



THE ATTRACTIVE CHRIST
AND OTHER SERMONS
MAC ARTHUR

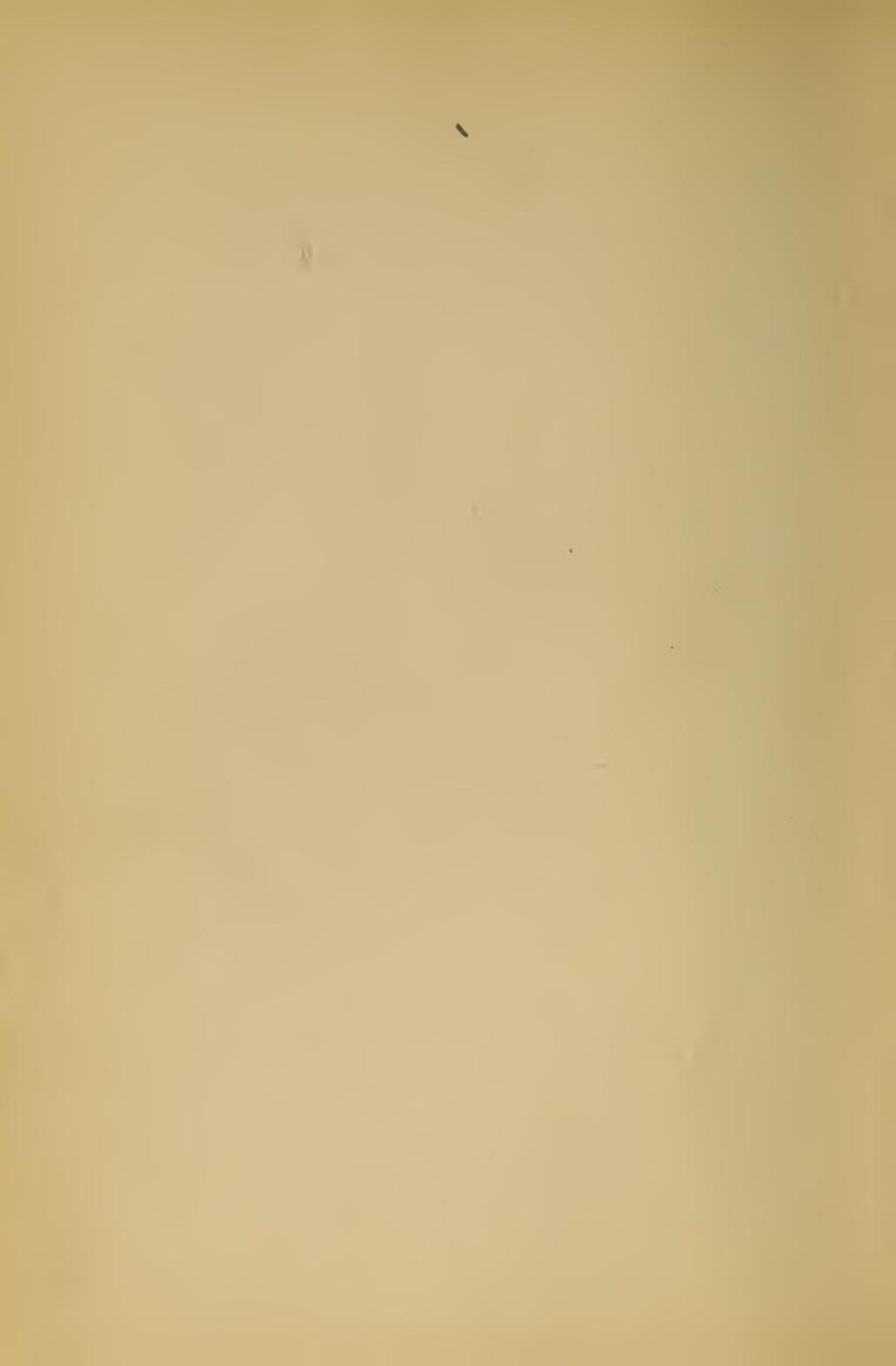


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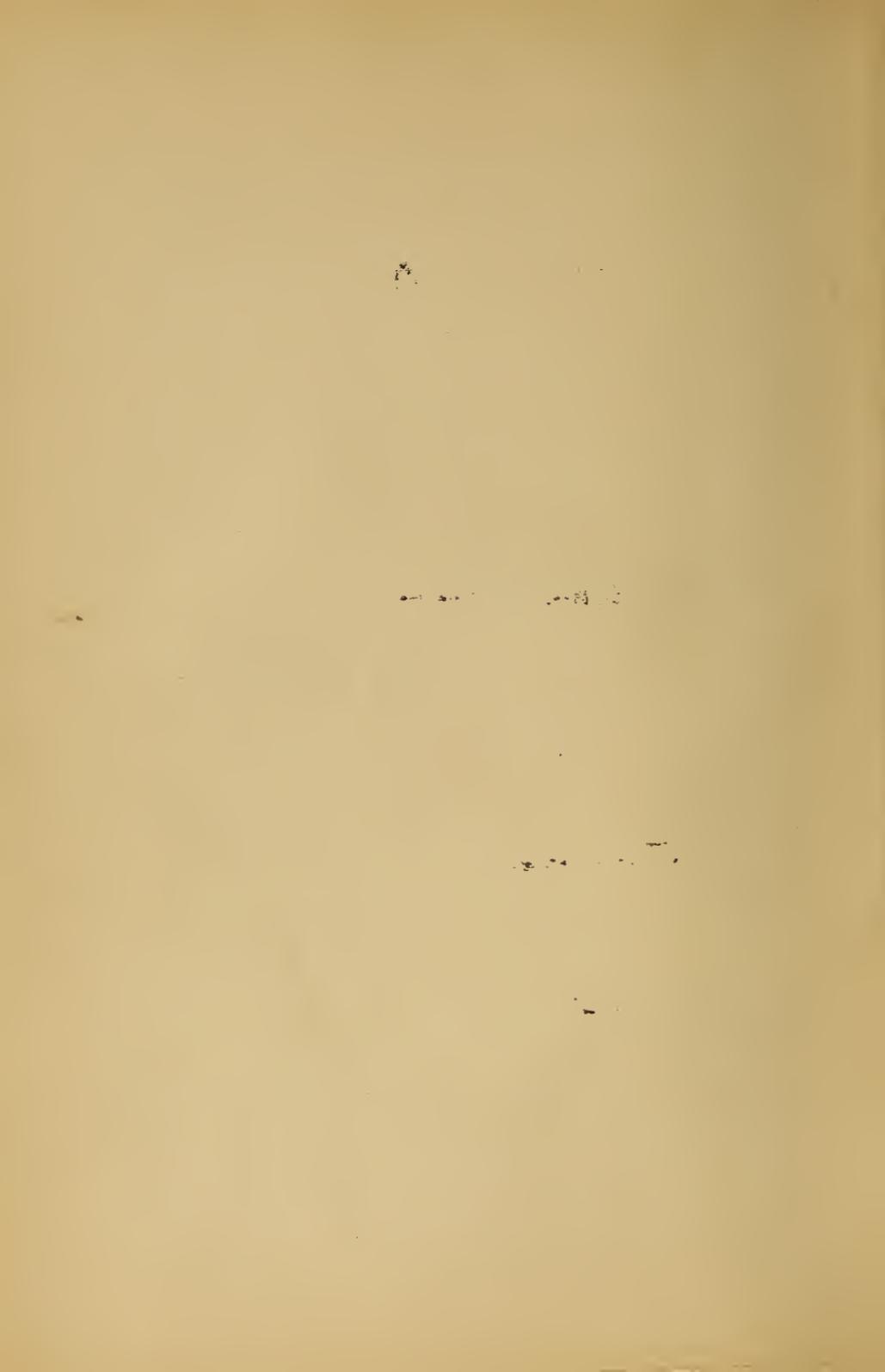
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THE ATTRACTIVE CHRIST

AND OTHER SERMONS



THE ATTRACTIVE CHRIST AND OTHER SERMONS

BY
ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR

I think I understand somewhat of human nature, and I tell you . . . that Jesus Christ was more than man. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself, founded great empires; but upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded his empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for him.

—Napoleon Bonaparte

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C. L. ...

PREFACE

MOST of the sermons contained in this volume were preached in the Calvary Baptist Church, New York, on consecutive Sunday mornings during the last few months. The discourses preached on Sunday evenings during the same period, and during a few additional months, will be published under the title, "Sunday Night Lectures on the Land and the Book."

It is the sincere desire and prayer of the author that all readers may experience the power of "The Attractive Christ," and may at last rejoice in "The Beatific Vision" of the King in his beauty.

ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR.

CALVARY STUDY, Jan., 1898.

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THE ATTRACTIVE CHRIST

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.—John 12 : 32.

I

JESUS CHRIST is the most attractive Personage the world has ever known. This truth was clearly indicated even at the dawn of human history. He is the Shiloh in Genesis ; the I Am in Exodus ; and the Star and Sceptre in Numbers. In Deuteronomy he is our Rock ; in Joshua he is the Captain of the Lord's Host ; and in Job he is the Redeemer. He was David's Shepherd and Lord ; and in the Song of Solomon he is the Beloved. In Isaiah he is the Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. In Jeremiah, he is the Lord our Righteousness ; in Daniël he is the Messiah ; in Zechariah he is the Branch ; and in Haggai he is the Desire of all nations. In Malachi he is the Messenger of the Covenant and the Sun of Righteousness. He is John the Baptist's Lamb of God, and John the Evangelist's Vine, Way, Truth, Life, Light. The Apostle Peter speaks of him as the Shepherd and Bishop of souls ; and in the book of Revelation he is the Alpha and Omega, and also the Morning Star. These are but a few of the attractive titles applied to Christ on the page of inspiration. He was the world's desire as indicated by the longing and hoping of the world's greatest thinkers. He was the perfect man of Plato's ideal

conception. He was the dream of poets, the hope of philosophers, and the inspiration of painters and sculptors. He is our hope in life, our support in death, and he will be the theme of our triumphant song in eternity, when we shall crown him with many crowns. At the time in his earthly life to which our text refers, he proved his attractiveness in a remarkable way. Much is said in our day as to the importance of securing preachers and pastors who can "draw"; but no pulpit can truly have drawing power except Christ be uplifted therein.

There has been considerable difference of opinion as to the time in our Lord's life when the words of the text were spoken. Some affirm that the visit of the Greeks took place on the day of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and others that it was later in the Passion week. The visitors were not Hellenistic Jews. There is reason to believe that they were Gentiles who had become proselytes to righteousness; and these are distinguished from proselytes of the gate. Even heathen writers mention the fact that so many Gentiles had adopted parts of the Jewish worship that Judaism was extended through all parts of the civilized world.

These men came to Philip. Philip hesitates at once to present them to Christ. He therefore tells his friend Andrew, and they together impart to Christ the desire expressed by the Greeks. In the approach of these Gentiles, who were hunger-

ing after salvation, Christ sees the first-fruits of the great harvest which would be reaped after his crucifixion and ascension. He sees now the great possibilities which are soon to be secured when his gospel shall have been preached to all nations. Stier has said : "These men from the West at the end of the life of Jesus, set forth the same as the magi from the East at its beginning ; but they came to the cross of the King, as those to his cradle."

Our Lord in the text shows how the grand consummation to be brought about by the preaching of his gospel is to be accomplished. Satan is to be cast out of the realm where he had so long reigned, and Christ is to be triumphant as the ruler over the hearts of men. Only as the corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, can it, by a fundamental law of nature, bring forth much fruit. Not otherwise is it with Christ himself. He must give his life as a vicarious sacrifice that his gospel may be preached and that many may be saved. A similar law applies to the life and work of all his disciples ; only as they die to the lower life can they live for the higher and diviner life. Already our Lord's soul is passing into the darkness of the last terrible struggle. But in the midst of this unspeakable sorrow there comes a voice from heaven assuring him that the name of God would be glorified again as it had been glorified in his obedience in the past. At his baptism the heavenly voice came, giving him cheer and in-

spiration ; on the mount of Transfiguration the voice of the Father again was heard, expressing his pleasure in the obedience of the beloved Son ; and now, as another stage in his earthly career is begun, that same voice is once more and for the third time heard. The great crisis in the history of the race is at hand. Our Lord sees the triumphs of his completed work. He is to be recognized as king when the rebel empire is overthrown. His soul is lifted up from its sorrowful depths to heights of ecstatic joy. He appears before us in the wonderful attractiveness of his vicarious work as the substitute for sinners, and as the triumphant king of glory, who opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Let us learn the characteristics of the wonderful drawing here described, the elements of Christ's attractiveness when he is lifted up to the cross and to the throne.

1. *This is a personal drawing.* Christ draws all men and draws all men unto himself. It is remarkable when we pause to reflect on the sublime egotism found here, and so often elsewhere in the life of our Lord. No other than he might so use the first personal pronoun ; there is no sense of unfitness in his use of that pronoun. He is conscious of imperial power as he utters these words ; and we seem to be conscious of his absolute right to the possession of that power and to the utterance of this form of speech. There is a kingly majesty in our Lord's words, even when spoken in the lowliest place which he occupied when upon

earth. There is no feeling of incongruity on our part between the words which he uttered and the character which he possessed. We feel that one living the life he lived rightfully might speak the words which he employed. There is here an almost unconscious argument on his part for his full, his absolute, and glorious divinity. Were a mere man to speak as did he, he would prove himself to be hopelessly insane. Such a thought, however, never occurs to us when we are studying the sublime and divine egotism of the Son of God. This consciousness of imperial dignity and this employment of kingly speech belong by divine right to the Son of God. We read the messages of kings and queens in our own day as they address their parliaments, and their use of the first personal pronoun in speaking of armies, navies, parliaments, and foreign courts may create a smile; but we recognize the conventional appropriateness of their language when we consider the theory of their governments. But in listening to the egotism of Jesus Christ we feel at once that it is not egotism in the ordinary acceptation of the term, but the appropriate language of him whose exalted mission and character gave him a divine right so to speak. His language is the more striking when we reflect that he was the captain of our salvation without an army or a soldier, and the king of glory without a courtier, and that he was now marching in sublime self-sacrifice to the cross to die for the world's redemption. It is true

that elsewhere the evangelist John speaks of this drawing power as possessed by the Father alone, but here it is ascribed to the Son. Before the glorification of the Son this special divine work was attributed to the Father, but after that glorification the Son himself draws to himself. There is this co-working between the Father and the Son; there is prominence given now to the act of the one and now to the act of the other.

2. *We observe, also, that this is conditional drawing.* We are not, however, to suppose that our word "if" expresses here any doubt or uncertainty that Christ should be lifted up from the earth. The word is elsewhere used to signify certainty rather than doubt. What is the real meaning of the words, "be lifted up"? We are quite sure that they represent our Lord's being lifted up on the cross. All doubt on that point is removed by the language of the verse following the text: "This he said, signifying what death he should die." This is the primary meaning of the language here used by Christ. He was lifted on the cross as a spectacle to men and angels. He hung thereon between earth and heaven, as if unworthy of both. Christ's cross was in a real sense his throne of power. He sways a sceptre to-day of spiritual dominion over men because once he died on the cross, the vicarious sacrifice for the sin of the world. His enemies supposed that when they lifted him to the cross they had forever destroyed his power as their foe and his influence as the

Redeemer of men. The cross is still a mighty attraction. Men who die for their country or for their race, live again as mighty forces in commanding the world's affection and reverence. Never did Satan commit a greater blunder than when he led to the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Satan over-stepped the limits of wisdom and proved that though he is knowing he is not omniscient, and although he is powerful he is not omnipotent.

But our Lord's thought passes from the cross and goes up to the throne. He realizes so fully his promotion to the right hand of God that he includes both forms of exaltation in the words here employed. His elevation to the cross was but one step in his exaltation to the throne. In the wonderful description given us by the Apostle Paul in the second chapter of Philippians, he traces our Lord's descent from the throne of equality with God to his death upon the cross. He then begins the glorious ascent until he sees the Crucified One exalted above all principalities and powers and bearing a name which is above every name. He also sees all things in heaven and in earth and under the earth bowing at the name of the crucified and glorified Christ, and he hears every tongue confessing that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The cross was inseparable in the life of Christ from the crown and the throne. In a real sense this is true in the life of all his followers. They, as truly as he, must bear the cross if they

are to wear the crown. The Holy Spirit came as Christ's ascension gift; he was to take the things of Christ and to show them unto men. But for the ascension and enthronement of Jesus Christ, we could not have had the descent and manifestation of the Holy Ghost.

The language of Christ will also include his exaltation in the preaching of his word. No pulpit can have genuine power except it manifestly presents Christ crucified to worshiping assemblies. He so uplifted is still the mightiest magnet to draw men and women from self and sin to holiness and heaven. We see how wonderfully the gospel won its triumphs after the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Christ's exaltation was then complete and the manifestation of his power was glorious and divine. When upon the earth he fed a few thousands with the bread that perisheth; but after his exaltation to the throne he commissions his servants to give the bread of life to every creature under heaven. During his earthly ministry he was limited to the Jewish people; but after his crucifixion and ascension he offers his salvation to all men irrespective of nationality, country, or clime.

3. *We observe that this was also certain drawing.* The condition of Christ's exaltation having been met, the power of Christ's attractiveness was made absolutely certain. We are here informed that he "will draw all men." There is no doubt as to the power going out from Christ when ex-

alted to his throne. There was a mythological fable that Jupiter had a golden chain which he could at any time let down from heaven, and by it draw the earth, with all its inhabitants, to himself. This chain, it is supposed by the interpreters of mythologies, represented the union of earth and heaven, that it represented the government of both by the chain of causes and effects. It was called a golden chain to express the beneficence of providence in its drawing power upon the earth and its peoples. What is here vaguely set forth in legend is literally taught in the text, regarding the power of the exalted Son of God. While to some his cross was a stone of stumbling, it was to others a lodestone of irresistible attraction. There is to this hour, and there will be forever, a mysterious, majestic, ineffable, attractive influence emanating from the cross and the throne of Jesus Christ. All men must recognize the uniqueness of his place in human history. Even now in many parts of our country assemblies of socialists and anarchists, who hate the name of the church, cheer the name of Christ. To them the church is the symbol of a cold and unchristian Christianity; and to them at the same time the name of Christ is synonymous with gentleness, helpfulness, lowliness, graciousness, and brotherly kindness.

Jesus Christ is the wonder of the world's history. His cross stood at the confluence of three streams of civilization. On the mount of Transfiguration Moses, as the representative of law, and

Elijah, as the representative of prophecy, disappeared in the shadows of the light emanating from Jesus Christ; so that the apostles looking up "saw no man save Jesus only." All men, whatever their creeds and characters may be, must reverence the blended humanity and divinity which were manifested in the Son of God. His name is to-day the mightiest name to move men to the noblest deeds, and to inspire them with divinest aspirations which human lips can pronounce. We need not fear that the exalted Christ will ever lose his power. Whatever changes may come in Christian thought and creed, in church form and life, Jesus Christ will still be in his divine attractiveness "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Beneath his cross I take my place to-day without doubt and with hope, without depression but with enthusiasm, knowing well that his gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The power emanating from the exalted Christ, exalted to the cross, to the throne, and in the pulpit, overthrew the most ancient systems of heathen philosophy and mythology, and in the ever-brightening future it will achieve similar triumphs, and Shintoism, Brahminism, Buddhism, and every unchristian "ism," with all their priests and votaries, will yet bow the knee to the Son of God; and every tongue throughout earth's remotest bound shall proclaim him to be Lord to the glory of God the Father.

4. *The attractiveness of Christ is also a gentle*

drawing. This thought is suggested by the word here translated "will draw." It signifies here a gentle rather than a forceful drawing. It is not the word that would be employed to suggest drawing by violence. Christ draws; he does not drag. Christ wins; he does not force. Christ draws by the "cords of a man." It may still be said of those who are sweetly drawn by the power of Christ that, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." God's power is manifested in drawing men to Christ, in harmony with the laws of our nature which God himself has conferred. Christ is represented as standing at the door of the heart and knocking for admission. With one blow of his resistless hand he might shatter the door, but that blow he will not inflict. He has made man free as a moral agent; were man not free he could not be responsible for his moral acts. Freedom is an inalienable attribute of manhood. That attribute God respects in his approaches to men and in his appeals to their intelligence and conscience. God may drive the brute creation; but God will draw the creatures made in his own image. There is a divine drawing constantly operating upon human hearts. God appeals to men in the providences of life; in the still small voice of his Spirit; and in the threatenings, commands, and promises of his divine word. Oh, let us beware how we treat God in his gentle appeals to our hearts! It is one of the profoundest solemnities of life that the creature may in a sense resist the

Creator; that man may defy God; that man in his wicked rebellion may hasten his own destruction. Oh, quench not the Spirit to-day! Oh, grieve not the gentle, wooing, beseeching Spirit of God, as he would now draw you in loving obedience to the heart of Jesus Christ!

5. *This is a comprehensive drawing.* "Will draw all men." The word "men" is not expressed, but as the word "all" is masculine in the original, it clearly refers to persons. We are not, however, to understand these words as teaching universal salvation. We must understand that the gospel is offered to all men without distinction of race or creed. It is certain that Christ here includes Gentile as well as Jew. The coming of these Greeks to him suggested the enlargement of the offer of salvation which would be made after his glorification. All men of every class were to have the opportunity of becoming the subjects of his glorious salvation; all men without distinction were to receive the invitations which his messengers were to extend. His death would make an atonement sufficient for the sins of men of every race and every degree of guilt. That atonement opened the way for a universal offer of redemption through the death, resurrection, and glorification of the Son of God. The Scriptures everywhere teach the enlargement of the sphere of redeeming grace in the times of the Messiah. Jesus was to be exalted as an ensign of the people and to him the Gentiles would come. Some would limit the language here

to those whom they call the elect ; others would go to the opposite extreme and find here the doctrine of universal salvation. But the words employed do not necessarily mean effectual calling. They do not teach that this drawing is irresistible. No affirmation is here made as to the extent to which the overtures of the gospel will be accepted. While we know that the provisions of the gospel are sufficient for all sinners, we know also that they are efficient only for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not here affirmed that all will actually embrace the offers of salvation and receive Christ as their Redeemer and Lord. In fact, we know from Scripture and we know from observation, that all men who hear the gospel do not receive it to the salvation of their souls.

The fulfillment of this promise is still going forward ; it is worldwide, and it is constantly finding its realization. To-day Japan stands on tiptoe with the light of the gospel falling on her upturned face ; to-day China is arousing herself from the conservatism of centuries and receiving or opposing the truth as it is in Jesus ; to-day India with its teeming populations is shaking off the bondage of her heathenism, and like the Greeks who came to Philip, is saying to the missionary of the cross, " Sir, we would see Jesus." To-day Africa is reaching out her hands and crying unto God for deliverance from the superstitions of centuries, and is longing for the light and liberty which come alone from Jesus Christ. The day is coming when

the final goal will be reached, and from sea to sea, from the rivers to the ends of the earth, from pole to pole, there will be one flock under one shepherd, and Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.

6. *This is, in the last place, an evangelical drawing.* "Will draw all men unto me." Some have supposed that all things as well as men are to be included here. There is a truth, doubtless, in the suggestion that all agencies, all resources, all forms of wealth, all kinds of political power, all inventions, all discoveries, all railroads, telegraphs, and telephones, are in a sense to be drawn to Jesus Christ. They are to be used in his service; they are to contribute to the salvation of men and to the greater exaltation of Christ. But the special reference is, of course, to men, and they are to be drawn to himself. The word "me" is literally "myself." The crucified Christ is the great object of faith, the supreme attraction for lost men. He himself draws all men unto himself—men of all classes and climes, of all interests and characters. The drawing will not be discontinued until men actually come to the living Lord as their personal Saviour. It is not enough that they be drawn to the adoption of formal and lifeless creeds; not enough that they come into the fellowship of the visible church; not enough that they adopt the external moralities of Christian faith. The drawing here is not simply to baptism and to church fellowship and to the Lord's Supper. If men are

drawn only thither they have not reached salvation; they are still in the plain where destruction may overtake them. They must flee into the mountain; they must find refuge in Jesus Christ. It is not enough that they should simply believe in the atonement; they must believe in the Atoner. Not enough that they should in a technical way believe in redemption; they must believe in the Redeemer. Not enough that they accept verbally spiritual deliverance; they must accept personally the spiritual Deliverer. Oh, that all in this audience, and all men throughout the world, might now look on the uplifted Christ, be drawn to his heart, and so be saved with an everlasting salvation!

THE HEALING LORD

*And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.—
Matt. 8 : 7.*

II

THE Evangelist Luke places this interesting miracle immediately after the Sermon on the Plain. There is, however, no contradiction between the order which he gives and that observed by Matthew. Matthew here gives us examples of our Lord's earlier miracles without strict regard to chronological order. His language does not necessarily connect this miracle closely with that which precedes. The prominence of the centurion whose servant was healed probably led to the selection of this miracle from others which might have been recorded, and the healing without touching or seeing the person afflicted may also have influenced the evangelist in selecting this miracle and in giving it its position in the inspired narrative. Capernaum had now become Christ's principal residence. It was also the center of his operations in that vicinity. After his preaching tours he went back to Capernaum as his home. On one occasion as he entered the town a centurion came to him preferring a request for his boy or servant, or more strictly, his slave. A centurion was a Roman officer commanding one hundred men. This particular centurion was probably stationed at Capernaum as it was an important provincial town, and the center of con-

siderable traffic on the sea of Galilee. He was probably in the service of Herod Antipas and his presence and that of his soldiers might be required in that vicinity to preserve order. Let us study, for a little time, the promise which was here given.

It is worthy of notice that it was a promise made in answer to prayer. We do not know with certainty whether the centurion approached him personally or through the instrumentality of others. The centurion knew well that in the judgment of the Jews all heathen were without the covenant and so without the pale of mercy. He knew well that a middle wall of partition separated between the children of Abraham and all Gentiles. Perhaps he did not therefore personally approach Christ, but sent others, entreating him that he would come and heal his servant. From the narrative in Matthew it would seem that he had come himself, but perhaps we are to take the expression with a somewhat broader meaning as taught in the parallel passage in Luke. There it would seem that the elders of the Jews were employed on this errand; it would also seem that they were very willing messengers. They pleaded for him as one who deserved a favor at their hands, and they add, "for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." Perhaps, indeed, both he and the elders came at different times. The truth to be emphasized at this point is that the promise was made in answer to prayer. Had the centurion not prayed, the Saviour had not promised. That we

may receive blessings from God our minds must be prepared for their reception. Our hearts must be on the same key as God's heart. Two pianos or harps in a room will give appropriate response when a chord on either is struck. There is some subtle affinity between the lightning and its conductor. There is evermore a relation, doubtless along the lines of strict natural law, if only we were able to understand the law, between the prayers we offer, the promises God makes, and the blessings we receive. Prayer is the nerve which moves the muscles of omnipotence; prayer is the muscle which moves the arm of the Almighty. All earthly blessings are in some way related to earnest prayers. It has been well said that it was in Luther's closet that the Reformation was born. Constantine was right when he refused to have his statue taken standing and insisted that it be taken kneeling, as it was by kneeling in prayer to God that he had risen to eminence among men. We know that before the delivery of President Edwards' great sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," which so mightily moved his congregation, certain earnest Christians had spent the preceding night in prayer. It is also affirmed that a company of believers spent the night in prayer before the delivery of John Livingston's sermon, which resulted in the conversion of hundreds of souls and started a revival movement which swept with irresistible power over parts of Scotland and Ireland. The Scriptures abound in

illustrations of immediate and direct answers to prayers. Noble as were the achievements of modern science when the American continent was girdled by telegraphs, and still nobler when the old world and the new were so united, a still more remarkable spiritual telegraph exists. Abraham said unto God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!" and the immediate answer came, "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee." In critical circumstances David asked of the Lord, "Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" And the answer of God immediately came, "Go, and smite the Philistines." Similar examples might be greatly multiplied showing that man may talk to God, and that God immediately replies to man in answer to his prayer. Indeed, the lives of Moses, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Elijah, Daniel, and thousands in the history of the Christian church, would be utterly inexplicable but for the blessed truth that God hears and answers prayer. The day may come when it will be seen that this spiritual telegraph from earth to heaven is as fully in harmony with great laws of the physical and spiritual universe, as it is now seen that telegraphs and telephones are in harmony with the laws of God, which we usually call the laws of nature. We are warranted in saying that if Stephen had not prayed Paul had not been converted. Is there not a similar relation between the prayers of thousands of parents, teachers, and other Christians, and the conversion of thousands of men now in our pulpits and tens of thousands in the pews.

Again, it is to be noticed that this *promise is made in answer to the prayer of a Gentile*. This fact is quite remarkable. God had promised to answer prayer when offered by the "seed of Jacob," but this man did not belong to the stock of Abraham. He was probably one of the Roman garrison of Capernaum. He was by birth a heathen. But perhaps he felt the utter emptiness and worthlessness of faith in the many gods of polytheism. Many trained in heathenism experienced the need of a fuller faith than heathenism could give, and they had attached themselves in nearer or remoter relations to the congregations in Israel. They found that Judaism gave a satisfaction to the deepest wants of their spiritual nature which heathenism could never supply. Some of these had become proselytes of different names, and they thus formed a connection between Gentile and Jew which greatly helped in the spread of the gospel, and in the bringing in of that time when there was neither Jew nor Gentile, but a blessed oneness in Christ Jesus. It is most interesting to observe that all the centurions mentioned in the New Testament, so far as we have any knowledge of their history, were men of worthy character. We have in addition to the one brought before us in connection with the text, the centurion who was on guard at the time of the crucifixion of Christ. This man saw the wonderful portents which accompanied the death of the Son of God. He acknowledged the claims of Jesus, saying, "Truly

this man was the Son of God." We also have the case of Cornelius, who had renounced idolatry and had become a worshiper of Jehovah before he had received a knowledge of the gospel. His case marks a distinct epoch in the earlier history of the church. He feared God, he gave alms, and he had a good reputation among the Jews. His prayers for fuller light were graciously answered, until at length he was honored as the first Gentile convert received into the church, in such a way as to prove that Christ's religion was intended for all and was not limited by the rites of Judaism. We also have the case of Julius, who was the keeper of the Apostle Paul on his journey to Rome. This centurion was a model of courtesy and kindness. He was a man of noble elements of character even before he became a Christian. His conversion added Christian graces to his original and rare endowments. Indeed these centurions seem to have preserved in their character and conduct some of the virtues of the earlier and purer Romans "in the brave days of old."

That Gentiles should find light and life in Judaism was quite in harmony with all the promises of the Old Testament regarding the Messiah. It was distinctly said in connection with our Lord's presentation in the temple that he should be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." This statement is in harmony with the prophecy that "in his name shall the Gentiles trust." It was in harmony with his own

words, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." It is in harmony also with the teachings of the Apostle Paul, when he said, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Christianity was needed by, intended for, and adapted to, all nations of all climes and in all centuries. It is the only religion ever promulgated among men that was intended for all nations, irrespective of color or condition. In this respect Christianity is unique among the religions of the earth. Jesus Christ was the only founder of a faith that was intended to become universal. Such a conception marks him as the foremost thinker of the world. Such a conception as this never dawned upon the minds of the sages of Greece or Rome, and never suggested itself to the dreamiest imagination of the dreamiest Oriental philosopher.

We see also that this is a *promise made to a Gentile for a slave*. The word translated "servant," in the ninth verse, means a bondman or a slave, although it is also used to express a service that is voluntary. We know that in the days of Christ slavery was almost universal among heathen nations. Such a request on the part of the centurion was an evidence of great consideration and condescension. Slaves then had no rights which freemen were bound to respect. Even Cicero deemed it needful to excuse himself for feeling sorrowful over the death of a domestic servant in

his household. One has only to pronounce the names of Domitius, Octavius, and others in similar positions, to be reminded of their unspeakable brutality toward slaves. The lives of these slaves were not more valuable in their sight than the lives of insignificant domestic animals. The humility and condescension of the centurion are worthy of all praise. He counted himself guilty of presumption to have asked the presence of Christ under his roof. Not only did he feel his unworthiness as a heathen, but his spiritual unworthiness as a sinner, in asking for the presence of the King of Israel and the Lord of glory in his home. He asked, therefore, simply that Christ should speak the word, and he knew that his servant would be healed. All the indications of this man's character, as brought out in the narrative, commend him to our consideration. He was one of those true children of God outside the fellowship of a recognized faith. The manner in which he spoke of himself as "a man under authority," showed his conception of Christ's position and power. If it were true that he, occupying so much lower a place than Christ, had those who obeyed him, how much more certain was it that Christ's word would be powerful over men, diseases, and devils. He recognized the fact that Christ was Prince over angels and spirits. He therefore could, without going to the centurion's house, give his command, and it would be speedily executed by the messengers of his will.

The centurion here evidences a conception of Christ's relation to the kingdom of earth and heaven, as beautiful as it is original, and as truthful as it is spiritual. This servant was a paralytic. He suffered from an abnormal relaxation of the nerves, and from the loss of sensation and the power of voluntary motion. It seemed as if he was on the very border of death. It is not wonderful that Christ marveled at the centurion's beautiful union of childlike faith and profound humility; it is not wonderful that Christ said, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Christ did not reject those who came to him on their own account; neither did he reject those who came on behalf of others. It is a wonderful blessing which comes to our own souls when we are anxious for the conversion of the souls of our fellow-men. We are told that, "the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." Would to God that we all experienced deep anxiety for the conversion of those about us! Men on every hand are suffering from spiritual paralysis, and only Christ can heal them. Let us go on their behalf to Christ with full purpose of heart as did the elders or the centurion on behalf of the domestic servant. Let us carry them, as did those who let down the sick man through the roof at the feet of Christ, to the great Physician. There is no selfishness in true religion. The more we give away, the more we keep; the less we bestow, the less we possess. When our hearts are warm with

the love of Christ, we cannot rest satisfied until we bring all about us to the heart of Christ, that they also may be saved with an everlasting salvation.

It is further to be remarked that *this is a promise of more than was asked*; for in the prayer that was offered, the centurion left all with Christ, and Christ answered, "I will come and heal him." The mothers brought their little children to Jesus that he might touch them; Jesus took them up, folded them in his arms, and blessed them. Christ always gives us more than we deserve, and usually more than we ask. We receive not more because we ask so little. We are not to dictate to God, but we are to ask God to bestow blessings in harmony with his own righteous will. The centurion simply informed Christ that his servant lay at home sick of the palsy; then Jesus made his gracious promise. But Jesus did even more than he promised. We also are diseased. The case of men everywhere is desperate because of the disease of sin. For them the world has not sure promise of relief; for them philosophy gives no panacea. For the ills of life and the diseases of sin human wisdom has no remedy. Whither shall men go for relief? Thank God, there is a balm in Gilead, and there is a physician there. Thank God, Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him. Thank God, that "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Gracious was the action of Christ in connection

with the healing of this servant. He said to the centurion, or his messengers, "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." And we are permitted to read, "And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." Not only was the force of the disease broken, but the disease itself was entirely removed. Wonderful is the condescension of Jesus Christ! He loves to bestow the treasures of his grace upon needy souls. He waits here to-day to answer those who ask for the forgiveness of sin and for the healing of their souls.

This leads us to observe, in the last place, that this *is a promise which was immediately fulfilled*. We have already seen that in the selfsame hour the servant was healed. Moses prayed, "I beseech Thee, show me thy glory," and immediately the answer came, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." Wonderful is it that God often answers so promptly and so fully. He fulfills his own promise, "While they are yet speaking I will answer." We have in the account of the healing of the centurion's servant the first instance of faith in Christ's power to heal at a distance, and we have also seen that this great faith was not exercised by some favored Israelite, but by an outcast Gentile. I have read that a British soldier in India was lying near to death. He had long neglected, and often had reviled, religion; but now that he was dying, he wished that some one might tell him how he might be saved. Soon he thought of a Christian friend living at a distance of one

hundred and sixty miles, and to him he sent this telegraphic message: "I am dying; what shall I do to be saved?" Instantly the reply came back to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He laid hold of the truth thus communicated by telegraph. The words were received in an honest and trustful heart, and soon he died with the hope of salvation in his soul. Thank God, that as Christ was able to heal at a distance, he is able from his throne in heaven at this moment to send saving grace to every sin-sick soul. To-day parents, teachers, and pastor are praying for some of you. Will you trample over a kneeling mother and a praying father, as you press along the downward road to everlasting perdition? Stop! I beseech you, stop now, and receive the salvation which Jesus offers. I would be to-day the centurion going to Jesus on your behalf. I now communicate to you his willingness to say, "I will come and heal him." Are you willing to be healed? Do not tell me that you need no healing. Do not claim that you are only slightly diseased. The leprosy of sin is deadly. There is only one Physician who can cure the sin-sick soul; there is only one balm that can heal this terrible wound. Here and now I lift before you Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the lost. Hear me, rather hear God who speaks in his word and through my lips, saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

THE DIVINE TRUSTEE

*For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded
that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto
him against that day.—2 Tim. 1 : 12.*

III

GOD is the absolutely faithful trustee. Stewards must be faithful or they are unworthy of their name. God must be just or he would cease to be God. Perhaps good and God are not etymologically one; but goodness and godliness are practically one and the same thing. Godhood and falsehood are incompatible ideas; an unjust God we cannot for a moment consider possible. One unjust act on the part of God would leave the throne of the world vacant, and the whole world godless. God is the able, stable, reliable trustee of all the interests of immortal beings for time and for eternity.

These great truths the Apostle Paul fully appreciated when he wrote the words chosen as the text. These words were written in prison in Rome. This fact seems apparent everywhere throughout the Epistle, although there is some doubt as to whether it was written during the apostle's first or second imprisonment. It is, however, almost the unanimous opinion of scholars that it was written at Rome, and while the apostle was there imprisoned. The words belong to what is probably the last Epistle which the great apostle ever wrote. He was then nearing the end of his journey, awaiting his almost certain martyrdom.

The Epistle is, therefore, invested with the deepest and tenderest interest. It contains the dying counsels of the most eminent apostle to a young man whom he greatly loved and who was then just entering upon his ministerial life. This young man, Timothy, was the apostle's son in the gospel. Over the early years of his Christian life the apostle watched with paternal solicitude, and now that he has entered upon his public career, the apostle still counsels him with fatherly wisdom and motherly affection. We have here the glorious words of triumphant assurance which the matchless Paul speaks to his beloved disciple. If ever Paul's heart voiced itself in deep emotion, it is in this Epistle; if ever he spoke as a dying man to dying men, it is throughout these chapters. Timothy's presence the apostle greatly desired, especially because nearly all others in whom he might have reposed confidence had deserted him in his hour of need. Only Luke was with him, and he desired that Timothy also might be near in his time of trial, as well as to aid in the work of the ministry. The apostle's last words to Timothy are spoken assuredly as the result of profound conviction. Here we sit at this great man's feet and hear his parting counsels. Soon he may have to stand before Nero; soon he may receive the sentence of condemnation; soon the headsman's sword may sever his head from his body; and soon he may stand in the presence of the Judge of the quick and the dead. All these facts the apostle

well knew ; but nowhere in this letter is there a tone of defeat. The letter is a bugle note ; it is a shout of triumph ; it is a pæan of victory. How glorious is the Christian faith when it supports the apostle in scenes like these ! This Epistle should be read with the deepest interest. We are always supposed to attach much significance to the words of a dying man ; then, if ever, we feel that the man will speak the absolute truth regarding the things that lie nearest his deepest heart. To all Christians, and especially Christian ministers, this Epistle is invaluable. It tenderly touches our hearts ; it inspires our hopes ; it brightens our prospects. The text epitomizes much of the Epistle ; it has been a benediction to thousands of souls. It assures the doubting, confirms the wavering, and inspires the hopeless.

In studying the text, we notice, in the first place, the apostle's *committal*—"that which I have committed unto him against that day." This committal possesses some striking characteristics. It is a personal committal. It is interesting to notice the pronouns, *I*, *whom*, *he*, and *him*, as they appear in this text. The apostle came into personal relations with the Lord Jesus ; he knew that no one but himself could make this committal for himself. Religion is a personal matter between the individual soul and God. No man can believe by proxy ; no man can obey by proxy. In the strict sense of the word no man can be sponsor for his fellow-man. Personality is eternal ; a wall as high as heaven

and as deep as hell, divides every man in his deepest religious relations from every other man. No rite, no tradition, no ordinance ought to be allowed to come between the soul and God. It is said that when the learned Dr. Alexander was dying, a Christian friend undertook to quote, at his bedside, the verse now used as the text, but in repeating it, said, "I know *in* whom I have believed." The dying man roused himself and interrupted his friend, saying, "Let not even a preposition come between me and my blessed Saviour." Too often we have let whole creeds, ancient traditions, unscriptural rites and groundless superstitions come between us and our divine Redeemer. There is much of heathen superstition in many Christian creeds. It is most unfortunate for the church of Christ that so many things have come between the seeking soul and the seeking Saviour. It is to be feared, that often at the bedside of the dying the ordinance of the Lord's Supper has been thrust between the soul asking for Christ and Christ who waits to deliver the penitent and trusting sinner. The apostle's committal was in the deepest and broadest and fullest sense a personal committal.

It was also a universal committal. He committed to Christ all his bodily interests. He knew not what might shortly befall his body. Bonds and afflictions might await him; death could not, at longest, be far distant. He knew that already his body had suffered much on behalf of his Lord. He in writing to the Galatians reminded them

that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus ; he referred to this fact with a tenderness and delicacy which deeply touch our hearts as we read his words. He well knew that all forms of suffering had been endured, and he might well expect still greater sufferings, if that were possible, in the near future. But here and now he commits all the interests of his physical being for sickness or health, for joy or sorrow, for life or death, into the keeping of his glorious Lord.

He committed also all the concerns of his professional life to the Lord Jesus. There were, doubtless, those who believed that the Apostle Paul had made a great mistake when he became the disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. The apostle might well have cherished high professional ambitions ; he doubtless would have taken high rank as a learned rabbi. He might have stood at the head of some famous school of rabbinical learning ; he might have been known throughout the learned world of his day as a leader of philosophic thought. With his great powers of mind, with his vast and varied erudition, he might have taken rank with the orators, scholars, and statesmen of his day. But all these possibilities, eminently becoming and desirable in themselves, he counted but dross for the excellence of the knowledge and service of Jesus Christ. He was willing to be nothing that Christ might be everything ; he was willing to lose his life for Christ's sake ; and thereby he found his truer, nobler, and diviner

life. But for his consecration to Christ comparatively few in the world to-day would have ever heard his name. His indifference to earthly renown has secured for him a renown otherwise utterly impossible. His whole-hearted service for God, irrespective of reputation or fame, has crowned him with glory which time shall not dim, and fame which will increase with the passing generations. The same law holds true to-day. The willingness of Carey to spend and be spent among the heathen in India, has made his name synonymous with the missionary enterprise round the globe. In his consuming zeal for the lost souls of the heathen, Judson was willing to sacrifice home, country, fame, and life; and in the heroism of that sacrifice he has written his name among the immortals. But for his heroic sacrifice he might have been merely a successful pastor in a quiet American parish, instead of being one of the brightest stars in the missionary firmament. God help us all to learn this lesson, and to lay ourselves in joyous and complete consecration upon the altar of Jesus Christ.

It was also an eternal committal. It reached past time and entered eternity. The apostle committed his soul for time and eternity to the keeping of his Lord; "against that day" was the limit of the committal, as he here describes it. In so speaking the apostle had in mind the great day of judgment. When language like that of the text is employed, the judgment day, "the day for

which all other days were made," is always in the writer's mind. The early Christians seem so often to have thought and spoken of the judgment day that it came to be readily understood when they referred to it simply as "that day." The apostle looked forward to seeing his Lord and Saviour seated on his great white throne. He had seen him amid the blinding light of the Damascus highway; he is at the last to see him above all principalities and powers, in all the splendor and glory of divine triumph. But the apostle looked to that time without fear or alarm. In the Judge he will find his best friend; in the King his loved Saviour. The apostle knew that Christ was both able and willing to keep him from the power of sin, and to preserve him in holiness of heart and life until that great day. He knew that Christ would go with him through all the trials of life, would sweeten its bitter waters, would cool the fierceness of its flames, would go with him into the valley of the shadow of death, and would at last welcome him among the redeemed. He had no fear in going into the solemnities of the unknown world and across the trackless sea, so long as he had Jesus Christ as guide and pilot.

We observe, in the second place, the apostle's *persuasion*, as set forth in this text. He was persuaded that Christ was able to keep body, soul, and spirit for time and for eternity. His persuasion was absolutely certain. No doubt intruded itself into his creed; no fear marred the joy of

his Christian service. He believed that his life was immortal until his work was accomplished. He was fully convinced that his soul was entirely safe from the dominion of sin, the fear of death, and the terror of the judgment. No man can have any higher interest in life, or more solemn duty in preparing for eternity, than to commit his soul with all its interests to the keeping of the Son of God. Religion largely consists in the making of such a committal, and in the enjoyment of the certain persuasion which results from so trusting Jesus Christ. What shall we do with this great, this invaluable treasure? We take our valuables now to the safe deposit company; we are persuaded that that company is able to keep in safety what we commit to its trusted officers. The committal is actually made, and our comfort in the knowledge of the strength and character of the company is complete. We are asked indirectly, by the example of the apostle, to make such a committal of the soul to the Lord Jesus now. Out of the knowledge of that committal will come the certain and joyous persuasion which the apostle here experienced.

It was also a joyous persuasion. No man can know true joy until he cherishes a genuine Christian faith. Those who have never known this joy have never known the greatest blessedness which human life can experience. If the soul be safe we need not be disturbed by the insecurity of any earthly treasure. All earthly interests, however

important in themselves, are but secondary compared with the interests of the soul and of eternity. These interests far outnumber and outweigh all temporal concerns, earthly joys, and sublunary achievements. The man who has not made this surrender to the Lord Jesus is an enemy to all his own higher interests both here and hereafter. Better live in a prison than in a palace on earth cherishing the hope of a joyous eternity, than to live amid the greatest luxuries, living without God and dying without hope. The apostle's conviction gave him peace amid all the trials of life, security in the presence of his bitterest foes, and triumph in the prospect of an ignominious death.

His persuasion was experimental. It was founded upon a broad and varied experience. The apostle was a poet, a philosopher, a prophet, a preacher, a Christian. He was as truly the apostle of logic as he was the apostle of love. The noblest poets are the ablest prophets. Tennyson was a true interpreter of the highest thoughts of our time. The Apostle Paul was not surpassed in tenderness of feeling, clearness of thinking, vigor of action, and breadth of thought, by any man of his time or of our time. His words in this text are not the words of the fanatic, the recluse, or the tyro in knowledge of men and of affairs. Few men at any time had an experience more varied than was his; and few men mingled more freely with soldiers, scholars, thinkers, and actors in every phase of life, than did the matchless Paul.

His conviction is based on a wide and accurate knowledge of the principles and motives usually considered valuable and dominant among men. We are listening to the words of a scholar, philosopher, and devoted disciple. No more competent was Solomon to speak authoritatively on the vanities of life than was the kingly Apostle Paul to speak authoritatively on the verities of faith and hope. We listen to his words as to those of age, experience, character, and deepest conviction. This is the testimony which he gives as he confronts death, as the darkness of the tomb and the brightness of the throne cast their blended shadows and lights upon his upturned face. Glorious apostle! Authoritative witness, devout disciple, heroic martyr! We receive thy words as words spoken almost amid the solemnities of the eternal world.

We notice, in the last place, the apostle's *knowledge* of the truths which he here affirms—"I know whom I have believed." He had exercised a sweet and unquestioning faith; he had reposed a firm and unwavering trust in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Of this fact he possesses absolute knowledge. His knowledge rests on a solid foundation; it rests upon the faith which he had reposed in Jesus Christ. He knew whom he believed. His knowledge was personal, both as related to himself as the subject of faith, and as related to Jesus Christ as the object of faith. Faith never is opposed to knowledge; faith is knowledge of the highest kind. We climb the ladder of reason to

its topmost round, and, being unable to go farther, we reach out our hand into the space beyond ; but there is no one to grasp the outstretched hand, and there is no foundation for the uplifted foot, until faith permits us to place our hand in the hand of Jesus and our foot on a pavement firm as adamant. Faith is knowledge raised to the highest power ; faith is knowledge resting on a blessed experience ; "faith is assurance of things hoped for, conviction of things not seen." Reason rightly understood is not opposed to faith. Reason and faith are twin sisters. He is not worthy the name of rationalist who refuses to exercise faith in Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour. He is an irrationalist who so refuses. Rationalism has been degraded by being placed in opposition to intelligent faith. Rationalism ought never to be opposed to the teaching of revelation and to the deepest experiences of the spiritual life. He is a true rationalist who sits in lowly obedience as a disciple at the feet of the Lord's Christ. The school of Christ is the noblest university the world has ever known. He can best walk the dizzy heights of intellectual greatness who has just risen from kneeling at the pierced feet of the Son of God.

There is a sweet personality in the apostle's knowledge. It may be permitted to call attention again to his use of the pronouns *I* and *whom* in this connection. He believed for himself and not for another ; and as there was a marked personality in the subject, so there was in the object of

the belief described. He did not believe simply in a doctrine, but in a person; not simply in a teaching, but in a teacher; not simply in a redemption, but in a redeemer; not simply in a deliverance, but in a deliverer. He calls attention emphatically to the fact that it is not *what*, but *whom* he believes. There is here an important distinction, a distinction which we have too often forgotten. The creed to be vital must lay hold of a person rather than simply a doctrine. Spiritual faith in its deepest significance is a mighty grip upon God. One may, parrot-like, recite creeds by the yard; but these creeds will be powerless except they lay hold with a firm grasp upon the living, loving, and unchanging God. One object in all the revelations of the Bible is to lead us up to a divine person; that person is Jesus Christ, the divine Lord and Redeemer. Except our creeds lead the heart to God in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, these creeds must be powerless and may become hurtful. Beautifully, as already suggested, does the apostle call our attention here to the *whom* rather than the *what* of his knowledge and faith. He saw Jesus Christ clearly set forth as crucified for him and as now sitting at the right hand of God as his personal Lord and Saviour.

The apostle's knowledge was therefore certain knowledge. There was in his thought no doubt whatever regarding the faith he exercised, the committal he had made, and all the blessed hopes which now he was permitted to cherish. Doubt

cuts the nerve of power in the Christian life; doubt paralyzes the arm of service in our Christian activity. Doubt is the infancy of Christian experience; faith is the manhood of Christian attainment. Doubt is the gray dawn of the morning; faith is the splendor of the noonday sun. Our faith is too largely expressing itself with "ifs, perhaps, and peradventures." The spirit of subtle agnosticism is abroad in the land. Many speak as if agnosticism were synonymous with intellectual acumen; they teach that implicit faith is indicative of shallow thought. Never was a greater mistake made than this. Agnosticism, with apparent modesty, says, "I know almost nothing." But in so saying the typical agnostic virtually means, "I fully know everything." There is a blessed gnosticism in the Bible and in Christian experience. The sect of Gnostic philosophers that rose in the first ages of Christianity, were guilty of assuming that they only had the true knowledge of the Christian faith. The sect of agnostic philosophers that has arisen in these later days pretends to know everything, both of science and of religion. Thank God, there is a true gnosticism, a gnosticism that recognizes its own limitations, and readily admits the propriety of agnosticism regarding many things, but which holds firmly, unquestioningly, and sublimely to its faith regarding certain other things. We thank God for the "knows" of the Bible. One's heart is stirred as he hears ringing down the ages the voice of Job saying, "For I know that my

Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth"; the voice of the blind man who was healed by Christ, saying, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see"; the voice of the beloved John, saying, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"; the voice of the Apostle Paul in the text, saying, "I know whom I have believed"; and the voice of the Son of God himself, saying, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."

Blessed are they who know that they have passed from death unto life, who know that they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. To-day Christ offers to be the trustee of all our most sacred interests for time and for eternity. He will receive our poor, sinful hearts and broken lives; and he will transform the one and re-create the other, making us his redeemed children. Come to-day and trust Paul's Saviour; never has he denied acceptance to any penitent sinner. To-day with a whole-hearted confidence you may make this great committal to Jesus Christ; to-day you may exercise this blessed persuasion; to-day you may rejoice in the glorious knowledge that you have committed your soul, your life, your all for time and eternity to Jesus Christ; and no power on earth or in hell can pluck out of his hand that which you "have committed unto him against that day."

THE SANCTIFYING TRUTH

*Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth.—
John 17 : 17.*

IV

IN the fifteenth verse of this chapter our Lord prayed that the disciples might not be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil that is in the world. That petition is both appropriate and beautiful, but it was negative, in form at least, and a broader petition seems necessary. As our Lord did not leave his work until it was finished, so he would not have his disciples leave the world until they also had finished their work. The world needs Christians to illustrate the spirit of Christ, as it needed Christ to perform his unique work of redemption.

Our Lord now passes, in the text, to the positive form of the petition. He desired much more than that they should be preserved from evil simply; they were to be wholly consecrated to good. He therefore here prays positively for the blessing which in the former petition he had negatively invoked. There is, of course, perfect harmony between these two forms of prayer. To preserve from evil is, partly at least, to sanctify to good. Preservation from moral defilement is in itself a form of sanctification to moral good. We find in this suggestive petition three divine things.

First, *there is here mentioned a divine grace—sanctification.* This grace the disciples already

partially possessed. They were already set apart by an external separation or consecration to the apostolic office ; but the word means vastly more than external separation. They were also partially sanctified in their inward life ; but the word here means a continuous and progressive sanctification in heart and life. We know that the word sanctified means, in its primary significance, to set apart or to devote to a religious purpose. In this sense the word would apply to the brute creation, to the setting apart of sacred vessels, and to other inanimate objects, for concerning them holiness, in its deepest meaning, cannot be affirmed. The term may be used also in this primary sense of entirely holy beings, for as already holy they cannot be set apart, or sanctified, in the sense of increasing their holiness. The deeper meaning of the word is to make holy. This thought leads us, of course, to very much higher ground than mere ceremonial cleansing, purification, or consecration. This meaning leads us in the text far above the mere separation of the disciples to an official work. It refers to internal holiness, and not simply to external consecration. Christian men and women need for Christian service sanctification in both these senses. Those who are outwardly consecrated to the service of God need internal holiness to make their outward consecration serviceable to God and helpful to men. In Christian experience, therefore, both meanings of the word are appropriately united. The meaning in this text, without any doubt, is

to make holy in the high spiritual sense of the term. The apostles already had the outward consecration ; they now needed inward and increasing holiness. All Christian men and women need to be separated more and more from the world, and be more and more consecrated to God in body, soul, and spirit. They need a personal faith in the crucified Christ, and a daily renunciation of sin. True believers already possess this grace, but they long for its fuller manifestation. They hunger and thirst after righteousness ; they long to become like their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ ; and they can never be satisfied with their present attainments. The man who believes that he has attained to perfect sanctification shows by that belief that he has very inadequate ideas of what perfect sanctification means. However high his attainments in the Christian life are to-day, the true Christian longs to make them higher to-morrow. Like the Apostle Paul, he does not presume to have already attained nor to be already perfect ; but, like him also, forgetting the things that are behind, he presses forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If any one might claim perfection in Christian character, that man surely was the Apostle Paul. He is a bold man who will lay claim to a degree of holiness which the Apostle Paul did not claim to have attained. Who may expect to surpass him in glowing love, in fervent zeal, and in a whole-hearted consecration to the

service of Jesus Christ? Who may claim to have more exalted views of God and to live nearer to God than this same apostle? Men who claim to have attained to perfection are in great danger of lowering the standard of perfection. This they are much more likely to do than to exalt their own character to the likeness of Christ's.

We thus see that sanctification is a progressive grace. Justification is a completed act; sanctification is a progressive experience. The moment we believe in Jesus Christ we are justified by faith in him; and simultaneously with the act of justification the grace of sanctification begins. It will continue throughout life. One may not say to what heights it is possible for a true believer to attain even while on the earth. He becomes a partaker of the divine nature, as the Scripture distinctly affirms; but the day is coming when he shall see Christ as he is, and be made like unto him in all the glory of his perfect character and spotless holiness. Christ's prayer in this petition is that the grace of sanctification already begun may be continued, confirmed, and completed. As Christ is the author of the good work, so he will also be the finisher of the perfect character. He will gloriously complete that which he has graciously begun. Not to advance in the Christian life is to retrograde; no duty therefore is more imperative than that of making progress. Standing still is absolutely impossible. Every Christian is like a man on a bicycle—he must go on or go off,

and that very soon. To grow in grace is both a duty and a privilege. The man who stops growing intellectually, immediately begins to die intellectually. The same law holds true in the spiritual life. All the figures applied by Christ and the apostles to the Christian life imply growth therein, as the one conclusive evidence of the existence of the Christian life. In this glorious springtime, if there is a tree which gives no sign whatever of pulsing life or bud or leaf, we are warranted in affirming that it has no life. Growth is a proof of life. One difference between a living tree and a post is that the tree grows, the post does not. When our Lord spoke of the leaven and the meal, and of the grain of mustard seed, the idea of growth and enlargement was as fully accepted as inherent life was assumed.

This thought gives significance to the exhortation to young believers to desire the sincere milk of the word. It is affirmed that they are to grow thereby. The time will come when they will desire the strong meat of the word. The idea of growth also underlies the striking comparison of the path of the just to the shining light. That light shines more and more; it grows brighter and brighter even unto perfect day. All the figures used by the Apostle Paul and drawn from the race-course and from the various athletic games, teach the same lesson of growth. Thank God, the day will come when the light will reach its meridian splendor; the day will come when God

will crown our struggling Christian lives with the perfection and beauty of holiness. He will not leave uncompleted the glorious work which he has lovingly begun. As it is God who justifies, so it is God who sanctifies. We are to soar upward and still upward, until we see Christ as he is and are made like unto him in all the glory of his divine humanity, in all the attainments of his intellectuality, and in all the immaculate holiness of his pure and heavenly character.

We thus plainly see that our sanctification is to be a perfected grace. This thought is found throughout our Lord's wonderful prayer, of which this text is a petition. That prayer is the true Lord's Prayer. What we so often call by that name is, strictly speaking, the disciple's prayer. Our Lord does not here pray to the Father in our sense of the term. He makes no confession of sin; he had no sins to confess. His prayer is the expression of his will to his Father on terms of conscious equality, rather than the petition of an inferior to his superior. Marvelous is the prayer, taken as a whole; it leads us to the heart of God. It flows on in language as simple and plain as it is profound and lofty. It introduces us into the very holy of holies of the gospel history. Throughout his prayer for his people Christ clearly implies that he desires them to be cleansed from every stain of moral impurity. They are yet to be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; he is to present them blameless unto his Father and ours. Even

now they are to be unspotted from the world. They are to gain the victory over the world ; although now in it they are not to be of it ; it is to be beneath their feet. A ship is not injured by being in water, but it is greatly injured, and may be utterly destroyed, by having the water come into it. To be in the water is its natural place, but to have the water in large degree in it is to fail of the purpose of its creation. In like manner Christians are to be in the world, but the world is not to be in them, at least to any great degree. The world would suffer, and perhaps be destroyed, if Christians were taken from it ; they are a preserving element amid the forces for evil in the world to-day. Christians are here to fight God's battles with the foes of truth and righteousness. They are the salt of the earth ; they are the light of the world. Without them the world would be in darkness, and would speedily hasten to utter destruction. It is possible for them to gain the victory over the world even while they are engaged in its affairs. This victory is a glorious attainment ; it is a transcendent triumph. Body, soul, and spirit are to be wholly sanctified to God, and to be earnestly used in the service of men. This three-fold sanctification is the aim, the ideal, the goal of Christian endeavor. In all its deep significance it may not be realized ; but the loftier the ideal, the loftier the actual ; for as are our ideals so in large part shall we ourselves become. We may not lower the divine standard ; we must

forever press onward and upward toward the highest possible attainments in the Christian life.

We have, in the second place, in this text a divine instrumentality, or medium—"Thy truth." Christians are to be sanctified through God's truth, or perhaps we ought to translate the clause, "in thy truth." If we adopt this latter rendering the idea will be that the word of God is the element or medium, the atmosphere, in which this sanctifying process takes place. True Christians are represented here as living and moving in the word of God for the growth of their spiritual life, as they live in and breathe the natural air for the growth of their physical life. God's word is thus a medium or means of sanctification. God's truth transforms the character of those who incorporate that truth into their life and soul. It is a blessed thing for Christians to live in the atmosphere or environment of divine truth. God has unexhausted and inexhaustible resources; he is not limited to any one instrumentality for the growth of his children in likeness to himself. He is not limited in the use of means, but in his infinite wisdom he has chosen to employ means to accomplish his purposed ends. We may be sure that the means he employs are the best adapted for the accomplishment of the ends which he designs. God never wastes power; he never needlessly multiplies miracles. There is evermore a close relation between the means he employs and our deepest needs which he intends to supply. His word

must be incorporated into our souls ; it must be masticated by our spiritual natures ; it must become assimilated to our spiritual bone, blood, and marrow. In this way we receive the thoughts of God into our thoughts, the life of God into our life, and the very heart and soul of God, if one may so speak, into the center of our mental and moral natures.

It is a marvelous, almost an ineffable, thought that sinful men and women can come into this close relation and divine fellowship with the pure and holy God. Our blessed Lord has emphasized the possibility of this intimate and vital union. He is the divine and heavenly vine ; we are the human but genuine branches from the divine stem ; and the divine sap and life pass to the tip of every leaf for the ripening of the luscious fruit. Separated from the living vine we become lifeless ; united to this vine we ourselves become the possessors of a divine and eternal life. God's word is the channel or medium, the instrument, by which true sanctification is to be received by us and to be manifested through us unto the world. We must bear in mind that while the word is the instrument which the Spirit commonly employs, the word of itself cannot sanctify us to the service of God or to likeness to his character. The word rightly understood is the seed of the new birth ; it is the food of the new life in Christ. The word is the incarnation of the thought of God ; when we truly receive the word, we receive the thought

which it embodies. Community of thought with God results in likeness of character with God. All true Christians know by a blessed experience that the word properly understood is efficient in producing likeness to God in our character and life. The psalmist affirms that he hid God's word in his heart that he might not sin against God; and in so doing he put the best thing in the best place and for the best purpose. All true students of the Bible have found that it was a compass to guide them over the sea of life, however numerous were the rocks and however dense the fogs. Neglecters of the Bible could add their testimony showing how much they lose by opposition, or even indifference, to the thought of God as revealed in the word of God. The Bible is a self-evidencing power which all its true students constantly experience. If the light of God's Holy Spirit shines upon God's Holy word, God's thoughts will be seen in all the tenderness of their love, in all the grandeur of their majesty, and in much of the divinity of their divine author. Happy are we when God's word is the channel through which God speaks to us in direction and command, and through which we speak to God in supplication and confession, in prayer and in praise. Let us feed on this divine manna; let our souls rejoice in this channel of communication between sinful men and a Holy God, and let the voice of God ever sound through his revealed word, rebuking our sins and calming our fears, increasing our faith, multi-

plying our hopes, and quickening our zeal for the salvation of men and for the honor of Christ.

We have here, in the last place, a divine definition—“Thy word is truth.” This is a blessed definition. Perhaps the disciples, and perhaps also Jesus, had in mind the sad condition out of which sprang the sneering inquiry of Pilate, “What is truth?” Jesus therefore, adds, “thy word is truth.” The literal translation is still more forceful, “The word that is thine is truth.” Christ must mean just what he said when he uttered these words. Christ is the soul of truth as a revelation from God, and as the chief object of desire among men. All men should desire truth above all besides. The question with us ought not to be concerning the new theology or the old theology, but only concerning the true theology. Truth is the daughter of God; truth is the child of eternity; truth is the inheritor of eternal life. It matters not by what messenger it is brought or from what source it come, truth is truth forevermore. Truth ought to be welcomed by us even though it destroys our traditions and shatters our conventional beliefs. Truth never can contradict itself. What God has spoken in one department of revelation must harmonize with what God speaks in all other forms of revelation. God’s truth is the end of all strife. More than truth no man can ask; with less than truth no man ought to be satisfied. Doubtless the language of Christ here refers to the word of God as given in the

Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Holy Scriptures are the fullest revelation of the truth of God that the world has received. God's thoughts are made known in his works as truly but not as clearly as in his word. Creation and revelation are but different books in the one great volume. God's thoughts are written in earth and air and sea and sky; but they are written with the utmost fullness, clearness, and blessedness in the book which the world calls, because of its superlative excellence, the Bible. This book speaks often of God's truth and will, of which it is an embodiment. It frequently refers to the powerful influence of the truth which it reveals. In the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, that psalm which through one hundred and seventy-six verses repeats, in various forms of expression, blessed things of the law of God, we have illustrations of the power of God's truth to guide us in life's perplexities and to glorify God in all his providences.

The reference here is thus not strictly to the personal Logos or Word as a title of Jesus Christ; it is rather to the truth or teaching of God as found in the written word—truth communicated by men and still more fully by Christ himself. But in its highest significance the reference is to Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word. He is the embodiment of truth; he is king in the realm of truth. This statement is based on his own language as spoken to Pilate. Jesus Christ did not deny that he was a king; he was not a king in the sense in

which Pilate understood the words, but in the vast realm of truth he is king, and to us he is the incarnation of truth and of God.

The text gives us not only a true definition but a choice definition of truth. Thousands are asking to-day as Pilate asked, in his day, what is truth? Sometimes they are ready to give up the quest in despair; sometimes they multiply falsities in their mistaken endeavors to discover the verities of God's revelation to men. One is never sadder than when he sees men giving up the search after truth and sinking into indifference, hopelessness, and falsity. Thank God, there is a truth that is enduring, pure, and divine. Thank God that Jesus Christ has made himself known as the way, the truth, and the life. We are told that the poet Tennyson in the pavement of the entrance hall to one of his homes had in encaustic tiles this motto: "Truth against the world." This motto is older far than the days of Tennyson. It is worthy of being written on the page of every volume, at the head of every sermon, and over the door of every heart. Happy are they who seek and who find truth. Finely did Pythagoras say: "That if God were to render himself visible to men, he would choose light for his body and truth for his soul." Jesus Christ is the word; Jesus Christ is the truth; they who accept him as their Prophet to instruct them, their Priest to atone for them, and their King to command them, shall walk in truth's highway. They shall have the best of guides, and the

best of companions, and they shall at the last reach the gate of that city of which it is said : " And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

THE BURNING BUSH

And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.—Exod. 3 : 2.

V

FOR long and weary years the oppression of Israel had been in progress. Doubtless it sometimes seemed to the people of God that God was deaf, or blind, or even dead; to them the heavens seemed brass and the earth iron. But the time had now come for God to reveal himself to his people. The darkest hour was before the dawn. During these weary years the deliverer was growing up and was receiving divine training for his heroic career.

The life of Moses is divided into three equal parts of forty years each. The first of these periods was spent at the court of Pharaoh receiving training in all the learning of Egypt; the second was spent in the wilderness of Midian; and the third in leading the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage to the confines of the land of Canaan.

But little is said in Scripture regarding the forty years spent in the land of Midian. Moses himself is the narrator of the events of that period, and he does not give us the details of his life during his humble retirement. He was simply a shepherd during this period of forty years; his days, doubtless, passed quietly away in the performance of his routine duties, and in what men

ordinarily judge a lowly occupation. His shepherd life was in marked contrast with his life in Egypt. Then he was a courtier, familiar with the ways of kings; now he was a shepherd, familiar with flocks and pastures. Then he was surrounded by all the splendors of royalty; now he walked amid the rough places of the desert. Then he was honored by his superiors and served by his inferiors; now he was exposed to heat and cold and lived on the coarsest fare. Then he was the companion of princes; now his companions were shepherds and sheep. He voluntarily made the change; he heroically chose the reproach of Christ rather than the pleasures of sin. Never was he so happy in treading the marble palaces of Egypt as he was in traversing the rocky deserts of Midian. He slept better on the ground under the shelter of a tent than he did on couches of state in palaces of marble.

In desert places God has often spoken his sweetest and sublimest truths to his servants. Our hurried lives give us too few opportunities for quiet thought and for divine fellowship. "A lodge in some vast wilderness" may be a school for acquiring divine knowledge and sanctified wisdom. Many a man has found the retirement which a slight illness necessitates, to be one of the most fruitful experiences of his life. Dr. Francis Wayland tells us that he never learned so much of God's word, and never rejoiced so greatly in its truths as when he studied it on a bed of illness.

It seems to be one of God's methods of training his great servants that they should have a period of retirement to study themselves and to study himself. John Knox found such opportunities for study when he was a prisoner in the French galleys. Luther found it in the monastery and the Wartburg when he learned both the weakness and the strength of the system of Romanism which he was so largely to destroy. William the Silent, at the court of Philip the Second, went through an experience not unlike that of Luther. The Apostle Paul had to spend three years in Arabia before he was ready for his great work. Elijah found his retirement at Cherith and later in Horeb. John the Baptist came forth from the wilderness as a forerunner of Jesus the Christ.

Moses learned wonderful lessons during those silent years. He communed with God face to face; he was lifted above all mean and selfish motives; he lived in a heavenly atmosphere. The barren desolation was to him an invaluable school, in the silence of this solitude God's voice alone could be heard. Some think that at this time he wrote the ninetieth Psalm. He certainly was a poet as well as a statesman, lawgiver, and prophet. The archaic majesty of the psalm is in entire harmony with its Mosaic authorship, but it is more likely that he wrote it near the close of the pilgrimage in the wilderness.

Moses learned more in many practical ways during his sojourn in Midian than during his forty

years in Egypt. He acquired hardihood of body, self-reliance of soul, mastery of himself, and sublime trust in God. This period of enforced retirement, however, was not without its trials. The years were passing, and health and vigor would soon decline. Is this the only life that God intends for this heroic soul? Had God no other meaning in the long training at the court of Egypt? Was he trained at that court simply that he might keep sheep? Questions like these must have agitated the soul of Moses; but for long years the silence was unbroken by any voice from above calling him to nobler work. But that work was now to be assigned him by God. God was training him for the foremost place in the leadership of Israel. God was training him for the foremost place in the whole history of the Israelitish nation. God was training him to be one of the greatest men the world has ever produced. Perhaps David is the greatest hero of Israel to Israelites; but Moses is certainly to the other nations the most commanding figure Israel has presented to the world. Among his other elements of greatness was the meekness which he showed in the wilderness, and which he will now show when God's call comes. Moses endured as seeing him who is invisible; only the man who sees the invisible can do the impossible. The patience of Moses was a marked element of his power. Patience is genius. His modesty was as beautiful as his endurance was heroic.

But the time is now coming when Moses must enter a larger sphere of duty. The second period of forty years is drawing to a close. He now comes to the back side of the desert. This was, doubtless, a place of good pasturage ; perhaps that was the chief thought in the mind of Moses at the moment. It is sublime to see a man move all unconsciously, but still under divine guidance, to the gateway of a marvelous opportunity, of a sublime history, and of a glorious immortality. Oftener than we know we stand at some such door, but are unfitted by character and training to enter the possibly rough, but certainly noble pathway. The traditional spot of the great experience in the life of Moses is in the vale of Hobab on the north side of Jebel Musa ; the convent of St. Catherine now stands on the supposed place, and the altar is said to be on the site of the burning bush. Perhaps, as Josephus says, it was the loftiest of all the mountains in that region. There was a popular belief that this mountain was the dwelling-place of the deity, and it is said that the shepherds feared to approach it. On this mountain was an acacia tree, a thorn tree, of the desert. It was but a lowly tree ; its tangled branches spread out over the rocky ground. Moses approaches this sacred spot. The rocky ground becomes holy ; the shepherd must remove his sandals ; he must comport himself as if on the threshold of a palace or of a temple. Immediately the bush is seen to be aflame ; already the mount is called the Mount of

God, from the signal displays of divine power about to be narrated. The first effect of flame is to consume, but this fire although wrapping the lowly shrub in a garment of flame does not burn. It is this fact that so arrests the attention of Moses. He must turn aside to see what is the meaning of this "great sight."

It was not a created angel who now communicated with Moses in this marvelous way. He is called the Lord, or as it is in the original, "Jehovah"; and later in the chapter some of the most expressive attributes of deity are applied to him. He is an angel simply in the sense of being a messenger. He was the messenger of the covenant, and this messenger was none other than Jesus Christ the leader of Israel and the Redeemer of all believers. Fire was among the Hebrews a symbol of deity. God accompanied the Israelites afterward as a pillar of fire by night, and a sword of fire guarded the gates of Eden. In a chariot of fire Elijah went up to glory and to God. Probably the pillar of fire which accompanied Israel became the symbol of God between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies. This idea of fire as representing deity was illustrated on the day of Pentecost in the tongues of fire that rested over the heads of the disciples. Applied to spiritual things the fuel for fire is moral evil. Spiritual fire does not create but reveals purity. This idea lies at the bottom of the whole system of Zoroaster. The Parsees affirm that they do not worship fire, but regard it

simply as the symbol of deity. There are among them traditions that while Zoroaster was in the retirement of a mountain he saw the whole mountain aflame, but that he came out of the midst of the flame without injury and that he then offered sacrifices to God. Even the Greek dramatists and poets speak of the deity as "formless and impetuous fire." When the promise of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was given to Abraham he saw a burning lamp. Perhaps this lamp signified the light of joy which that deliverance should bring; but now that the deliverance is nearer and the promise is about to be fulfilled the light became brighter, enveloping the bush in its fiery embrace. In flame God manifested his glory in the giving of the law. This mountain was afterward to become famous in the history of God's people. Not only did he here appear now to Moses, but here he appeared in the giving of the law, when Moses fasted forty days and nights and from this mountain brought to the people the two tables of the law. Here Joshua was made to prevail over Amalek. Wonderful thoughts gather about the abrupt cliffs of this granite range. Never shall I forget seeing, as I sailed over the Red Sea on a calm Sunday afternoon, part of this Sinaitic range flushed as it was with a soft pink hue at times characteristic of that region.

We stand for a little time with uncovered head and unsandaled foot beside Moses as he gazes on this tree aflame with the glory of God. It is no

stately palm tree, no graceful olive tree, but a little thorn or acacia. It glows with flame, but it is not burned. We listen with sacred awe to the divine voice which Moses heard. The Lord announces his great name. He does not make himself known as the God of Levi, of Kohath, or of Amram, the immediate progenitors of Moses, but he makes himself known as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Wonderful are the revelations which he now makes to Moses of his observance of all the afflictions of his people. God is not dead; God is not blind; God is not deaf; God heard their cries, he saw their sorrows, and he has now come in mighty power and great glory for their deliverance. No wonder Moses hid his face and was afraid to look upon God. Let us learn some of the lessons which Moses learned, and which these striking incidents so fully teach us.

First, we learn that fire is an emblem of the deity. This thought we have already touched upon as related to Israel and to some other nations. There is a sense in which God is still a consuming fire. He destroys moral evil with the consuming flame of his purity and power. He still puts his chosen ones into the fiery furnace that their dross may be consumed and their gold refined. The purity of his law is still as fire as it was at Mt. Sinai in its opposition to sin and all its works. There still comes a fire out from before the Lord to consume evil and its deadly fruits. God still puts his chosen into the furnace of trial heated seven times

hot, but he never deserts his chosen ; he designs to bring us into sweet conformity to his holy and righteous will. We shall learn to say with the beloved Whittier, even when passing through fiery trials :

If from thy ordeal's heated bars
Our feet are seamed with crimson scars,
Thy will be done.

Second, the burning bush was a symbol of the oppressions, and the flaming fire of the oppressors, of God's people. The bush was itself a lowly one ; that fact is not without significance. God's people in Egypt were lowly in the esteem of their Egyptian taskmasters. The bush was burning, but it was not burned ; although lambent tongues of flame licked its branches, these branches were not consumed. This tree aflame finely sets forth the condition of Israel in Egypt. The people were afflicted by the violence of their foes, but they were not thereby destroyed. They were oppressed, afflicted, and tormented with cruel bondage, but they still multiplied ; though but as a briar or bramble or thorn bush, they still lived and grew. Naturally the fire would immediately destroy this lowly shrub ; as in the case before Moses the fact that the bush was not burned arrested his attention, so the symbol before us ought to arrest our attention. We, like Moses, should manifest a sanctified curiosity. We, like Moses, should desire to be taught of God the lessons which the symbol is

intended to set forth. God is often near us, but we see him not ; he speaks, but we do not recognize his voice. Such a manifestation as this is intended to emphasize great moral truths and duties. God spoke to Jacob to encourage him to go down into Egypt. Now after two hundred years he speaks to Moses to encourage him to go to Egypt to bring his people out of bondage. We have sinned and God's wrath must flame out against us, but God speaks to us in the gospel, informing us of the great Deliverer. As God walked with his three faithful servants in the fiery furnace, and they were not consumed, so he still walks with his people for their protection and deliverance. His church often since has been in the flames of fierce persecution. He permitted the fires of pagan and papal Rome to be kindled against his believing people, but the Lollards, the Albigenses, the Huguenots, and the Covenanters were not destroyed by the fierce flame. Noble souls trod the valleys and climbed the hills of Scotland, sometimes wrapped by God in the mists of the mountains to hide them from their savage foes. Beautiful is the motto chosen by the Church of Scotland, and suggested by the flaming bush seen by Moses : "*Nec tamen consumebatur.*"

Third, this bush of flame is the symbol of the children of Israel even to this day. They have been despised and persecuted by every nation under heaven, but they still live and prosper. They are strangers in foreign lands ; they have no

flag, no government, no country, except the flags, the governments, and the countries under which and in which they find a home. One would have said that long ago they would perish from the earth or become amalgamated with those about them. But not so; they still live as a separate people among many peoples. They still maintain distinctive characteristics of face and faith; they have survived the lapse of ages; and they have performed important parts in the history, the literature, and the civilization of the world. They have long been burning, but are still unburned. God undoubtedly has yet some great design for his chosen people. Assuredly they are yet to be grafted into their own olive tree. Perhaps they have neither thought nor desire of going back to the land of Israel. Those in America find their promised land in the enjoyment of the liberty granted to all nations under our flag. We cannot but believe that God is still with them; that God still remembers his covenant with their fathers and that he will fulfill his great purposes in the case of his people. This symbol finds its illustration also in the case of individual believers; they have been tempted and tried in all the years of their history, but they still live as witnesses of God's sustaining grace. God's church will never be destroyed; the gates of hell shall not prevail against her; she has often been in the wilderness; she has often prophesied in sackcloth; she has often suffered bonds and imprisonment as a witness for Christ,

but God is in the midst of his church, she shall not be moved. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

Fourth, we may learn sweet lessons from the great name which God gave himself in his communication to Moses—"I am that I am." It was necessary that Moses should have authority for the great mission on which he was to enter ; and he must be able to cite that authority as the justification for his appeal to Pharaoh. God has made himself known in his word by many names. When he appeared to Abraham he called himself El Shaddai, God Almighty. This name indicated that he was infinitely able to fulfill the promise made to Abraham of a son in his old age. On other occasions he called himself the Most High, the Ancient of Days, Jehovah, and by still other titles equally significant. These names were precursors of a fuller revelation of God's character ; each new title brought out a new element in God's character appropriate to the existing necessity of his people.

He now gives a definite answer to the definite question asked by Moses. The literal translation is "I will be that I will be." He thus reveals himself as the Existing One, as the Eternal, who is without beginning of life or end of days. This new title thus denotes the underived, eternal, and

unchangeable existence of the great Being to whom it is applied. It also sets forth God, who eternally is in opposition to the pretended deities of the Egyptians. They were vanity, they were a nonentity; he is a reality, he is an eternal truth. As such he can fulfill every promise made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and now to Moses. With marvelous power this name must have come to Pharaoh, as setting forth a self-existent and immutable God, in opposition to the idols of Egypt. The future tense in this name has the force of a continuous present. There may be, strictly speaking, a grammatical anomaly in the name; but when God reveals his name, he may well also reveal a new grammatical law. This is his memorial name unto all generations. Beautifully is the truth of this name brought out in the words of the psalm: "Thy name, O Jehovah, endureth forever, and thy memorial, O Jehovah, unto all generations."

These words would give alarm to Pharaoh, joy to Israel, and assurance to Moses. The God who ever lived would ever be mindful of his chosen. Moses was now armed with a name of potency and majesty. He now could speak with the authority of the Almighty. In that same mighty name we find refuge. The Lord Christ took up the thought of this name when he said: "Before Abraham was, I AM;" and "Lo, I AM with you unto the end of the world." The Jesus of the New Testament is the Jehovah, the great I AM

of the Old Testament. May we ever find by sweet experience the blessedness of those to whom the name of the Lord is a strong tower, and who running to him are saved forevermore!

This name of God is full of instruction for us, as used by our Lord to prove the doctrine of our immortality. He taught us that God was the God, not of the dead, but of the living; and in proving that point he described him as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. This is a wonderfully sublime name; this is a gloriously beautiful doctrine. In that name let us sweetly rest; the name of our Prophet, Priest, and King; the name of him who is our deliverer from bondage worse than that of Egypt; the name of him who pitieth like a father and comforteth like a mother. May we ever be ready with a holy curiosity to turn aside, like Moses, to see the presence and to hear the voice of God even in the ordinary duties of life! Then shall we find that every lowly bush on life's highway is aflame with the glory of God and voiceful with its command of God to his obedient disciples.

THE ALLOTTED TASK

To every man his work.—Mark 13: 34.

VI

THIS text teaches us clearly that God has a plan for every life. Far back in the councils of eternity the life-work of each man and woman was appointed. Each life is taken up into the thoughts and purposes of God. Between each man and all others there is a dividing line that is deep, high, and broad. Personality is immortal. "To every man *his work*"—not *your* work, not *my* work, but *his work*—is God's law. Each man must do his own work, or that work must remain undone to all eternity. No other man can do it. Each day has its own duty; so has each person for each day and each hour. Christ distinctly said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work." As there is a special work for each man, so there is a special time in which that work must be done, and when that special time has passed the work cannot be done. Permit me to specify some of those whose allotted task is easily understood by us all.

1. *To the pastor God gives his work.* God has called him to an exalted sphere of service. No sphere is higher; no labor is nobler. Angels would feel honored in being permitted to preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Gabriel

would willingly come to any pulpit in this city, did God so command or permit. The Apostle Paul magnified his office. Every true pastor may and ought to be in this form of apostolic succession. While we are not unduly to exalt the work of the ministry, we may truthfully say, that no other work gives greater joy to the worker, or greater glory to God. The true pastor is not to be simply a man of society; he is not to be simply a man of affairs. He is in the world and has to do with its various obligations as a Christian citizen. These obligations he dare not neglect without being disloyal to his country, his church, and his God. But all the while he must realize that he is above the world, while he is in it and is discharging its obligations.

The true pastor is not to be simply a great scholar. A scholar he must be, if he is a loyal pupil in the school of Christ; but whatever scholarship he possesses he holds in trust for the greater honor of Christ and the better service of men. His scholarship is to be sanctified to the honor of his Lord and the salvation of the souls of men. Everything that he has and does must be held and done under the inspiration of the constraining love of Christ, and for the salvation of the lost. He preaches not himself, but his Lord; he seeks not men's things, but their souls. He is to strive to build them up into the likeness of his Lord and Master, and to present them at the last without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, in the presence

of God and to the glory of Christ. Beautiful as were the cups which the Spanish artist placed in his painting of the Last Supper, they became an object of disfigurement when they diverted the attention of the spectator from the Lord himself. Then the cups were no longer ornamental but detrimental. The artist was right when he seized his brush and blotted these cups from the canvas, that the figure of Christ might be the only object of attraction. Quaintly and rightly has it been said that Christ "must be the diamond to shine on the bosom of all our sermons."

2. *God gives to the professional scholar his personal work.* The true scholar loves and seeks for truth. He is truth's willing and joyous slave. He welcomes truth from whatever quarter it comes and by whatsoever messenger it is brought. Truth is the daughter of God, and the prophetess of all true progress in the world. Never is man so great and so free as when he bows in lowly reverence at the feet of Jesus Christ who is king in the vast realm of truth. Nothing is more certain than that in the end truth shall prevail over every form of evil and error. Truth is a great stronghold erected and fortified by God, and no enemy shall be able long to hold it. Scholarship is always a power. It may indeed sometimes be a power for evil rather than for good; but we must strive constantly to make scholarship the handmaid of truth and so the servant of God. Sanctified scholarship is an inestimable power for God among men. All the

discoveries of modern science are making it easier than ever before to believe in God. We ought never to speak of science as opposed to revelation. Science is a part of revelation. God's testimonies in his great book of nature can never contradict his testimonies in his greater book of revelation, if only we rightly understand the testimonies in both books. Our interpretations may be in conflict; but God's revelations must ever be in sweetest harmony. If a man can write in Paris and his writing be instantly reproduced in London, three hundred and twelve miles away; if a man can talk in New York and his words be instantly heard in Chicago, in round numbers one thousand miles away, who will dare say that a man cannot write or speak on the earth so that the great God shall see the written and hear the spoken words? If man can answer man one thousand miles away without the violation of any law of nature, but in harmony with laws of nature which until recently we did not know, who will dare say that we cannot talk to God and God to us without the violation of laws of nature, but simply in harmony with higher laws, whose full operation we do not yet understand? All true scholarship will yet lay its honors at the pierced feet of Jesus Christ. Science and revelation will yet march joyously in step to the music of Christ's name and shall yet cast their crowns before him as Lord and Master.

An educated man is higher than an uneducated man. He reaches up to difficult truths, takes

them down, simplifies them and places them before weaker minds. It is his business to simplify not to mystify truth. He is only a half-educated man who cannot talk to plain people. The thoroughly educated man has so mastered difficult truths that he can take them out of their technical terminology and give them in simplest forms to plainest minds. Some men get a reputation for being profound when they are only muddy. You can look twenty feet into clear water, but you cannot look one quarter of an inch into mud. To professional scholars the cause of truth is greatly indebted. At times churchmen have made utter mistakes in manifesting tendencies in opposition to true scholarship. Our opposition is directed rightly against science falsely so called; but against a true science no true Christianity can ever object. Some evangelists and other good Christians say, "Let us study simply the English Bible." They talk against the use of commentaries and scientific theological study; but such men know not whereof they speak. They are indebted to the broad biblical scholarship, which they attempt to belittle, for the partial biblical learning which they possess. There would have been no English Bible for us but for the Hebrew and Greek scholarship of earlier days. We need expert and scientific, but always consecrated, knowledge in every department of inquiry. To the professional scholar along every line my text applies—"To every man his work."

3. *The teacher also has his special work.* I include the teacher in our secular as well as in our Sunday-schools. The teachers in our public schools occupy an important and responsible position. Too seldom do we think of them with sympathy and appreciation; too seldom do we pray for them with intelligence and earnestness. In a city like New York the public school is a mighty power. Thousands of children are receiving in our public schools to-day their preparation for life. Into the formation of their characters the teaching and even the atmosphere of the public school largely enter. I rightly say atmosphere, for that word is suggestive of important truths. Very much depends on the atmosphere which a teacher creates. It is possible to read the Bible and to offer prayers in our public schools without producing much, if any, religious impression. The reading and the praying may be in a cold, mechanical, and utterly perfunctory spirit; but some teachers, even though they never read or pray, may yet put the spirit of Christ into their instruction, even though they be teachers of mathematics, and other seemingly purely secular studies. All scientific studies ought to be conducted as revelations of the thoughts of God. Taught in this spirit, angles and triangles, sines and cosines, are parts of a divine revelation; taught in this spirit chemical affinities and repulsions are truly revelations of divine design and of spiritual purpose.

These truths have a still higher application to

the teachers in our Sunday-schools, and in our distinctively religious seminaries. The Bible ought to be a text-book in all our schools, and it is cause for congratulation and gratitude that it is finding its place in so many of the higher institutions of learning. It is well that we study Homer, but why ought we not with equal earnestness to study David and Isaiah? It is well that we study Herodotus, but why ought we not to study Moses, who is rightly what Herodotus has wrongly been called, "the father of history"? It is well that we study Sophocles and Euripides, but why not study Job and his matchless personations and dramatic scenes? It is well that we study Plato, but why not the Apostle Paul, with his profound reasoning, his lofty argumentation, and his glowing conception of divine and human life? The day will come soon when the Bible, even though it be regarded chiefly as history, as poetry, as drama, in a word, as literature of the highest order, will have an honored place in all schools, seminaries, and colleges. All true Sunday-school teachers are the assistants of the pastor. They are his yoke-fellows. They are his coadjutors; they are his joyous fellow-laborers in the vineyard of the common Lord and Master. To each of these God gives his work.

4. *The professional or business man has his work.* The church to-day needs consecrated labor. It is often more difficult to get competent Bible-class teachers and Sunday-school superintendents than

to find able pastors. We have made too broad a distinction between secular and sacred duties. Strictly speaking, such a distinction is imaginary, and not real. To a true child of God nothing in his Father's universe is profane or secular. There ought to be no line of cleavage between sacred and profane history. All history is sacred. God has never been absent from his universe. His hand is now on its great helm. He is as truly present to-day in the great affairs of all the nations, in guiding czars, kings, emperors, and presidents, as he was in the days of Moses, Joshua, David, or Solomon. His hand may have been more plainly seen in that early day than now, but it is present now as truly as it was at that time. We must not think of religion as belonging to Sundays and sanctuaries, and business as belonging exclusively to weekdays and counting houses. The Apostle Paul in writing to the Romans clearly taught us that we were to be diligent in business, and at the same time earnest in the service of the Lord. We do not put on our religion like a garment on Sunday, and then lay it off when Sunday has ended. If you cannot take your religion with you into your business, you must have a very bad business, or a very poor religion, or both. In a true sense, every desk and counter may, in its place and for its purpose, be as sacred as a pulpit. In its place and for its purpose, every family table may be in some sense the Lord's table. Our religion is not to be left in the church when our

prayers are offered and our hymns are chanted. Religion is not a monk or a nun to be shut away in a cloister. God wants men, not monks. Jesus prayed that his people should not be taken out of the world, but simply that they should be kept from the evil. The world would be a sad place if God's people were all taken from it; it would go to destruction utterly within a month. Real estate was not worth much in Sodom or Gomorrah when God held over it the cloud charged with fire and brimstone. Religion is a beautiful daughter, a noble wife, a consecrated mother. As such she walks out among men, causing the flowers of beauty, of innocence, and of fragrance to blossom wherever she sheds her influence, and causing the flowers of bigotry, immorality, and sin of every kind to wither wherever she plants her feet. If the salt of the gospel is to save the meat of the world, it will not do to put the salt and the meat into separate barrels. The whole system of monasticism in its various phases is unchristian, is evil and only evil, and that continually. O business and professional men, I summon you to-day to consecrate all your professional powers, all your business achievements, all your social relations, to the service of him who has died for you, and who lives to crown you as his victorious followers here and forever hereafter.

5. *To the workingman and domestic servant Christ says—"To every one his work."* God gives appropriate duties to men of every class and con-

dition. The usual social distinctions are not to be observed in the house of God. At God's altar none are rich, none are poor, none are high, none are low. All there are on the same level of unworthiness in themselves, and of blessedness in their divine Redeemer. The workingman has become a tremendous power in Great Britain, in the United States, and throughout the world, during the closing decade of the nineteenth century. We have unduly limited the term workingman. Men who work with their brain and pen are as truly workingmen as those who work with pick or shovel, with hammer or plane, with axe or adze. In this sense, as in other senses, Jesus Christ was a workingman. He stood at the carpenter's bench and toiled through the long hours. The sweat beads of honest toil were on his brow and the hardness of manly toil was on his hands. Workingmen commit the greatest conceivable mistake when they turn away from Jesus Christ. He was their best friend; he is their best friend still. He sympathizes with every true workingman and workingwoman. He reaches out to them the hand of tenderness and offers them the heart of affection. He will be to them as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land and under a burning sun. He promises them food and raiment. Marvelous is the thought that Jesus Christ was poor and friendless. He said with an infinite tenderness that, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where

to lay his head." Christ would have lost much of his power over men if he had come into the world rich. He was the only man born into this world who had his choice as to how he should come. He might have come as a full-grown man, as did the first Adam. He chose to come as a babe. He might have come with kingly power and imperial splendor; he chose to come in lowly poverty. No poor man to-day is so poor as was Jesus Christ; no lonely man so friendless as was he. He was despised and rejected of men. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His reference to the baking of bread and the mending of clothing gives us a glimpse into his lowly home and the employments of his mother in Nazareth. Think of the thousands of toiling, struggling women with their cares as wives and mothers in our great city. Jesus stands near to help each one. Think of the thousands of domestic servants with their manifold and monotonous duties. Jesus stands near to each, assuring all that those who are faithful in that which is least, are faithful also in much.

Think of the thousands of young women as stenographers, typewritists, and accountants. Jesus comes near to each saying to them, with reference to their duty, "not with eye-service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God." There is no duty that may not be dignified and glorified, if it is performed with the right spirit. Lofty motives give lowly duties their true dignity

and glory. The distinction often made among men in these regards is purely arbitrary. When we enter upon our work as for God, and not for men, that work becomes radiant with heavenly beauty and prophetic of heavenly glory. In our humblest service the beautiful words of the saintly George Herbert may have their full realization :

A servant with this clause,
Makes drudgery divine ;
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

THE COMPREHENSIVE DESIRE

*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel
is, that they might be saved.—Rom. 10 : 1.*

VII

THE Apostle Paul was a skillful teacher. He knew how to be loyal to his divine Master and yet be loving to his Jewish brethren. He knew how to speak plain words, and yet to love with fervent desire. He could preach against his brethren and yet pray for his brethren. It was possible for him to speak the truth, and to speak it, as he himself exhorts all others to do, in love. It is a mark of noble character to combine these elements in our addresses to our fellow-men. The apostle desired to win his brethren ; he was, therefore, anxious in the midst of the most emphatic rebukes to mingle evidences of the tenderest affection. He had just spoken with apparent severity concerning his brethren. It would be difficult to imagine any doctrine more offensive to them than the doctrine he had just propounded. He knew well that they must have regarded him as having been false to his Jewish training, and to the commission which had been entrusted to him at the time of his abandonment of Judaism and his confession of Christ. He was engaged, under an important appointment, because of his special fitness for the duty entrusted to him, at the very time that he abandoned the faith of his fathers. He knew that his own brethren must regard him as an

apostate. Since his conversion to Christianity he had opposed the principles which once he had preached, and he had rebuked the spirit of pride and self-righteousness of the Jewish people. He charged them in effect with the crime of crucifying their own Messiah. He forsook all that they valued in the gorgeous rites of their temple and in the traditional faith of their fathers. He had gone everywhere preaching the gospel of Christ. They could not doubt the sincerity of his new profession, however bitterly they might oppose the doctrine which he preached. It was most important that he should not arouse their opposition, but convince them by cool argument and win them by genuine affection. By nature he was tender and kind ; but in order to be loyal to the truth he must rebuke his brethren for their opposition to Christ, and warn them of the condemnation which their unbelief would certainly bring.

He was obliged to pour out his heart in rebuke, but now he could no longer contain his fervent and tender affection. While he muses the fire burns, and at length his loving heart bursts forth in the text in the expression of this glowing desire for the salvation of his brethren. It is most instructive to watch the conflict of emotions as illustrated in the text and its context. No one can read these words without feeling the throb of the apostle's heart across the intervening continents and centuries. Let us examine the characteristics of this desire as they are given in the text.

I. *It is a fraternal desire*—"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." The Apostle Paul was a cosmopolitan. He was also especially the apostle to the Gentiles, but he always gave in his preaching the first opportunity to the Jew to receive the blessings of the gospel. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and there is much, as we all know, in blood. The Apostle Paul loved his nation with the fervor of a true believer and a genuine patriot, but he realized that the Christian is the true Jew. Strictly speaking, there is no contradiction between a true Judaism and Christianity. It is a false Judaism that opposes Christianity; all true Jews were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. The Apostle Paul might be called, if I may coin a word, a Messiahian; but a Messiahian is simply a Christian. The former word is Hebrew, the latter is Greek, and both mean precisely the same thing. The true Jews are Messiahians; and, if they but knew it, in so affirming they affirm also that they are Christians. The Apostle Paul longed for the coming of the Christ; he glorified in the hope of the Messiah; and he never meant to be disloyal to that hope. He opposed Jesus of Nazareth because he did not understand him to be the Messiah of God; but when stricken down under the blinding light on the Damascus highway, he learned in answer to his question, "Who art thou, Lord?" that the Lord whom he persecuted was Jesus, and he gave him immediate submission and reverence.

Judaism is the root ; Christianity is the flower and the fruit. Judaism is simply undeveloped Christianity. Judaism is the gray dawn of the morning ; Christianity is the splendor of noonday. True Judaism must pass on into acknowledged Christianity. Judaism is the childhood of faith ; Christianity is its manhood. When the Apostle Paul became a Christian he realized the hope toward which he had always been striving. He now longs for the conversion of his brethren. He who has come into the true light cannot be satisfied to have his brethren remain in darkness. Perhaps the insertion of the word "Israel" in the text is not warranted by the most authoritative manuscripts ; but the fraternity of the apostle's desire is fully emphasized in his use of the word *brethren*, with which the text begins. There is a sanctified patriotism ; and to that patriotism we have a right to appeal in urging the claims of the gospel of Christ. The apostle in making this affectionate appeal to his brethren, wishes to destroy any unfavorable impression which his plain words might have produced. He felt himself to be fully under the power of national feeling and of Christian affection. This is a sentiment which all true manhood appreciates and desires to possess and to manifest. We may well appeal in our Home Mission work to a genuine American patriotism as an incentive to aggressive Christian endeavor. "North America for Christ," is a noble motto. We must use every right endeavor to make this motto a literal

truth in our mission work. The flag of our country and the banner of our Lord ought ever to blend in sweetest and sublimest union. Our kith after the flesh we ought to strive to make our kin in Christian faith.

2. *The apostle's desire as expressed in the text is also a cordial desire*—"Brethren, my heart's desire." The apostle's desire came from his heart; it was, therefore, honest, earnest, and sincere. The word translated "desire" really means good-will or benevolence; it is benevolence passing over into beneficence. This earnest desire gives us the apostle's motive in so addressing his brethren and in laboring for their salvation. Not all who are interested in the salvation of men are influenced by this high motive. There may be simply a professional desire for the conversion of those about us. Doubtless there are times when Sunday-school teachers, evangelists, pastors, and others, are largely influenced by what may be called a professional desire to secure and to report a large number of conversions. One does not wish to pass harsh judgment on his fellow-men, but one can readily see that they may at times be influenced, even when engaged in the highest work, by personal and professional motives. The quality of our work must depend largely upon the motive which governs our acts and aims. We must strive to perform our best services under the influence of the highest motives. Against this professional danger we must constantly strive. The Apostle

Paul rose far above any personal advantage or professional ambition when he poured out his heart in the affectionate words of the text. Out of his heart's desire his pen wrote in this letter to the Romans. It is because his words came from the heart that after the lapse of these centuries they still reach the hearts of his readers. Heart evermore responds to heart. All Christian workers must be right in their hearts with God, and they will not be wrong in their efforts with men.

There may be, also, simply a duteous desire for the conversion of men. This desire may spring from a higher motive than that of professional ambition. It is the duty of those who are teachers and preachers to seek for appropriate fruits in their Christian labors. They cannot be indifferent to results—such indifference would be culpable in the extreme. The duteous act is performed under the realization of what is due, of what the position properly requires; it is that which is enjoined by duty or by the position which one may occupy. It is better that one should desire the conversion of men from this motive than be indifferent to their spiritual welfare, but it is a great gain when we pass over from that which duty requires, in the mere legal sense of the term, to the joy in service which love always secures. I do not wish, however, to make light of the importance of performing our duty irrespective of results. We must ever remember that duties are ours, events are God's. We have too often in the Christian life been governed

simply by feeling, by emotion, by impulse. We never read in Scripture that men are saved by feeling; we always read that they are saved by faith. One cannot help wishing at times that the word "feeling" were stricken out of our religious vocabulary. Many neglect all forms of religious duty because they are governed by feeling rather than by the higher law of obedience to Christ, no matter what their feelings are. If right feeling comes we may welcome it, but in any case we must move forward in the faithful performance of our duty. If duty be faithfully done, right feeling will not long be wanting; but blessed are they who rise above the consciousness of performing duty for duty's sake and who know that they are constrained by Christian love.

There may also be a mere intellectual desire for the conversion of our brethren. The intellect of the Apostle Paul was active as the intellect of few men ever has been; but his intellectual activities were sweetly submissive to the constraining love of Christ. When the light flashed upon him on his way to Damascus, new meaning was given to all his previous reasoning. He saw, as never before, the meaning of the Old Testament in its prophecies concerning the Christ; he saw that all the ways of God's revelation converged toward the cross of Christ. He realized that if you take away the cross the Old Testament is largely meaningless; he saw that the cross of Calvary is the center of the Bible; he realized that it is the

pivotal point around which all the events of the world's history revolve. As a student of secular history as truly as of sacred story, he saw that he must build his study on Calvary. Christianity quickened, directed, and ennobled all his intellectual activities. He was truly the apostle of logic; he was equally the apostle of love. He wrote under divine inspiration the masterpieces of logical reasoning which are found in the Epistle to the Romans; but it was he also, under divine inspiration, who wrote the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians, which has been finely called "The New Testament Psalm of Love." Doubtless from a purely intellectual point of view the apostle desired to convince others, as he had himself been convinced, that Jesus was the Christ; but the desire of his heart, as expressed in the text, rose far above a mere intellectual victory. He was under the influence of the gentle and yet mighty love of Christ. This pure and heavenly desire gave his words almost irresistible power. This desire gives us similar power to-day. Love has a logic of its own; love has a brogue that never can be imitated by unloving hearts. Love evokes love. The writer of poetry and of music must write with the heart if the highest results are to be secured.

The same law applies to art of every sort; if the heart is wanting, power is wanting. More men are reached through the heart than through the head. Many men put their hearts into the tone of the voice, into the glance of the eye, and

into the grasp of the hand. Men can resist the pulpit's attacks upon their heads when the attack is made simply by the arguments of cold logic; but men cannot long resist the appeals made to their hearts when these appeals come from hearts tender with human sympathy and glowing with divine love. The heart is really wiser than the head; the heart may see far while the head is totally blind. Affection is mightier than reason. The pulpit needs loving hearts more truly than it needs clear heads. In so saying I do not at all depreciate the value of the clearest thinking in religious instruction; but the thinking that leaves out tender love is not really clear thinking. There may be an intellectual power that is as beautiful as the frost on a window pane, but it may at the same time be as cold as it is beautiful. The apostle harmoniously combined clearness of thought with tenderness of feeling; it was this happy union that gave his spoken and written words much of their blessed power to win men to truth and to God.

3. *The apostle's desire as expressed in the text was also a prayerful desire*—"Brethren, my heart's desire and *prayer*." True desire for the conversion of men must ever express itself in prayer as in effort. The heart that goes out to men for God must go up to God for men. It is possible for the heart to cherish desires which it does not utter in prayer; but where the heart overflows with religious desires the lips will address the Al-

mighty in appropriate petitions. True prayer must come from warm hearts; cold hearts seldom pray, and seldomer pray aright. Sometimes the shortest way to reach men's hearts is by way of God's throne. When Paul and Silas were in the prison at Philippi, we are told that they "sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them"; literally the words mean that "praying, they hymned God." Perhaps they could not directly have addressed their fellow-prisoners, but they prayed while singing a hymn to God, and the voice of prayer and praise ascended to God and descended upon men. We could oftener mightily move men if we were mightily moved toward God on their behalf. We are greatly instructed in our efforts for the conversion of men by the union of effort and of prayer so beautifully given in the text, to secure that result. The apostle could not be satisfied with simply cherishing a desire for the conversion of his brethren; that desire he expresses in prayer to God himself, and also in writing to the brethren. He tells them of his desire and of his prayer to God on their behalf. The mere telling them of this prayerful desire would have its influence in securing their submission to Christ, and so in answering the prayer which he had already offered. He had no pleasure in declaring the severe truths which he had just announced, but the announcement was made not in anger but in love; he baptized his warnings in heartfelt prayer. This union of prayer and preach-

ing is an example for all Christian workers to this hour. We cannot afford to dispense with any elements of power which the apostle manifested, and which God may permit us to possess and to employ. There should be definiteness in our desires as we approach God in prayer, and equal definiteness in our purpose as we approach men to win them to Jesus Christ. The moment our hearts go out in true desire for the conversion of our fellow-men, that moment in conscious weakness our hearts will go up to God that his Spirit may apply the truths we utter and bless the efforts we make. We thank God and the noble apostle for this illustration of the union of human effort and divine power in Christian labor.

4. *We notice also that this was an evangelical desire on the part of the Apostle Paul*—"That they might be *saved*." What is the apostle's thought in the expression of this desire? Does he mean simply to labor and to pray that his kindred may be saved from temporal disaster? Doubtless their temporal welfare was dear to his manly and loving heart; but it is quite certain that he does not limit his desire to their salvation from temporal or national disaster. He may have known by divine intuition, or by careful study of national tendencies, and by the position of the people in relation to other nations, that temporal disaster was soon to come. As a true patriot he undoubtedly desired to save his brethren from national ruin; but he means much more in this prayerful desire

than preservation from national destruction or any form of earthly sorrow. He prays and labors that they may be saved with an eternal salvation; he desires that they may be convicted of sin and converted to God. He could not consistently pray that they might be saved so long as they remained in unbelief. If their eternal salvation were secured they could better endure the temporal calamities which were certainly soon to come. Nothing short of their redemption from sin here and from death forever hereafter, could satisfy the apostle's desire; nothing less than this ought to satisfy our desires as Christian men and women in our relation to our fellow-men. The example of the apostle is helpful to us as parents and as patriots; he recognizes the ties of blood and of nationality; so ought we. Are we ourselves saved? Have we a good hope through faith in Christ? Have we passed from death unto life? Are our names written in the Lamb's book of life? If so, we ought then most earnestly to desire the salvation of our kindred, especially our own flesh and blood in the tenderest relations of family life. Can we be indifferent to the welfare of our children, both for this world and for that which is to come?

I appeal to you, teachers, on behalf of the children committed to your care in our Sunday-schools. Have you a fraternal and cordial and prayerful desire for their salvation? Such a desire did the Apostle Paul cherish toward his kinsmen, his brethren in the flesh. Have we who are preach-

ers and pastors a realization of our responsibilities and our opportunities in regard to those who listen to us as ambassadors for Christ? Wonderful are the words of this same glorious and peerless apostle when he said: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He here puts himself, and other ambassadors for Christ, in Christ's stead before men, to beseech them to be reconciled to God. He here rebukes our coldness, softens our hardness, and quickens our deadness in Christian life and love. Oh, that to-day we might catch the spirit of his affectionate heart and his prayerful desire! Oh, that I might now be able so to beseech you who are still strangers to Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour that just now you might submit your hearts in loving obedience to him as your Prophet, Priest, and King! Oh, men and women who have known the love of Christ, make the apostle's example in this text your own. Cherish with all your souls this glowing desire of his heart which found expression in earnest prayer to God, and in loving efforts for the eternal salvation of his brethren after the flesh. May God give us all such a conception of Christ and of salvation that we shall, as the apostle elsewhere did, beseech men night and day, with tears, that they may be reconciled unto God.

THE MANIFOLD KEEPING

Keep me as the apple of the eye.—Ps. 17 : 8.

VIII

THIS psalm is appropriately entitled, "A Prayer of David." The psalm is really a prayer; its distinctive characteristic throughout is petition. The servant of God who offers the prayer was conscious of his uprightness, and also of the danger to which he was exposed. We do not know on what historical occasion this prayer was offered, but it is quite certain that the petitioner realized that he was surrounded by enemies. David's life abounded in occasions when such a prayer might fittingly be offered. He was so often beset with dangers that he might properly with great frequency pour out his heart to God in the language of this psalm. On the special occasion giving rise to it, his enemies were numerous, bitter, and deadly; they were as fierce and greedy as the lion hunting its prey. They were also men of wealth, and men who sought only the supposed good things of this world; but the petitioner's thoughts rose far above these considerations. He declares in the closing part of the psalm that nothing short of beholding God's face in righteousness would satisfy the longings of his aspiring soul.

The part of the petition selected as the text is very tender and beautiful. We ought to have its

literal thought clearly in our minds. There is in the original a remarkable strength in the words employed. The exact rendering of the Hebrew is, "Keep me as the little man—the daughter—of the eye." It is readily seen that there is here a curious confusion of genders, but a little familiarity with the Hebrew idioms will clarify our conception of the meaning. The apple of the eye means the pupil of the eye, the small opening in the iris through which the rays of light pass to the retina. The Hebrew word *Ishon*, rendered apple, means "little man," because in this part of the eye one sees his own image in greatly reduced proportions; and this fact accounts for our word-term, pupil. The expression "daughter of the eye" means that which is dependent on or connected with the eye. It is customary to call a small town or village, when dependent on a city, "the daughter of the city." The prayer, therefore, is that God would guard the psalmist as the tenderest part of one's eye is guarded. The pupil is the type of that which is most precious, and most easily injured. The psalm is truly precious to all God's children. Perhaps no part of the Psalter has been more often sung than this psalm in some one of its many versions. When we pray that God will keep us as the apple of the eye it is necessary for us to know how God does keep the apple of the eye, that we may fully appreciate the prayer that we offer.

1. *God keeps the apple of the eye constitution-*

ally; and we therefore pray that God may so control us in our constitutional qualities and desires that through them he may keep us for his service here and for his glory hereafter. God as our Creator has marvelously guarded the eye. He has placed it in a well-protected position; not more truly was Jerusalem encircled by mountains than is the eye protected by appropriate guards. He has placed it in a deep, bony socket, composed it is said, of "seven different bones hollowed at their edges." He has made the forehead and the cheek bones its ramparts. He has caused the eye to rest within its socket on a bed of fatty substance the best adapted for its repose as well as its motion. He has also sheltered it by the eyebrows; they are an arch of hair forming a hedge to prevent the moisture of the forehead from going into the eye. He has also given it the curtain of the eyelids, and protected it by the brushlike eyelashes. They sweep it clean from the various dangerous substances which might prove injurious. The eyelid defends, wipes, and finally closes the eye in sleep. The eyelids are really close-fitting shutters to screen the light; their inner side is lined with a membrane that is exceedingly sensitive; it thus aids in protecting the eye from irritating substances. Within the lashes are oil glands which lubricate the edges of the lids. It would be difficult to find any apparatus more appropriate in its organism for its useful purpose. In order that the eye may be moist and clean, God has supplied

it with a secretion which excellently washes it from all foreign substances. He has also so made it that the superfluous brine is carried to the nostril through a skillful perforation in the bone. The ball itself is covered by three coatings. The first is a horny casing which helps to give the eye its beautiful shape; the second is really a black lining which absorbs the superfluous light; the third is a membrane in which the fibers of the optic nerve expand.

It would be easy to go into much fuller detail regarding the construction of the eye as showing divine wisdom, and as illustrating the prayer of the psalmist, but we catch his thought sufficiently for the spiritual lesson we desire to teach. We ought earnestly to pray that our whole nature may be so constituted as to be a guard against evil in thought, in word, and in act. Sin is a disturbing and disorganizing element in our nature. Our natures ought to be in perfect harmony with the will of God, but sin comes in as a jarring note in the melody of life. Our natures ought to guard us against evil in the world about us, but sin breaks down the protecting walls and leaves us exposed to the assaults of the enemy. Most earnestly ought we to pray that God would guard us constitutionally as he has guarded the apple of the eye. Reason, imagination, desire, and duty are often at war with one another; antagonistic forces disturb our mental repose and our moral peace. Not until the heart is brought into the obedience

of Christ can the lost harmony be restored to the soul; not until Christ is enthroned in the center of our soul as the organizing principle and the harmonizing influence can the whole nature be brought into peace with itself and with God its Creator. This prayer may appropriately voice the deepest desires of our hearts as we come into the presence of God.

2. *The psalmist's thought includes the prayer that God would guard us circumstantially as well as constitutionally.* There is a marvelous degree of divine providence in the construction of the eye, and in its remarkable adaptedness to the various circumstances in which it is to perform its offices. It is much like a camera; indeed, the camera is in some sort an imitation of the eye. The eye adapts itself with remarkable quickness to its new conditions. The eye of the fish does not have the wash of which we have spoken as characteristic of the human eye, because the element in which fish live supplies a constant lotion to their eyes. The winking membrane is a striking illustration of the adaptation of the eye to its environment. It lies folded, but is ready in a moment for use. Two kinds of substances, muscular and elastic, are employed in the necessary motions of winking. The movement is so rapid that we have come to use as a proverb the phrase, "quick as a wink," but the process is really somewhat involved, and is remarkable as showing the wisdom of the Creator in the adaptations which the eye can

make. In the motion of the eyelash in winking there is a gentle flow of tears over the eyeball, keeping it moist and clearing it of dust. When danger is near the optic nerve announces that fact to the brain; the brain then sends a message through some of the motor nerves to the muscle of the eyelid, and that muscle immediately receives the message and instantly acts upon it, shutting down the eyelid. Winking not only protects the eyeball by shutting it in, but by a divine contrivance it moves the eye back a little way in the socket. At the same time the muscles of the eyebrow and of the face below the eye are drawn together, and thus they make a sort of cushion which saves the bone from being fractured, even though a somewhat heavy blow should fall upon it. No one can study the eye without being profoundly impressed with the providential arrangements for its protection and use. It has been often affirmed that the examination of the eye, even though other parts of the body were not under consideration, would be a cure for atheism.

In offering the prayer of the psalmist we pray that God would enable us to adapt our moral nature to our environment as he has adapted the delicate pupil to its environment. Circumstances may help or hinder us in the Christian life. Circumstances may make or mar men in their earthly relations. Circumstances alone do not make men; if they did there would be more men made. There certainly are circumstances enough. The

man of genius is he who masters even unfavorable circumstances so as to make them conduce to his earthly advancement. The door of opportunity will always open at the touch of the finger of industry ; but only the eye of true genius sees the opportunity when it is presented. So in the Christian life our environment may make or mar us. All depends upon our relation to it and the advantage we take of it. In a bright light the iris expands so as to make the pupil smaller, as too much light would give pain to the nerves ; but in the dark the iris shrinks and enlarges the pupil so as to admit more light. God by his wonderful pre-arrangements thus enables the eye to adapt itself to its varying circumstances. When irritating substances enter the eye their presence generates a fluid which struggles to wash them out ; but when this cannot be done these and other substances quickly strive to dissolve these irritating intruders. The prayer of this text is that we may have equal wisdom in our moral relations to our unfavorable circumstances in life. Every man has his besetting sin ; every man has his weak places — unless, indeed, he is weak all over. We are to guard ourselves at these exposed points ; we are to adapt ourselves to our circumstances, so that we shall use them as helps to higher things in the Christian life. Many a man has made his misfortune the means of making his fortune ; many a man has developed power by the adverse conditions of his life. What wind is to the wings of a

bird, so misfortune has often been to the wings of manly courage and Christian faith. The boys without a chance have often risen to be the men of great power and superb achievement. Let us pray that God may teach us to triumph over every form of adversity, and to turn evil, real and seeming, into the highest form of good.

3. *The psalmist also prayed that God would guard him instinctively when he offered the prayer, "Keep me as the apple of the eye."* This thought we have somewhat touched upon, but it is worthy of additional explanation. God's children are always dear to him as the apple of the eye is to us. He has himself affirmed that he who touches us, touches the apple of his eye. We protect our eye instinctively. It is most interesting to see how constantly this is done. Going into a dark room where dangers might come to the eye, our hands go up without a thought to act as protectors. Just as the lid comes down instinctively when danger is near, so instinctively the hand goes up for the same cause and to accomplish the same purpose. God has so made us that the telegraphing of danger to the brain and its communication to various portions of the body, instructing them to protect the eye, will all go on instinctively and instantaneously. The brain receives the announcement of the danger, and immediately imparts the necessary instruction to the defenders of the eye, without any consciousness on our part of designing to communicate to the brain or to employ the

natural defenders of the eye. In a similar way our appreciation of spiritual danger and our use of spiritual defenses should take place. A trained conscience will often act almost instinctively. There are men who live so near to God that their perceptions of right and wrong are extremely acute; their consciences are as tender to moral dangers as are the pupils of their eye to physical dangers. They are not obliged to go through any prolonged process of thought; no involved methods of casuistry are necessary to enable them to distinguish between right and wrong. Their eye is single, and as the Lord has taught us, their whole body is full of light. There are other Christians who are afflicted with moral strabismus. Physical strabismus is an affection of one or both eyes, in which the optic axes cannot be directed to the same object; thus there is squinting, the oblique or askance look, the optic axes not being coincident; strabismus also is defined as a want of parallelism in the visual axes. It may be convergent or divergent; it may be single or double. Its causes are very numerous.

Not otherwise is it with moral strabismus. There are many short-sighted and side-sighted, many squinting, many non-coincident Christians; their moral organs of vision are often double when they ought always to be single. Personal interests, selfish desires, and sensuous delights warp the vision, causing them to see double and sometimes making them entirely blind to duty and

to God. The whole delicate apparatus of the moral eye is seriously disturbed; the eye loses its sensitiveness; foreign substances which ought to irritate do not irritate; substances which ought immediately to be driven out are allowed to remain in the eye. There is often in our own eye a great "beam" and of its presence we are entirely unconscious, but somehow we are remarkably sensitive to the mere "mote" that is in our brother's eye. Many men are extremely anxious about their brother's mote, but strangely indifferent to their own beam. It is wonderful what tricks we can play upon our moral nature. We can make evil seem to be good and good evil. We are often afflicted with a disease which prevents us from distinguishing between moral colors. We see the color we wish to see; we utterly refuse to see the color we are not willing to see. No prayer can be more appropriate than that God would make our consciences quick, even as he has made the apple of the eye; that he would arouse our souls to see sin when it is near, as he has formed the eye promptly to see and instinctively to guard itself when danger is near.

4. *The psalmist thus prayed that God would keep him constantly.* The eye in its normal condition is constantly protecting itself, and the whole body hastens to render needed assistance. No one can study the eye without being profoundly impressed by the excessive pains taken by the divine Creator to ensure its protection from danger

and its due performance of its appropriate functions. There is just as much evidence of mechanical contrivance in the eye as in the telescope; the eye was made for vision, the telescope to assist the eye in the purpose of its creation; both are perfectly adapted to the laws of light. The eye cannot for a moment be off its guard; all its parts must co-operate for the accomplishment of the purpose for which it is bestowed. It is most instructive to see how its muscular tendons perform offices similar to the various mechanical parts of the telescope. Indeed, it is vastly more complete than any optical instrument. No instrument is so perfect in design, so exquisite in its parts, and so efficient in its results; but it never can allow itself to be indifferent to the dangers which menace it. It must be kept constantly.

Not otherwise is it with our spiritual natures. The Christian man is never off duty; he can never afford to make light of the claims of God upon his whole being. In the physical realm seeing is not done by the eye but by the brain. The eye simply makes the image and the appropriate nerve carries the fact and form of the image to the brain. The nerve simply tells the brain that the image is formed on the retina. The nerve of each eye ought to tell the same story to the brain; so the conscience must receive reports from every part of our moral nature. We cannot afford ever to have our conscience unfitted for immediate service. No man can speak correctly from a grammatical

point of view, when called upon in an emergency, if he is not accurate and grammatical at all times and in all mental states ; so the conscience must be kept sweet, clean, pure, and full of light at all times, that it may possess these characteristics in some great crisis when called upon to give an authoritative decision. Evidently our moral natures are capable of vast improvement with advancing years and increased knowledge in the Christian life. The eyes of near-sighted persons become better as they grow older ; so the spiritual eyes of many Christians improve as they walk more fully in the light of God.

5. *The prayer, therefore, is in its fullness, that we may be kept completely in our relations to one another and to the world.* There are no more diseases of the physical eye than of the spiritual, and the diseases of the spiritual eye are equally dangerous. Some men suffer from spiritual cataract ; they are in danger of sinking into absolute darkness ; they do not see God and truth and duty, because they will not. After a little time *will not* becomes *cannot*. If a man lives long in a dark cave he will soon lose the power of vision. In caves there are various kinds of fish which have no eyes. In course of time the organ of vision being utterly unused entirely disappears. Changes in physical structure are constantly going on in men and animals according to the various uses to which they subject the different parts and organs of their bodies. The arm unused, soon loses its power of

motion. Hindu fakirs have held their arms aloft until the muscles have become rigid and now their arms are incapable of motion. These facts suggest a broad and a solemn law. If a man refuses to speak for God, he will eventually lose the power of speech in testifying for truth ; if a man refuses to pray, he will soon lose the gift of prayerful utterance ; if a man refuses to believe in Christ, he will lose the power of spiritual faith ; if a man refuses to see God, by living pure in heart and thus complying with the divine condition of seeing God, he will lose the power of this beatific vision. Heaven and hell are but the realized conditions of earth ; men who heed God here can love God hereafter ; but men who walk in spiritual darkness now will go into outer darkness forever hereafter. This is a terrible possibility ; and it is a possibility entirely in harmony with natural law. Fixity in spiritual conditions tends to become eternal. There is nothing so awful in the conception of the future as the utter, the outer, and the eternal darkness into which men have condemned themselves to live by living in spiritual darkness here and now. Look, now, I beseech you, to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and the Light of the world. He is that true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. If you walk in this light it will grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. If you walk in darkness now you must keep right on walking in it—deeper, blacker, fouler darkness, forever

Jesus Christ is the great optician ; he is the divine oculist ; he is the universal physician. He can cure strabismus ; he can remove cataract, taking away entirely the opacity of the crystalline lens. Thank God, he can cure those born spiritually blind even as he cured the physically and the spiritually blind when he was upon earth. Come to him now in your darkness and blindness. He will give you sight. He will remove all defects of vision, so that you shall not see men as trees walking, so that you shall not see right as wrong and wrong as right, but so that you shall see him, the King in his beauty, and finally shall behold the land that is very far off. God in heaven, cure us of spiritual blindness, and then keep us as the apple of the eye !

THE GREATER WORKS

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.—
John 14 : 12.*

IX

THE thought of parting with their Master filled the hearts of the disciples with sorrow ; but he comforts them with the assurance that they shall be endowed with all power needful for carrying on the work given them to do. We see, however, that all their power to perform miracles was dependent upon their faith in him as the Son of God. He distinctly limits the bestowal of power by the words, "He that believeth on me." The faith mentioned in the text refers to the trust reposed by disciples in Jesus Christ as their divine Lord and Master, as the divine Son of God and the Messiah of Israel. The possession of miraculous power is thus dependent upon the exercise of personal faith.

The characteristic of the great powers they were to possess is shown by the great works which they were to perform. We are first taught that they were to perform works similar to those which Christ himself had performed, "The works that I do shall ye do also." The pronoun in this and in the last clause of the text is very emphatic ; it brings out in striking contrast with the weakness of the disciples the inherent strength of Christ ; and so it emphasizes the wonderful statement that weak as they were they should do such works as

he did of whom divinity had just been affirmed. One cannot but be startled as he contemplates this remarkable statement. How could any one perform such works as he had performed? How can the greatest of men hope to perform miracles such as Jesus had performed during his earthly life? The statement startles us even now. Does this remarkable promise of power to them weaken the argument which Christ had drawn from his works to prove his own divinity? Certainly not, when the real meaning of Christ's words is understood. Rightly understood, his words strengthen rather than weaken the argument for his divinity as drawn from his works. He had said that men should believe on him for the very work's sake, and now he affirms that his disciples should do what he had done, and even greater works than his own. Let us bear in mind, however, that the miracles which they wrought were wrought not in their own name, but in his. Let us emphasize the truth that it was still Christ and not they who did the works; the greater their works, therefore, the greater his honor. It is important that we should hold this truth most clearly in our minds.

Not only did Christ work miracles when among us in the flesh, but also after his ascension; he then gave power to others to work miracles in his name. He was able to delegate this power; he did delegate this power. It was in his name, as distinctly affirmed by Peter and John, that the lame man was healed at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. They

claimed no honor for themselves in the performance of that miracle. Peter distinctly said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Did Christ when upon earth directly heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and raise the dead? After his ascension he continued to perform these miracles, his power working through the disciples. All that is recorded in the book of the Acts is still the work of Christ as truly as when he was upon the earth. The title, "The Acts of the Apostles," is not inspired. A better title to the book would be, "The Acts of the Lord." In the Gospels we have a record "of all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach until the day in which he was taken up." In the Acts of the Apostles we have a record of what Jesus *continued* to do and teach. He is still the mighty worker; the disciples are simply the channel through which his power flows. He is still the divine author of all power; the disciples are simply his instruments. Did Christ draw sin-sick souls to himself when upon earth? By his power his disciples should still continue to draw men and women to him as the risen Lord. Though leaving the disciples, so far as his physical presence is concerned, the work should not cease. He goes up to his vacant throne the better to control the work of his servants, and the more speedily to secure the triumph of his kingdom.

The promise contained in the text is abundantly verified in the Acts of the Apostles. The suggestions already made as to the relation between

the Gospels and the Acts is profoundly suggestive. Christ is still the worker. He still doeth miracles, and he is pleased to use his disciples as his instruments in performing his miracles. We therefore look beyond the channel through which the power flows to its lofty and divine source in Jesus Christ himself.

But our text tells us that the disciples should do even greater works than those which Christ did. We here take a long step in advance of the point we have considered. It is not surprising that this statement has puzzled and well-nigh confounded many earnest Christian students. How could the disciples do greater works than those which Christ himself had done? What can be greater than the raising of the dead? If the disciples could do greater works than he had done, does not his argument for his equality with the Father on the ground of his miraculous works lose its entire force? We have already explained that Christ was still the worker, and these disciples were only the instruments which in his divine wisdom he chose to employ. Their works, therefore, were in the full sense his works, although he was on the throne directing all their movements and giving them all necessary power.

Is it literally true that the disciples did greater works than Christ himself did when in the flesh? The true form of this question is, Did Christ choose to do through the disciples greater works than he chose to do in his own personal presence

upon the earth? This latter is the entirely accurate form of the question. To that question one is obliged to answer with an emphatic affirmative. Attention has been called frequently by commentators to the fact that these words are certainly true in the physical realm. When we look at the facts connected with the miracles of healing performed by Christ on the one side, and by the apostles on the other, we are ready to affirm that he through them did greater works than he did in his own personal presence. Christ healed when the diseased touched the fringe of his garment; but we see in the Acts (5 : 15), that the Apostle Peter healed even when his shadow fell upon the diseased. We see also in Acts (19 : 12), that the Apostle Paul healed with handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched his body. We also see in Acts (5 : 5-10), that by the word of the Apostle Peter, Ananias and Sapphira were smitten with death; and that by the word of the Apostle Paul (Acts 13 : 11), Elymas the sorcerer was stricken blind. Our Lord wrought miracles for three years and a little over, in a limited territory; but the disciples wrought miracles for a generation in widely separated countries. Christ preached in Judea; the disciples went everywhere preaching the word, and confirming the word they preached by the miracles which they wrought.

The full significance of this promise finds its illustration in the great and standing miracle of Christianity, the rapid spread of the gospel and

the triumph of the Christian faith. This miracle is greater than any mere physical miracle which was or which could be performed. Indeed the evidential value of miracles, in the ordinary sense of the term, is greatly lessened in our day. Many Christian apologists would prefer to have the number of miracles recorded in Holy Scripture reduced rather than increased. It is difficult to draw the line between the working of what we call natural laws and the introduction of divine power. It is in the spiritual, rather than in the natural, realm that the greatest miracles, both of Christ and the disciples, were performed. In this realm the promise of our Lord is emphatically true, "and greater works than these shall ye do." In the rapid propagation of the glorious gospel this promise has its most important application. Deny the resurrection and divinity of Jesus Christ, and you cannot explain the existence of the church of Jesus Christ. You can safely challenge any student of history and philosophy to account for the existence of the church if he denies the resurrection of its Founder. The existence of the church is really the most wonderful of miracles ; it is simply a matter of history that under the preaching of the apostles the gospel secured greater victories than under Christ's personal ministry. As already explained, the victory was still Christ's, the power still went out from him as the enthroned King in Zion and Saviour of men. He himself said a short time before his crucifixion : " And I

if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." He was now lifted up upon the cross, lifted up to the throne, and lifted up in the preaching of the apostles. His own promise is now secure of glorious fulfillment. He is drawing men of all classes and conditions to himself. They are acknowledging his glorious kingship and divine lordship. That power and those "greater works" were especially manifested in the conversion of his enemies, in the extension of his kingdom, in the planting of churches, and in carrying the gospel to the Gentiles of many names and nations.

The conversion of a soul is still a greater miracle than the healing of a body; in a sense it is as great a miracle as raising the dead. The power which could transform a persecutor like Saul of Tarsus into a disciple like Paul the apostle, is miraculous and divine. It is more wonderful far to open the eyes of a soul blind and dead in sin, than the eyes of a body blind from birth. Our blessed Lord did both. At the time of our Lord's ascension, as far as the record goes, there were only six hundred and twenty disciples in the world—five hundred in Galilee and one hundred and twenty in Jerusalem. We are indeed warranted in believing that there were many more or less secret disciples; but these are the numbers that are clearly given. On the glorious day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came in mighty power as Christ's ascension gift, the miracle of the tongues was wrought; the Apostle Peter preaches, and three

thousand are converted to faith in Jesus Christ as the immediate result of that sermon. A short time before, Jesus had died the death of a malefactor; he died amid the jeers and taunts of the Jerusalem mob, and now these Jerusalem sinners are convicted in heart and converted to Christ. The Holy Spirit is now in the world as never before; his dispensation in the economy of the revelation of the blessed Trinity has begun. On this day in a real sense the church was founded, and in the founding of the church the greatest of conceivable miracles was wrought. We now see that the gospel spread with astonishing rapidity; it is difficult for us to realize how glorious were the triumphs of the apostles when endued with the power of the Spirit, for whose coming they had tarried and prayed in Jerusalem. The success of their preaching far transcended that of their divine Lord and Master. Now the Spirit gave their preaching power and enabled them to win numerous trophies for their crucified and ascended Lord. We learn that soon five thousand more became obedient to the faith of Jesus Christ, and soon the writer gives up the count regarding numbers. The places where the disciples and their hearers met were shaken by the power of God, and all the people were filled with the Holy Ghost as the apostles spoke the word of God with great boldness. These were wonderful days! This was a glorious harvest; Christ was the sower, the apostles were the reapers.

Evermore the harvest time must be greater than the seed time. He who a short time before had died as a felon, now reigns as King, and his followers are counted by thousands. Soon the whole habitable earth was under the influence of the gospel of Christ. In the cottage of the peasant and in the palace of the Cæsars Christ was preached. Away over the rocky hills of Palestine went the preachers of the glad tidings; and mountains and valleys echoed and re-echoed with the preaching of the precious gospel. Soon the islands of the Ægean became stepping-stones for the feet of "the sacramental host of God's elect." Away, away, over sea and land went the glad messengers of the glad tidings of redemption through Jesus Christ. Ancient philosophers, hoary traditions, classic mythologies, all disappeared before the simple story of the blessed gospel. The cross was the instrument which battered down the walls of heathen error enthroned amid the halls of learning and the palaces of power, and soon the cross was the symbol on the banners of Rome's triumphant army, and Christ was recognized on the throne of the descendants of Cæsar. Christianity thus, to its spiritual detriment, became the recognized religion of Roman power. This rapid extension of the gospel is the miracle of miracles; it is one of the "greater works" that the disciples were to accomplish in the name and by the power of their ascended Lord. So explained, we can readily see the meaning of our

Lord's promise and its literal fulfillment in the history and work of his apostles.

We have also, in the text, a statement of the reason of the accomplishment of greater works on the part of the disciples—"because I go unto my Father." This reason has been implied in the remarks already made. The coming of the Comforter depended on the departure of Jesus Christ in his physical presence. Christ's spiritual presence could not be granted until he had entered on his glorified state. While with the disciples he was their Comforter, their Paraclete in all the blessed meaning of this suggestive title. He promised that upon his departure "another Comforter" should come. It was expedient for them that he should go away in order that the other Comforter might come. While with his disciples his presence was local; if with them in one city, he could not be with them in his physical presence in another city. Our Lord gave up much of his glory by his voluntary humiliation in becoming a man. The cloud of humanity came across the face of the sun of his divinity. He accepted humanity with many of its conditions and limitations, although he did not become stained with its sinfulness; but having finished his earthly work he entered upon the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. His return to the Father was followed by the descent of the Spirit; and that descent is here given as the reason why his disciples should perform these greater works. The Spirit's presence now in a fuller

sense than ever before was manifested among men. Each Person in the blessed Trinity has his appropriate part to perform in the work of human redemption. Christ's absence made the presence of the Comforter the more necessary; his presence with the Father made it possible, in harmony with the divine plan, for the Spirit to be gloriously present on the earth.

The Spirit was in a measure present from the dawn of human history; he brooded over chaos in the morning of creation. The psalmist recognized the blessedness of the Spirit's presence, and prayed against the danger of his withdrawal. With the coming of the promised Comforter came the bestowal of the promised power. When Christ "ascended on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." This power came because Christ was exalted and crowned with glory and honor at the right hand of God. We are now living, in a special sense, in the dispensation of the Spirit. There was a fullness of time in the coming of Christ; so there was a fullness of time in the completer manifestation of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Christ had tabernacled among men frequently before his incarnation as the child of Mary and his birth in the manger at Bethlehem; but he then came in a fuller sense than before; and he then came to dwell for a long period in the flesh. In like manner the Spirit was present previous to the day of Pentecost; but he then came in larger measure, in sublimer manifestation, and

in the accomplishment of a diviner work in the conversion of men to God.

The church has too often forgotten to give due prominence to the Spirit's mighty manifestations on the day of Pentecost, and his abode in the church from that day to the present. As Christ was incarnated in the child of Mary, so the Holy Spirit is incarnated in all the children of God. The Apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians distinctly affirms that the bodies of true believers are the temples of the Holy Ghost. This is a marvelous thought; this is a blessed realization. Christ dwelt as in a tent or tabernacle; but the Spirit dwells in us as in a temple; he is to abide with his people even unto the end. From those who are true believers the Spirit will never take his departure. He is here as the advocate of God the Father with men, as Christ is present on high as the advocate of men with God the Father. We should rejoice in the glorious significance of the name given to the third person of the Trinity, as the Paraclete. Our word *Comforter* is too narrow a word to cover the broad and blessed significance of the heavenly Paraclete. He is our helper, adviser, and comforter. Doubtless the word comforter comes from the Latin *conforto*, meaning *to strengthen much*, but we have now restricted the meaning of the word. In the Reformation period the Spirit was especially the Illuminator of God's word to God's people. In later times, especially the times of Wesley and Whit-

field, when the church had sunk into a cold and dead formalism, the Spirit was the Quickener of God's people. Perhaps in our day he is peculiarly the Leader of God's people, revealing to them the things of Christ, leading them into all truth and into enlarged spheres of benevolent activity in missionary enterprises at home and abroad.

Let us anew recognize the relation of Christ's ascent to the descent of the Holy Paraclete. Let us anew appreciate the presence, and honor the person, of the Holy Spirit in the church of God. Let us not so much pray, "Pour out thy Spirit," as "quicken our hearts to recognize the Spirit's presence and power." Let us put ourselves anew under his holy and divine leadership, that we may do greater works than were ever before done in the church of God.

Never were the opportunities so great as now for doing great things for God and man. The whole earth is a whispering gallery making known the name of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men. Telegraphs, telephones, steamships, and railways have girdled the earth as never before. Doors are opening into every heathen nation. God is calling his church to go up and possess the land for his Son and for the salvation of men. To-day India is as near to America as once Great Britain was; to-day in heathen lands science is opening highways for the feet of the messengers of Christ. Oh, that God would arouse his church to do these greater works! Oh, that our own hearts might

be opened as never before, to be the spheres in which the divine Spirit should achieve the triumphs of divine grace! God hasten the day when his church shall arise, girding herself with his power, putting on her beautiful garments, and marching forth "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners," to bring this rebellious world into sweet submission at the pierced feet of Jesus Christ.

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.—Deut. 33: 27.

X

IT seems as if Moses might have concluded his remarks to the children of Israel with the close of the preceding chapter. But his great heart is full, and out of its abundance he must still speak and write. The farewell sermon which he had already preached was beautiful, powerful, and pathetic. After the sermon, as Matthew Henry suggests, he gave out a long psalm, and nothing then remained but to dismiss the people with a blessing. That blessing he pronounces in this chapter in the name of his God and theirs. The ode with which the chapter closes is one of great energy and beauty; it describes in glowing terms this wonderful people and their remarkable privileges. Although in our Common version the words appear as prose, they are really poetry; and the author's meaning would be much clearer if the translation were given in lines corresponding to the original.

Many tender and precious truths are here uttered. It will be observed that these are the last words which Moses, the great leader and law-giver, ever wrote. He did not of course write the account of his own death. The fact that the text is among his last words invests it with a strange and tender interest. Moses is now one hundred

and twenty years of age, but his eye is not dim and his natural strength is not abated. Joshua has been appointed his successor; the law has been written out and ordered to be deposited in the ark. The song and the blessing of the tribes conclude the long and last farewell. Soon the mysterious close will come. Up Pisgah's heights Moses climbed; here he surveyed the four great masses of Palestine west of the Jordan, so far as it could be seen from that position. The last farewells are said, and Moses in mystery and majesty goes up to glory and to God. With his last earthly breath he will magnify the Israel of God and the God of Israel.

Three of God's relations to us are here beautifully set forth. It will be profitable for us to study these relations and truths which they so fully and so tenderly suggest.

1. *God is here presented to us as a refuge—“the eternal God is thy refuge.”* The word translated “refuge” conveys much instruction to every careful reader. When we look down into the heart of the word we see that it really means that God is our house, our home, our habitation or, as it has been rendered, our “mansion-house.” Every true believer has his home in God; and his soul was houseless and homeless until it found rest in God. God is the heart's comfort, and the spirit's hiding-place. Moses in the ninetieth Psalm speaks of God “as our dwelling-place in all generations.” Atheism makes the heart an orphan in God's great

universe ; atheism robs us of our God, of our help, of our home, and of our hope. It leaves a man without God and without hope. Long ago in incomparable words did Augustine say : "Thou, O God, hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it reposes in thee " ; and Jean Ingelow, taking the psalmist's thought, sings :

Thou art what I want ;
I am athirst for God, the living God.

Thousands have since realized the truth of these longings, and they have also sweetly experienced the blessedness of finding their home in God. It is man's highest honor and greatest glory that nothing short of the eternal God can satisfy the longings of the soul. Things may satisfy the wants of the beasts that perish ; but things can never fill the aching void in human hearts. A living man needs a living God. Were it possible for us to be possessors of half the world, we should be dissatisfied until we had the other half ; and if we had both halves we should still be dissatisfied, for only as we possess God can we know peace, joy, and genuine blessedness. The rich fool of whom our Lord speaks, was a fool indeed ; he thought he could satisfy the longings of his soul because he had much goods laid up in his barn for many years. But souls cannot live on grain ; they need the spiritual food which only God can supply.

God is a refuge to the soul when men become

conscious of the bondage of sin. When Israel groaned under the oppressions of Egyptian slavery, their hearts went up in a longing cry unto God. Neither did they cry unto God in vain. He heard the voice of their prayer and he made bare his arm for their deliverance. God's greatness is most gloriously seen when he inclines his ear to the cry of his feeblest child. God does not wrap himself in clouds of mystery, nor in garments of unapproachable glory. God does not enthrone himself in remote quarters of the universe, and remain indifferent to the sufferings and supplications of his children. Never is his glory so glorious as when he reveals his power to save his people. So great is God that he metes out heaven with a span, but he takes his whole arm for the protection of one of the lambs of his flock. Israel in Egypt is still God's Israel; and God in heaven is still Israel's God. When Israel realized her bondage and longed for deliverance, God prepared the deliverer to accomplish the deliverance. So when men and women to-day are conscious of sin and cry unto God he will give them his peace when they give him their trust. When they long to overcome sin and Satan, God is ready to interpose his power and to give them the victory. When they are conscious of their transgressions against his holy and righteous law God is ready to say, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

God is a refuge when in the Christian path our

enemies become numerous and powerful. He was a refuge to Israel at the Red Sea. Never were God's people in a more trying position than was Israel at that time. They knew well the strength and anger of the enemy; they knew equally well their own defenseless condition. Their very numbers were a source of weakness rather than strength. They were on foot, unarmed, undisciplined, and dispirited by long years of servitude. They are now penned up in a situation of peculiar danger. Upward went the cry of Moses on behalf of the people; downward came the deliverance of God for his endangered saints. Glorious always and everywhere is God as the refuge of his people.

Israel experienced God's help and presence in the fierce attack made by the Amalekites. They were the first assailants of the Israelites after passage through the Red Sea. We behold Moses on the mount engaged in prayer, his weary arms upheld by Aaron and Hur, while Joshua fights with the Amalekites in the valley below. When Moses held up his hand in prayer Israel prevailed, but when he ceased Amalek prevailed. Praying and fighting must go side by side in heavenly warfare. Joshua in the field of battle and Moses in prayer on the hilltop are alike necessary to victory. Our blessed Christ is both our Joshua and our Moses; as Joshua, he is the captain of our salvation, who fights our battles, and as Moses, he is on the throne in heaven ever living to make intercession for his people. God is our refuge, to whom we can run

and be safe now, as did his praying and fighting saints in that early day.

In the deep glens and up the rough hillsides of Scotland, God again and again proved himself to be a refuge to his endangered people. He sometimes wrapped them around with clouds of mist to hide them from their Satanic foes. He sometimes made the dens and caves in the mountains his pavilion, into which these endangered witnesses might run and be safe. He became their high tower, their strong fortress, their inaccessible and impregnable munition of rocks. God has never forsaken his people in their hour of danger. All through the Reformation, and other crucial periods in the history of the church, he has been round about his saints for their deliverance. They have been able triumphantly to say with the psalmist, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear; the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" No body of people can more fully testify to these truths than our own Baptist brotherhood. They have borne witness for Christ in almost every land. Some have bedewed the soil in the valleys with their blood, and others have stained the snow on the mountains with the crimson tide. But they and thousands more have ever found that God was their refuge and strength. Well might glorious John Milton, as secretary of Cromwell, when the duke of Savoy so terribly persecuted the Protestant people in the Alps, sing:

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones,
Forget not in thy book.

God proved himself to be the supply of Israel's need and refuge from heat and hunger and thirst during all their wilderness journey. He brought water in gushing streams from flinty rocks; and he sent manna as miraculous food from heaven to supply the wants of his people. Not otherwise does God prove himself to his people to-day. They who trust him are never brought to shame. He has marvelous ways of supplying the wants of his people. All the forces of nature and grace are at his command. He can make cyclones his servants, storms his messengers, and peaceful seasons his gentle benedictions. His love is as unexhausted as his power is unlimited; his grace is as abundant as his wisdom is profound and his might omnipotent. His heart is the heart of a mother, while his arm is that of Jehovah. Happy, thrice happy, are they who lean upon his heart and who trust his arm. Travelers on the higher Alps have often told us that they sometimes rise to heights so great that they see beneath them the clouds rolling, the lightning flashing, and the rain falling in torrents. They hear the thunder roll as the very artillery of God; but the mountain peaks on which they stand are above the storm and are bathed in the glory of unclouded sunshine. The

peace of God dwells in that lofty region, and only beneath are the storms of earth. Such is the experience of those who make God their refuge. They dwell in unbroken light, in undisturbed peace, and in unfailing joy. The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

2. *God is represented to us in this text as a support—“underneath are the everlasting arms.”* In this part of the text the figure presented to us in the former part is changed; an additional and beautiful thought is introduced. We know that the arm is a symbol of power, and power in active exercise. Numerous passages of Scripture bring out this thought. We have here a most beautiful and instructive figure. God's power is fully pledged for the deliverance of his people. This figure teaches us that God is a support appropriately placed “underneath.” This is the position in which a support is rightly located. God is such a support when his children sink in their conscious humiliation and weakness; when they are consciously humbled, they are then divinely exalted. When they have confessed their weakness, then they are truly strong. When they feel their need of God as a refuge and support, they are best prepared to run to him as a protector and to lean upon him as a helper. They need the support beneath them also when they sink under their heavy burdens. God has not promised that his children shall not bear the cross; cross-bearing is inseparable

arable from their Christian service. God has not promised that his children shall not go through deep waters nor into fiercely heated furnaces; but he has promised that the waters shall not overflow them, and that the fire shall not consume them. He has promised that he will be with them alike in the floods and in the flames. Gethsemane and Calvary evermore lie on this side of Olivet. We must drink our cup in Gethsemane and endure our cross on Calvary before we shall experience our glorious ascension from Olivet. Have courage, O child of God. Trust thy Father's love and might. There shall be no burden so heavy but that he will give thee grace to carry it to his glory. However low you may sink beneath the weight of the daily cross, still lower you shall find the everlasting arms, for they are underneath. You shall sink low perhaps in sickness, but no bed on which you lie can be so far down but that beneath it are those same loving arms. I have repeated these words again and again to the sick and the dying, and as they have fallen upon the ear I have seen the eye brighten and the peace of God come upon the illumined face. Bending a little time ago over a dying brother, a member of this church, I gave these words as my parting message. Two days passed and I was again by that bedside. Our brother's feet had already touched the cold waters of death's river; the chill was upon hand and brow. I bent still lower until my ear caught his whisper, and these were the words I heard, "Underneath

are the everlasting arms," and with these words in his heart and on his lips he went out into the world that is so near and yet so far. You shall be laid low one day in the grave, but no grave is so deep but that beneath you therein are the everlasting arms; and God shall one day raise you up again by his almighty power. Blessed symbol of God's loving might! Glorious truth of God's omnipotent power! Who would not be upheld and encircled by these strong, these everlasting arms?

It is interesting also to observe that this is an enduring support. It is the "eternal" God who is our refuge; and the arms underneath are "everlasting." I officiated not long ago at the funeral of a young mother. While the services were in progress her babe was crying for her in tones so pathetic that the hearts of us all were touched. But her ear was heavy that she could not hear, and her arm was powerless that it could not protect her child. Blessed be God, his ear is never heavy and his arm is never weary. It is an everlasting arm. Such a support we need in this changeful world of ours. The friend of to-day may forget us to-morrow; our beneficiaries of yesterday may be our opponents to-day. To do some men a kindness is to make them hereafter our cold friends or our open enemies. But not so with God; his covenant is an everlasting covenant. His consolations, like his covenants, are everlasting; and his arms, like his covenants and consolations, are everlasting arms. Let us never, never doubt our God.

God is a tender as well as an enduring support ; this thought is suggested by the word "arm." No earthly father or mother is half so gentle as is God. If father be an endearing appellation on earth, God permits us to call him father. If the word mother touches the tenderest springs of human affection, God permits us to use that name as illustrative of his love. "I should have been a French atheist," said Randolph, "had it not been for one recollection, and that was when my departed mother used to take my little hands in hers and cause me on my knees to say, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.'" Well may he say that there is more eloquence in such words lisped by the feeblest child than ever came from the lips of the most eloquent orators the world has ever known. Often in our times of weakness and weariness the words of the now sainted laureate,

But oh, for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still !

come to our lips as a hopeless prayer. Then immediately above all such earthly loves the heart goes up to God, who is both father and mother to every trusting child.

3. *And in the last place, this text teaches us that God is a leader—"He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee and shall say, Destroy them."* God leads the van. He ever goeth before his people. When Israel went through the wilderness he went before them as a pillar of cloud by day and of fire

by night. When they entered the promised land he made the Jordan flee before them, made cities fall down at their feet, and made enemies flee at their approach. Wellington estimated the presence of Napoleon as equal to an additional force of fifty thousand men to the French. Who shall estimate the numbers for which God's presence stands as the leader of his conquering hosts? Who can stand before the divine wisdom and unlimited power of the mighty God of Jacob? He is the Lord of hosts, the God of Sabaoth. Ours is a triumphant contest; ours is an assured victory; ours is an unspeakable triumph. Forward, ye hosts of God, under his divine leadership. Fear neither earth nor hell, neither man nor devil, with God as your leader, for you shall gloriously overcome every enemy.

God as a leader goes before his people for a definite purpose—"He shall thrust out the enemy." At the very beginning of our Lord's ministry he had to come into contact with his enemy and ours. That was a fierce conflict in the wilderness between Christ and Satan. Satan had overcome the first Adam. Shall he overcome the second? The conflict began in the wilderness immediately following the baptism in the Jordan. At that baptism Christ had been recognized as God's beloved Son. The temptation also followed the long period of fasting. Terrible was the conflict; but glorious was the victory. Christ refused all the blandishments of Satan. He rebukes and repels; he humiliates and

despises Satan. He uses no weapon which we may not use; he wins no victory which we may not win. His weapon was "the sword of the Spirit," which is "the word of God," and by that weapon he overcame. So in the beginning of our Christian life, Satan makes his fierce onsets, just as the Amalekites at Rephidim cowardly and wickedly fell upon the weakest and most defenseless of God's people; but God had there his Joshua to fight and his Moses to pray. So God has given us Jesus as the true Joshua to fight our battles and to present our petitions. In the wilderness he struck the crown from Satan's brow and the sceptre from his hand, and Satan was never the same afterward as before. It is true that in the hour and power of darkness he made one more attempt upon Christ as the "strong Son of God"; but in that last onset he was terribly defeated and Christ was again gloriously triumphant. God in the person of his Son still goeth before us against our foes and for our deliverance.

God as our leader gives us a command to aid in the work—"Destroy them." While he thrusts out our enemy from before us he commands us to use our power to the same end. God's early people were entering the land that was full of formidable foes. These foes looked upon themselves as the rightful owners of the soil, but God gives Israel a commission to destroy them as the enemies of God and the enemies of good. God as the sovereign Lord of all lands and peoples commands the chil-

dren of Israel to take possession of the land of Canaan. God issues a similar command to his children to-day. This world of ours does not belong to Satan. When he promised to deliver the kingdom to Christ if Christ should worship him in the wilderness, he was a liar, and such he has been from the beginning. Even if Christ had yielded to the temptation, Satan could not have performed the contract. The pierced hand of Jesus Christ is on the helm of this universe. Satan is an intruder, an interloper, a rebel. He is to be utterly cast out. Believers are to be more than conquerors over all their spiritual foes. Jesus Christ as the Captain of our Salvation has thrust out the enemy and overcome the world. His cross was really his throne, and thereon he spoiled principalities and powers. All about us in our city to-day are abodes of sin, houses of shame, saloons and their degrading influences. The word of God from the throne of God is "Destroy them." God has been our refuge in all the past of our national life. He was the God of our fathers, he is our God, and he will be the God of our children. Almighty God utters to-day concerning all the evils about us, this old command, "Destroy them." O men and women, trust God as your refuge, lean upon him as your support, follow him as your leader; and through life, across the river of death, through the gates of pearl, and along the streets of gold he will be your "all and in all" in time and in eternity.

THE MASTICATED WORD

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.—Jer. 15: 16.

XI

JEREMIAH was called when young to be a prophet ; at Anathoth, the place of his birth, he first exercised his prophetic office. He soon became the subject of persecution, both from his townsmen and his kinsmen. Later in Jerusalem he experienced similar trials. While the pious king Josiah ruled, Jeremiah received constant aid in his efforts to abolish idolatry and to establish true religion. But under Jehoahaz a great change was experienced by Jeremiah, and an entirely different spirit pervaded the city and country. Idolatry was revived, and Jeremiah's warning prophecies were disregarded, and he himself was bitterly persecuted. He foretold the captivity in Babylon and the fall of Babylon itself. But all his warnings were unheeded, and his fidelity even endangered his life. When Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem Jeremiah was a prisoner because of his loyalty to the truth. Finally he was carried to Egypt with the remnant of the Jews B. C. 586.

His mildness, sensitiveness, and modesty made his trying duties the more severe ; but he feared no danger and braved every form of opposition when duty called him into rough paths. His bitter warnings were often more painful to himself than to the people whom he addressed. Nothing could

stay the downward tendency of his infatuated countrymen. In a spirit of loyalty to God and of patriotism to his country and people he himself shared in the sorrows which his earnest appeals and solemn warnings could not avert. One element of his strength in the performance of his trying duties was his personal experience of the preciousness of the word of God. He could not but declare to others the truth which had been so blessed to his own soul. No man can really preach above his own experience. No man can powerfully move others by the word of God who has not been himself powerfully moved by that same word. The minister who is cold and official can never subdue and constrain the hearts of the hearers. Only he who has known God as a personal friend and Saviour can recommend him as such to others. Jeremiah received the word into his own heart, and out of the fullness of his own heart his lips spoke. The heart must unite with the head if the pulpit is to be a throne of power. Heartless preaching of the word of God can quickly be discovered even by those who are themselves heartless in the service of God. The mastication of the word is the very heart of this text ; but it gives other helpful truths and suggestive hints in our relation to the discovery and declaration of the word of God.

1. *We have in the study of this text the word discovered—"Thy word was found."* In Jeremiah's case, the finding of the word was his conviction that the message which he received was truly from

God. It was of the utmost value to him to know that the voice which he heard was the voice of God. He had to try the voices, as we are instructed to try the spirits. He seems to have had divine discrimination enabling him to distinguish between the voice of his own heart, the voice of false prophets, and the voice of God. The man who lives near to God will be likely to know his Father's voice. The heart that is responsive to the call of God will quickly distinguish between the call of man and the call of God. Only he who has mountains in his brain can rightly appreciate the everlasting hills; only he who has oceans in his soul can fully enjoy the waves and music of the shoreless sea. So, rightly to see and to hear God we must have the appropriate faculty. The pure in heart see God here and now; the obedient in soul hear God's voice, and immediately recognize it as the voice of God and not of man. Jeremiah lived in an atmosphere charged with the presence of God; he therefore readily, spontaneously, and joyously, "found" the word of God.

In the sense in which he found God's word we are not to make that discovery. He had to distinguish between the voice of man and the voice of God. We have the inspired volume in our hands, but there is still a real sense in which we also are to discover God's word. The Bible is never truly God's message to us until it comes to us as if addressed to us alone. God's book of revelation, like his book of creation, is spread out

before us ; but both books must be studied before they will give up their deep secrets. God's thoughts are written on rocks and trees, in rivers and flowers ; but only the attentive student interprets the divine thought in these manifold revelations. Not otherwise is it in the higher, fuller, and diviner revelation which we call the Bible. There is no contradiction between God's thoughts in the volume of nature, and in the book of inspiration ; both are from his mighty hand and his loving heart. Nowhere does the Bible oppose or even depreciate the teaching of God in creation. Science and revelation cannot be opposed to each other ; all true science is revelation within its own realm of thought. The word of God gives its deepest meaning only to careful and prayerful students. We must be in sympathy with its thought in order fully to master its thought. The student of music must be musical in taste and studious of purpose. We ask no more of the student of the Bible in this respect than we do of all students of any science or art. The Bible is God's fullest revelation to the children of men. We too often read it in a fragmentary manner ; detached texts often lose the meaning which they possess in their original position. Our study of the Bible has too often violated all laws of careful interpretation. No man could understand a play of Shakespeare simply by studying a few lines out of their connection. In this way texts from any author could be made to mean almost anything

except what the author intended them to mean. No man can understand Milton's "Paradise Lost" except he read the magnificent epic from beginning to end. No man can understand one of Daniel Webster's orations except he be familiar with its beginning, middle, and end, except he know its purpose, and interpret all its parts in the light of that purpose. Tennyson's poems could not stand the test of the fragmentary and torturing manner in which the poems of the Bible are often treated. Macaulay's histories would be meaningless oftentimes if subjected to the processes of study and interpretation too often applied to the historical portions of the Bible. If any Bible student will read the book of Job through at a single sitting he will get such a conception of that book in its dramatic, its poetic, and its didactic elements as he never before experienced. But recently I made a test of the method I am now commending, by reading this book from beginning to end at a sitting. As a result of that personal experience I am ready to apply to the book of Job the strong and eloquent words of Carlyle when, apart from all theories about it, he calls it one of the grandest things ever written with pen, and then adds: "Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind; so soft and great as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible, or out of it, of equal literary merit."

Let the same method be applied to an Epistle, as for example, the Epistle to the Philippians, and I venture to say that it will be a new chapter in this matchless volume, ever after it has been so studied. Mr. Moody recommends the topical study of the Bible; he would have us take such a topic as faith, hope, joy, peace, light, love, and study it in different books, carefully discovering its meaning in its varied relations. This method has its advantages, but it is not without its disadvantages as well. The constant effort should be to get the writer's thought as it is revealed in any portion of the inspired volume.

The Bible is not one volume, but it is a whole library; in it are contained all the treasures of wisdom and learning, as they were not found in the library of Alexandria in the olden time, nor are found in the libraries of Germany, France, England, and America, in our own time. The word of God is a torch in our dark night and a lamp in our life journey. It is the book of books, and has survived the literature of many centuries and climes, in harmony with the law of the survival of the fittest. It is a book of greater antiquity than any other. It is the oldest history of the oldest events; it comes to us with the loftiest pretensions and demands for its message an absolute acceptance.

There is no kind of history so difficult to write as biography. Had the Bible been written by un-inspired men it would have denied, or at least minimized, the vices of its heroes; it would have

magnified, or created, their virtues; but it dares to tell the truth. In this respect it differs from all other books; it nothing conceals, it nothing exaggerates, it sets down naught in malice. There is then a true sense in which we, as well as Jeremiah, may discover the word of God. I urge you to study most diligently its inspired pages; read the seraphic prophecies of Isaiah until your own soul shall glow with their heavenly ardor; the glowing lyrics of David until heavenly poetry shall sing itself in your own hearts; and the rugged histories of the olden time until the events narrated shall live again in your own experience; and thus shall you discover God's word, and know that you have found God's word because God's word has found you in the deepest experiences of your own souls.

2. *We have the word appropriated*—"I did eat them." The word of God will do us but little good except it become a part of our own souls; a hungry man may make a chemical analysis of bread and starve while carrying on this chemical process. Bread cannot impart nutrition, except it be eaten, and thus become a part of bone, sinew, and blood. Jeremiah might have rejected the word of God; many reject it to this day. Many wish to obey it only so far as its truths harmonize with their own desires. They practically make themselves superior to the fullest revelation of God.

The Bible asks no favors from the critics; it simply demands fair treatment at their hands. It is willing to be subjected to every form of just

criticism. It has passed through the fires of criticism when they were heated seven times hotter than they have ever been heated for testing any other book, and it has come out of the trial without the smell of fire upon its pages. Moses will live when all his critics are utterly forgotten ; and the same is true likewise of others among the writers of the sacred book whose works have been discredited. Man may tilt against the stars, but they shine on undisturbed from their inaccessible heights and in their unapproachable beauty.

But even the literary endorsement of the Bible will not give us the best results which it is intended to impart. The assimilative process suggested by the text must take place, else the heavenly manna will not fully cheer our fainting spirits. The divine word is to be eaten ; its spirit is to be taken into our inner life ; we must masticate, digest, and incorporate the heavenly truth before it will bring forth its appropriate fruits in our daily life. This is a remarkable expression here employed to set forth the completeness of this assimilative process. We must actually, spiritually, experimentally, chew, masticate, and digest the living bread, that it may truly nourish our living souls. In the large and divine sense, Jesus Christ is the true Word of God and the true Bread of heaven. He himself taught us that in this figurative and spiritual sense he was to be eaten by us, that he might impart to us true spiritual life. In our hurried lives we do not meditate sufficiently upon the word of God. If it

would become dear to us as it was to the psalmist, as he has detailed his experience in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, if it would become our meat and our drink as it was to many of our fathers when other books were not so numerous, then we might expect to see the stalwart believers and heroic soldiers in the service of God whose noble services made the church illustrious in the past. Then would the church be "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

3. *We notice God's word enjoyed*—"And thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." When so appropriated the word of God never fails to give joy; it illumines the mind, it purifies the heart, it ennobles the life, and it appeals to all that is grandest in human experience. The Bible has given us all that is most enduring in painting, in sculpture, in music, and in poetry. It has developed the highest genius in every department of human endeavor. Take out of the great galleries of painting, the halls of sculpture, and the libraries of the world, the paintings, sculptures, and books, whose existence depended upon the intellectual inspiration and æsthetic culture of the Bible, and you make these galleries and halls and libraries poor indeed. The Bible has inspired the noblest music as well as the loftiest poetry; it has filled the world with the finest productions of human genius; it meets the deepest wants of the soul; it stimulates intellect, imagination, reason, and aspiration. The Psalms mirror the moods of

the soul, as a placid lake mirrors the rocks and trees on its banks. Never did any merely human harp give forth such lyric sweetness as came from the harp of David and filled the glens of Judah with their undying echoes. Nowhere else can nobler specimens of history, biography, poetry, and logic be found than are within the lids of the Bible. Some of the chapters of the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans have been studied by students of law as models of syllogistic reasoning.

The day will come, and that before long, when the Bible will be a text-book in all the colleges of America. Its literary merits alone entitle it to this recognition. Why should we study Heroditus and not Moses, who is the true father of history? Why should we study Homer and not Isaiah, who surpasses the epic poets of Greece? Why should we study Aristotle and neglect the noble Paul?

God's word brings God and the soul into a wonderful nearness, and into a blessed oneness; coming from God, the Bible leads to God its divine author. It is the ripe product of ripe minds under divine inspiration. Its bards stood with uncovered head in the presence of God and sang to the world the songs taught them by heaven. They were conscious of the immediate presence of God, giving inspiration to their thoughts and eloquence to their words. They lived over again the thoughts of the Eternal. As we appropriate God's word we too may live over these thoughts until they become a part of our mental and moral nature.

We may hold large portions of the word of God in solution in our minds. No one could hear the prayers of the late Mr. Spurgeon without appreciating the fact that the thoughts of God colored all his own thoughts as he drew near to God in prayer. The atmosphere of God was diffused from his pulpit, especially as he approached the throne of the heavenly grace. The same remark will apply in part to the sermons and prayers of both his sons. We may so live with certain writers as to catch their spirit and largely re-live their lives.

Alexander the Great made the Homeric heroes his ideals ; he carried a copy of the "Iliad" with him on his marches and into his battles, and incarnated the poet's heroic conceptions in his own daring life. It is possible for a man to sit in his library and hold communion with the mighty dead whose thoughts still breathe and burn in the volumes on his shelves. It is marvelous that a man can thus live with the spirits of the immortals who have long passed from time to eternity. He can master their thoughts, breathe their atmosphere, and in a measure reproduce their lives. He may thus enjoy their fellowship as if he lived in their time and walked in their company. You can sometimes discover by the man himself what books he reads, what ideals he imitates, and whose inspirations are his aspirations. A man's life is the reproduction and interblending of many lives whose streams flow into his own soul. How much more

of God as he is revealed in his word we might enjoy! One scarcely dares say how much of God it is possible for a human life to possess. If we are born of God, we are, as the Apostle Paul affirms, "partakers of the divine nature." We are to be filled with God; we are to share in his divine fullness of life and love. This is the beatification of human experience; it is a foretaste of our divine glorification, when we shall see Jesus as he is and be satisfied as we awake in his likeness.

4. *We notice, and in the last place, God's word acknowledged—"For I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts."* Jeremiah came, in some measure, to possess and to manifest the character of God. We are told that Scipio Africanus was hardly ever without a copy of Xenophon's writings. He came to possess and to manifest much of the character of the author so studied and lived. It is said that Bishop Jewell could recite all of the poems of Horace, and that those poems greatly shaped his thought and speech. It is also affirmed that Beza, when over eighty, could repeat all the Epistles of Paul in the original Greek, and all of Psalms in the original Hebrew. That fact alone would explain much in his own life as to his clearness of thinking and correctness of writing. On coming into this close relation with the revealed, and especially with the incarnate Word of God, we shall so partake of the character of God, that we may be known by the world as men of God. In this way it came to pass that those who knew

Jeremiah recognized the godly character which he possessed, and they gave him God's name.

The beloved missionary, Judson, was known as "Jesus Christ's man." Every Christian is a "Christ man." There ought to be as little difference between a Christian and a Christ man as there is between the spelling of the two words. If we live with Christ, we shall gain his image; if we live with him, men will surely take knowledge of us, that we so live, and that we possess and manifest his character. Men who thus feed upon God and his word, come to possess the characteristics of both, so that the world must recognize the divine lineaments even in their faces. Homely men when ungodly, become divinely beautiful when they have long lived godly lives. Pure thoughts reveal themselves in pure faces; the grasp of the hand, the tone of the voice, and the glance of the eye, will often tell of the indwelling of Jesus Christ in a man's soul. Faces to-day may shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from the mount of communion with God.

To-day some men hesitate to acknowledge God and his word; but the day is coming when such an acknowledgment will be the highest honor that men can desire or possess. To-day I offer you Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God. Have you found him? Do you know him? Do you live with him? Do you know him as the Bread of heaven? Have you appropriated, masticated, incorporated that heavenly food? If so,

you can live the heavenly life ; if so, you have meat to eat of which the world knows nothing. Have you enjoyed this heavenly word ? If not, your highest enjoyment thus far has been but a child's experience compared with the fuller enjoyment which awaits you. Have you acknowledged this heavenly word by the public profession of your faith in Jesus Christ ? With the heart we are to believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Blessed are they who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, who are even now living the heavenly life while they are upon the earth, for they at last shall see Jesus face to face, and shall be satisfied by awaking in his glorious character, his heavenly beauty, and his perfect likeness.

THE WONDERFUL ENGRAVING

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.
—Isa. 49 : 16.

XII

THIS text is a diamond truth in a setting of gems. My subject this morning is The Divine Engraving. It is the most wonderful engraving which history or tradition, mythology or theology, has ever known. Doubtless the original application of this text and context was to God's people in their lonely exile in Babylon; and their restoration from that exile is in the mind of the inspired writer all the way through this remarkable chapter. It was natural for the people of God during that period of banishment to feel that God had utterly forgotten them. Their spirits sank within them; their harps hung upon the willows; and they had no heart to sing in a strange land one of the songs of Zion. They felt that a song of Zion sung simply for the entertainment of the heathen would have been nothing less than sacrilege. There is also in this chapter a reference to the Messiah, and to the greater deliverance which he would bring to the spiritual people of God, and which would be offered to all the nations of the earth. A prophecy may have many fulfillments. We thus see that there is here a reference to the coming of the Messiah, and to the comforting fact that he would be a Saviour to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

'This text, therefore, is for every child of God. It is for you, it is for me, if this morning you and I by a simple, loving, loyal faith are trusting in Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour. Permit me to call your attention to some of the characteristics of this wonderful engraving, as these characteristics are suggested in the text.

1. *This engraving is wonderful, in the first place, because of the personality of the engraver*—"Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands." The engraver is the eternal Jehovah. God condescends to engrave his people upon the palms of his hands! No wonder that the text is introduced with the word "behold," a word expressive of great wonder. The statement which follows this word is so wonderful that it may well challenge the thoughts of devils, men, and angels. It is so wonderful that God properly introduces it to men with the word "behold." If I may say so with becoming reverence, it is so wonderful that it excites the admiration of God himself. It is one of the wonders, not of earth alone, but of heaven as well; it must create surprise among saints and seraphs before God's great throne. The personality of the engraver always adds greatly to the value of an engraving, if the engraver be famous. You may remember that in the Museo Real, the royal picture gallery of Madrid, the museum which is said to contain more wealth in pictures than any other gallery on the Continent, great importance is attached to the paintings bearing the names of the great

artists. The numbers of paintings are given : ten by Raphael, forty-six by Murillo, and sixty-two by Velasquez, and other immortal painters. Here the works of Velasquez are seen in all their glory. He and Murillo are the masters of the Spanish school of painters. The marks of genius associated with the names of the artists give unique value to their work. Its genuineness is its charm. What adds value to many documents is the signature. Why do we still talk of "signing" our name. We say, "sign your name," not write your name; and in that fact is wrapped up an interesting bit of medieval history. The old barons, brave soldiers, chivalrous knights, and powerful kings, often could not write their names. They could fight, but they could not write. They had, therefore, their sign, and they stamped it on official papers; sometimes this sign was a cross, sometimes some other design; sometimes it was part of the hilt of the sword, and sometimes it was part of a ring or seal, hence the significance of the name—signet ring, a ring containing a signet or private seal. Thus we have this curious bit of history in our modern phraseology, even though few stop to think of it, as often as we speak of signing our name. It is a wonderful thought that the sign-manual of God is on this marvelous engraving. It is that sign-manual that adds so greatly to its value. The greatest autograph collector now living has recently offered an enormous sum for a supposed letter of Shakespeare. The forgery of Shakespeare's name would

destroy the value of the letter ; it is in the reality of the signature that the value consists. The sign-manual of the cross of the Son of God is on this divine engraving.

God is the greatest of painters. He hangs, morning by morning and evening by evening, in the sky marvelous productions of his delicate hand and his divine heart. We traverse sea and continent to find the masterpieces of great sculptors and painters, and we do well. Twice, at least, in my life have I been able without guide or guide-book to pick out masterpieces in two galleries. Coming unexpectedly upon the Venus de Milo in the Louvre, and suddenly upon Murillo's masterpiece, the Madonna, in Madrid, I felt the inspiration of genius before stopping to think who the artists were or what were the subjects of their artistic skill. We do well to recognize genius in man. But why do we pass over the masterpieces of God? Earth and air, sea and sky, are filled with God, if only our hearts are open to hear his voice and our eyes to see his handiwork.

We thus see that the personality of the engraver adds greatly to the value of the engraving ; and the personality in the text also shows the lovingkindness and unwavering faithfulness of God. My text is God's answer to Zion's complaint as given in the fourteenth verse of this chapter : "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." During their great trials many of the people thought God had forgotten them ; to them, there-

fore, the text primarily applies. But the language is applicable not only to the period of captivity, but to the long period of spiritual banishment from God when holy souls were longing for the revival of God's work and for a time of spiritual refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The text, broadly considered, applies to all who are striving for the triumph of good over evil, of right over wrong, of light over darkness, and of Christ over Satan.

God gives, in connection with Zion's complaint, two arguments for the encouragement of his people. In the fifteenth verse his love is shown to be stronger than that of the mother for her infant child. It would indeed be strange for a mother to forsake her helpless babe; but often in heathen, and occasionally in Christian lands, mothers are so forgetful and so cruel as to forsake their helpless infants. But God affirms that though the mother may forget her babe in its greatest need and in her most tender ministries, he would never, no never, forsake his children. It is interesting to see how the Bible takes up the tenderest of human relations in order to represent the blessedness of God's relations to the church and to individual souls. The Bible represents God as a husband and the church as his beautiful bride. The Apostle Paul amplifies this thought and emphasizes the truth which it so tenderly teaches. As members of the church of Christ we may reverently say that we are married to

God, and that he is our eternal husband. God furthermore represents himself as a father, saying: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He also speaks of himself as a mother, saying: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." He speaks of himself in the text of this morning as going far beyond a mother's love, for no mother has graven her child upon the palms of her hands. Why should we ever doubt God's love? We may well be surprised and ashamed at our faithlessness, while we are surprised, humiliated, and blessed with God's lovingkindness. His love is the wonder of wonders. In order to banish our fears and comfort our hearts he gives us strand after strand wound together in this cable of heavenly love. Here is assurance made doubly sure. God's unchanging, immeasurable, eternal love. Let us sing it; let us rejoice in it; let us tell it out to all about us. God's unmerited, matchless, boundless love. Glory forever be to his great name.

2. *But I ask you to notice, in the second place, that the engraving itself is wonderful*—"Behold I have graven," etc. Let us look at its significance. Various interpretations are given to the language of the text. Some suppose that it refers to the custom of placing a string on the finger, or on the wrist, or some other part of the hand, to remind us of something which otherwise might be forgotten. The latter part of the verse may allude to the custom of architects, then as now, of mak-

ing drawings of the form and proportions of a building before its erection has been begun. The idea would be that God had drawn a plan of Jerusalem on his hands long before the city had been founded, so that it became, so to speak, a part of his own personality. Others have supposed that the reference is to a design on a signet ring worn on the finger; but it seems better still to believe that the allusion is to some practice of making marks on the hands and arms by means of punctures and indelible ink. These punctures at times were signs or representations of the temple, to show the personal loyalty of devotees to their ancient faith. It was once, and still is to some degree, a custom in many parts of the East, especially on the part of pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre, to mark parts of the body in this way. These various marks are called "the signs of Jerusalem"; and the pilgrims bearing these marks show them with pride to their relatives in far-distant countries. These marks conclusively prove that those bearing them have visited the Holy Sepulchre; they thus become sacred souvenirs and meritorious signs. Just as travelers make marks upon their alpenstocks to indicate that they have climbed certain mountains, so these pilgrims mark themselves to show that they have kept some vow, or performed some other act of special devotion. In many parts of Palestine Arab women may be seen with marks about the face, especially on the chin and on the sides of the mouth, to tell

certain facts in their history, certain relations in their social life, and perhaps with the strangely mistaken idea of adding to their beauty. In India travelers see large numbers of Hindu pilgrims with various marks on the forehead indicating the caste to which they belong, and also serving other purposes which it is difficult for us fully to understand.

It is interesting to see how God takes advantage of these local customs in order to set forth in stronger terms his heavenly truth. This engraving abides. God is its author, his child is its subject. God makes no mistakes in his engravings. No foe of our souls can reach God's palms to blot out or deface God's engraving there. Socrates, in the night of pagan darkness, dared to think of the gods as loving men even as a mother loves her child. This Grecian sage longed for fuller light. Addressing himself on one occasion to his disciples he bore testimony to the overruling providence of God, endorsing the allusions in the incomparable Homer, when he likens the deity to a mother who with gentle hand fans the flies from her babe's face ; so this heathen sage represented God as driving away difficulties from before his children. Among the disciples of Socrates was Critias, the traitor, who afterward condemned Socrates to death, and he laughed and mocked at the comparison, considering it dishonoring in the deity to be concerned in matters so trifling. Socrates rebuked him, reminding him that this

thought of God exalted us toward God instead of lowering God toward us. The malice of Critias did much to secure the condemnation of Socrates to death ; but in answer to his sneer, Socrates remained calm, rejoicing that the gods now gave him rest after his day's work was completed.

We need to-day the rebuke which the heathen sage gave to his critic. There are men who believe in a general, but utterly deny a special, providence of God. But there can be no general providence if there is not a special providence. A general providence is only an aggregation of special providences. He would be deemed an utterly irresponsible speaker who should say that an army perished but no particular soldier was killed. A general providence is the marshaling and accumulation of special providences ; so that there can be no general providence except as there are special providences. Some think it beneath the character of God to note the sparrow's fall and to count the hairs of our head. Christ did not so teach regarding his Father's notice of his children. We utterly misunderstand God if we think we magnify his greatness by setting him apart from our sorrows in the daily walks of life. If God is our father, then all the concerns of his children are dear to his heart. It has been well said, in substance, that with one hand God may be making a ring of a hundred thousand miles in diameter to revolve about a planet like Saturn, while with the other hand he may be giving color to the feathers

of a humming bird, or form and perfume to a flower. God's greatness in dyeing a feather or shading the petal of a rose is as truly divine as in holding the planets in their orbits. Preservation is only another form of creation. God's greatness is truly manifested in his care for what we weakly call little things ; with God nothing is little and nothing is great.

I do not know but that the microscope shows more of God's wisdom and power than does the telescope. I do not know but that the student of botany sees more of God than does the student of astronomy. Away, away with the idea that you honor God when you enthrone him in some dreamy existence like that imputed to Buddha by his followers, who make him in many ways indifferent to the call of his worshipers. God bends his ear to the feeble cry of his weakest child. I honor that conception of God which gives him the heart of a mother and the arm of divinity. O wondrous God, thou art in tenderness father and mother both to those who trust thee ; and yet thou hast an arm for the protection of thy saints that can hurl the thunderbolts of heaven, and stop the stars in their courses, making them fight against thy foes.

3. *Notice now, in the third place, that the wonder of this engraving is much increased when we remember its subject—“Behold I have graven thee.”* Thee, my brother, thee, my sister, thee, my little girl, thee, my little boy ; “behold I have engraven

thee." There is a wonderful personality in all God's relations to the children of men. We stand each before God as if each man and woman were the only person in the entire universe. Jesus showed a most discriminating sympathy with men and women. He loved them in masses because he loved them as individuals. He loved all because he loved each with a personal affection.

I wonder how it came to pass that the angel at the empty tomb on the morning of the resurrection, said to the women: "Tell his disciples and *Peter.*" Who told the angel to give that message to the women? Jesus amid all the glory of that resurrection morn, going forth leading death and hell in captivity, doubtless specially remembered and named the poor repentant and broken-hearted Peter—"Tell his disciples and Peter." Think of this discriminating love! Who told Jesus of the test Thomas had proposed? A week passes, and so far as I know, none of the disciples had seen Jesus during that time. Now they meet and Thomas is with them, and Jesus immediately says to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless but believing." In a moment Thomas is saying, "My Lord and my God." Oh, the individuality, the personality, the discriminateness of the love of Jesus Christ! Then there is the case of Zaccheus, the little fellow, so short of stature that he cannot see Jesus except by resorting to a method which, to say

the least, seems likely to compromise his standing among the men of his class. He climbs a tree like a boy. He will hide himself behind the leafy screen of the sycamore's branches; but Jesus looked up into the tree and said, "Zaccheus, come down." He does not wait for the subject to invite the king, but like a true king, in royal condescension, he invites himself to the home of a subject. See that woman, timid, hesitating, shrinking, going through the crowd and pushing her hand forward until her fingers touched the tassel or fringe of Christ's robe. Now she would shrink away with her stolen blessing which, if unacknowledged, would be only half a blessing. "Who touched me?" The disciples were astonished that Christ should ask this question, because the multitude was thronging him. But Jesus had an inward consciousness that virtue, or power, had gone out of him. Others touched him, but theirs was not the touch of faith. Her touch reached beyond the fringe of his mantle, it went to his divine heart and soul. So Jesus said, "Somebody hath touched me." O men and women, let us touch him with the finger of our faith to-day. Touch his garment with the finger of your necessity; touch his heart with your earnest prayer. He will bend from his throne to say, "somebody hath touched me." Thank God, we have an high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

It would be unspeakably wonderful if your

name were graven on God's hands ; but a more wonderful thing, I am quite sure, has been performed. It is not your name alone that is graven there, but your face, your form, yourself ; your troubles, your sorrows, your failures, your weaknesses, all are graven there. You have had your ups and downs during the past week, and all these experiences are graven on God's hands. All our concernments are dear to God. We have tripped, we have failed, we have hesitated, we have doubted ; all this history is on God's hands. " I have graven *thee* ! " I am overwhelmed ; I am silent with astonishment in the presence of so precious and sublime a truth as that. Does God care that much for me, that much for you ? " I have graven thee on the palms of my hands." Be astonished, O earth, be silent, O my soul, and muse in wonder, love, and praise.

4. *There is just one other thought of which I shall speak. The wonder of this engraving is enhanced when we remember the place of the engraving—* " Behold, I have graven thee upon the *palms of my hands.*" I beg you to observe that the engraving is not on one hand alone, but on both—" my hands." Here is the hand of power—it is on that. Here is the hand of love—it is on that. In the hand of justice is the rod of chastisement ; the engraving is on that hand. In the hand of mercy is the sceptre of forgiveness ; the engraving is on that hand—" I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

√ Mr. Spurgeon, in commenting on this thought, calls attention to the fact that the engraving is not on God's works, but on his hands. The works shall perish; they shall be rolled together as a scroll. We know that the Falls of Niagara are receding slowly but surely, and if the final day be long enough postponed, the falls may entirely disappear. Nothing in creation is really permanent. The pyramids are not so high as once they were; they are yielding to the tooth of time. The very object for which they were built is not certainly known. They are crumbling slowly away. The great mountains are constantly pulverizing. Streams from glaciers carry thousands upon thousands of tons of powdered granite yearly into the valley of Chamounix. Thank God, this engraving is not on the works of his hands, but on his hands. Truly this is wonderful! I beg you to observe that it is on the palms of his hands; and when God shuts his hands he protects, and when God opens his hands he observes the engraving. It is thus on the sensitive part of his hands, the place of observation, the place of protection, the place of tenderness. Wonderful is this truth. O men and women, go to God to-day as your Redeemer. Why have you so long refused his offers of mercy? You treat no other friend so ill as you are treating God. If you go to him as your Redeemer, then trust him as your Protector. I think I shall never doubt God so readily again since my meditation on this text. It is not simply a nug-

get of gold—it is a bottomless mine of gold. I have only scratched the surface; you can dig deeper as you meditate on this precious truth. Trust God as your Protector. No earthly father loves like God; no earthly mother is half so gentle as God. I would that I could pillow my head on his bosom; I would that I could feel the embracement of his fatherly love, until I meet him in his immediate presence. It seems to me to-day that I never can doubt him again.

Learn of God as your teacher; sit at his feet. The school of Christ is the greatest of all universities. Jesus Christ was the greatest of all teachers. Never man spake like this man. O blessed Christ, let us sit at thy pierced feet, look up into thy face, and learn of thee forever. Let us sweetly know to-day that we, in all our interests for time and eternity, are graven on the palms of thy dear hands, once pierced with the cruel nails for us.

THE INSTRUCTIVE EAGLE

As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings.—Deut. 32 : 11.

XIII

WE have in this text and context part of the song which Moses sang near the close of his heroic career, recounting the great things which God had done for Israel. The text is as suggestive spiritually as it is beautiful rhetorically. It directs our minds at once to the habits of the eagle. We know that what the lion is to the beasts of the forest, that the eagle is to the birds of the air. God has made all the animal creation capable of teaching us useful lessons in the Christian life, if we but listen to the voices which they utter. All God's creation is beautiful to the attentive eye, and voiceful to the listening ear.

1. *In studying this text we have set before us, in the first place, the exercise of a wholesome discipline—"As an eagle stirreth up her nest."* We know that the eagle selects the lofty height and the inaccessible eyrie as the place for its nest. But she has remarkable maternal instincts; and in obedience to these instincts she knows how to protect her young securely in their nests until the time comes for them to fly grandly into the upper regions of the sky. We are told that she sometimes builds her nest a yard square; and that into its structure go great pieces of wood, bunches of grass, and quantities of mountain heather. She

knows full well when the time comes when the eaglets ought to fly abroad. They were not made always to lie in a warm and soft nest. She wishes at the proper time to stir up the spirit of the eagle which she well knows is latent in her timid brood. She, therefore, begins to make the nest uncomfortable for her young. She first removes its soft and warm lining. She thus exposes its hard framework which she has put together with remarkable care and almost human skill. But still the brood are unwilling to attempt to fly. They dislike to leave their safe couch; they look out from the side of the nest into the yawning abyss below, and then shrink back into the nest with not unnatural terror. Within them, it is true, are some strivings toward the realization of their lofty possibilities as the children of the cloud and the storm; but without are the awful dangers suggested by the lofty crag and the deep abyss.

What next shall the mother eagle do? Shall she in false pity for the fears of her brood abandon all the plans which her maternal instincts suggest? Shall she see her young refuse their title to be the king of birds, and to spend their lives in idle repose and unnatural cowardice? This is by no means her thought. We are told that she next begins to tear the framework of the nest; part is dislodged from part, and piece after piece falls with a thundering sound among the crags, and the eaglets flutter in their alarm and express their fears in their cries. They seek ref-

uge, huddling together in the parts of the nest yet undisturbed. What next shall the mother eagle do? Shall she yield to the promptings of her maternal heart and abandon her high purpose and her noble ambition? So to act would be unworthy of the eagle's soul that throbs within her.

It is said that next she dislodges with her strong talons pieces of the rock above the nest. These portions of the rock come rolling down the side of the cliff with a thunderous sound that goes echoing far amid the lofty rocks. The eaglets are alarmed more than ever. Does the mother mean utterly to destroy her brood; has she become cruel rather than loving? Is there no motherly heart beneath her wings and feathers? Let us not so misjudge this mother bird. She must teach her brood to fly. Flying aloft above the storm and in the face of the sun is one of the glories of an eagle's nature, and one of the possibilities of the eagle's heart and wing. The mother must teach her young to fly. The sun which never shines is not a sun; the stream which never flows is not a stream; the fire which never burns is not a fire. Shining, flowing, burning are the inseparable attributes of sun, stream, and fire. The eagle which never flies is not an eagle. This mother cannot see her brood despise their noble heritage; they must fly or die, so far as their higher nature is concerned. All this the mother fully knows. An eagle unable to fly is unworthy its name. Shall these eaglets deny their noble parentage? Shall

they be unworthy of their high birth and their possible destiny? The mother is determined that they shall leave their nest, cleave the air with mighty wing, and rise above cloud and storm with brave heart and undimmed eye.

In like manner God drove Israel out of Egypt. God made their tasks extremely bitter in that land of wealth and beauty. The Egyptians transformed God's people into the slaves of Pharaoh. Pharaoh made their tasks increasingly severe. Finally he obliged them to furnish their tale of bricks although they were not provided with straw. God permitted them to multiply rapidly although they were oppressed greatly. God caused them to suffer when their nests were disturbed, and he led them to aspire after higher and diviner things. There is a noble discontent among men even now, and this discontent is not all of evil; it has in it sublime possibilities for the exaltation of the race. Satisfaction with degradation is itself an element of deepest degradation. It is always an element of hope when men are reaching out after higher and better things for themselves and their children. God looked upon his chosen in their time of sorrow, and he listened to their cries in their periods of mingled despair and aspiration. He longed for his brood in their Egyptian nests; and their night of despair was followed by a morning of hope. The knell of their liberty was quickly succeeded by the pæan of their victory. God cared for them in their long journey as deeply and tenderly

as a man does for the safety of his eyesight. God manifested a fatherly protection toward them and an amazing condescension for their welfare; for it is said, "He kept them as the apple of his eye."

Similar principles are illustrated to this hour in our family life. Obstacles often make men. The greatest misfortune that could have happened to many men was to be born rich; the greatest blessing to other men is that they were born poor. The hard soil and the chill atmosphere of New England have largely made America the land of progress and power that she is to-day. But for the difficulties which he encountered in boyhood Daniel Webster would never have achieved the sublime success which is synonymous with his great name. But for his loyalty to God, and the cruelty of the Church of England, Bunyan would never have been imprisoned and the world would not have had his immortal allegory, "The Pilgrim's Progress." From his prison cell his pilgrim has gone forth to walk through the world, exhorting men and women to enter upon the narrow pathway and to march to the celestial city. We are told that Bunyan wrote this remarkable book on pieces of paper used to cork the bottles of milk which formed part of his daily food. Gifford wrote his first copy of his mathematical work on scraps of leather which he secured for this purpose while he was a shoemaker's apprentice. Rittenhouse calculated eclipses on the handle of his plow as he rested for a little at the end of the furrow.

Michael Angelo struggled against poverty while his genius was pluming itself for its flight to the stars. Opposing circumstances rightly encountered develop conquering elements of character. There are men born to wealth who never truly live; they simply exist. They have contributed nothing whatever to the world's wealth in literature, in science, in discovery, or in philanthropy; they are plants; they are vegetables. If their nest had been thoroughly destroyed and they themselves shaken by the winds of adversity, they might have developed power and have taken their places among the immortals.

Many a man says, "I will die in my nest"; but God has better things in store for him. A man may put his business between his heart and his duty to God; a man may put his wife and his children on the throne of his heart and give them the love and devotion due to God alone. We cannot love our families too much if we love them as God's gift, and look past the gift to the great Giver. But if God is dethroned and any creature is enthroned in his place, we need not be surprised that our homes are shaken and our idols broken. From your arms and heart God may take those you love the most, if you give them the love which is due to him alone. In so doing God will be rendering the greatest possible service to you as his child. Let us be sure that God is conferring the richest blessing possible upon us in giving us needed discipline. Men slumber on the edge of a precipice;

he is their true friend who awakens them before their destruction is complete. May God stir up our nest if the nest prevents us from flying abroad on messages of service for God and of blessing for our fellow-men !

2. *We see also, in the second place, that the eagle gives needed encouragement*—she “fluttereth over her young.” This act on the part of the eagle is a step in advance of her course when she stirreth up the nest. Let us fix our thoughts upon her as she is engaged in this commendable course on behalf of her brood. See her as she perhaps for a time broodeth over them, giving them some part of her own vital warmth and wondrous strength. See her as she poises over the nest, giving her young needed encouragement ; no wonder they cling to the nest, uncomfortable and somewhat dangerous as it now is. To fly is no easy task for these unfledged birds. Patiently, lovingly, does the mother bird balance herself over the nest listening to the cries of her eaglets, and perhaps by responding cries, as well as by her own motions, encouraging them to fly. She must teach these callow eaglets that they have wings ; and that they must soar aloft above the crags and amid the clouds. They must look into the face of the sun as they fly into its brightest rays, rays which would blind other birds, but which scarcely dazzle the eyes of the eagle. They must learn to sweep with majesty and triumph through the azure gates of day. Mother-love stirred the nest ; mother-love

sent the rocks thundering down the cliff ; and now mother-love gives encouragement as only a mother can give it, with equal ingenuity, patience, and tenderness.

Similar encouragement is given us in the word of God. Often the faults and failings of the saints of the olden time have in them an element of encouragement for us in our struggles. Job's sublime patience, without Job's occasional impatience, might utterly discourage us amid life's trials. David's kingliness among men and his filial spirit toward God, might dampen all our enthusiasm and discourage our endeavors, were it not for his great weakness, cowardliness, and sinfulness toward both God and man at one crisis in his heroic career. There is to us an element of comfort in the fact that the Apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and that it remained, even though he prayed earnestly for its removal. The character of Jesus gives us our strongest encouragement in struggling against the evils in our earthly pilgrimage. He places before us a high standard ; he exhorts us to be perfect even as his Father in heaven is perfect. He incarnates in his own spotless life the perfect precepts which he taught to men ; but his holy example does not repel, but sweetly attracts. There are lives that are beautiful as the frost on a window-pane, and they are as cold as they are beautiful. There is a stately sanctity which is as repellent as it is complacent. Far otherwise was the perfect character

of the Lord Jesus. When Moses came down from the mount with the glory of the Lord still shining from his face, men were repelled; when Jesus came from his mount of Transfiguration men were attracted. His whole earthly career has in it an element of wonderful encouragement for us in our struggles toward the higher life. His incarnation was to some degree an eclipsing of his glory as the Son of God; the cloud of his humanity veiled the dazzling splendor of his divinity. He laid aside his glory lest he might awe and repel us when he would sweetly invite and lovingly attract us to himself. For our encouragement Christ did not consider equality with God as a possession to be retained; but he emptied himself, he became man, he humbled himself as a man, finally dying the death of the cross. Marvelously does he thus encourage us to bear our cross, that we like him may finally be highly exalted because of our lowness in service, our loyalty in obedience, and our likeness to him in character.

In the ceiling of the Palazzo Rospigliosi, in Rome, there is a painting by Guido Reni representing Aurora strewing flowers before the chariot of the god of the sun, who is surrounded by dancing *horæ*. By many this is considered to be this artist's masterpiece. The coloring is especially skillful, the brightest light being thrown on the figure of Apollo. All the colors are thus shaded off so as to harmonize with that of the central figure and the dun-colored horses and the clouds

in the background. The eye of the beholder becomes weary in the effort to study this painting on the ceiling; and the considerate guardians have placed opposite the entrance a mirror in which the painting may be conveniently studied. The visitor looks downward rather than upward, resting neck and eye as he studies the perfect forms and harmonious colors of this historic painting. The humanity of Christ was the mirror of his divinity; in it we can see him as the beautiful child, the noble youth, the perfect man, and the divine-human Redeemer. In all these relations of life he hovers over us as the eagle flutters over her young, giving us needed encouragement. May we watch the inspiration of his presence and feel the uplift of his influence! Oftener ought we to give needed encouragement to others. John B. Gough stood leaning upon a lamp-post, broken in body and wretched in soul; the light of his life had gone out; and there seemed to be no hope for him in time and no light in eternity. A gentle hand was laid on his shoulder, a kindly word spoken to ear and heart, and a new life then and there was begun. The eloquent words of Gough, spoken on hundreds of platforms on both sides of the Atlantic, words which thrilled unnumbered thousands, were but the echo of the kindly words spoken on the streets of New York by this inspired man who, under God, became Gough's deliverer. May God help us to give encouragement to some struggling soul to-day! May there be kindness in the glance of

our eye, cheer in the tones of our voice, and sympathy in the grasp of our hand! May God give us the spirit of Jesus Christ that we may live and labor to bring men into sweet fellowship with him, their Lord and Redeemer.

3. *The eagle, in the third place, gives a practical example*—she “spreadeth abroad her wings.” She knows well that she must do more than flutter over her brood; fluttering may be conducive to flying, but fluttering is not flying. She must give her eaglets an example in her own action. She now appeals powerfully to the dormant spirit of the storm, the cloud, and the upper air, which spirit she knows well is in the heart of her young. She wishes to arouse the ambition which will lead them to skirt the lofty crags and to fly serenely and sublimely in the high places of the thunder. Behold her as she strikes boldly out from the nest, see her as she cleaves the sky with her strong wings, and as she sweeps upward in the face of the sun! How she darts forward! How placidly she sails on the clouds! How wildly she screams, filling all the air with the echoes of her cries! Upward she now darts, higher and still higher she rises; circle after circle she now makes, and now she is entirely lost to sight as her eaglets strain their young eyes to follow her noble flight. Soon she returns, her wings dampened by the dews of the upper air; again she sails grandly amid the clouds on her tireless, undaunted, joyous wings, back to the eyrie and the nest. Her brood

welcome her ; their little hearts beat high. What pride they have in their mother ! What ambitions are stirring in their eagle souls ! Shall they ever accomplish such a flight as that of their strong mother of whom they are so proud ! Great thoughts, such as eagles may have, are filling their breasts ; they never before saw such a flight as that of their dauntless mother. She has aroused the ambition of the eagle soul which will lead them to surmount cloud and storm until they reach the calm upper air, where no cloud floats but where the sun ever shines. The spirit of the king of birds is evoked, and nothing will ever satisfy the eagle heart within until a similar flight is made by each wondering eaglet.

So God gave a practical example to Israel in Egypt and at the Red Sea. God made bare his arm to destroy Pharaoh, his courtiers, and his soldiers. He made Pharaoh and his people willing to let Israel go. He surpassed all the powers of this mighty king by displaying power mightier than Pharaoh had ever before seen. Israel fled ; they are gathered on the shore of the Red Sea. Never before were a people in so evil a case ; before them were the waters of the sea ; to the right of them and to the left of them rose lofty mountains, and behind them were the soldiers of Egypt. But one way was open—the way upward, the way to God's throne and heart. That way no foe of God or man can ever obstruct. By that way our prayers may ever ascend and God's deliverances

ever descend. Marvelously did the sea flee before them; so also did the Jordan on their behalf stop in its onward flow; so also did the walls of Jericho fall down; so also were the nations smitten with fear. God went before his people for their deliverance from their foes. So Christ goes before us to-day; he is still the Good Shepherd who calleth his sheep by name and leadeth them out. His voice is full of cheer, of hope, and of inspiration; we see his footprints and there we place our own. He makes every trial encouragement for an additional victory. The Sandwich Islanders believed that when they slew a fierce foe his heroic virtues and dauntless bravery passed over into the hearts of the slayers. So Christ enables us to conquer sin and Satan, and to get from every vanquished evil, courage, fortitude, and inspiration to vanquish remaining evils. One ounce of example is worth a pound of precept. Christ's precepts he translated into daily examples. Never can we be satisfied with our low attainments when we see his lofty achievements. O blessed Christ, put around us thy strong arms, lifting us when we fall, holding us when we faint, and making us heroic and victorious in every encounter with Satan and his hosts.

4. *We notice, in the last place, the eagle giving help in extremity*—she “taketh them, beareth them on her wings.” The eaglets catch the inspiration of her fearless flight and so strike out boldly for themselves. Perhaps in some cases she may be obliged to carry them out on her own strong wings. If

so, she will then throw them off in order that they may learn how to exercise their own wings. See them as they flutter, fly, and begin to fall! Above them are the clouds and the storms; beneath them are the fearful depths of the terrible abyss. How their hearts beat and their wings flutter! Perhaps also, they are exposed at times to the arrow of the archer that may pierce their bodies. See her now, as she sweeps under them, takes them on her own strong, tireless form, and strikes back for the nest. Most beautiful is this illustration of God's help, protection and salvation for his people.

Let us never be discouraged, and let us never be satisfied with low attainments in the Christian life. We live too often in the porter's lodge, when we might dwell in the king's palace. We are too often satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the Master's table, when we might eat a full meal. Let us remember, as the Apostle Paul has taught us, to be filled with all the fullness of God. May God drive us from our nest if thereby he may draw us to himself! May God empty us of self that he may fill us with himself! Let us show to the church and to the world what God can make of men and women who are wholly surrendered to him. We may rise to as lofty a height as that attained by any of the saints of God in the past. Let us strike out grandly to-day for a sublimer flight. Let us be enterprising for God. Can we not mark out a new pathway of service for God and man? God's everlasting arm will ever be be-

neath ; we can never sink so low, even though we sink into sickness, poverty, death, and finally the grave, but that still beneath us shall be the everlasting arms. To-day, let the glowing words of Isaiah sing their sweetest music in our souls : " They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; and they shall walk, and not faint."

THE RIGHTEOUS GARMENTS

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.—Isa. 61 : 10.

XIV

THE sixtieth chapter of Isaiah begins a beautiful and glorious description of the golden age of the Messiah. This description continues through the sixty-first and the sixty-second chapters. The blessings of that period are represented as numerous and glorious. They are described in the exalted and poetic imagery so often employed by the prophets, and especially by the evangelical prophet Isaiah. This prophet, in harmony with his usual method of foretelling, puts himself into the midst of the scenes which he so strikingly describes. In this connection he portrays the time when the Gentiles shall be gathered in, and when the whole earth shall be illumined with the glory of gospel truth. The sixty-first chapter is a marked portion of this grand description ; it sets before us the blessed results of the coming and the work of the Messiah. In the text we have the language of the prophet himself, or of some other who speaks authoritatively on behalf of Zion. The truth here taught is that the prosperity of Zion, the true church and kingdom of the Messiah, is a sufficient cause for rapturous joy, and that this prosperity should lead all God's true people to give thanksgiving for the great mercy experienced in the reign of the Messiah.

But all true Christians in our day are as really the people of God as were the saints in the days of Isaiah, and they can make this language their own. They, more truly than God's people of that earlier day, can rejoice in the grace of God in their own hearts, and in the spread of the kingdom of God throughout the world. The world never was so small, so far as the means of reaching all its parts are concerned, as it is to-day. All the inventions and discoveries of the hour are contributing to the spread of the gospel and to the establishment of the kingdom of God. Telephones and telegraphs have made the world a whispering gallery to echo the story of redeeming love. Steamships and railways in carrying God's messengers are instruments for the spread of the gospel and for the salvation of the race. Never before might the church so rejoice in the glory of God's grace as to-day.

In looking more closely at this text we see that it gives us its salient thoughts with great clearness and with equal beauty.

1. *It contains a joyous resolution—“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God.”* The joy spoken of here is described as great. Those who rejoice in God have cause to rejoice greatly. No other joy can be half so joyful; no other joy is worthy of the name. The joy of this world perishes even while it is used; but the joy which comes from heavenly things increases with the using, and it will be en-

joyed more fully in heaven than upon the earth. In speaking of this heavenly joy extravagance is impossible; in attempting adequately to represent its greatness economy in statement is sinful. If our joy is in God we cannot rejoice too much. Well might the psalmist say, in the second verse of the thirty-fourth Psalm, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." Boasting in God is not only justifiable, but its absence is unpardonable. The psalmist recognized God as the fountain whence his joy sprang in a full and continuous stream. No man can boast too much when he forgets himself and exalts only God as the object of his trust and the subject of his boast. If our joy is in God we may rest assured that God, in the perfection of his character and in the preciousness of his love, will be in our joy. Only as God is in our joy can joy be truly joy.

The first gospel song which earth ever heard was a song of ineffable joy. In that moment of tremulous excitement when there came to the heart of the Hebrew maiden the realization of all the honor that was to come to her, and all the blessing that through her was to come to the world, she burst forth in a song of holy ecstasy. The lofty words of the lowly Hannah came spontaneously to her lips. Her soul was saturated with the glowing lyrics of the earlier saints; she was imbued with their spirit, and her thoughts naturally took the form of this glorious Old Testament poetry. And so the gentle maiden sang,

“My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” And the “Magnificat” of Mary has echoed through loyal hearts ever since, and has found expression on the lips of men and women under the spell of its lyric impulse and its religious emotion. The “Benedictus” of Zacharias was the natural echo of the “Magnificat” of Mary; and soon the “Gloria in Excelsis” of the angels is heard. The birth of the Lord gave them, as well as us, new cause for joy. Over the plains of Bethlehem rang their voices making night melodious with heavenly music. The birth of Christ was cause for joy to saints and seraphs in heaven, as well as to all pure hearts and noble souls on earth. Indeed the whole atmosphere was tremulous with song at the time of the Lord’s birth. Never before did loving hearts so utter themselves in lofty song as then. We are not surprised at the “Nunc Dimittis” of Simeon after we have listened to the other strains of music evoked by the rapturous emotion of that marvelous time. No wonder that Simeon, as he takes the divine babe into his arms, finds himself uttering strains of music which had long been shut up in his own reverent heart.

The noble Paul drank in the true spirit of Christian joy. He says, “Rejoice evermore,” and elsewhere, “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice.” The apostle shows us that joy in the Lord is not simply a privilege but a duty. The apostle but echoes the words of the Old Tes-

tament prophet who states a profound psychological, as well as a deeply religious, principle when he affirms, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Religion evermore gives joy. Religion makes joy bells ring in heaven and among redeemed souls on earth. It is an ancient, and also a Satanic, slander to affirm that a religious life is a life of gloom. Satan, as his name implies, is evermore a slanderer. We have seen lives sad because they were without God and without hope. It is true that religion has its solemn elements ; it is true that while Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, he was also the Man of sorrows. All his people share with him in these times of sunshine and shadow. That is a shallow life which knows no lofty joy and no deep grief.

We see also that this is spiritual joy—"My soul shall be joyful." The joy here described is real, internal and spiritual. It springs from the deepest elements of the soul. It is a quality of the essential being. It is not a simulated but a genuine joy. It does not wreath the face with smiles while the heart breaks with grief. In the experience of mere worldly joy there is often an aching heart beneath a bridal veil. Worldly pleasure cannot satisfy the heart's deep need, but true religious joy fills the heart and springs up from the soul's deepest and truest reality. It is also in the noblest sense personal joy—"I will rejoice . . . my soul will be joyful." The heart thus becomes a well-spring of joy. This joy is not dependent upon ex-

ternal conditions ; it springs from internal possessions. It is not something which "haps" to one, but something which springs up from hidden sources within. Joy, therefore, is a much greater possession than mere happiness. Happiness comes or goes according to the frowns or smiles of external fortune ; but joy remains because it has its origin within rather than without, and because it springs up from deep and inexhaustible sources within the soul itself. All without may be dark as deepest midnight, but all within may be bright as clearest noonday ; without may be only the world's harsh discords, but within there may be celestial harmonies. This joy was the blessed gift of Christ to his followers before his crucifixion and after his resurrection ; it was also his parting legacy as he went back to take his place on his Father's throne. This is the blessed peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

It is to be observed, further, that this is a resolution of divine joy—it is "joy in the Lord." This thought we have already expressed, but it is here brought out with greater fullness of meaning. This is beautiful language ; and the experience here suggested is a proper subject for the joy here declared. We can never exhaust the joy which has God for its source. The life that is hid with Christ in God is a charmed life. It draws upon an unending fountain of blessing and exhaustless source of delight. All the other streams may become dry ; this stream cannot know dimi-

nution. Like a river with constantly multiplying tributaries, it flows on widening and deepening in its progress. One day this enlarged stream will pour itself into the ocean of eternity. All the world's fountains are not really fountains, but simply cisterns, and broken cisterns which can hold no water. When our lips are parched with thirst we reach the hand for some cup of earthly joy, and we find that it is cracked, and that it contains no water; but at its bottom we find only poisonous sediment. Thrice happy is the man whose soul can be joyful in the Lord! That soul can be joyful in adversity as in prosperity, in darkness as in light, in shadow as in sunshine, in death as in life, and in eternity vastly more than in time! In the forty-fourth Psalm and the eighth verse we have the thought expressed in the words, "In God we boast all the day long." Here not a momentary joy is described, but a continual and increasing joy is expressed. Every true believer may have such joy here and now. We live far below our privileges when we are satisfied with dwelling in the porter's lodge rather than in the King's palace. We walk in the valley singing jeremiads, when we might leap on the hilltops singing hallelujahs; too often we insist upon calling ourselves servants when God proclaims us to be sons. Jesus Christ is our Immanuel—God with us. He is perfect man and perfect God; he is the Son of Mary and the Son of God; he is the Child of the manger and the Ancient of days. In

God let our souls make their boast ; with him on our side we can defy the world and the devil. Let us shout his praise and have even here sweet foretastes of the fuller joy we shall experience and the grander victory we shall achieve in his immediate presence.

2. *We have, in the second place, in this text, a sufficient reason for such a resolution—“ For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation,”* etc. God reveals to the soul its need of clothing. Dr. Bushnell, in his suggestive discourse on “ Putting on Christ,” reminds us that the highest distinction of man, considered as an animal among animals, is not in his two-handedness nor in his erect figure, but in his necessity and right of dress. The lower animals have no option regarding their figure and appearance. Their dress is a part of their organization ; it grows upon them as their bones grow within them. This is true whether their dress be feathers, fur, hair, or wool ; but man shows his superior dignity by the necessity of additional clothing and the high prerogative which he may exercise regarding its character. This remark is as true morally as it is physically. When the first pair sinned, the garment of purity which had been on their soul was lost ; they therefore tried to substitute for it external garments of their own devising. Their act unconsciously declared their sin. Many men and women still follow their example. Education, refinement, culture, and many other graces of manner, are manufactured cover-

ings for moral deformities. Proud men and women do not wish to be reminded that they are poor and blind and naked. Instead of turning against their moral defects, they are apt to turn against the preacher for uttering unwholesome truths. Except men be clothed with the garments of salvation, they are unclothed so far as the noblest elements of character and the highest attainments of divine culture are concerned.

God also reveals the fact that he alone can provide garments of salvation and robes of righteousness. This truth, also, men and women are slow to learn; they wish to help God. They desire a share in the work of salvation at a point where their service is neither needed nor possible. The enforcement of these solemn truths humbles pride and destroys self-sufficiency. Some men are so inflated with self-righteousness, that they think they have need neither of the mercy of God nor the cross of Christ. They sit at their own loom and weave their own robes; they act, so far as their moral nature is concerned, precisely as did our first parents in Eden in respect to their physical clothing. But even here at times these Pharisees discover defects in their robes, and here and there put in the silver or golden thread of some good deed, some holy aspiration, or some saintly resolution. They expect that God's mercy will make up for all threadbare spots, ragged rents, and deep-dyed stains. They would unite their rags to Christ's robes. Believe me, it is impos-

sible to cover the soul in this way. You must put on Christ's robes, or you will not be suitably attired for the wedding feast ; otherwise you will not have on the wedding garment. Quaintly has some one said that "The filthy rags of the first Adam must not be joined to the princely robes of the second Adam."

We know, indeed, that Christ's righteousness is imparted as well as imputed ; and when so imputed and imparted, all men take knowledge of its possessor that he has been with Jesus. Christ in the heart makes his presence seen in the life. He cannot be hid. A rose in our bosom will fill the atmosphere about us with its fragrance ; so does Christ, the Rose of Sharon. In the robe of his righteousness there is no seam and no stain. Even the eye of infinite holiness and purity cannot see any defect in that perfect robe. Self-righteousness is no righteousness. Impurity cannot purify itself. Our prayers need to be prayed for ; our very tears need washing. As well might a man lean for support on his shadow as for a guilty sinner to seek comfort and hope in his own goodness. As a ground of acceptance with God, our own righteousness is only "sinking sand." Christ will not share with us the glory of his finished work as a part of our justifying righteousness.

We are told that Phidias, the great sculptor, was employed by the Athenians to make a statue of the goddess Diana, and he produced a master-

piece. It elicited his own admiration; it filled his soul with artistic enthusiasm. But self-glory took the place of devotion to his art and the place of reverence for the subject of his artistic labors and genius; and being anxious to hand his name down to posterity, we are told that he secretly engraved it in one of the folds of the drapery. When the Athenians discovered his clumsy duplicity, his unpatriotic ambition and unartistic selfishness, they indignantly banished the man who had polluted the sanctity of their goddess. Self-righteous sinners to-day act the part of this ancient sculptor; they would add their own name to Christ's in his robe of perfect righteousness. The true Christian is clothed with the garments of salvation and the robes of righteousness. The clothing is actually on his soul here and now. The gospel armor is useless except it be put on; the bread of life is worthless except it be eaten; and Christ is powerless to save, except by a living faith he be received into the soul.

Why should we have in the text both garments of salvation and a robe of righteousness? Some have suggested that we have here an instance of Hebrew parallelism; but I certainly think we have here more than a mere rhetorical form. The garments may refer to the soul's need of grace and mercy, and the robe to the beauty and glory of religion. The soul is not only protected, but it is ornamented. The princely robe that was thrown over the shoulder was an article of beauty; it

manifested the dignity, the royalty, and the sonship of the wearer. We have here then the garments of the divine nuptials; we have the flowing robes of the heavenly kingdom. They can be made white only in the blood of the Lamb. Behold the redeemed in glory! Whence came they? See their flowing robes of spotless white! Marvelous mystery of redeeming love, these robes are made white by the cleansing power of blood. Oh, precious truth! Oh, blessed gospel! Oh, mighty Saviour! While the Roman soldiers at the foot of the cross were casting lots for Christ's seamless robe, he was preparing for you and me a seamless, spotless, and sinless robe of righteousness. That robe by his grace I now offer you. It will hide your deformities. It will make you a son, a daughter of the Lord of life and glory. It will be the wedding garment for the King's feast. It will be the flowing robe of heaven's redeemed and triumphant inhabitants. Will you put it on? Will you receive Christ now? Then he will be your wisdom, your righteousness, and your redemption now and forevermore.

3. *We have also here, in the third and last place, a striking comparison—“As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”* We see that Christians thus attired are compared to a bridegroom decked with the priestly crown. It is a strange combination of ideas, but a combination which the original words clearly suggest. The allusion, doubtless, is

to the magnificent robes of the high priest when performing his functions. Special reference is made to the mitre and the crown of gold on its front. The great truth is here taught that all true believers are priests and kings. They are heirs of glory; they are joint-heirs with Christ; theirs shall yet be, as two apostles have taught us, a triple crown, a crown of righteousness, a crown of life, and a crown of glory.

All these truths are again beautifully suggested by the description here given of the bride adorned with her jewels. The Bible exhausts all human relations in setting forth the blessedness of Christians. Human language can scarcely bear up at all times under the weight of human thought; but it breaks down utterly under the weight of God's thought when he strives to make known his relations to men, or the exalted positions to which by his grace he raises them. What tender thoughts gather about a bride's preparation for her marriage. Father and mother, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors, wait upon her, and her slightest wish is considered and if possible gratified. She is the princess of the home; she is the queen of the hour. Some of us have seen among the fjords of Norway marriage processions of the humble and yet noble peasants of that rugged country and brave people. On the brow of the peasant girl on this wonderful day rests a crown, while neighboring maidens with evident satisfaction, and perhaps with occasional envy, watch the

marriage procession. This custom incarnates a universal thought and expresses an appropriate honor. In every country, if the bride have wealth she takes from her jewel case rare ornaments for her adornment. Beloved, the church is Christ's redeemed, beatified, and beautified bride. He came from heaven to woo and to win her; he sought and found her; he redeemed, exalted, and glorified her; he loves her with an everlasting love. She marches triumphantly through the wilderness, leaning joyfully and trustfully on the arm of her Beloved. She is going up to take her place by his side and his throne. His throne is large enough to welcome to his side all his redeemed; they are to share in his glory and to rejoice in his victory. Will you accept the honors which he offers to those who become kings and priests unto him and joint-heirs with him to his cross and throne?

O glorious bride of Christ, redeemed by his grace, adorned by his robe, glorified by his presence, march through this world singing already the first notes of that song which shall fill heaven's arches with its melodious music when the bride shall be seated with the heavenly Bridegroom on his glorious throne.

THE INTREPID STATESMAN

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and, his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.—Dan. 6 : 10.

XV

IT is quite certain that the prophet Daniel was one of the noblest men whose history is recorded in any literature. He maintained his integrity as a boy, refusing the king's meat lest he might be defiled thereby. He maintained his integrity as a man, when he was placed over the princes and presidents of the realm ; and he still maintained it when he was in danger of losing his life because of his loyalty to God. His life is one which all our young men ought to study ; one with which they ought to be perfectly familiar ; and his example is one which they ought constantly to imitate. I do not suppose that Daniel ever returned to his own land ; but he lived to see many of his highest hopes fulfilled in the return of his people from the land of their captivity. Large numbers of them under Cyrus returned ; some came under Darius, and some under Xerxes and his successors. Daniel was an old man when the first exiles came back. Perhaps, in his own estimation, he was too old to return to the land of his fathers and to begin his life afresh ; and perhaps, also, he considered his position in the land of his exile too important to be abandoned at his age and in the midst of his great official duties. He might well suppose that he was better able to serve God

and to serve the people of God by remaining in that distant land, than by returning to his early home. Daniel was descended from one of the highest families of Judah, if not one of royal blood. The more noble a man's birth, the more solemn his position. "*Noblesse oblige*," says the French proverb; the higher a man's birth the more binding are his obligations to live a right life. A doctrine of devils has been promulgated to the effect that great ability, lofty position, and noble birth absolve men from the duty of developing and maintaining a worthy character. Never was there a more Satanic doctrine. A man's responsibility is the greater because of his greater ability and loftier position or attainment.

Daniel's birthplace was probably Jerusalem. We know that he with other noble Hebrew youths was carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon, probably between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. We know, also, that he rose by degrees from the position of a captive boy to be the highest ruler in the realm. There is a most striking and beautiful similarity between the life of Daniel and that of Joseph. I know of no two characters of sacred history between whose lives a parallel can more appropriately be instituted. As Joseph rose to great prominence in the court of Pharaoh, so rose to corresponding prominence in the court of Belshazzar this noble Daniel. Both of these young men, without their consent, were exiled from their native land; and both became

great statesmen by personal worth in the land of their exile. Both preserved their religious faith and their personal purity in lands of idolatry and of gross corruption; and both rose from slavery to the highest civic honors. Both were loyal to their God, and both were abundantly blessed of God and honored of men. At this time, however, I do not design to continue this parallel, nor to speak of the life of Daniel as a whole, but rather to confine your attention to the special incident in that life suggested by the text chosen for the morning.

1. *In the first place let me call your attention to Daniel's danger.* He was in danger of losing his life. The princes conspired against him, and they perverted the mind of the king. They were insanely jealous of Daniel. Especially were they embittered against him because he was a Hebrew captive. They were envious of him because of the character which he had maintained, and the influence which he exercised. They felt themselves outstripped by his ability and overshadowed by his success. Jealousy is born of perdition, and it constantly leads to the place of its birth. Success almost inevitably excites jealousy. There is no man in business whose success is marked, who does not excite hostility on the part of other men in the same line of business. There is no man of mark in the gospel ministry who does not excite the jealousy of little-souled men who are capable of no noble impulses but only of narrow prejudices. Shakespeare utters a universal truth when he says :

Be thou chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
Thou shalt not escape calumny.

And Pope, in his "Essay on Criticism," has said with equal truth :

Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue ;
But like a shadow, proves the substance true.

The men associated with Daniel were actuated by this bitter and Satanic spirit. I do not know of any more beautiful compliment than these wicked men were obliged to pay to Daniel ; for they frankly acknowledged that as regarded the matters of the kingdom they could find no fault with him, and that the only criticism they could make was because of his loyalty to his God. Daniel had not been guilty of malversation in office ; he had not sought personal aggrandizement ; he had not been guilty of the abuse of power, as is so common in Oriental countries. There was on his part no lack of devotion to the interests of the king or the kingdom. Happy are men in high office when their political foes are obliged to pay them such a compliment as these political foes of Daniel paid him ! Happy are we, as members of the church of God, when men can say of us that their only point of criticism is because of our devotion to God ! Noble, happy Daniel ! Faultless even in the judgment of his foes except as regarded his religion ; guilty in the esteem of his critics only because of his devout heart and pure life ! I would to God that our critics might find

us like Daniel ; then should we be armed in a coat of triple steel against which the arrows of criticism might strike, but from which they would fall pointless and powerless at our feet.

He was in danger, also, of losing his integrity. If to save his life he had been disloyal to his religious convictions he would have lost his integrity, and might in the end have lost his life as well. Archbishop Cranmer, the first Protestant archbishop of Canterbury, who perhaps was the chief author of the "Thirty-nine Articles," and was at the head of a commission which prepared the Liturgy of the Anglican Church, turned traitor to Protestantism and to his own deep convictions, and in order to save his life denied his faith. He was induced to sign no fewer than six recantations and to subscribe to the doctrines of the papal supremacy and of the real presence. He also recanted his recantations. But the bitterness of Romanism was so terrible against him, that on March 21, 1556, he suffered martyrdom opposite Baliol College. When he came to the stake he looked at his right hand, which had signed his recantation, and said, "O guilty hand ; perish first," and he thrust that hand into the flames and held it there until it was burned to a cinder. To save his life he abandoned his faith, and he lost both his faith and his life. Macaulay considers him an unscrupulous time-server.

Daniel was in danger of losing his faith and his life. It is easy to see what arguments he might

have used to save his life: "Is it not better for me just to shave my religious convictions a little, to pare them down here and there? Is it not better for me to omit prayer rather than to incur the danger of death? May I not pray in secret? Need I kneel to pray? Is not my position most important at this crisis for God's honor, and for the good of my countrymen, and perhaps for the salvation of the heathen king?" So he might have reasoned; so some of us do reason; so some of us by a tone, by a shrug, by a look deny Jesus and deny our faith. Thank God, Daniel was not such a man. Mr. Spurgeon tells us of a curious blunder which a printer made in printing a portion of the story of Daniel. Instead of saying, "Daniel had an excellent spirit," the printer made the types say, "Daniel had an excellent spine." This was not much of a mistake. Thank God for Daniel's spine! That printer was quite right. Would to God we had men with excellent spines, men who could stand for truth and God! We need men who can stand even though the lions growl; men who are firm even though they see the gleam of the knife or hear the noise of the rack; men who would gladly die rather than lose their integrity!

! He was in danger of losing his soul. When a man deliberately puts his selfish interests before his duty, he risks all that is sacred in life, and all that is blessed in eternity. He violates the very first commandment of the law; he has made self

his god, putting his cowardly wish before the will of the Almighty Jehovah. We all are brought in some form into similar trials; we are all at times in danger of losing our life, our integrity, and our soul. We cannot escape such trials; perhaps we ought not to desire to escape them. We need not seek crosses; but we must not shun them. We ought to walk trustfully along the path of duty, not asking for crosses to come upon us, not asking that crosses be taken from us, but simply doing every duty in the fear of God, and bearing every cross which comes with brave and true hearts.

2. *Notice, in the second place, Daniel's decision.*

It was marked by certain most interesting characteristics. In the first place, it was a prompt decision; his duty was not a matter of discussion. There was no opportunity for differences of opinion as to what he ought to do; neither was there any ostentation in his conduct. I would not endorse Daniel if he had taken special pains to go up to the housetop to attract attention, to challenge criticism, and to draw the fire of his foes. Nothing of that sort, however, did he do. He simply "prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime." He changed his methods in no particular; he moved quietly along the line of his usual and exalted duty. He did not take counsel with flesh and blood. It was a matter not open for discussion. In this respect his conduct is worthy of praise. The moment a man parleys with the devil, that moment he has partially yielded

to the devil. The moment a man hesitates about doing right, when the difference between right and wrong is clearly put before him, that moment he has done wrong. We ought to be so courageous that we would not hesitate a moment when the distinction between right and wrong is put before us. We ought to go straight up to the line of duty, the line of obedience, the line of right before God and before men. Promptness always disarms the tempter. A young boy left home for college, and among his experiences were solicitations to drink intoxicating liquors. "Come and have something," said his companions. His reply was, "Gentlemen, I never drink. We are to be associated for four years; I hope you will find me a good fellow, but I will never drink." If he had hesitated, if he had shilly-shallied, if he had said a weak "no," there being a "yes" wrapped up in it, there would have come repetitions of their invitation, and perhaps yielding on his part. But there was no "yes" in the "no"; it was a courteous "no"; it was a "no" expressive of appreciation of their intended but mistaken courtesy, but it was a "NO" which rang out like the crack of a rifle on a frosty morning. No gentleman will urge a young man the second time if he says "no" in that fashion. He who continues to solicit, after such a refusal, is not a gentleman. I would that that same spirit might characterize all our acts. I would that all young men, and older men, who hear me to-day might be able to say

“NO” to every temptation of the devil. I would that all my boys in the flesh, as well as my boys in the faith, these noble boys who are so loved in the church, going out into business, into college, and everywhere, might be able to say “NO” to every temptation. O boys, keep yourselves clean, sweet, and pure. Be Josephs! Be Daniels! Stand up, stand up, for truth, for purity, for manliness, for God; and God will shut the mouths of the lions, and cool the flames of the furnace for you.

We notice, also, that it was a very courageous decision. Daniel well knew what that decision meant; he well knew the bitterness of his foes. Perhaps he did not suppose that they could secure the signing of this foolish law, but they did secure it. I wonder that Darius signed it; but perhaps he was somewhat indifferent, as many monarchs often are, and signed it thoughtlessly. Or perhaps he signed it because it was very flattering to him to be called a god. Darius to be a god for thirty days! But when I remember that Alexander wished to be adored as a god, and that Xerxes did things as foolish as are here attributed to Darius, I am not surprised that Darius was not stronger than Xerxes or Alexander. The great king signed the law. It may have seemed to him that this was a convenient method of testing the loyalty of the people. It may also have been suggested that there was danger of an outbreak and that this law would effectually prevent it. Daniel

knew that the law was signed, and he acted intelligently, calmly, and courageously. Brave Daniel! Noble Daniel!

There was no excitement in his manner. He was calm in spirit as he walked to his place of prayer. The windows were open toward Jerusalem, in the usual manner. In the warm climate of Babylon they were naturally open. Daniel offered up his prayers with his face toward Jerusalem, as became an exiled Hebrew. Courage is contagious. A young man who dares to do right becomes a leader. The conscience of every other young man is on his side. Their words may be weak and cowardly, but their consciences are on the side of the man who does right. Frederick Robertson said, when perplexed by doubt, when walking at times in darkness, "One thing I know; it must be right to do right." Did you ever think of the origin of our word "wrong"? Wrong is something that is wrung; it is properly the participle of wring, although it occurs as a noun as early as 1124; it is what is twisted, what is wrung or wrested from the right or ordered line of conduct; it is wrong because it is wrung. Right is *rectus*, straight, the participle of the Latin verb *regere*, to order, to command; and so "right" is what is ordered, commanded, laid down in the laws of eternal justice, the laws of the eternal God. Right wert thou, O Scottish poet, immortal Sir Walter, right wert thou, when thou didst say:

Oh ! what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive.

In the meshes of that web a man will be entangled until he loses all that is dear to a true man, and all that is precious in the sight of high heaven. Oh, let us not practise to deceive, and thus make such a web !

3. *In the last place, emphasize Daniel's deliverance.* Possibly a certain sort of faith in God made even the heathen king believe that God would deliver Daniel. The king suffered greatly when he found it necessary to punish Daniel. He had plainly violated the law, and in this respect his guilt was undeniable ; but the king doubtless was much displeased with himself for having framed such a decree. He saw that this law was unworthy of him as the king of a great people ; he saw also that it had involved in technical guilt a man of unsullied character and the first officer in the realm. But he knew of no way by which he could evade the penalty which the law decreed, notwithstanding his heart was set on delivering Daniel.

The enemies of Daniel most skillfully urged his punishment, reminding the king that he was one of the captive Jews and suggesting that he had shown an open contempt of the royal authority, and the king found no way by which he could abrogate the law. The law of the Medes and Persians was unchangeable. The sun went down while he was earnestly laboring to devise

some means by which the integrity of the law could be preserved and yet the punishment decreed be remitted. But the law was clear and its violation was undeniable, and there seemed no way of escape but that it should take its course. The king finally was obliged to command that Daniel be cast into the den of lions. Recent discoveries among the ruins of Babylon prove that this mode of punishment was not uncommon in that city and country. The king still cherished the hope that the God of Daniel would in some way interpose for his deliverance. He had absolute confidence in the integrity of Daniel and a vague hope that the God of heaven would display his power for the protection of his loyal servant. But the stone is brought and laid upon the mouth of the den and the king sealed it with his own signet. He then went to his own palace, not to eat, drink, and be merry, but to spend the night in fasting. No instruments of music cheered his disconsolate heart. He passed the night supperless and sleepless. With the dawn of the morning he arose, his deep anxiety making him haste unto the den of lions. With a voice of deep solicitude he called for Daniel, the servant of the living God. To his delight his call is answered by Daniel's prompt and loyal reply. Daniel assures him that God had sent his angel and had shut the mouths of the lions. Daniel believed that this result was accomplished by a miracle. The occasion was fitting for a divine interposition. Daniel asserts his innocence

and rejoicingly affirms that he had received no hurt. With joy the king commanded that Daniel be taken out of the den, and with equal joy that the men who had accused him be cast therein, together with their wives and children. The Bible does not commend the act of the heathen king ; it simply records the fact, a fact which was in harmony with the common custom of the time and the country. The lions had mastery of Daniel's foes even before they reached the bottom of the den. Immediately the king sent forth his decree giving honor to Daniel, to the God of Daniel, and to the divine power and justice which had interposed for the delivery of God's servant.

God, a little earlier in this history, when his three faithful servants, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego had been cast into the fiercely heated furnace, sent One who was "like the Son of God," to cool the flames and to protect his children. Then Nebuchadnezzar recognized the God of these faithful men and made a decree that the people of every nation and language who should speak against the true God should be destroyed. God's resources for the protection of his children are numerous. He can prevent the flames from touching their persons, and he can padlock the mouths of lions for their protection. Lions still stand in the pathway of duty for the children of God. But those who move forward in that pathway shall find that the lions are chained and their jaws locked, so that they can inflict no evil. No dan-

ger can come to any of us while we are in the path of duty.

What are the names of the men who cast God's children into the fiery furnace? You do not know. No one knows. They were never recorded. The memory of the wicked perisheth, but the righteous are in everlasting remembrance. Daniel's name shines in the firmament of biblical history as a star of brightest light and greatest magnitude; but the names of his foes are unrecorded. Let us stand for duty, for truth, for God. All his enemies and ours shall perish. But as we read in the same book, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

THE ROYAL PENITENT

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.—Ps. 51: 12, 13.

XVI

THIS psalm is known as one of the penitential psalms. It expresses an unfeigned penitence and a humble confession. It also voices an earnest prayer for restoration to the favor of God. It contains solemn vows of consecration for future conduct. It is the first of a series of psalms ascribed to David in what is called the second book of the Psalter, and written when his conscience was aroused by the prophet Nathan. Before that time, we may well be assured, that remorse had robbed him of joy, but now with the confession of his sin came the experience of forgiveness. Perowne reminds us that nowhere else in the Old Testament do we find so true a confession, so humble a trust, and so unfeigned a penitence as here. He also affirms that this psalm and the thirty-second justify the title given to David as "the man after God's own heart." Although his sin had been great, it was not the sin of an utterly hardened and selfish man. It was rather the sin of one overtaken with evil and anxious now for the removal of guilt. If David was a great sinner he was also a great penitent. Carlyle rebukes those who magnify David's guilt and minimize his penitence. This psalm seems to have been written before the thirty-second. This

psalm is David's great confession ; that psalm is the record of the forgiveness which he obtained. It has been well said that in this psalm he is the prodigal saying, "Father, I have sinned," and in the thirty-second psalm he is a son restored to his Father's heart looking up into his Father's loving face and saying, "Thou art my hiding-place."

1. *We have, in the first place, in the text, David's prayer.* This prayer implies that the royal petitioner had lost the joy of salvation. The literal translation of his words is, "Cause the joy of thy salvation to return." The first verb is a causative in Hebrew, and it clearly implies that he previously had possession of that for whose return he now prays. His communion with God had been interrupted by the sins which he had committed, and the joy of salvation was impossible when spiritual communion was interrupted. Unfortunately the absence of joy as the result of sin is not an unknown experience in the Christian life. It may be caused by open and continuous sin against God as our Father and Saviour. Believers will then lose the joy of their first love ; they will lose the peace which comes from loving obedience to Christ ; their soul will then be sunless, joyless, and at times hopeless. The joy of salvation may be lost by a spirit of worldliness often when there is no marked act of disobedience against God. The world is not the friend of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ overcame the world and we in him may win a like victory. He clearly taught us that there is and ever

must be opposition between the spirit of worldliness and the spirit of godliness. The world creeps in upon us as a slow but deadly paralysis. It administers to us a soothing but dangerous opiate; it wraps us in an anæsthetic slumber which will prove to be our spiritual death if we are not speedily aroused. There is in Brazil a plant known as the "*matador*" or murderer, which creeps along the ground and finally climbs a tree which it will hold fast in its embrace until the tree actually dies. The armlike tendrils surround the tree as the "*matador*" rises higher and higher and its ligatures grow larger and clasp the tree more tightly. The parasite finally sends out a flowering head above the struggling and dying tree, and its seeds later drop into the ground, again to do their work of death for other trees. What this deadly plant is to the trees of the forest, worldliness often is to Christians growing in the vineyard of the Lord. We must guard against it with the utmost watchfulness. It may destroy us as it did Demas, as it did Judas, and as it has destroyed thousands since the early days of the church. There can be no real joy in the Lord while this spirit of worldliness is in the hearts of believers.

The absence of joy will also be caused by the neglect of duty. Duty well done is productive of increasing joy in Christian service. God demands nothing of his children which their best interests here and hereafter do not incline them to give in

response to God's demand. Neglect of duty must assuredly bring darkness, sorrow, and death into the soul. There may come with temporal blessings leanness in the spiritual life; there may come darkness in the spiritual life while the light of earthly prosperity shines upon our pathway. Happy are they who guard against the danger of neglect; happy are they whose consciences are pricked with the remembrance of broken vows and neglected duties in the Christian life. God has made pain the messenger of danger which might threaten the body. Pain gives its warning and declares the need of an appropriate remedy. In the spiritual life we shall also feel the prick of neglected duty if our consciences are sensitive and our hearts are warm. One element of hope in a joyless Christian life is the realization of its joylessness, and the earnest prayer that the absent joy may be restored. Nothing is sadder than that men dying of hunger sometimes have visions of tables spread bountifully with all that taste can desire; nothing sadder than that men who are perishing with cold become benumbed with slumber, are conscious of neither discomfort nor danger, and wish only to lie down and sleep what will become the sleep of death. May God help us to remember that our first love may be restored and our early joy may be increased!

This thought leads us to another element in David's prayer, the expression of desire to have the joy of salvation restored. It is most impor-

tant for our happiness and usefulness in the Christian life that we should have joy in that life. We are not slaves, but freemen ; we are not servants, but friends. There is, of course, a sense in which we are the slaves of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul loved to describe himself as the "slave of Jesus Christ," but such slavery is the most blessed kind of freedom ; such slavery is the noblest element in the grandest manhood. Never is one in a sadder case than when he is conscious of the absence of Christian joy, and conscious also that he does not desire its return. If ever a man should pray it is when he has no desire to pray ; if ever a man is in danger it is when he thinks he is rich and increasing in goods and has no need of Christ and of the joy of salvation. There can be no strength in Christian service if joy is wanting. There is a divine philosophy in the statement of Scripture, "the joy of the Lord is your strength." Joy in the Christian life is not simply a privilege ; it is a duty. The Apostle Paul commands us to rejoice and to rejoice always. There is power for God in the consciousness of fullness of life and joyousness in his service.

The psalmist's prayer expresses also a desire that he might maintain a worthy character—"and uphold me with thy free spirit." The best interpretation of this clause refers the word spirit here to David's spirit and not to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not excluded, but the primary reference is to the spirit of the petitioner himself ;

the reference is to David's spirit as acted on by the Spirit of God. The words "that thy" are added by the translators. The word rendered "free" properly means willing, spontaneous, prompt, voluntary, and then noble and princely. David had acted an utterly unworthy, unsoldierly, unmanly, unprincely, and ungodly part. He did well to be ashamed of the course which he had pursued. Now he prays to be upheld in an altogether different spirit. He prays that God would give him a willing, noble, manly spirit; that God would enable him to preserve and to manifest the spirit of willing and ready obedience to all the commands of God. He prayed for grace that he might stand firm and strong in the service of his divine King. This is always a proper object of desire and prayer. The inconsistent man is always a weak man. How can he rebuke sin while he lives in sin? How can he recommend holiness while he lives in the neglect of holiness? What he builds up with one hand he destroys with the other hand. What he teaches with his lip he denies with his life. The man who lives consistently before God will live influentially before men. This was eminently an appropriate element in David's prayer; it is a quality fitting in the prayers of God's people today. Good men have fallen; the best man, if neglectful of God and unwatchful of Satan, may fall. We have great need to listen to the divine exhortation, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." We must daily, hourly,

watch and pray, lest we be led into temptation. Let us to-day make this part of David's prayer our own, praying that we may be upheld in a willing, prompt, generous, noble, and obedient spirit before God and men.

2. *We have, in the second place, David's promise.*

As an expression of gratitude to God, he promises that he will teach transgressors God's ways. It is interesting to see how the personal element is here introduced into this promise. He himself will engage in this blessed work. No one was now more fit for that work than he. He had wandered away from noble and manly conduct; he had sinned against a brave and loyal soldier; he had sinned against womanhood; he had sinned against himself; and he had sinned against God. But when the sense of forgiveness and the joy of salvation came into his soul, he was ready to use his painful experience to teach others the way of penitence and peace. Men must themselves be pardoned before they can tell others of him who will pardon their sins. The blind cannot safely lead the blind. Men need to be taught by their fellow-men; and all who are taught of God should be willing to become teachers of men. David was a king, he was at the head of great armies; still he was willing to be the teacher of great sinners. The best we have should be given to our fellow-men in service for Jesus who has redeemed us with his precious blood. David could now show to those about him the fearful consequences of

sin; he could also beautifully explain the nature of true repentance, and he could eloquently describe the full and free forgiveness which God promises to the truly penitent. After the Apostle Peter had fallen under the power of temptation, and then had turned back from the evil way, the Saviour said to him, "And when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." A similar duty rests upon each of us. When we have been protected from any evil and have been made the recipients of any good, we are to give others the benefit of our two-fold experience. There is nothing selfish in religion; the more we give away the more we have. The more we strive to keep for ourselves the less we have for ourselves or for others. There is a profound philosophy in all the commands of God to his children, and in all the experiences of men in their efforts to keep God's commandments.

David promises to teach transgressors. All men are in some sense transgressors of the law of God. The more men transgress the more they ought to be taught by those who are able to impart spiritual gifts. The possession of spiritual gifts is God's call to us for their bestowal. The need of spiritual gifts is man's call to us to give them needed help. Deep calls unto deep, the depth of sin in men to the depth of mercy in God.

David will also teach transgressors the very best of truths—he will teach them God's ways. What particular ways of God shall he most appropriately

teach to the transgressors of God's law? He may well begin by teaching the certainty of God's ways of punishment. God will not be mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. We cannot separate between sin and sorrow. Sorrow must follow sin as shadow its substance; as well might a man hurl himself from the top of a lofty cliff, and expect by some trick of legerdemain to escape being dashed to pieces on the rocks below, as to sin against God and not suffer the consequences of his sin. There is a law of moral as truly as of physical agriculture, inseparably connecting the harvest reaped with the grain sown. But, thank God, David could also teach transgressors God's ways of pardon; he could remind them that God "abundantly pardons," when the sinner forsakes his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. He had experienced the fullness of God's pardon. As Mr. Spurgeon has said in his comments on this verse: "Reclaimed poachers make the best gamekeepers. Huntingdon's degree of S. S., or Sinner Saved, is more needful for a soul-winning evangelist than either M. A., or D. D." He could also most sweetly teach God's ways of upholding and of blessing penitent sinners. This was a valuable experience for David. God can overrule even our wanderings from him so as to make them the channel of rich blessings to our fellow-men.

3. *We have, in the third place, David's persuasion*—"and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

Of this result David now had no doubt. He was persuaded that he would reach and influence sinners. There was now, in some sense, a bond of sympathy between him and transgressors; they would learn from his example the misery of sin and the manner in which divine mercy might be found. Having turned to God himself and having experienced divine forgiveness he is now able to warn and to win other souls from sin to God. He was fully persuaded that through his instrumentality transgressors would be moved to action. The word translated "shall be converted" is not a passive verb; it is an active form of the verb expressing the idea, shall turn or return. He believed that rebels, traitors, and apostates should now return to the Lord whom they had neglected, opposed, and despised. It is important to call attention to the fact that this is the active and not the passive verb. The work of turning has to be done by transgressors themselves; they are not to wait until God turns them; they are themselves to turn. Having walked away from God they are now to turn and walk toward God. This is the end to be sought in all conversions. Men have been wandering from God; they must now return to God. Our labors on behalf of transgressors are comparatively worthless unless this sublime result is secured. We may not cease in our endeavors on their behalf until they have actually abandoned their evil ways, returned unto God, and received his abundant pardon.

This end David felt sure would be accomplished in the efforts he promised to make ; he believed that the return of transgressors would be complete ; that they should indeed return unto God. If they stopped short of coming thus unto God, their return or conversion would be but partial and so practically worthless. It is well that men be moved toward reformation ; but we must not be satisfied with partial or even apparently complete reformation. Regeneration and not mere reformation is to be sought by us on their behalf and by themselves on their own behalf. This is the sublime and glorious end at which we and they are constantly to aim.

These are, indeed, remarkable words which we have been studying. Too many of us, it is to be feared, like David may have lost the joy of salvation. Many start out with enthusiasm and vigor in the Christian life and run well for a season ; they then drop out of the Christian race and seldom frequent the ways of Zion. Their conduct is one of the greatest sorrows in pastoral life. Were a pastor to look only on that side of his work his heart would break with its continuous aching. He would feel disposed to surrender his commission, and never to counsel his younger brethren to enter the Christian ministry. But we ought not to look only on that side of Christian life and work. Others begin well, continue loyal, and end the Christian course in triumph. Doubtless, however, there are those present this morning who are

walking in gloom. They remember with a well-defined longing the joy of their first love. They dwell occasionally with sadness upon the joy which they experienced in the day of their espousal to Christ, and occasionally they pray as does the psalmist, that the joy of salvation might be restored. This is an appropriate prayer. Is there one present from whom the light of God's countenance is withdrawn? There really is no mystery in this experience; there is here a relation between cause and effect which is as invariable as in other relations in life. The cause of our spiritual darkness may readily be discovered, and it may be wholly removed. Be frank with yourself; be honest with God; face the matter in a genuine and manly way. With a deep sense both of privilege and duty remove the cause; no Christian can have joy who lives away from God. As well might a man expect light and heat from the sun while he insisted upon living in a dark cave. How unreasonable he would be to complain of the dampness, darkness, and death which he would experience, while he resolutely refused to come out of the cave into God's sunshine. O man, the light of God's reconciled countenance may be lifted upon thee; let that light fall now upon thine own upturned face. Come out of the dark cave of self and sin; let the sunshine of God give thee a baptism of blessing in light and warmth to-day. Never did father wait for the return of his prodigal son with the gentleness and loving-kindness with which God will re-

ceive thee, if thou wilt but go to his fatherly arms and heart to-day. Have you come back in this spirit? Then your joy is full; then your duty is clear; go out to bless others. Freely ye have received, freely give. God bestows upon us that we may bestow upon others. Having labored to teach transgressors God's ways, let us with unquestioning faith expect immediate and blessed results. Sinners shall be converted unto God; and angels shall rejoice over these returning penitents. As sure as God is God, we shall reap if we faint not. Then to-day let us make this prayer offered so long ago our own, this promise our own, this persuasion our own, and we and other penitent transgressors shall have unspeakable good, and the great and gentle and forgiving God shall have unending glory.

THE PRACTICAL THINKER

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.—Ps. 119 : 59.

XVII

THE psalm from which this text is taken is known as one of the alphabetical psalms; it is also familiar to us as the longest psalm in the Psalter. The characteristic of alphabetical psalms is that the first eight verses begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the next eight with the second letter, and this method is pursued throughout the twenty-two letters of that alphabet. It is well understood by expositors that the fifty-seventh verse of this psalm begins a new division, the division indicated by the letter "cheth." It is quite evident that the portion of this psalm beginning with this verse and going to the end of the sixtieth verse, is an account of the work of divine grace on a human heart. We have here a statement of the divine operation in religious experience, from the first dawn of its heavenly light to its full-orbed splendor. Had the order of religious experience been followed rather than the alphabetical order, the fifty-ninth verse—the text on this occasion—would have come before the fifty-seventh verse. In the text we have the sinner reflecting on his ways; in the fifty-seventh verse we have him declaring that God is his portion and that he would keep the words of God. The text seems clearly to refer to the great change which we usually call

conversion ; and perhaps it is a description of the author's own religious experience. The first step in a true religious life he took when he began to reflect on the course he was pursuing and the character he was forming. Then he paused, as did the prodigal son, who reflected on his former life and his present condition. Such reflection almost invariably precedes the return to duty and to God. There is hope for a man when he comes earnestly to look at the tendency of his life, and at the consequences which must inevitably follow disobedience to God. As a result of the reflection suggested in the fifty-ninth verse, we have the actual obedience described in the sixtieth verse, and the confession in the fifty-seventh verse. Let us notice the truths taught in the text in the order of their presentation.

1. *We have the fact of earnest thought—"I thought" on my ways.* The power of thought is man's royal prerogative ; it allies him to angels and to God. It is one of the evidences that he was created in the image of God and for companionship with God. God recognizes the glory and divinity of this superb endowment ; and he appeals to this angelic possession. We therefore have God speaking to us through Isaiah, saying, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord ; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." God does not hesitate to submit his claims to the consideration of thought-

ful men and women. In another passage in Isaiah we are reminded of the distinction between God's thoughts and ours: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." It is the glory of man that he should think God's thoughts. When science is studied with a truly reverent spirit, whether it be astronomy, geology, botany, or any other natural science, the student is really thinking God's thoughts. He is to some degree living over again God's life. All great advancements in invention are but the incarnations of thought. The whole world was once a thought in the mind of God; the world to-day is that thought materialized. The Corliss engine was once a thought in the mind of its inventor. Telegraphs, telephones, and phonographs were once thoughts, dreams, ideas; they are now these thoughts, dreams, and ideas translated into visible, legible, audible, and practical forms. Much has already been accomplished in the way of intellectual development, when men are induced to think. Great thoughts sometimes come plowing their way through the soul, bringing aliment to the brain; such thoughts mark a blessed epoch in human experience. For such experiences as these, men ought to be profoundly grateful; such thoughts lift us to a higher plane of life and enable us more fully to appreciate our kinship with God.

But thought is too seldom exercised in regard to divine things. One of the charges which God brought against his people in ancient times was their want of thought concerning his claims and their own duties. He was obliged to say, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." His people would not understand his purposes regarding them and their privileges toward him. They often exhibited the dullness and insensibility of animals rather than the responsive affection of children. The same thought was more than once in the mind of the great Teacher. He echoed in his Sermon on the Mount the charge made in Isaiah hundreds of years before. There is no lack of opportunities of thought if men will but keep their eyes, ears, and hearts open. The whole world is voiceful of God's thoughts to him who is attentive to the heavenly speech. Christ made the lilies of the field preachers to unduly anxious hearts. "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow," said the teacher who spake as never man spake. He found a text in every incident of life, however familiar. To him the whole earth was a vast cathedral, resonant with the voice and radiant with the glory of God. The stars, the flowers, the seasons, providences, and varied experiences, all declare God's presence and reveal his purpose, if we are but obedient to their instruction. But men dislike to think on religious things. They do not dare to go with a

lighted candle into the chambers of their own heart. Self-examination leads to self-condemnation. Men are cowardly in relation to their own inner life. They are unwilling to sit alone with their own hearts, communing with themselves and with God. Their unwillingness in this respect is an evidence of their guiltiness. It is humiliating to be obliged to make this acknowledgment; but its truth no intelligent man can doubt.

When thought is properly exercised on religious things there is hope of a man's future. It is better that men should violently oppose the gospel than that they should listen indifferently when it is proclaimed. Vigorous resistance in such cases is more encouraging than apathetic hearing. Napoleon encountered a mud fort in Egypt, and he was powerless in its presence. Had it been made of wood, he could have fired it; had it been made of stone, he could have shivered it. But it was made of mud, and the greater the number of missiles which he fired into it the more did he increase its powers of resistance. Stolid apathy on the part of unconverted men gives less hope to Christian workers than vigorous antipathy. The opiates of indifference are more deadly than the stimulants of skepticism. When the psalmist truly thought on his ways he made haste and delayed not to keep God's commandments. When the prodigal son "came to himself" he soon said, "I will arise and go to my father." Previous to that time he had not been truly himself. He was

like a man in a dream ; he was like a man who had been stunned, like a man who was paralyzed, like a man who was hypnotized. There was hope for him the moment he fully realized his wretched condition. The moment that one comes to his true self he comes to God ; and when he comes to God he also finds a still higher self of which previously he had been ignorant. When the fascinating spell of sin is broken, we may expect to see the liberated soul turn to God.

2. *We notice the subject of thought on the part of the psalmist—"on my ways."* This certainly was a very personal subject of thought. It is easy enough to think upon the ways of other men, but extremely difficult to think on our own ways when they are evil ways. Love of evil blinds us to the nature of evil ; love of evil warps our judgment and thus vitiates its decisions. There is no difficulty in finding many men who are greatly concerned regarding the doubtful ways of other people. They earnestly inquire, "what shall others do?" They are able to give instruction to others, but are unwilling to apply the same instruction to their own sinful courses. It is humiliating that we are so often ready to see the mote in our brother's eye when we are utterly ignorant of the beam in our own eye. We can readily set up a standard of conduct for other church-members to which we are utterly unwilling to conform our own lives. The Apostle Peter was greatly concerned regarding the future of the Apostle John.

We need not charge Peter with mere curiosity when in regard to John he asked the question, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Christ had just predicted the sort of death which Peter should undergo; and now Peter becomes extremely curious as to the manner in which John should die. We may well believe that his question arose from motives of true friendship, rather than was prompted by mere curiosity or by unfraternal jealousy. Nevertheless the answer of Christ was, "What is that to thee; follow thou me." The rebuke implied in our Lord's answer we ought all to feel when we neglect our own duty because of inquiries regarding the duties of other men. It is so easy to condemn in our brother what we condone in ourselves.

It is to be observed also that our ways is a very broad subject of thought. It touches our life at many points; our "ways" in this sense would include our entire life. What subjects of thought we have in our ways of neglect of divine duties! We must with shame often reflect on our ways of open, willful, and continuous transgression. We have sinned against light and opportunity. We have disobeyed God when his will was clearly revealed and our duty was strongly emphasized. We have broken our own most solemn promises to God and our frequent pledges to ourselves. We have earnestly determined to abandon certain courses of conduct, and yet we have found ourselves returning to them, notwithstanding our

promises and our prayers. The language of the Apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" has often been the most appropriate vehicle of our emotions. Reflection on our "ways" in all these respects may well bring the blush of shame to our cheeks. It would be easy to speak with severity of others were it not that conscience rebukes *us* for similar forms of disobedience. We ought also to think of our "ways" in their relation to God's mercy. How long-suffering God has been toward us! How patient in the midst of our neglect of him and our open violation of his commands! The memory of his goodness ought to lead us to deep repentance. Let us return again unto God from our numerous wanderings.

Reflection on our ways is also a very humiliating subject of thought. The psalmist turned his ways upside down when they became the subject of earnest reflection, because previous to that time they had been wrong side up. The word implies that he deeply pondered them, that he viewed his conduct on all its sides; and that he dwelt upon the course he had pursued with fixed, abiding, and penetrating thought. Some suppose that there is a reference here to the work of embroidering, where the figure must appear the same on both sides. The work must be very exact, every flaw must be covered or removed, and in order that the work may be carefully done, the cloth must be turned on each side as often as the

needle is used. With equal closeness and carefulness did the psalmist examine his conduct. He footed up his accounts as the arithmetician foots up columns of figures. Most instructive is the language here employed as to the carefulness of thought which is here suggested. Would to God that we could exercise equal diligence regarding the tendency of our acts and the trend of our thoughts in their relations to God!

3. *Let us notice the result of the psalmist's thought—"and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."* After the discovery which he made he found himself the proper subject of God's displeasure. He then abandoned his evil ways, took God's word for his guide, and started out in the way of salvation. This was a personal turning—the psalmist turned; it was not God who turned. God did not need to turn or in any way to change his course. The psalmist employed his own will and exercised his personal freedom in the choice he made, and in the new course he pursued. He did not wait for God to turn him, but he himself paused, reflected, and turned from evil and so returned unto God. A similar course of thinking and acting is required to-day, when a sinner reflects on his ways and returns unto his God. He must actually turn from sin; there must be a genuine and personal returning unto God. There must be obedience to the divine command uttered by Isaiah, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord,

and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." To get out of self is to get into God. To act without due thought is foolishness ; but to think without right action is sinfulness. This turning is indeed by God's loving help, for without him we can do nothing. But let it never be forgotten that it is man who turns, man who repents, man who changes, and man who returns unto God whom he had long neglected.

It is observable, also, that this is a practical turning. We are told that the psalmist turned his feet unto God's testimonies. He was not satisfied with turning his hands ; the hand can be turned when the body is not moved. He was not satisfied with turning the eye ; the eye may be turned when even the head is but little moved. He turned his heart toward God and then his feet moved in obedience to the will of God. The desire of his soul was toward God's testimonies, and then his outward action corresponded with his inward decision. To turn the feet is to return the whole body. Strictly speaking, there is a difference between conversion and regeneration. Regeneration is the inward experience ; conversion is the outward expression. Regeneration is the act of God's Spirit working through the truth on the heart ; conversion is the obedience of that heart to the will of God as made known by the word and Spirit of God. We are, while enemies to God, walking with our backs toward him and our

faces toward evil; when we listen aright to the divine voice we "right about face," turning our backs to sin and our faces toward truth, purity, God, and heaven. Conversion is a most practical act in our entire being. When it really takes place it cannot be misunderstood by any intelligent observer. May God help all to-day who have not yet turned toward God, to "right about face" at this moment, to reverse the course of their lives, and to walk in the narrow path which leads to everlasting life!

This was also a prompt as well as a personal and a practical turning; for the psalmist made haste and delayed not to turn his feet unto God's testimonies. All true reformation implies regeneration. Regeneration reveals itself in conversion. Doubtless the psalmist had often hesitated, previous to the conversion described in the text and context; but now there was no delay. He offered no excuse. Procrastination is not only the thief of time, but the murderer of souls. He did not defer duty till "a more convenient season." Neither ought we. I never will urge unconverted men and women to go home, to read the Bible, and to pray; they may not live to reach their homes. *Now* is the day of salvation; *now* is the accepted time. Instant and unconditional surrender to God is the duty and privilege of every unconverted man and woman. I dare not compromise with you at this point. If all convicted sinners immediately turned to God with their whole

hearts, they would be immediately converted. The trouble with men is that they delay, that they will not break away from their sins, that they excuse themselves for their evil courses and thus refuse to seek God. Like Felix, they are asking for a more "convenient season." Conversion ought to begin in serious consideration, and such consideration we may hope will end in true conversion. Most suggestive are the words of the sixtieth verse. The original which is translated "delayed not" is more emphatic than can well be expressed in English speech. The psalmist really says, I did not stand "what, what, whatting." The thought is often expressed by us when we say that we were not guilty of "shilly shallying." Would to God that all who hear me this day would so act that the language, descriptive of the psalmist's course, could be truthfully applied to their conduct! Behold the Father whom you have so long despised and disobeyed! He stands waiting, O prodigal, to welcome thee home. He has come out to meet thee. He is ready to fall upon thy neck with the kiss of love and the words of forgiveness. I beseech you all to come home to-day. Think on your ways; turn your feet unto God's testimonies; make haste and delay not to keep his commandments; and as God lives, his peace shall come into your heart, his joy into your life, and the assurance of acceptance with him now and of dwelling forever with him hereafter, will be your sweet experience.

THE EMPTY TOMB

Come, see the place where the Lord lay.—Matt. 28 : 6.

XVIII

ONCE more we greet with garland, song, and prayer, our risen, victorious, and ever-blessed Redeemer. We prostrate ourselves at his feet, while his "All hail" salutes our ear. Every Sunday is the Lord's Day, and commemorates his resurrection; but it is fitting that once a year we should earnestly and tenderly emphasize this glorious fact.

The significance of Easter it is difficult to over-estimate. It is the Christian Passover, and the greatest of all the holy days of the Christian church.

It was long believed that Christ would on Easter morning come again in power and in great glory. In the Russian Church, after impressive ceremonies during the night, the day begins with the jubilant salutation, "The Lord is risen"; and the joyous response is made, "He is risen indeed." To-day angels might well sing anew their songs of praise to their Lord and our Redeemer; to-day the First Begotten from the dead comes forth from the conflict crowned with victory; to-day hell and the grave are defeated; to-day the kingdom of darkness is spoiled; to-day the Son of Man is declared with power to be the Son of God; to-day the church wears the robes and crown of royalty and glory.

All hail the day when our divine King marches forth bearing in his girdle the keys of death and hell, and wearing on his brow the crown of transcendent victory! This morning I shall ask you to visit the empty tomb of our Lord and Redeemer. We shall find there much of interest and instruction, and much to suggest thoughts of gratitude and love, thoughts of certain triumph and of blessed victory.

It will be profitable for us to meditate for a little on the invitation given in this passage. It is interesting to observe at the outset that it is the invitation of an angel. The angels were our Lord's devout worshipers before he left the bosom of the Father and the courts of heaven to become the Saviour of men. Angels followed him on his downward journey from the throne of God to the manger in Bethlehem. They made, in solo and in chorus, celestial music on the night when the Christ was born. Doubtless they were often with him during his earthly sojourn. We may well believe that they honored the scene of his baptism by their seraphic presence. We know that they ministered unto him amid the trials, the humiliations, and the agonies of Gethsemane; and now we find them keeping watch at his grave. One was at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the Lord had lain. An angel rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it; an angel whose countenance was like lightning, and whose raiment was white as snow. No won-

der that at that great sight the keepers did shake, and became as dead men ; but when the devout and loving women approached, the angels had for them messages of tender encouragement and of earnest hope. The angels knew well whom these women sought. They, therefore, invited them to come that they may see the place where the Lord lay. Later, angels commanded them to go and tell his disciples that he had risen from the dead. Angels felt honored in being the servants of their Lord and the servants of his people. He is their king as he is ours. Perhaps he is not their Saviour as he is ours ; but nevertheless they owned his authority and gave him the reverence which is his due. We might well imagine the conversation which was held by these angels as they spoke to each other while watching by his grave. They rejoiced in honoring the spot which was honored by their Lord and Master, while he lay in the power of death and the grave. We may well listen to this angelic invitation and go under this heavenly guidance to the place where our Lord lay.

It is also the tomb of the greatest visitant which earth or hades ever knew. Christ was the King of men as he is the Lord of heaven. His tomb is the shrine of the loftiest genius as truly as the altar of the tenderest love. Men visit with softened tread the tombs of earth's heroes, whether it be the tomb of a Napoleon, a Lincoln, or a Grant ; but never was there a tomb so conspicuously that of gentleness and greatness, of loftiness and lowliness,

of divinity and humanity, as is the tomb of Jesus Christ. Tell us not of Palestine's tombs of the kings, not of India's glorious Taj, not of Italy's Campo Santo, not of Russia's tombs of the Czars, not of France's Père la Chaise, not of Scotland's Necropolis nor of her Greyfriars' churchyard, not of England's Frogmore and Westminster Abbey, Joseph's tomb is the tomb of humanity and the tomb of divinity. It is the unique tomb of the world.

The world is now beginning to recognize Christ as its profoundest thinker, its wisest leader, and its divinest sufferer. He is ruling the thoughts of men to-day with a kingly sceptre and with an irresistible power. The world will never go beyond the Sermon on the Mount either for breadth of thought, clearness of vision, tenderness of statement, or divineness of spirit. Christ rules to-day as king on the throne because once he died as a sacrifice on the cross. This is the tomb of the world's greatest man. Compared with him all other great men shrink into insignificance, and the lustre of their genius is lost in darkness. Why will men worship heroes, and refuse to give the homage of their hearts to Jesus Christ? Why will men glorify the destroyers of life, and refuse to give their love to him who came not to destroy, but to save? Why will they glorify weak and sinful men, and refuse to give glory to him whose perfection as man is without spot, and whose divinity is clearly proved by his perfect humanity?

This is a sweet and blessed spot. We cannot accept this invitation literally to-day, because the hand of time, the hand of the infidel, and the hand of the vandal has so obscured the place that we cannot be sure of its location. Little did the angels who first gave that invitation know that it would sound through the ages to come, and would finally reach our ears in this far-off country and in this distant century. The invitation is sweet to our ears, notwithstanding the uncertainties regarding the locality and the changes in its characteristics. Never was grave so charming as that of the Son of God. He has perfumed it by his presence. Sweeter breath than that borne upon the gales of Ceylon salutes us as we are conscious of the holy fragrance of that blessed tomb. Our divine Lord never saw corruption. Sweet and blessed is this tomb. Voiceful is it in its silence, and eloquent in its emptiness, as with the loving women we draw near to it this morning in obedience to the invitation of the angels.

Standing beside this empty tomb there is much of interest that we may observe. The now sainted Spurgeon, in one of his earlier sermons, called attention to the fact that it is a costly tomb. He was quite right in emphasizing this fact. No common grave was that of our divine Lord. His was not the grave of a pauper; he was buried in no potter's field; his was truly the tomb of a king. The prophecy was made seven hundred years before that he should make "his grave with the

wicked, and with the rich in his death." Nothing apparently could be more unlikely of fulfillment than this ancient prophecy; but it was fulfilled to the very letter. A princely tomb was the tomb of the Prince of Life. This fact is the more wonderful when we remember that in life he had not where to lay his head. No sumptuous palace was his, no crown of gold, no sandals of silver were his. Why does he not fill a pauper's grave? Why should he be with the rich in his death? Why should many difficulties in the fulfillment of that ancient prophecy be overcome that our divine Lord might sleep in a new and costly tomb? Is there not here a sweet suggestion for every true believer? If Jesus is to be buried, the rich Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus of the Sanhedrin shall assist in that burial. His work of expiation is now finished. No more shall shame, buffeting, and reproach be visited upon his sacred person. When he said, "It is finished," his experience of contempt, contumely, and ignominy from men is ended. His body will be embalmed with precious spicery and robed in costly shroud for the tomb of honor, and not the tomb of disgrace. Courtly hands will bear the sacred head, and womanly tenderness will wipe the pierced brow; and thus with love and reverence will the sacred body be laid in the new-hewn sepulchre. Loving hearts will follow as mourners, and the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea will become the tomb of Jesus the King.

We observe also that this tomb is in a garden.

This is indeed a striking circumstance. Not in gardens do we expect to find tombs. It is true that occasionally the tombs of kings were in gardens, but such occasions were rare and were associated with princely splendor and royal greatness. As we look about us we see clearly that this is no place of graves. Here are no other memorials of the dead ; there is but a single tomb and that in a garden. There is here a strange mingling of opposites. Gardens suggest life, growth, beauty ; tombs suggest decay, death, corruption. This mingling of opposites is suggestive of all experiences of life. Every garden in life has its tomb, whether it be the garden of the heart, of the home, or of the church. Every path leads to some tomb. This fact is the sad side of earthly experience ; but there is a bright side as truly as there is a dark side. For while there is a tomb in every garden, there may be a garden around every tomb. That fact is inexpressibly sweet. Meet it was that Christ, the Lord of life and glory, should be buried in a garden. Was it not in a garden that sin and death were born ? Ought it not to be in a garden that sin and death should die, and life and love should have a new birth, to die no more ? In Eden death won his first victory, and in the garden near Calvary, death received his last stroke from the great conqueror. This garden suggests the other garden, the paradise of God, where sin can never enter, where sorrow is unknown, and where love lives on rejoicing in the immediate presence of God.

If we observe more closely we shall see that the grave clothes are arranged in order, and the napkin is laid in a place by itself. These facts are full of suggestion to every thoughtful mind. We see clearly that this tomb was not rifled, that Christ did not hastily arise, and that loving hands disposed of the cerements of the grave, and folded by itself the napkin that was around his thorn-pierced brow. Doubtless our Lord showed in this way his appreciation of order and propriety, and thus taught lessons of homely instruction while he was proving truths of highest and divinest importance. Clumsy was the story told by the soldiers that his disciples stole him away while they slept. The condition of the tomb was itself a contradiction to their foolish affirmation. Glorious was the rising from the grave, and amid its majestic elements was regard for the proprieties of life in these humble details. No human eye saw Christ rise; the angels did not say that they saw him rise. Evermore in silence are God's sublimest deeds wrought. Perhaps when the angel rolled away the stone and sat upon it, the divine Lord came forth without haste, without confusion, in the calmness of conscious power, and in the majesty of divine achievement.

All the surroundings of the tomb are full of suggestion. It was cut in a rock, as was fitting for the temporary resting-place of him who is the Rock of Ages. It was a new tomb, as became him of virgin mother born, and of unique life as well as unique birth. Had another ever been

buried in that tomb it might have been claimed, as in the case of the man who touched Elisha's bones, that so Christ arose from the dead; but none other ever slept in that tomb. It was reserved for the exclusive use of the mighty monarch of death's domain as of earth's dominion. We may well bless God for all the circumstances of that wondrous burial, that costly tomb, and this glorious resurrection. Joseph intended the tomb for his own family; but it became the tomb of heaven's king, and so is immortal among the tombs of earth.

We observe also, and chiefly, that this is now an empty tomb. The angels invite the women to come that they may behold the place where the Lord lay, not where the Lord lies. This is the greatest and sublimest truth ever taught the children of men. The doctrine of our Lord's resurrection is the foundation stone of the Christian church, and that stone is laid in the empty grave of Jesus Christ. Nothing is more certain than that Jesus Christ was truly dead. In that rocky tomb, motionless and dead, the mighty Redeemer lay; and nothing is more certain than that this dead Christ arose from the grave to die no more. As well might we attempt to deny the existence of Cæsar or Napoleon as the resurrection of Jesus Christ; than that no historical event is more certain. He burst Cæsar's seal, and proved that the rocky walls of Joseph's tomb could not imprison the Lord of life and glory.

The resurrection of Christ has changed the literature, the sculpture, the painting, and the music of the church and of the world. It teaches us great lessons, some of which we do well to emphasize as we stand to-day beside this empty tomb. We here receive conclusive proofs of the divine nature of the Redeemer. Proofs enough he gave during his lifetime that he was truly the Son of God and the Saviour of men. But his words were misunderstood, misinterpreted, and rejected. His resurrection, however, must convince all candid inquirers and at least silence all captious cavilers. This effect it seems to have produced when the apostles first went forth to declare the mighty fact. Christ had himself rested all his claims to be the Son of God upon the sublime fact of his resurrection. Had he not been truly the Son of God he never would have come forth from the tomb of Joseph. When challenged to give a proof of his claims, he referred to his own resurrection from the dead. His resurrection was, therefore, a fulfillment of his own prophecies, as well as the working of the greatest of miracles.

His resurrection is also a proof that his work of atonement was accepted by God the Father. It was the Father's seal upon the atoning work of the Son. Not on the cross, but rather in the tomb, did that work reach its completion. In the tomb the great battle was fully fought and the sublime victory gloriously won. Then it was that the Son of David was declared with power to be

the Son of God. Then it was that the foundation of Christ's reign among men was laid. Other founders of religions lived and died, but Christ is the only founder of a religion who came forth from the grave. His resurrection is the unique fact in our holy faith; it is the divine proof of its absolute certainty. It carries with it all the facts of his birth, his life, his death. His resurrection has justly been called "God's amen and the hallelujah of humanity." It gives us a striking proof of his divinity. To this crowning miracle the teachers of Christianity constantly appealed; to be the witnesses of his resurrection was one of the objects for which the apostles were appointed. In his great sermon on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter affirms, "This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we all are witnesses." Paul, addressing the men of Athens, affirms that, "He hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." To this same miracle the teachers of Christianity may now refer as proof of its supernatural claims. It is the keystone in the arch of our faith. If it be true, all other affirmations of that faith may be easily proved.

The doctrine of the resurrection also accounts for the existence of the church. We know that the Christian faith has transformed the world; but we cannot account for the Christian church, except we admit the resurrection of the Lord. Were the first teachers of this new faith deceivers? Who dares so affirm? Were they deceived?

Who can so believe? Deny the resurrection and you cannot account for the church. This fact any man may safely affirm in the presence of any student of history. You may safely challenge any man who denies the resurrection of Christ to account for the existence of the church. No sensible man will accept the challenge. Nothing is more logical or sublime than the Apostle Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor. 15, when he says that "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." But he gloriously affirms that Christ is risen, and he exults in the fact that our faith is not vain.

One other and more personal lesson we may learn as we stand beside this empty grave. Christ's resurrection is a prophecy and proof of our resurrection. He is the only one instance of a complete victory over death in his own person. He met death in his own domain, and won in that dark territory his glorious victory. Hitherto death was an inexorable tyrant, never bribed by tears and never melted by beauty. He struck his deadly blow and humanity fell before his power. Enoch and Elijah really won no victory over death, for they never really grappled with this foe. They were translated without meeting him on the field of conflict. There is proof that the ruler's daughter, the widow's son, and Lazarus, were rescued for a time from the power of death; but death afterward claimed them for his own. Christ alone of woman born, ever grappled with the mighty wrestler death,

and overcame him in his own dark domain. Death never before had such a visitant in his silent realms. Jesus wrenched the sceptre of empire from his hand, and took the crown of dominion from his brow. Jesus won a full and final victory leaving the sepulchre that morning to return no more forever. Nothing but that empty tomb remained to tell that once the Son of God slept on this rocky bed.

We thus have a sweetly personal interest in this victory. Christ won it not for himself alone. As he died for us, so he rose for us. Our resurrection depends upon his. Fast as the grave seems now to shut in our beloved, it is doomed to relax its grasp. When men say that the scientific objections are such that they cannot believe in the doctrine of the resurrection, we have simply to ask them, Did Jesus rise? This is a question of fact. Is it true? There are, all admit, difficulties in the doctrine of our resurrection. They are inexplicable; but were there not also difficulties in the resurrection of Christ? The difficulties in the case of a general resurrection are not greater, from a strictly scientific point of view, than those in the case of the resurrection of Jesus. To believe that he died and rose again is scientifically as difficult as to believe that we die and may rise again. He who denies that the dead can rise must also deny that Christ did rise. "But now is Christ risen." Then we too may arise. Empty as was Joseph's tomb, so empty shall all the tombs of the world be

when the archangel's trump shall sound. All hail, then, thou risen Jesus! Thou art he who once was dead, but who now liveth forevermore. At thy girdle are the keys of death and hell. March forward, thou mighty Conqueror, in thy sublime victory! Let all the bells of heaven ring on this glad Easter morning. With Christ we bear the cross; with him we shall be buried in the grave; with him we shall rise in triumph; and with him we shall sit on the throne to die no more but to rejoice forever in the triumphs thou hast won—thou Christ of God, blessed forevermore.

THE FULFILLED PENTECOST

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.—Acts 2 : 1-4.

XIX

WE to-day celebrate with appropriate services what is known in some churches as Whitsunday. It is well known that this name refers to the white garments worn by candidates for baptism, or worn by those who had been recently baptized. It is a festival of the church in commemoration of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Although not observed very early in the church, it came to be one of the most prominent of all the sacred feasts. In the early church, in some instances, the entire period from Easter to Pentecost was observed as a joyous occasion. It was a time of thanksgiving, because of the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God. In some portions of the church this period was considered as a continuous Sunday. It was also marked by an absence of fasting, and of kneeling at all the public prayers. It was considered a time of holy jubilation.

We must not allow ourselves to suppose that the Holy Spirit was not in the world until this Pentecost. From the very beginning of creation the Spirit was active, both in the creation of the universe and in the re-creation of men. But when Pentecost was fully come the Spirit came with greater fullness of life than ever before. He has

dwelt in the church ever since. This is, in a special sense, the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. Christ promised to send another Comforter, as one of his ascension gifts. The work of God the Father was especially marked previous to the incarnation of the Son. The work of God the Son continues now at the right hand of God since his ascension and enthronement, and the work of God the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, marked a new era in the divine manifestation and economy. There is in the divine plan a fullness of time for the manifestation of each person in the blessed Trinity.

The day of Pentecost is the beginning of the second period in the New Testament dispensation. We speak of Christmas as the birthday of the Lord ; we may speak of Pentecost as the birthday of his church. As the birthday of Christ was proclaimed by angelic voices chanting his praises, so the birthday of the church was proclaimed by human voices chanting his praises in the various tongues of earth. Christmas marked the incarnation of the Son ; and Pentecost the incarnation of the Spirit. Ever since believers have been his temple.

1. In the study of this subject it is well for us, in the first place, to emphasize the *time* of the Spirit's coming. We have every reason to believe that the Spirit came on the first day of the week. Honor was thus for the second time done to this day. Not only did it mark the resurrection of our

Lord but also his enthronement at the right hand of the Father. The first day of the week is therefore a standing memorial of the resurrection of Christ and of the descent of the Spirit. These two considerations give additional dignity and glory to it as the Lord's Day. We have not given the day sufficient honor as a memorial of the coming of the Spirit. Whitsunday as well as Easter Day should stimulate the gratitude and evoke the praises of all God's devout children. As the one day commemorates Christ's birth from the tomb, so the other commemorates the birth of the church, and marks an era in the history of redemption. If Christian people would observe the Lord's Day with reference to these two great truths the day would have increased dignity, solemnity, and tenderness in their thoughts. Let us honor it as the time of the birth of the church, which next to the birth and resurrection of Christ is the greatest event in the history of our race.

The Spirit came also when God's children were met for prayer. This circumstance also is worthy of an emphasis which it seldom receives. It is true that some have reckoned so as to make this Pentecost fall on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. But all the Christian traditions point to Sunday as the day, and all the Christian observances of the day, as far back as they can be traced, lead to the same conclusion. When we turn to the fourteenth verse of the preceding chapter, we see that all who were named were with one accord in prayer and

supplication, Mary the mother of Jesus being one of the number. On some former occasions there had been jealousies and envyings among the disciples ; but these are now entirely gone. There are now no schisms, no opposing interests, no discordant ambitions. There is here a beautiful picture of earnest devotion and of united supplication. Mary the mother of Jesus has cast in her lot with the apostles and is also a suppliant at the feet of her divine Son and Lord. We have here one of the finest examples of earnest prayer which the word of God anywhere gives us. The disciples had followed their Master to the eastern declivity of the mount of Olives. While the words "to the uttermost part of the earth" are on his lips he is parted from them. They steadily watch him as with uplifted hands he pronounces his blessing, and then they see him moving sublimely upward, all the laws of gravitation submitting to his higher authority. The everlasting doors lift up their heads and the King of glory triumphantly enters. Within the veil he receives the worship which is his due, and on the earth his disciples lift up their prayers and praises in his name. This was a wonderful experience even for the disciples. They now understand what he meant when he said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." During the forty days he spent upon the earth he opened to them the Scriptures ; they now saw as never before what his death meant, and that there was to be no more temple and no

more altar. Perhaps they expected that the Spirit would come almost immediately upon the Lord's departure; but day after day passes until a week is gone. "Not many days," said the Master, and so they wait and pray and pray and wait.

Never had such prayers ascended from earth to heaven as these. Eight days are gone; ten days are gone! Is the promise to be broken? What did Christ mean when he said, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high"? But God's children never wait and never pray in vain. The promise is near the fulfillment; the day of Pentecost is dawning; the longing of their hearts will be fully met. There is some work for them during the interval of ten days between the ascension of Christ and the effusion of the Spirit. An apostle is to be elected in the room of Judas who had fallen. This work done, they continue to wait for the Spirit as they who wait for the morning. They are sure of his coming, but they will not relax their earnest prayers and will not cease their continuous waiting. Persevering prayer and unity of purpose are divinely appointed means for opening the heavens. Through the cloud, which shut out the ascending Lord from the strained eyes of the disciples, the incense of prayer may rise and the dews of blessing may fall. Thus they wait and thus they pray.

The chief note of time, however, for the coming of the Spirit is that the day of Pentecost was fully come. We know that the word Pentecost literally

means the fiftieth of something; but the Greek adjective finally came to be used as a substantive and is so used in this connection. It was applied to the festival which occurred fifty days after the Passover. We know that this feast was also called "the feast of weeks," and "the feast of harvest, or first-fruits." Nothing could be more important than that the Spirit should descend on the occasion of the historic feast. According to the Jewish tradition, as we learn from Maimonides, this feast commemorated the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, which event occurred on the fiftieth day after the departure of Israel from Egypt. It was the fiftieth day after the sixteenth of Nisan, and was believed to be the very day on which the law was given on Mount Sinai. Pentecost was one of the three yearly feasts prescribed in the Mosaic law. The selection of these three periods was not arbitrary, but in strict harmony with national events and with the changing seasons. Nothing could be more beautiful than the connection between the descent of the Spirit and the crucifixion of Christ on the one hand, and the relation between the feast of the Passover and the feast of Pentecost on the other hand. Fifty days after the paschal lamb was slain God came in fire and flame on Mount Sinai inaugurating a new dispensation, and fifty days after the true Paschal Lamb was slain God came again in fire and flame and inaugurated the dispensation of the Spirit. It is impossible to fail to see the connection between these

symbolic events of the olden time and the deeply spiritual experiences of these apostolic days. At the first Pentecost the law was given on tables of stone; at the last Pentecost the Spirit came to write that law on the hearts of the disciples.

2. Let us observe, in the second place, the *manner* of the Spirit's coming. It was to be expected that so great an event as the inauguration of a new spiritual dispensation, that so sublime an occurrence as the special manifestation of the third person in the Trinity, should be preceded and accompanied by sensible and audible phenomena. We are not, therefore, surprised to know that "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." This was an extraordinary sound. It came suddenly; it came from heaven. This expression intimates that it was not the result of any natural influence; it may suggest also the origin of the sound, that it descended as if from God. It is to be observed that this was not a rushing mighty wind, but simply that it gave forth a sound that could best be represented by this description. There seems to have been no gale sweeping over the city, no wind that violently struck the sides of the building or that swept furiously through the street. The sound fell directly downward, without cause or presence or movement to explain its existence. It came like mighty showers in a dead calm and from a cloudless sky. God was pleased to give two witnesses to the de-

scent of the Spirit, one appealing to the sense of hearing, this strange sound; the other appealing to the sense of sight, the tongues of flame. We stand in awe of this mysterious sound. Whence came it? What means it? Is it not the Lord breathing upon his people? Was not this a supernatural sign of the divine presence? Was not this invisible witness mightily testifying to the presence of the Holy Ghost? Was not this sound emblematic of the mighty power of the divine Spirit? May we not well imagine that the head of each disciple bowed reverently as this strange sound was heard? Who among them could resist the conviction that the mighty Spirit of the living God was breathed upon them in fullness of blessing and in the majesty of God himself?

We are not surprised to learn that this sound filled all the place where they were sitting. We are to refer this expression to the sound rather than to the wind, for it is not even affirmed that there was any wind blowing. Far more terrific than a tempest was this windless sound. A sound of wind when no wind was blowing might well fill every soul with holy awe. We are to believe that they were meeting in a private dwelling rather than in any part of the temple. This sound was symbolic of the presence of the all-pervading Spirit. Cyril of Jerusalem has said, "For as he who sinks down into the waters and is baptized and is surrounded on all sides by the waters, so also they were completely baptized by Spirit." Oh, mys-

terious and blessed baptism! Now the disciples were receiving the divine enduement of power for which they were to tarry in Jerusalem. Now they will go forth with irresistible power to declare the story of redeeming love. Only as men are endued with power from on high can they so declare the glorious gospel that Christ shall be honored and souls shall be redeemed.

The visible sign of the Spirit's presence was "cloven tongues like as of fire." The word translated cloven is more correctly rendered by the word "distributed." Painters have represented these tongues as divided into two or more portions; the form of the pope's cap was derived from an incorrect interpretation of this passage. The tongues were not themselves cloven, but each tongue was separated from a mass of seeming flame. Flames naturally assume the form of tongues, and so we have the expression, common in many literatures, "a lambent flame." These tongues were not of fire, but were "like as of fire"; they possessed the brightness without the burning of fire. One of the tongues sat on each of those present. We know that fire has ever been regarded as a striking emblem of deity. Thus God is said to have revealed himself to Moses in the bush which burned, but was not consumed; thus on Mount Sinai God descended in the midst of thunder, lightning, smoke, and fire, striking emblems of his presence and power; thus startlingly God is described as "Consuming Fire." We are familiar also with the fact

that the most famous classic writers frequently represent their deities by fire and flame in various forms. It was especially fitting that the Holy Spirit should be so represented. The prediction of John the Baptist was, "He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire." The purity and the purifying power of the Spirit were thus strikingly set forth.

We cannot, however, fail to observe the special form of this flame. It might naturally assume the form of a tongue; and frequently reference is made to "the tongue of fire," suggesting the thin, long, narrow point which flames naturally assume. But in this instance we are warranted in seeing a degree of significance in the tongue-like form of the flame. Not a shapeless flame is here presented to our view, not Abraham's lamp, nor the coal of Isaiah, but a tongue comes before us. Over the head of each one of that honored group rests a tongue of flame. There is a sense in which the tongue was to be the symbol of the dispensation now inaugurated. Any form of fire would have suggested the presence of God, but its particular form taught an additional truth. Well has William Arthur said, "Christianity was to be a tongue of fire." Not by the printed page, mighty as it may be for good and for God, but by the living voice of the living preacher is the glorious gospel to be proclaimed. A tongue set on fire of the Holy Ghost is a power neither man nor devil can resist. The tongue, when consecrated to God, is the

mightiest and most glorious instrument for good which the world has ever known. It is the power which has confounded enemies, which has confronted learned councils, and which has silenced opposing hosts of every kind; this is the power which is to-day girdling the world with the blessed story of redeeming love. Oh, that the Lord God Almighty would consecrate to his service, by the touch of his mighty love, the tongue of eloquence in every language and country!

3. We are also called upon, in the third place, to notice the *results* of the Spirit's coming so far as set forth in the text. Those who were present—and the number is certainly not limited to the apostles, nor perhaps to the one hundred and twenty—"were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Up to this time the Spirit had come to men in smaller measures, had come simply as foretastes of this larger blessing. Now the children of God were entirely under the influence and power of the Spirit of God. To be filled with anything is a scriptural phrase implying that all the faculties are pervaded by it or under its control. Our attention was previously called to the external evidences of the divine presence, but now to the internal. The Spirit was now present in fullness. He pervaded the whole being of those upon whom he came. He imparted to them extraordinary powers of many kinds. Under the old dispensation he was given only to chosen leaders, or to skilled workmen, or to such honored servants as

Elisabeth, Zacharias, and John the Baptist. There were special and transient occasions on which we hear of persons being filled with the Holy Ghost. Now he is to be the permanent indweller in God's people. His abiding presence is their joyful privilege. Previous to this the apostles had enjoyed only the ordinary influence of the Spirit, but now his indwelling in the largest measure. Now God's Spirit is put into all his people. In the early day the Spirit of God strove with men both before and after the flood; but it was only when the Son of God came to earth that the Spirit of God returned to earth in fullness. In the second Adam he dwelt without measure, and now he sends down the Spirit to dwell in this larger form with the disciples whom he left upon the earth. As vessels they were long prepared for this infilling, and when the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost these prepared vessels were filled to overflowing.

We read also that they "began to speak with other tongues." How can we explain so wonderful an event? There have been many attempts made to deny or to modify this miracle. Some have said that the miracle was not in the speaking of the apostles, but in the hearing of the people; but this cannot be, as the use of the tongues was manifested before the hearers were met together. Nothing can be more certain from what follows than that these disciples actually spoke with other tongues. We know that they did not merely speak in different dialects of the Greek language, for the

people were met from many lands and were of many tongues. We here see that the disaster of Babel was more than remedied by the blessings of Pentecost. Sin separated man from God and man from man. Salvation comes to unite men to one another and all men to God. Pentecost is the divine remedy for Babel. The native tongue of many of the people was the barbarous dialect of Galilee. Some indeed were acquainted with Greek and Latin ; but there is no reason to think that any were acquainted with the divers languages represented on this occasion. The natural meaning of the passage is that these disciples were endued by the power of the Holy Ghost to speak foreign languages. This ability was predicted in the Old Testament ; it was also promised by the Lord Jesus when he commissioned his disciples. It was vastly important on this occasion that the gospel should be proclaimed in the languages of those present at this feast. We do not, however, suppose that the disciples used this miraculous gift in their ordinary work. The Greek tongue was so general throughout the Roman Empire that they could ordinarily use it in their preaching ; but the ability to speak in various languages ministered marvelously to the rapid spread of the gospel at the pentecostal feast. The ability to speak in these varied tongues on this occasion carried the gospel to more people than could have been reached by the ordinary ministrations of the word for a series of years. Pentecost was a great hill-

top, and kindling the light thereon it shone out across many lands and for the illumination of many peoples. It is glorious that these first disciples were thus able to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance, glorious that each man could hear the gospel in the language in which he was born. It is still the duty of the church to give the gospel to all peoples, not only in the tongues of the learned, but in the language of daily speech and of the common people. Oh, for the pentecostal baptism! Oh, for the tongue of fire! Oh, for the conscious power of the Spirit as the culmination of the hopes of the past, and as the prophecy of a glorious Pentecost as the nineteenth century closes and the twentieth century dawns!

THE BEATIFIC VISION

He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.—Isa. 33 : 16, 17.

TRUE believers need oftener to contemplate their happy conditions and their bright prospects. They live on too low a plain; they forget their exalted position as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. They need to be reminded of the contrast between themselves and "the sinners in Zion," even in the world that now is, and especially so as they contemplate the world beyond. In the fourteenth verse of this chapter we are reminded that "the sinners in Zion" are afraid, and that the hypocrites are filled with alarm. This fear and alarm were produced by a view of the judgment of God on the army of Sennacherib when, in a single night by the blow of the Almighty, one hundred and eighty-five thousand men were slain. How then could that wrath be borne forever? In the fifteenth verse the prophet presents to us a suggestive contrast between the confidence of the righteous and the fearfulness of the wicked. He also gives us some striking characteristics of the righteous man. He lives righteously; he speaketh uprightly; his words and acts are in perfect harmony with one another. He is not false, slanderous, or impure in speech. Another mark which he bears is his abhorrence of the gain of false dealing in business. Still an-

other is that as a magistrate he will not stretch out his hands for bribes, but will adjudge all causes according to inherent justice. Still another is that he will not willingly listen to proposals to commit violence of any sort, and will even shut his eyes from beholding the committal of violence by others. In a word, he keeps himself from all iniquity, lives a manly, honest, and godly life.

We then have in the text a statement of God's regard for men who live righteous lives, as those lives are set before us in the fifteenth verse. It is a matter of great interest to know how God regards such men. Is he indifferent to them? Does he treat them otherwise than as he treats "the sinners in Zion"? Many Christian men and women at times feel that there is no profit in serving God. They see the righteous in business troubles, in family bereavements, and in physical sufferings. Wicked men often spread themselves as green bay trees; and it seems sometimes, as if all that they do prospers. The psalmist was carried away for a time by that thought; and his experience is that of many conscientious Christians in our own day. But the psalmist saw that the time came when the wicked passed away and could not be found. He saw the transgressors destroyed together, and then he learned not to fret because of evil-doers. He sweetly experienced also the fact that those who wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth. This lesson is beautifully brought out in our text and its context.

1. In studying this text we have, in the first place, the believer's *position*—"he shall dwell on high." Here it is affirmed that the righteous man shall dwell on heights which were usually safe places, as they were inaccessible to the enemy. A truly godly man has his dwelling on a lofty cliff, and on the immovable rock. The enemy cannot reach him, however bitter that enemy may be. The true believer is hid in the time of trouble in God's pavilion, in the secret of God's tabernacle. He is set up on a rock; God takes him into closest communion and sweetest fellowship with himself. God admits him into his own portion of the sacred dwelling, as a man would protect his children in his own home. God will not permit him to remain in the vestibule, or the open court, of his palace, but will take him into his private apartments, where no stranger may intrude. God covers his head in the day of battle, and his heart in the hour of fierce temptation. True believers literally occupy a high place. They are men of mark. They are set on a hill and cannot be hid. Ten thousand men read their life for every one who reads the Bible. A true Christian is God's best representative in the world. The world will judge God's character by the conduct and character of God's children. The world judges us by our children; not less, but in harmony with the same law, does the world judge God by his children. This truth places upon Christian men and women a solemn responsibility

and crowns them with unspeakable dignity and glory.

The believer's position is a high one, when we consider his peculiar blessings. He is in the world, but not of it; he is passing through it to fairer and nobler worlds on high. He is God's beloved among the children of men. His name is written on the palms of God's hands, so that when the hand is open God sees the name, and when the hand is closed God protects his child. Young was right when he said, "A Christian is the highest style of man." The Scriptures represent him as flourishing like the palm tree, as growing like a cedar in Lebanon, and as fat and flourishing even in old age. If Christians fully understood the glory which they have in possession, and the greater glory which they have in promise, they would be unable to conceal their joy as they walk among men. Their faces would ever smile, their eyes ever sparkle, and the glory of the celestial city would flood their path with its heavenly light. There is a real sense in which we may say, with becoming humility, but with literal truth, that every Christian is, in his measure, Christ to the world. He shows more of the character of God than any other being this side the throne of God. He has to do with the affairs of this world, for he is a man among men; but he is conscious of his inherent dignity and of his inherited honor. He asks no favors of men because he is a Christian. He does not abandon the world because he is a

Christian ; to abandon the world is a coward's act. He does not yield to the world ; to yield to the world is a traitor's part. He overcomes the world ; to overcome the world is a true Christian's part. Others may be satisfied with the dross of earth, but the Christian wants the gold of heaven ; others may be satisfied to look downward, but the Christian looks upward, onward, heavenward, Godward. God is his father and heaven is his home.

2. We observe, in the second place, the believer's *protection*—"His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." Literally translated we should have the expression, "the strongholds of the rocks shall be his fortress." These are stirring words. The strongholds of the rocks were often the fortress for David and other heroic Hebrews in the time of civil strife and foreign invasion. "The clefts of the rocks, and the tops of the ragged rocks," were often the home of brave patriots in Palestine and in many other lands. In the Highlands of Scotland and among the rugged rocks of Spain courageous defenders remained unconquered and unconquerable notwithstanding the fiercest onsets of the most formidable foes. Rocks have occupied a prominent place in the history of the church. Here brave Covenanters found a refuge when hunted by Claverhouse and his fierce dragoons. Often the valleys of Scotland were holy cathedrals, echoing the voices of heroes and martyrs as they sang the psalms of David, exhorted the people, and prayed to God for strength

in their hours of trial. The world will never forget the men who thus risked life and all that made life dear rather than be disloyal to conscience and to God. The church will always be grateful that God sometimes wrapped the mists and the clouds of those rugged hills around his saints to hide them from their Satanic foes. They found it to be literally true that their place of defense was the munitions of rocks.

Believers may find it equally true even to this day. All God's attributes are strongholds for his children. His omnipotence, omnipresence, benevolence, justice, and holiness, are places of defense to his penitent, trustful, and obedient children. The elements in God's character which give alarm to the sinners in Zion and to the fearful hypocrites, are sources of comfort to his loving and loyal children. We read in Prov. 18 : 10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower ; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." God is a sanctuary to the righteous when they are pursued by their foes. All his titles and attributes, and all his covenants and promises, constitute a tower, impenetrable, impregnable, and invincible. All his saints know that their security is in their God. May God help us to find in him, now and always, our sure protection from all our enemies!

3. In the third place, we notice the believer's *provision*—"bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." This promise has been literally fulfilled in the case of the majority of God's

people. Religion is the friend of industry and every other virtue. It opposes laziness, extravagance, and every other vice. It creates and fosters sobriety, economy, and capacity. Nothing is more certain than that religion "is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." Nothing is more certain than that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Godliness is profitable for the development of the intellect and for the management of business enterprises, as well as for the culture of the heart and the preparation for the life to come. Except in special cases—regarding which we think and speak with tenderness and sympathy—poverty is suggestive of indolence, extravagance, or incapacity. A Christian may not fare sumptuously every day; he may not wear purple and fine linen, but the promises of God are that verily he shall be fed. True spirituality is helpful in the development of character and in the conduct of affairs in every relation in life. The psalmist was able to say, after a long and varied experience—an experience of mingled disappointment and achievement, sorrow and joy—"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. I have been young and am now old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

God is equally the source of all supply for our spiritual wants. He is the fountain of all life and light. Christ has called himself the Bread of

Heaven, and the Water of Life. Apart from God there is no true source of supply for the wants of the soul. Men who refuse to eat of this spiritual food starve their souls in the life that now is, and utterly destroy them for the life that is to come. It is unspeakably sad that they will strive to feed upon the husks which are simply the food of swine, and will refuse the bread of heaven of which angels eat. God's supply of temporal mercies is but the suggestion of our need and his supply of spiritual life. The new-born soul desires the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby. It afterward hungers for the bread of heaven, the strong meat of faith, and the water of life. The soul can no more live and thrive without spiritual food than can the body without natural food. God has promised to give us our spiritual meat in due season, as truly as our daily bread. His grace will be sufficient for us in every hour of need, however great that need may be. He gives us his holy word to be the guide of our lives and the food of our souls. He gives us the communications of his Spirit that we may understand the teachings of the divine word and apply them aright to our spiritual necessities. Nothing is more certain than that he will give us strength according to our day; than that he will strengthen us with might in the inner man; than that he will sustain us in our spiritual conflicts and bring us off at the last more than victorious over all our spiritual foes.

4. We have, in the last place, the believer's *prospection*—"thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." I use the word *prospection* rather than *prospect*; the idea intended to be taught includes the outward view and the inward appreciation of the external prospect. Some suppose that the reference here is to the Assyrian king, and that he should be seen at the walls of Jerusalem—that is to say, that he should be overthrown. Others believe that primarily the reference may be to Hezekiah. The sense then would be that the people should be defended from the army of the Assyrian foe; that they should be permitted to live during the peaceful and prosperous reign of their own king; that they should look to the remotest part of the land of Judea as delivered from their enemies and under the control of their own sovereign; that they should not be confined within the walls of Jerusalem, but the empire of their king should extend over a wide dominion, and they should occupy as their own the territory now under the control of the Assyrians. But, although the primary reference may be to Hezekiah, we are warranted in saying that a greater than Hezekiah is here, and that a more goodly land than the land of Canaan is spread out to our gaze. The true King in his beauty is the King of kings and the Lord of lords; the true land that is afar off is the land of the heavenly Canaan with its unbroken peace, its undimmed light, and its unin-

errupted joy. The believer is permitted at times to look out on that goodly land. Just as the spies brought back from the land of Canaan the rich clusters of Eshcol, indicative of the abundant fruits which there grew, so to us now are brought the fruits of paradise in precious promises and in blessed realizations. The believer has much in possession, but he has vastly more in prospect. He stands at times as Moses stood, and looks out on the magnificent prospect whose glories blind the gaze, whose beauties intoxicate the soul, and whose blessedness no language can describe. But unlike Moses, he will cross the river and enter the goodly land. We cannot think of the inhabitants of heaven as idling by its purling streams and in the enjoyment of its balmy airs. We think of heaven as a place of ceaseless, but tireless activity. Shall not David there strike his harp to sweeter songs than he ever sang on earth? Shall not Isaiah speak of the glory and majesty of God in nobler words and loftier strains than marked his divinest earthly prophecies? Shall not Paul there glow with a holy enthusiasm compared with which his highest earthly visions were cold and dark? Shall not ten thousand godly martyrs, preachers, philosophers, poets, scientists, and unlettered saints, there rise to heights of achievement and possibility such as no language can now express and no thought now conceive. Even here, as the Apostle John hath said, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we

shall be ; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." We could not endure the sight of the glory that awaits us as the heirs of God. There we shall shine like stars, there we shall flash like suns, there we shall be like Christ, for we shall see him as he is. God be thanked for the glimpse we now get of that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God—a city never weary with burdens nor hoary with years ; a city without trials or tears ; a city without foes or fears ; a city without sins or sorrows ; a city without deaths or dirges ; a city without griefs or graves ; a city whose walls are salvation and whose gates are praise. What manner of men and women ought we to be who are the children of God and heirs to glory so unspeakable ? Away with the attractions of this world ! Away with the fascinations of its honors, its riches, and its glories ! These may captivate the children of earth, but they are powerless to attract the children of the King in his beauty and the heirs of the land which is "afar off."

Are we to-day numbered among the righteous ? Do we possess the characteristics enumerated in the verses preceding my text ? Have we known Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour ? Have we robed ourselves in the spotless garments of his righteousness ? Are our lives hid with Christ in God ? If we truly are his, then where he is there we shall surely be, and the glory of his

splendor shall be ours, world without end. For assuredly his own tender, yearning prayer regarding his people shall be sweetly fulfilled: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

This prayer is tender and beautiful in the extreme. Our Lord clearly implies that his own happiness would not be complete until his saints were with him in glory. It was foretold of him that, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." The psalm regarding himself, says, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." Christ's satisfaction consists in part in the presence of his people; and the satisfaction of his people consists in awaking in his likeness. Each is satisfied with the other; neither can be satisfied without the other. As he looks forward to his glorification in heaven, our Lord longs for the presence of those whom he died to redeem. There is wonderful humanness as well as divineness in this prayer; indeed the divine and the human in the prayer and in the Lord himself marvelously and tenderly blend. He looks forward here at once to his exaltation in heaven when his work of atonement shall have been completed. He looks still farther forward to the time when all his redeemed shall be with him in glory. Perhaps we do not with sufficient frequency think of heaven and its beatific vision. In health and in the midst

of present duties our thoughts cling to earth and earthly things, but when sickness, disappointment, and bereavement come there is wonderful comfort and inspiration in the thought of the eternal peace, felicity, and blessed companionship of Christ and his people in glory.

This text has cheered and comforted tens of thousands of God's people in various periods of the world's history. They have rejoiced with joy unspeakable as they have realized their exalted position as believers in the Lord Jesus. They have rested with unquestioning trust in the protection which God supplies to his people, to whom he is a "place of defense and the munitions of rocks." They have looked into an unknown future with unquestioning faith and with joyous confidence as they have accepted the divine provision, claiming the promise, "bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." And they have rejoiced with a joy that is full of glory, as they have in the long vista of the future enjoyed the believer's prospection, clinging to the promise, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." May that happy realization be ours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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