

THE ETERNAL EXAMPLE

Love

OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

QUOTATIONS | STORIES | REFLECTIONS

O ye the cherished loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! It is a long time now since my inward ear hath heard any sweet melodies out of certain regions, or my heart been gladdened; and this despite the fact that ye are ever present in my thoughts and standing clearly visible before my sight. Filled to overflowing is the goblet of my heart with the wine of the love I bear you, and my yearning to set eyes upon you streameth like the spirit through my arteries and veins...

O God, my God! Make thou the believers in other lands to partake of Thine abounding grace, deliver Thou, by Thine unfailing help and bounty, whoso among Thy loved ones in the farthestmost climes sigheth over the bitter cruelty of his foe. O Lord, they are the captives of Thy love, the prisoners taken by Thy troops. They are the birds that fly in the heavens of Thy guidance, the whales that swim in the ocean of Thy bestowals, the stars that sparkle on the horizon of Thy gifts.

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They are the defenders of the fortress of Thy law. They are the banners of Thy remembrance amongst men. They are the deep wells of Thy divine compassion, the fountains of Thy favours, the well-springs of Thy grace.

Keep them ever in safety beneath Thine all-protecting eye. Assist them to exalt Thy Word; make Thou their hearts to be constant in Thy love; strengthen Thou their backs that they may serve Thee well; in servitude, strengthen Thou their powers.

Spread Thou through them Thy sweet savours far and wide; expound through them Thy Holy Writ; make known through them Thine Utterance; fulfil through them Thy Words; through them pour out Thy mercy.

Thou art verily the Mighty, the Powerful. Thou art verily the Clement, the Compassionate.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

*M*ake me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones, and grant that I may offer up my soul for the earth ennobled by the footsteps of Thy chosen ones in Thy path, O Lord of Glory in the Highest...

Tablet of Visitation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

① Thou kind Lord! These souls are Thy friends who are gathered together and are carried away by Thy love. They are transported by the rays of Thy beauty and captivated by Thy musk-laden locks. They have surrendered their hearts to Thee and, lowly and helpless, wander in Thy path. They have forsaken friend and stranger alike and have laid hold of Thy unity, bowing in adoration before Thee.

They belonged to this nether world; Thou didst welcome them into Thy Kingdom. They were as withered plants in the wilderness of deprivation and loss; Thou didst make them the saplings of the garden of knowledge and understanding. Their voices were stilled; Thou didst cause them to speak forth. They were dispirited; Thou didst shed illumination upon them. They were as parched and barren soil; Thou didst turn them into a rose-garden of inner meanings.

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They were as children in the world of humanity; Thou didst enable them to attain heavenly maturity.

O Thou kind One! Grant them a haven and a refuge within the shelter of Thy protection, and shield them from tests and trials. Lend them Thine invisible assistance, and confer upon them Thine infallible grace.

O Thou kind and beloved Lord! They are as the body, and Thou art the Spirit of life. The body is dependent for its freshness and beauty upon the grace of the spirit. They stand, therefore, in need of Thy confirmations and yearn for the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit in this new Revelation. Thou art the Mighty. Thou art the Giver, the Provider, the Bestower, and the Forgiver. Thou art the One Who shineth brightly from the invisible Realm.

Prayers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I ask God that His confirmations may encompass you, that your hearts may become radiant, that your eyes become illumined through witnessing the signs of God, that your ears hearken to the anthems of heaven, that your faces be set aglow with the radiant light of the Word of God. May you all be united, may you be agreed, may you serve the solidarity of mankind. May you be well-wishers of all humanity. May you be assistants of every poor one. May you be nurses for the sick. May you be sources of comfort to the broken in heart. May you be a refuge for the wanderer. May you be a source of courage to the affrighted one. Thus, through the favor and assistance of God may the standard of the happiness of humanity be held aloft in the center of the world and the ensign of universal agreement be unfurled.

The Promulgation of Universal Peace

*V*erily, I place my brow upon the dust, turn my face towards the Lord of Lords, and invoke Him with all fervour and attraction, that He may look upon you with the glances of the eye of His providence and watch over you with the gaze of His loving-kindness. May He unite your hearts, gladden your breasts, harmonize your souls, rejoice you with exceeding gladness, give you to drink from the cup of salvation, and make you firm in His Cause. May He enable you to hold fast to the hem of grandeur, to hasten towards the field of sacrifice, and to be sheltered beneath the shade of that blessed Tree whose roots are planted firm and whose branches reach unto heaven.

Extract from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

*Y*ou are always in my thoughts. You are not nor shall you ever be forgotten. I hope by the favour of His Holiness the Almighty that day by day you may add to your faith, assurance, firmness and steadfastness, and become instruments for the promotion of the holy fragrances.

Tablets of the Divine Plan

*V*erily I pray unto my Lord with all humbleness, meekness, obedience and submissiveness—which demolisheth every edifice of self-exaltation—that He shall strengthen thee by the fragrances of holiness and the breath of the Spirit of Truth and cause thee to be dedicated (or severed) unto God, purged and purified from the dross of the world, holy and sanctified from carnal passions, sacrificing thy soul to the beloved of God, contented with that which the Lord hath granted thee in the world, anxious to perform noble and good deeds while following the teachings of god, and in all things adhering to the law of God!

Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas

O ye who have turned your faces toward the Exalted Beauty! By night, by day, at morningtide and sunset, when darkness draweth on, and at early light I remember, and ever have remembered, in the realms of my mind and heart, the loved ones of the Lord.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

*Y*ou are all very welcome, and I love you all most dearly.

Day and night I pray to Heaven for you that strength may be yours, and that, one and all, you may participate in the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh, and enter into the Kingdom.

I supplicate that you may become as new beings, illumined with the Divine Light, like unto shining lamps, and that from one end of Europe to the other the knowledge of the Love of God may spread.

May this boundless love so fill your hearts and minds that sadness may find no room to enter and may you with joyful hearts soar like birds into the Divine Radiance.

May your hearts become clear and pure like unto polished mirrors in which may be reflected the full glory of the Sun of Truth.

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May your eyes be opened to see the signs of the Kingdom of God, and may your ears be unstopped so that you may hear with a perfect understanding the Heavenly Proclamation sounding in your midst.

May your souls receive help and comfort, and, being so strengthened, may they be enabled to live in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

I pray for each and all that you may be as flames of love in the world, and that the brightness of your light and the warmth of your affection may reach the heart of every sad and sorrowing child of God.

May you be as shining stars, bright and luminous for ever in the Kingdom.

I counsel you that you study earnestly the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, so that, God helping you, you may in deed and truth become Bahá'ís.

Paris Talks

*D*ay and night I entreat and supplicate to the Kingdom of God and beg for you infinite assistance and confirmation. Do not take into consideration your own aptitudes and capacities, but fix your gaze on the consummate bounty, the divine bestowal and the power of the Holy Spirit—the power that converteth the drop into a sea and the star into a sun.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I am going away from your city, but I leave my heart with you. My spirit will be here; I will not forget you. I ask confirmation for you from the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh. I pray that you may advance continually in spiritual susceptibilities, that day by day you may grow more radiant and draw nearer to God until you become instrumental in illumining the world of humanity. May these confirmations of the Kingdom of God encompass you. This is my hope, my prayer.

The Promulgation of Universal Peace

*V*erily I say unto thee: I am with you in heart and in spirit. I delight in your joy and my spirit rejoiceth in your happiness. With mine inner ear I hear your call and with mine inner sense I inhale the sweet savours of the garden of your hearts.

Extract from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O ye dear friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! At all times do I await your good news, longing as I do to hear that ye are making progress from day to day, and are becoming ever more illumined by the light of guidance.

The blessings of Bahá'u'lláh are a shoreless sea, and even life everlasting is only a dewdrop therefrom. The waves of that sea are continually lapping against the hearts of the friends, and from those waves there come intimations of the spirit and ardent pulsings of the soul, until the heart giveth way, and willing or not, turneth humbly in prayer unto the Kingdom of the Lord. Wherefore do all ye can to disengage your inner selves, that ye may at every moment reflect new splendours from the Sun of Truth.

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Ye live, all of you, within the heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and with every breath do I turn my face toward the Threshold of Oneness and call down blessings upon you, each and all.

Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

After Bahá'u'lláh's confinement in the Most Great Prison in 'Akka had ended, but while He was yet residing in the town, an Egyptian merchant, 'Abdu'l-Karim, afire with God's latest message, desired to visit Him. He wrote for permission to go on pilgrimage. He must have been greatly surprised when the reply arrived: he might go on pilgrimage but only after all his debts were paid.

He had been in business for many years. His caravans crossed the desert with precious cargo. He had quite naturally been interested in expanding his business, but now his consuming interest was to 'owe no man anything'. It followed that when he received payment, instead of investing it for further gain, he paid off a debt. This continued for five years, until at last he was debt-free.

His business shrank. No longer did 'love of wealth' consume him.

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When all his debts were paid, he had only enough to keep his family going in his absence and to pay for deck passage on a ship bound for Haifa. Formerly, he would have travelled first-class. Now he had neither bed nor warm stateroom. Never mind! He was going to see Bahá'u'lláh. As he crossed the gangplank, his shawl slipped into the water. The night would be chilly, but his heart was glad and he felt 'alive with prayer'.

Bahá'u'lláh informed His family that He was expecting an honoured guest. A carriage was sent to Haifa to pick up the merchant, but the attendant received no description of this very special guest. As the passengers disembarked, he watched them very carefully -- surely he would recognize someone so distinguished -- but the passengers appeared quite ordinary and in due time he returned to 'Akka with word that Bahá'u'lláh's visitor had not arrived. The merchant had expected to be met. He had no money left to hire a carriage.

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Bitterly disappointed, he seated himself on a bench, feeling forlorn and destitute. Bahá'u'lláh knew that His distinguished guest had arrived, even though he had not been recognized. This time He sent 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who, in the twilight, recognized 'the disappointed figure huddled upon the bench'. Quickly the Master introduced Himself and explained what had happened. Then He asked the traveller if he would like to go to 'Akka that very night or if he would prefer to wait until morning. The merchant had already spent hours in prayer in preparation for his meeting with Bahá'u'lláh, but now he found that bitterness had seeped into his heart -- he had felt so forgotten and alone upon his arrival in Haifa. He had even begun to wonder about the very station of Bahá'u'lláh. For what had he given up his fortune? He was in spiritual torment. However, in the presence of this welcome and gentle Man, doubts and suspicions ebbed out of his soul; yet he felt the need of hours of prayer to feel spiritually ready to meet God's Emissary.

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As the story is told, ‘Abbas Effendi knew instinctively that His new friend would not wish to seek a hotel at His expense, so finding that he preferred to wait until morning for the journey to ‘Akka, ‘he unbuttoned the long cloak that enveloped him, seated himself beside the pilgrim, and wrapped both on its ample folds. So they passed the night praying together, lost in that ecstasy of prayer that brings realization.’

The next morning they proceeded towards the prison-city of ‘Akka. At long last the Egyptian appeared before Bahá’u’lláh with a glad heart, purified through five years of testing.

Honnold, Annamarie, Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 61



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