

The *constancy* of these two angels is in harmony with their character. "Goodness and Mercy shall follow me *all* the days of my life." Their constancy, indeed, is part of their character. Human friends are proverbially inconstant: even brothers often fail in time of need. "My brethren," says Job, "have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the streams of brooks they pass away, which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: what time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot they are consumed out of their place." But these two angels are friends who stick closer than a brother. Un' e the deceitful brook and the melted snow-water, which Job had seen and moralized upon, Goodness and Mercy resemble the tide which rushed from the smitten rock, and followed the camp of Israel through the desert. Goodness is faithful. When you look behind you never miss it; or, if you do, it is only for a moment, and that not because Goodness is gone away, but because you have dust or darkness in your eyes, which hides it. Goodness never leaves the heaven or the earth. It wheels round the seasons, and commands the weather; and after we have been complaining of too much or too little rain, or snow, or frost, how wonderfully things come right at last; and the doubting farmer has to sing at harvest-time, "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness."

And Mercy is faithful. "His mercy endureth for ever." "His mercy is everlasting. The mercy of God, as revealed in the Gospel, is as constant to the sinner as the law of nature can be constant to the creature.

I know nothing more affecting than a calculation of the possibilities of life. What a multitude of things, such as we daily hear and read of in the newspapers, may happen to us! Nothing that is possible may not come. A whole list of casualties might be here given, enough to fill us with shrinking and dread, lest the next step should sink us in the grave. Nothing about life, as to its particular circumstances and incidents, is at all certain. What one might be called to do or to endure to-morrow nobody knows. But this is as sure as the rising sun, that Goodness and Mercy will ever be the faithful guards of all Christ's flock. Accidents, sicknesses, bereavements, losses, and other dark calamities, may be following me, and may overtake me next year, or next month, or next week, or to-morrow; but that is a "peradventure," a "perhaps." I cannot see them, and it would be foolish to imagine them. But here is something that is no "may be," no imagination. I am sure that, wherever I go, these two guardian angels will go with me; whatever else follow, they will not be absent.

This is a blessed conviction amidst life's uncertainties. It is blessed to have this light shining in such a dark place—to have this clue in such a perplexing maze. Let us cherish the conviction, walk in the light, and keep hold of the clue.

The constancy of Goodness and Mercy will be ever needful. Upon Goodness I, as a creature, must be ever dependent; but in this respect I am like all other beings, human and angelic. Upon divine mercy, as an imperfect being, and prone to sin, I am peculiarly dependent. I know I shall not sin in heaven; but as long as I am on earth, I fear I shall. There is so much in humanity which is bad, that it is hard work to root the badness out; and the mischief is, that we have not got the strong will indispensable for such rooting out. It is with a very shaky hand, and in a very lazy way, that we tear the sin-weeds out of our fallen hearts. How they grow! I met, the other day, with a curious fact in natural history, which may serve to illustrate this. "There is a new water-weed—new in this country—which has made its appearance in the river Thames, within these ten years. It is a long, very knotted kind of plant, whose growth is as prodigious as it is curious. The leaves are beset with minute teeth, which cause them to cling; and every fragment broken off is capable of becoming an independent plant, producing roots and stems, and extending itself indefinitely in every direction. Most water-plants require roots; but this is independent altogether of that condition, and actually grows as it travels slowly down the stream, after