!* In an instant life sets its wheels again in motion. We leap up from that temporary tomb, our bed. We awake refreshed, restored, made anew for a fresh start on the life journey. Was yesterday a sick day? Sleep, like a good doctor, has made us well. We left our aches and pains in the vale of dreams. Was yesterday a sad day? Sleep has blunted the edge of our grief and soothed the agitated nerves. Was it (like too many of its predecessors) a *test* day? Then our merciful Father puts us on a new probation, and gives us a chance to *save* this new-born day for Him and for the holy purposes of our existence.

Do we lose the *morning*, either by long sleep, indolence, or aimlessness? Then we commonly lose the day. One hour of the morning is worth two at the sun-setting. The best hours for study, for in-

vention, for plans, and for labour, are the *first hours* which the mind and the body have after their resurrection from the couch of slumber. Napoleon—who, above all generals, knew the value of time—seized the early dawn. Walter Scott wrote nearly all his Waverley romances before breakfast, and achieved a literary immortality while his guests were sleeping. The numerous and erudite commentaries of Albert Barnes are monuments to early rising; they will ever attest how much a man can accomplish who gets at his work by “four o'clock in the morning.” To the student, to the artist, to the merchant, to the day-labourer, the most useful hours are reached before the sun climbs to the meridian. I am well aware that a vast deal of traditional stuff has come down to us about the “midnight lamp.” But I have generally found that those who use most the “midnight lamp,” either for study or dissipation, burn their own lamp of life out the soonest. While good men are most active in the morning, the “children of darkness,” knaves, rouses, and debauchees, are most busy at the midnight. Make it a rule, then, that he who would begin the day aright must seize and save its earliest hours. How often do we see some poor, careless, dilatory fellow rushing in blundering haste through the whole day, in a vain chase after the hour he lost in the morning!

2. Every day should be commenced with God and upon the knees. “In the *morning* will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,” said that man who “was after God's own heart.” He begins the day unwisely who leaves his chamber without a secret conference with Christ, his best friend. The true Christian goes into his closet for his armour; before night he will need the whole panoply. He goes to his closet for his spiritual “rations” for the day's march. As the eastern traveller sets out for the sultry journey over torrid sands by loading up his camel under the palm-tree's shade, and by filling his water-flasks