



It is like walking along the mud flats in the bottom of a slough. The muck beneath your bare feet sucks at every step, slowing your stride. The cold slime oozes between your toes, with each labored step pulling you down, pulling you down.

WHO MAY ASCEND INTO
THE HILL OF THE LORD?
AND WHO MAY STAND
IN HIS HOLY PLACE?
HE WHO HAS CLEAN HANDS
AND A PURE HEART...
Psalms 24:3-4a

Made for Something Better

SOMETHING DEEP WITHIN YOU CRIES OUT, frustrated, convinced of your grasping notion that there is surely something better. Every morning you swing your weary bones out of bed, plant your feet down onto what you hope will be gossamer clouds of ease—only to discover that nothing has changed from the day before, and your feet sink down into the familiar brown muck.

You want to cry out, “I deserve better than this!” but don’t like the presumptuous sound of it. What you mean is that you were made for something better—that you are cut from better cloth than this. You acknowledge the Creator, and because He made you

in His image, there is something profound and mysterious dwelling—simmering, percolating—within: a sense of your part in God’s grand scheme of man’s eternity. Your part is small, admittedly, but not insignificant. He has placed within you a desire for Him and His ways. He has, through the sacrifice of His own Son, graciously given you a place with full rights in His own family.

You have enjoyed moments of sweet, intimate communion. You have, like sister Mary, sat enraptured at His feet, listening, letting His words and love seep into your very pores. Every part of you embraced the Lord and, secure in His elevating love, you left

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His presence driven not by mechanical locomotion, but by the sheer power of His life. Your feet never touched the ground as you returned to live for Him, by Him, to Him.

But soon you found yourself, once again, treading not just upon the soil of earth, but down deep in its muck.

It is not inevitable, but it *is* persistent. Man may have been created with a heart yearning for God, but he was also created with feet of clay. Indeed, that paradox is the source of the believer's frustration, his pain. Having been granted a glimpse into the ethereal "lightness of being" of eternity with the Savior, our leaden steps in the muck of this world have become all the more disconcerting. We know better. We have lived better.



"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."

Matthew 5:23-24

If Jesus' words are sound counsel when we have wronged a brother—and they are—then how much more pertinent they are when we have wronged

Christ Himself. We are not to track the world's muck into our worship.

The life of a Christian is to be, by definition, Christ-centered. To avoid the path that takes us through the muck of the slough we are to keep our eyes—even while we still float in His heavenly realms—on the Lord. The sobering sight of His empty, but blood-splattered cross is the caressing breeze that keeps us aloft. And if our gaze roams—if from the heights we begin to envy those who trudge the earthen path—and our feet begin to sink into the sucking slough, then, on our way to the throne, we are to revisit the place of His sacrifice. For only there, in that awful, holy place, do we find the cleansing, restoring waters that will clean our feet of the world's mud, and lift us once again onto the Father's holy plane.

A soul can never attain the knowledge of God unless God Himself in His condescension takes hold of it and raises it up to Himself. For the human intellect lacks the power to ascend and to participate in divine illumination, unless God Himself draws it up—in so far as this is possible for the human intellect—and illumines it with rays of divine light.

The Philokalia



Now I have found the ground wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may remain,
The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
Before the world's foundation slain;
Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,
When heaven and earth are fled away.

O Love, Thou bottomless abyss,
My sins are swallowed up in Thee!
Covered is my unrighteousness,
Nor spot of guilt remains on me,
While Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy, cries.

With faith I plunge me in this sea;
Here is my hope, my joy, my rest;
Hither, when hell assails, I flee,
I look into my Saviour's breast;

Away, sad doubt, and anxious fear!
Mercy is all that's written there.

Though waves and storms go o'er my head,
Though strength, and health, and friends be gone,
Though joys be withered all and dead,
Though every comfort be withdrawn,
On this my steadfast soul relies,—
Father, Thy mercy never dies.

Fixed on this ground will I remain,
Though my heart fail, and flesh decay;
This anchor shall my soul sustain,
When earth's foundations melt away;
Mercy's full power I then shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love.

Johann Andreas Rothe

